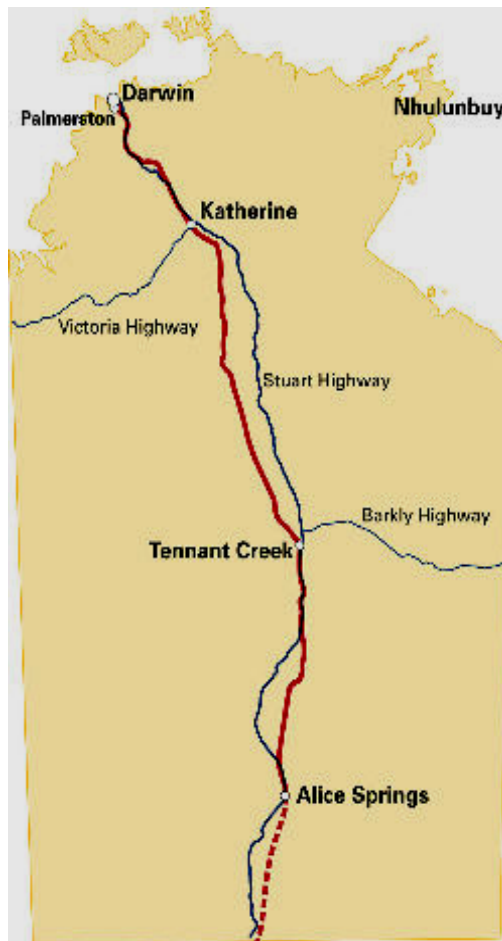


# Annual Report

## 2003/2004



**NORTHERN TERRITORY**  
**ELECTRICAL WORKERS AND CONTRACTORS**  
**LICENSING BOARD**

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# **ELECTRICAL WORKERS & CONTRACTORS LICENSING BOARD**

## **ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2004**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The Northern Territory Electrical Workers and Contractors Licensing Board is a statutory authority established under the *Electrical Workers and Contractors Licensing Act*. It exercises the powers conferred upon it by this Act relating to the licensing of Electrical Workers and Electrical Contractors to enhance electrical safety.

*The main objective of the Board is to ensure the safety of consumers and the general public, electrical worker and other workers.*

This is achieved by:

- ensuring that electrical work is carried out by persons who are competent and appropriately qualified to perform the work,
- ensuring that electrical workers and contractors working in the Northern Territory are properly licensed through a licensing and regulatory system that recognises local as well as equivalent licenses issued in other states and New Zealand, and
- investigating and conducting hearings into complaints relating to electrical work and taking disciplinary action where appropriate.

### **COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD:**

The Minister appoints the Members and Deputy Members to the Board under provision of the Electrical Workers and Contractors Act. These members are drawn from various representative groups within the Electrical Industry and have continued to give their services at no cost to the Northern Territory Government. The functions of the Board are set out under section 17C of the Act.

The membership of the Board at 30 June 2004 comprised -

**Chairman**

**Mr C Freeman**

36 years experience in Government/private/consulting employment. Member Institute of Engineers of Australia; past President of the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists & Managers Australia, NT Branch representing Electrical Engineers.

**Members:**

**Mr D Sachs**

Manager Electrical Safety (Electricity Safety Regulator appointed under *Electricity Reform Act*) and representative of Government. Former Chief Electrical Inspector with PAWA. Northern Territory representative on various committees specific to the Electrical Industry.

**Mr A Paton**

Northern Territory Organiser for the Communication, Electrical and Plumbing Union. Director of MITAC, Deputy Chair Electro-Tech & Utilities Training. Representing Electrical Workers.

**Mr S Versteegh**

Associate Director for Community, Technology & Horticulture, Centralian College. Representing Registered Training Organisations.

**Mr K Kernich**

23 years as an Electrical Contractor in the NT. Vice President of NECA, NT Chapter. NECA National Councillor. Member of Management Board of Electrotech and Utilities TAC. Member representing Electrical Contractors.

