



Unlicensed and DIY electrical work is Not worth the risk!

Finding yourself considering doing your own electrical work? Telling yourself "it's a simple job I can do it" or "electricians are so expensive I can save money doing it myself". If you have or are thinking like this, STOP and ask yourself – is it worth risking your life or the life of a loved one? Aside from the risks to life, if you choose to do your own electrical work, you **are** breaking the law and you probably haven't even realised that you are jeopardising your insurance.

Get a licensed electrical contractor!

The bottom line is that a licensed electrical contractor must always be engaged to perform any electrical work. To find a licensed electrical contractor that services your area simply perform a web search, if this fails then contact your local electrical industry association for a recommendation.



**ALL ELECTRICAL
WORK MUST BE
PERFORMED BY
A LICENSED
ELECTRICIAN**

When selecting a licensed electrical contractor, always look for their electrical contractor licence number in any advertisement and confirm their licence is current before agreeing to any work. You can check the status of the electrical contractor licence number on the Electrical Safety Office Queensland (ESO) [licence search](#) facility. If your electrical contractor does not appear to be in the database contact the ESO immediately.

What is electrical work?

Section 18 of the [Electrical Safety Act 2002](#) defines electrical work to include "the manufacturing, constructing, installing, testing, maintaining, repairing, altering, removing, or replacing of electrical equipment". That is, tasks such as installing a new power point, replacing a light switch, replacing a batten holder with a new light fitting, repairing an appliance (e.g. heater), moving a power point, replacing a light fitting with a ceiling fan, making an extension lead or repairing a lead.

The definition does not include works such as replacing a drive belt in a washing machine or fitting but not connecting cooktops/wall ovens. You should consider electrical risks such as, damage to, or contact with wiring within the unit or wall cavities particularly when cutting holes or driving screws or nails into walls before doing this. It should be noted, that it is not against the law to purchase electrical components, materials or appliances that need to be hard wired, but they must be installed by a licensed electrical contractor.

What can happen if I do it myself?

Besides the fact it's illegal, unlicensed electrical work is dangerous for the person doing the work and for anyone who utilises or performs subsequent work on the electrical installation or equipment.

An obvious risk to the person performing the unlicensed work is the potential for contact with electricity, which can have deadly consequences. Also, the electrical installation or equipment may be unknowingly left in an unsafe manner and is a risk to anyone who comes into contact with it. Due to the concealed nature of some electrical faults the danger may not be obvious and will only become evident when a fault or situation develops. Underlying faults and unsafe installations pose risks of electrical shock, equipment damage or electrical fire all of which can result in considerable financial, emotional and reputational loss, especially if the cause was illegal electrical work, also, your insurer may refuse your claim.

Licensed electrical contractors have the equipment and training to find faults before they are a risk! If you suspect someone of performing unlicensed work, in Queensland, a report can be made to ESO and Electrical Safety Inspectors will investigate the matter.

What are the penalties?

If you manage to avoid injury or death and are found to have undertaken unlicensed electrical work by the ESO, then a penalty of up to \$40,000 for individuals can be applied. If you managed to cause a death or grievous bodily harm to persons using the illegal installation then then a maximum penalty of \$100,000 for an individual or \$500,000 for a corporation) or two years imprisonment. If you really got it wrong and caused multiple deaths, the maximum penalty is \$200,000 for an individual (\$1,000,000 for a corporation) or three years imprisonment.

Electrical licensing

In Queensland, to be able to perform electrical work you **must** hold a current electrical work licence. It is a requirement by law that licensed electrical workers ensure electrical work is performed meets with legislative requirements and any applicable codes of practice and technical standards.

Queensland businesses that provide electrical work services must hold a current electrical contractor licence, although the actual electrical work may be undertaken by an employee who holds a current electrical work licence or is supervised by someone who holds a current electrical work licence that then certifies the works. Licensed electrical contractors need to adhere to specific insurance requirements including having a minimum of \$5 million public liability insurance, with a \$50,000 consumer protection component. Unlicensed and DIY electrical work does not have this assurance or protection.

Still think you know what you are doing? Ask yourself if you would let an unlicensed Doctor operate on you? No, then perhaps you should contact a licensed electrical contractor for any electrical work.

Information for this article was sourced from the [Electrical Safety Office](#)