

27 February 2015

Issues Paper
Mutual Recognition Schemes
Submission by the Master Plumbers' Association of Queensland

The Master Plumbers' Association of Queensland welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Issues Paper prepared and circulated by the Productivity Commission both at our face to face meeting and in this submission. The Issues Paper describes the Mutual Recognition Schemes that are in place and seeks views about the benefits that flow from those schemes and whether there are any further benefits that could be realised.

Mutual Recognition Schemes in relation to Goods

In relation to plumbing related goods there are two areas worthy of comment:

For water plumbing and drainage products there is a regulatory framework based on the Watermark Scheme that underpins the mutual recognition framework and is essential to ensure that these products protect the health and safety of consumers and are fit for the purpose for which they are intended.

It is the view of the Association that the Watermark Scheme continue and apply across Australia. This issue is under consideration as part of a separate review by the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB).

For gas products there is a permanent exemption in relation to a limited class of gas products under TTMRA and this should remain.

Mutual Recognition Schemes in relation to Occupations

Plumbing and gas fitting are licensed occupations in Australia and are subject to mutual recognition requirements. There is an existing mutual recognition arrangement for plumbing in Australia. The existing arrangement requires a separate application in each State.

The existing mutual recognition system could be enhanced and made more efficient by getting greater consistency in the definitions of plumbing work in the different jurisdictions.

Whether significant benefits would flow from this would depend on the numbers seeking to move between jurisdictions but is a good principle. Much work was done in this area as part of the National Licensing program which was ultimately cancelled. Some work continues on Mutual Recognition enhancements, but without industry involvement and is therefore unlikely to succeed.

Any move to automatic mutual recognition would need to recognise the requirement for inspection/auditing of work and consumer protection issues.

Some concerns exist about non NZ trained “plumbers” gaining recognition and licensing in Australia by entering through NZ–(as well as differences between States in Australia.)

These brief comments are intended as a summary of the key matters raise however MPAQ would be happy to meet and discuss these items further, please contact me

Kind regards

Penny Cornah

Executive Director

Master Plumbers' Association of Queensland