**Deputy Members**

**Mr D W Byerley**

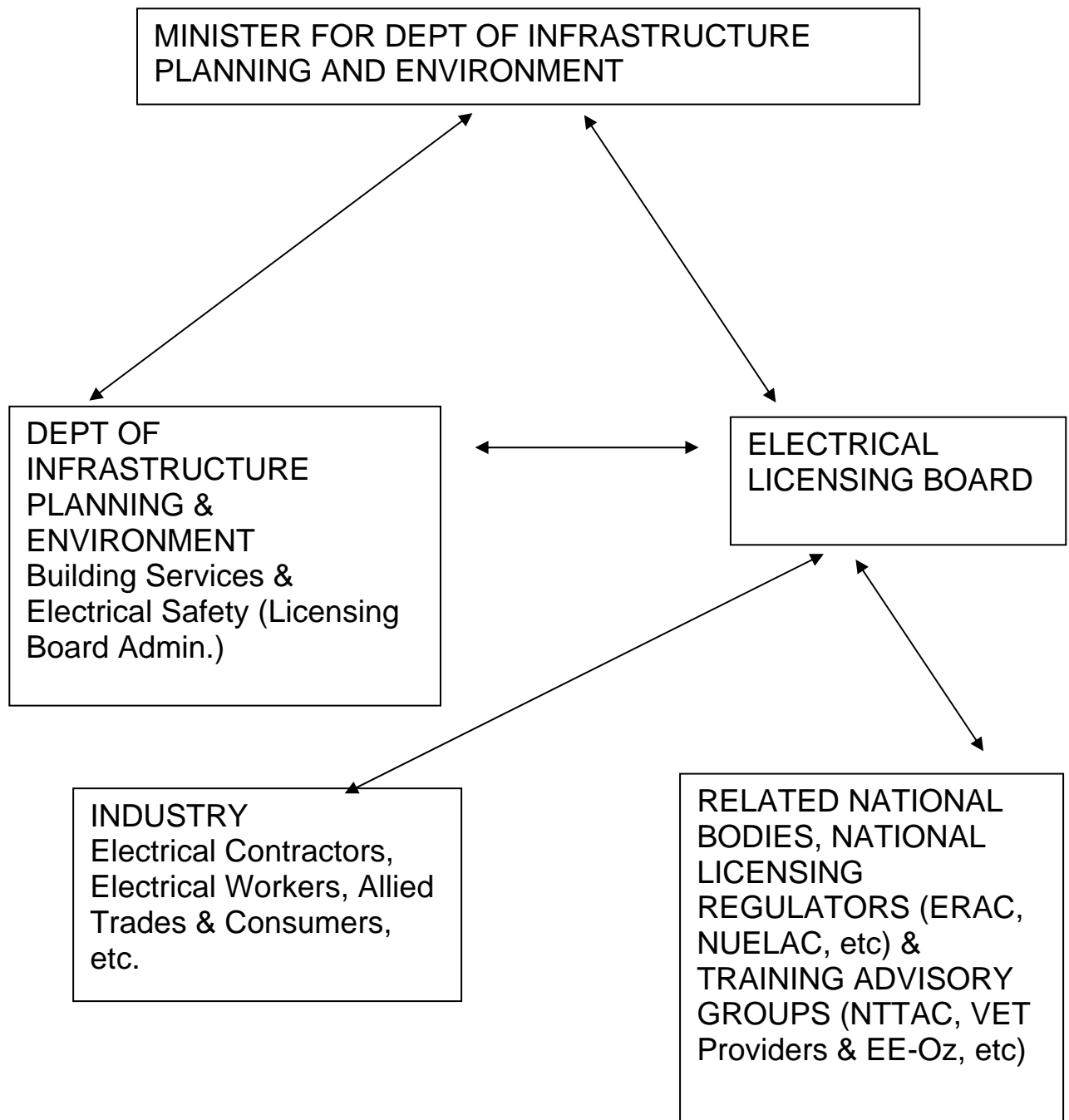
Work's Coordinator Power and Water Authority, Alice Springs  
Deputy Member representing Electrical Workers for 16 years.

**Mr. T Hallen**

Chief Electrical Safety Officer and representative of Government. Northern Territory representative on Standards Australia EL-001 Committee.

**Mr. G Cowie**

28 years as an Electrical Contractor in the NT principally in the field of Power Generation and Control Systems. 5 years as an Electrical Contractor in WA. Committee member of NECA, NT Chapter since its formation. Deputy Member representing Electrical Contractors.



The diagram above shows the Board's context and the environment in which it operates.

## **MEETINGS**

The Board maintains an open door policy. Any electrical worker, contractor, or employer, who wishes to attend a meeting to clarify or discuss any matter relating to the Act, or the Board's administration thereof, is invited to do so. In an effort to maintain this policy and to assist the industry, the Board periodically meets in centres outside of Darwin.

The Board met on 11 occasions during the last year for general meetings and on four occasions outside normal hours to facilitate Show Cause hearings. In August 2003 and in April 2004 the Board met in Alice Springs and its May meeting was held in Nhulunbuy. All these meetings were followed by open forums where those involved in the electrical industry were invited to discuss their views and concerns with the Board. On all occasions there was a healthy representation of industry with a range of topics discussed.

## **COMMUNICATIONS TO THE ELECTRICAL TRADES**

The Board endeavours to maintain a flow of information to the Electrical Industry through:

- meetings,
- mail outs,
- open forums,
- articles in the Electrical Safety Magazine "The Conduit",
- the Northern Territory Government Territory Business Centres,
- the Territory Construction Association,
- website.

**NATIONAL LIAISON**

The Board maintains a working relationship with licensing bodies in all States/Territories and New Zealand and participates in mutual recognition of licenses issued by those bodies. It is also represented on the Electrical Regulatory Authorities Council (ERAC) a national body that sets the standards for minimum qualifications and requirements for licensing with a view to achieving national uniformity. The National Uniform Electrical Licensing Advisory Committee (NUELAC) is an advisory committee set up to look into issues relating to uniformity of education, training and licensing. The Board has input into the proceedings of this committee. Additionally the Board staff participate in a national forum of licensing managers working on uniformity of licensing management practices. The forum meets on a bi-annual basis.

**PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING DEVELOPMENT**

Through its membership of the Major Industries Training Advisory Council (MITAC) the Board was represented at the Northern Territory regional workshops reviewing National Electrotech Training Packages for the Electrical Industry. The Board is also participating in the introduction and monitoring of the new training package for electricians. The new training package addresses both industry and regulatory concerns regarding the levels of competence being achieved by trainees.

A new restricted electrical licence training package was adopted nationally this year and the first students are currently participating in the course.

In line with other jurisdictions and in the pursuit of licenced electrical workers maintaining their skills the Board developed a scheme to monitor skills maintenance. The scheme was introduced in January 2003 with all electrical workers given advanced notice of the requirement. The scheme requires electrical workers to lodge evidence of skills maintenance at the time of renewal of their licence, every five years. Current monitoring has revealed a positive response from both industry and workers that the Board is endeavouring to ensuring all workers are aware of the current electrical installation requirements.

### **WEB SITE**

The Boards web site has been moved and is now attached to the Department of Infrastructure Planning and Environment. It can be accessed at [www.electricallicensing.nt.gov.au](http://www.electricallicensing.nt.gov.au). The site contains information for the electrical industry such as the Boards information bulletins, application forms, frequently asked questions and other information of benefit to both industry and consumers.

### **INVESTIGATION AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

The continued proactive auditing of electrical workers and contractors by the Electrical Safety Unit of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning & Environment has resulted in a steady stream of breaches being forwarded for consideration by the Board.

During the financial year 2003-2004 the Board received 30 written complaints concerning non-compliant or unlicensed work. This equates to 9.5 per 1000 licenses on issue as at 30 June 2004.

The Electrical Workers and Contractors Act enables the Board to take the following action where a breach of legislation has been established:-

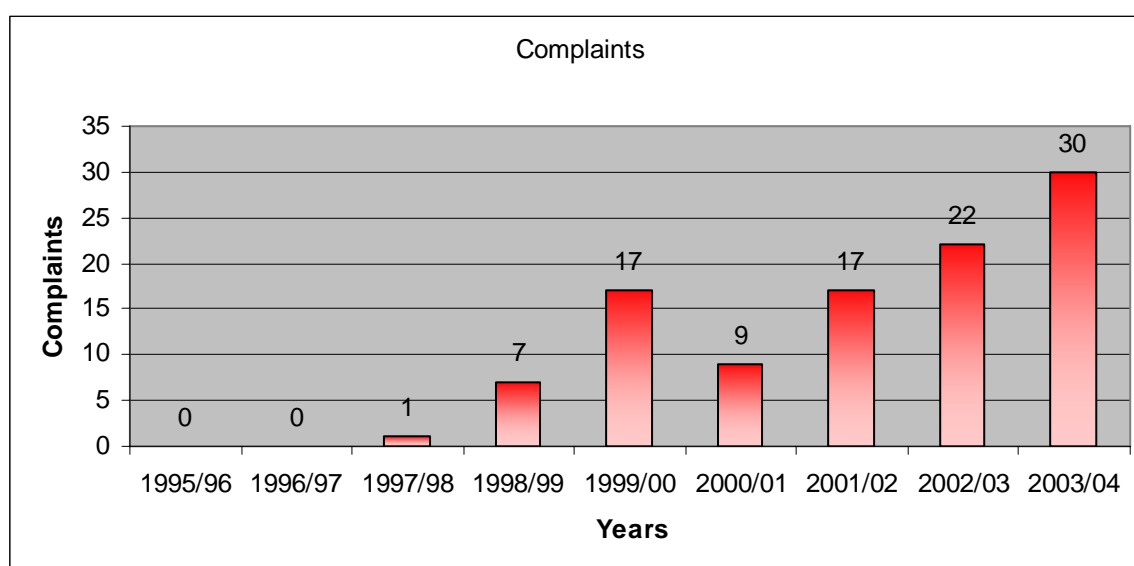
- (a) cancel the licence;
- (b) suspend the licence for such period as it thinks fit;
- (c) vary the conditions of the licence including an endorsement relating to the trade classification or grade of the licence;
- (d) fine the holder an amount not exceeding \$100.00;
- (e) admonish the holder and endorse his licence to that effect; or
- (f) do any combination of the above.

DATE	REASON	OUTCOME
15.7.03	Refrigeration tradesperson allegedly carried out electrical work whilst REL expired.	Worker received a warning and advice regarding licence requirements.
15.7.03	Shop owner removed counter and cut power cables in doing so. Cables were left on the floor only isolated by switched off circuit breaker.	Shop owner notified of licence requirements and informed of penalties related to unlicensed work.
6.8.03	Supply Authority linesman replaced a burnt out switchboard in a meter box with a 60 amp overhead pole mount type service fuse to supply several power circuits.	Fined \$100.00. (maximum allowable) and issued a warning.
19.8.03	Sole trading contractor carried out extensive non-compliant work.	Workers licence suspended for 3 months in which time a wiring rules exam must be completed. Failure = automatic cancellation of licence. Contractors licence already lapsed, any future application requires further assessed by the Board.
19.8.03	Unlicensed person allegedly carried out unlicensed work on a bore pump installation.	Unlicensed worker issued warning and notified of licence requirements.
26.8.03	Electrical worker carried out non-compliant work resulting in a reversed polarity and no MEN connection.	Workers licence category varied from A to B Grade. Required to complete re-training within 12 months to regain A Grade. Failure = review of licence with view to suspension or cancellation.
26.8.03	Inadequate supervision by an Electrical Contractor of a worker resulting in non-compliant work also failure to issue Certificate of Compliance for the work.	Further investigation in progress.
21.11.03	Electrical worker carried out non-compliant work inclusive of unprotected joints in underground cable and lack of an MEN connection	Workers licence suspended for 3 months and until a wiring rules exam is successfully completed.
21.11.03	Inadequate supervision by contractor resulting in non-compliant work.	Contractor fined the maximum and issued a warned.
8.12.03	Alleged unlicensed electrical work and contracting by an electrical fitter	Found not to be electrical contracting, installing comms cabling only.
14.1.04	Refrigeration mechanic worked outside the scope of licence by wiring in a split system air-conditioner which didn't work prompting the customer to report the incident.	Board interviewed the offender, gave advice and issued a warning.
20.2.04	Alleged inadequate supervision by an Electrical Contractor of a worker resulting in non-compliant work.	Investigation in progress
18.2.04	Contractor refused to provide information to Electrical Safety Officers	Complaint withdrawn as matter resolved
23.2.04	Contractor employed electrical fitter to carry out electrical installation work.	Contractor has put a system in place to negate future incidents of the company employing the wrong category of licence holder. The process was accepted by the Board and no further action is to be taken.
8.3.04	Business contracted for electrical work without holding an Electrical Contractors Licence.	The company obtained a contractors licence as soon as it was made aware of the requirement.
8.3.04	Business contracted for electrical work without holding an Electrical Contractors Licence.	Investigation in progress
8.3.04	Plumber without an electrical licence allegedly disconnected an electric water heater and reconnected it in a non-compliant manner.	Worker not identified, Company found to be responsible, report filed for future reference.
8.3.04	Unlicensed person allegedly carrying out electrical contracting work.	No action taken as investigation revealed work carried out four years ago.
10.3.04	Possible unlicensed electrical work by deceased person	Waiting outcome from coroners court.
12.3.04	Contractor carrying out electrical work whilst licence suspended due to lack of a nominee.	Investigation in progress
23.3.04	Suspected unlicensed electrical work	Unlicensed worker found to have carried out minor non-compliant work which was later rectified by a licensed worker. Warning and information issued.



DATE	REASON	OUTCOME
23.3.04	Suspected unlicensed electrical contracting.	Found to have carried out non-compliant work, fined and required to carry out retraining by passing a wiring rules exam within six months.
2.4.04	Suspected unlicensed electrical contracting by restricted licence holder.	Refrigeration mechanic holder of restricted licence found to have installed wiring to refrigeration equipment. Admonished and advised of parameters of scope of work .
5.4.04	Suspected unlicensed electrical work	Unlicensed worker found to have carried out minor non-compliant work which was later rectified by a licensed worker. Warning and information issued.
30.4.04	Contractor alleged to have carried out non-compliant work	Found to have carried out non-compliant work, contractors licence not renewed and required to demonstrate testing competency within 6 months or suitability to hold licence will be reviewed.
2.6.04	Electrical worker alleged to have carried out electrical work after licence had expired.	Found to have carried out minor repair work, issued warning.
2.6.04	Electrical Contractor allegedly consistently lodging incorrect notices and carrying out non-compliant electrical work.	Investigation in progress
3.6.04	Alleged unlicensed electrical contracting and/or electrical work re the installation of an air-conditioner.	Worker found to be licensed and was educated regarding requirements to contract.
25.6.04	Alleged to have employed an unlicensed electrical worker.	Contractor did not check legitimacy of new workers licence. Contractor issued a warning.
25.6.04	Alleged to have worked as electrical worker unlicensed.	Electrical worker continued working after permit had expired, warning issued and worker informed to apply for licence.

10 licence holders appeared before the Board and attracted a variety of those penalties available, two licenses were suspended. The Board prefers where possible to have offenders participate in retraining to upgrade their knowledge and skills and stay in the workforce rather than suspend or cancel licences.



The graph above depicts the complaints dealt with over the 9 years of records to date. The lack of complaints dealt with from 1994/95 to 1997/98 was due to the position of Executive Officer being vacant for that period. The upward trend in recent years is mainly due to the increased activity of the Electrical Safety Unit in persuing

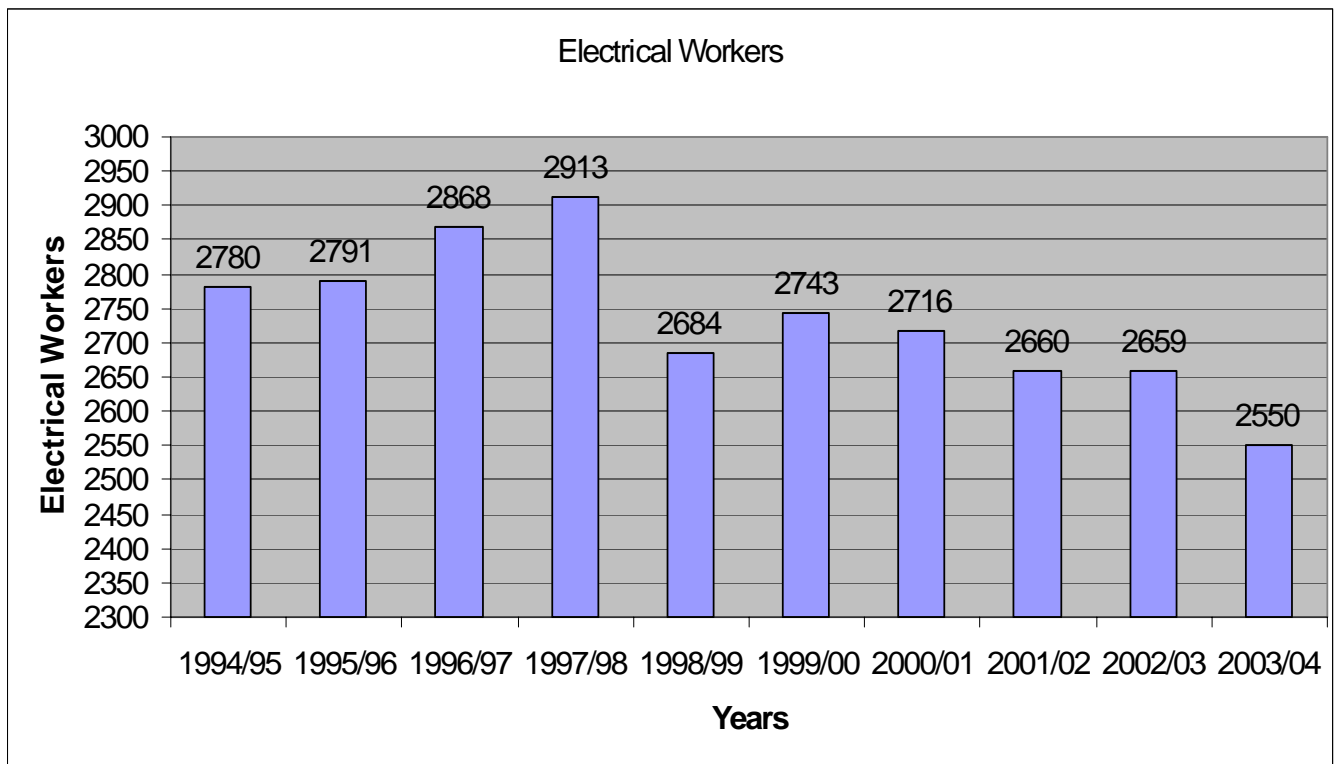
unlicensed and non-compliant work.

## **STATISTICAL INFORMATION**

### **Electrical Workers Licences**

A Grade Electrical Workers Licences are issued in the categories of Electrical Mechanic, Electrical Fitter, Electrical Linesman and Electrical Cable Jointer. These licences are issued to persons who have completed training in any of the areas listed above or who hold licences from other States/Territories and are eligible to be issued with the equivalent licence under mutual recognition. The total number of licences on issue on 30 June 2004 was 2550.

B Grade Electrical Workers Licences are issued in the categories of Electrical Mechanic and Electrical Fitter. This category of licence requires the holder to work under the supervision of the holder of an A Grade licence. In keeping with national policy, the holders of B Grade licences are encouraged by the Board to upgrade to A Grade licences. The total numbers of B grade licences on issue, as at 30 June 2004 were 12.

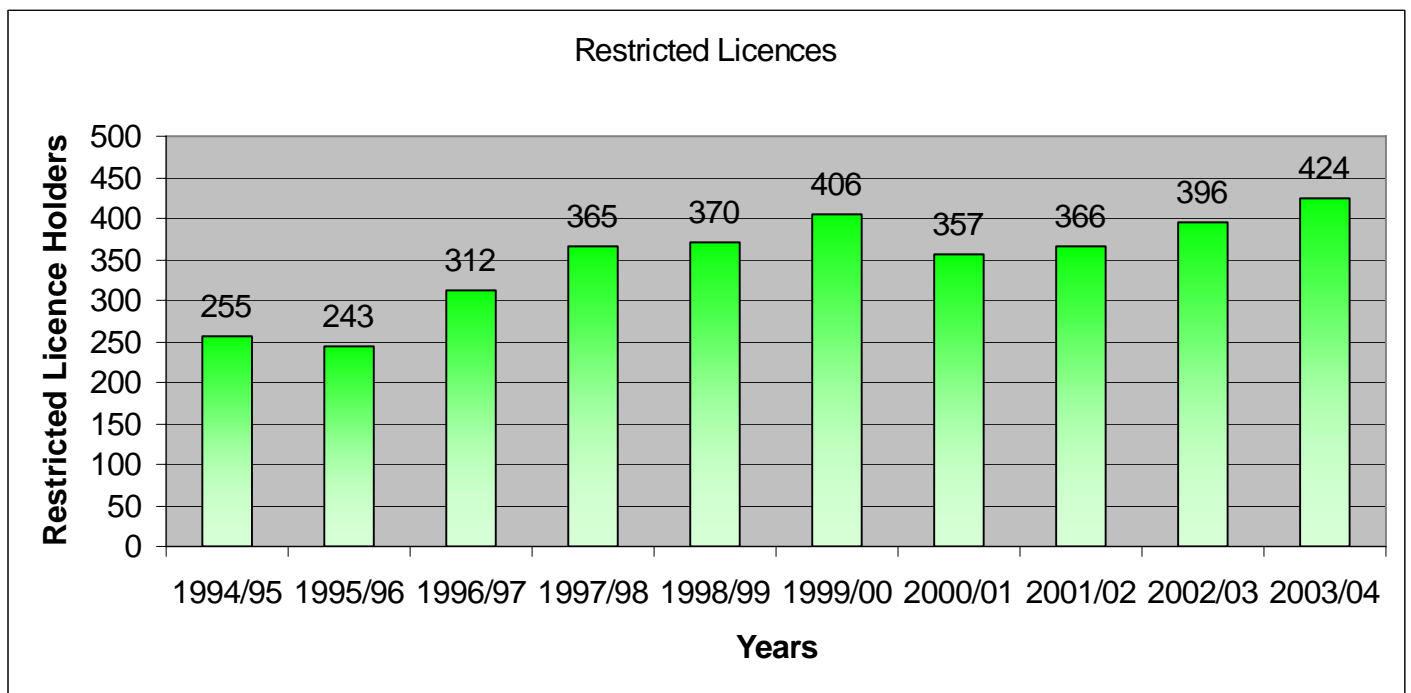


The variations in the above graph depict the trends in the construction industry over the same period.

**R Grade Electrical Workers Licences (restricted licences)**

The development and introduction of a new national training package for restricted electrical licences has seen a change from 9 to 11 categories of restricted licences. The categories cater for those workers who need to carry out a minor amount of electrical work to enable them to carry out their main trade. Examples are refrigeration mechanics, appliance repairers, plumbing & Gas trades and areas of the mining industry. A comprehensive set of guidelines including an application form have been developed to assist industry to determine if their operation can be enhanced by having their workers licensed.

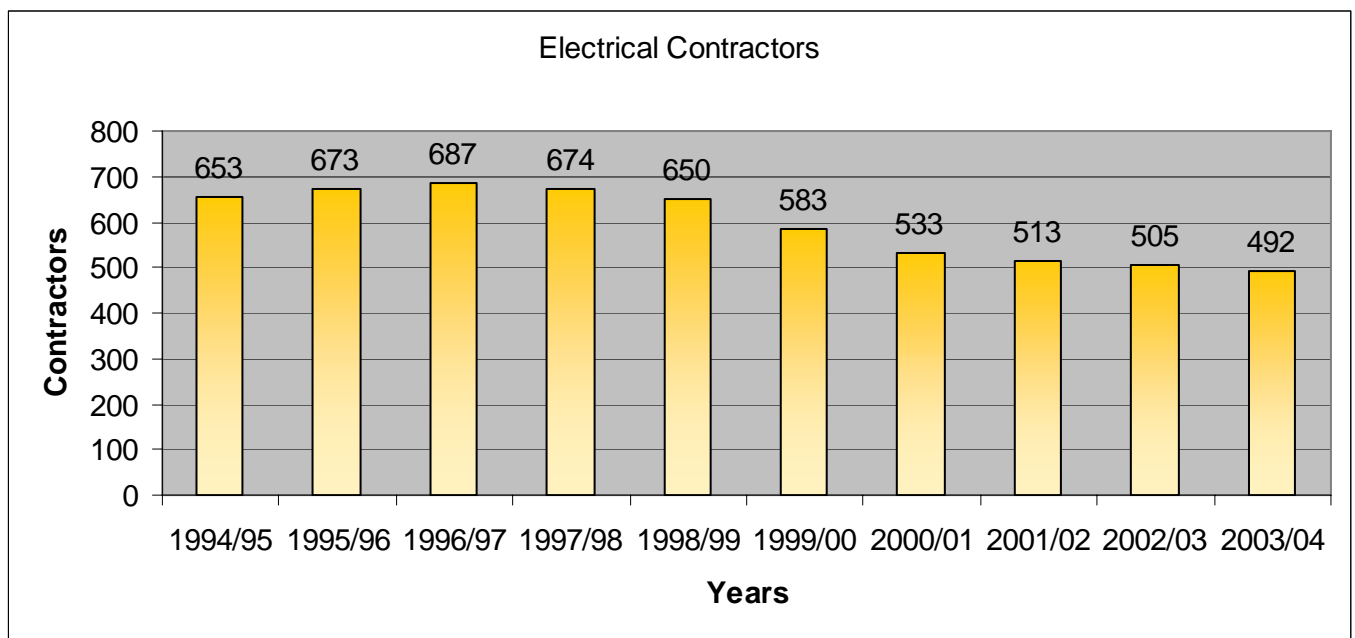
The total number of restricted licences on issue at 30 June 2004 was 424.



### **Electrical Contractors Licences**

Contractor Licences are annual licences and have a common expiry date of the 30 June each year.

Total number of electrical contractor licences issued as at 30 June 2004 was 492.



### **Apprentices**

Apprentices to trades that require a person to hold an electrical workers licence are registered with the Board.

During the year a total of 18 apprentices were registered with the Board.

**Staff**

The Department of Infrastructure Planning and Environment provide administrative support to the Board. Two full-time staff members, the Executive Officer and the Licensing Officer, manage the day-to-day operation of the Board with additional administrative assistance as and when required.

**Financial Statement**

The Department of Infrastructure Planning and Environment administers the Boards budget and finances. The Board's Financial Statement forms a part of the Department's report.

**Executive Summary**

Determining the skills and knowledge required for licensing of electrical workers and electrical contractors, and ensuring those licence holders have the ability to carry out safe electrical work, is one of the Boards main objectives. To this end the Board continues to participate in the development of training packages, the dissemination of information, receive and deal with complaints from industry, the general public and the Department of Infrastructure Planning and Environments (DIPE) Electrical Safety group. Through out the year the Board has continued to make extensive use of the departments' resources in particular the services of the Electrical Safety group to carry out investigations into complaints. Many of these investigations have resulted in disciplinary action being taken. The availability of the department's resources allows the Board to function without having to directly employ staff.

The Board has continued to maintain communication with industry and the general public over the past year by its use of:

- The DIPE's involvement in various functions,
- Frequent mail outs,
- Electrical Safety's newsletter the "Conduit",

- Territory Construction Association publications & forums,
- Trade seminars,
- Addresses to trade training groups,
- MITAC meetings and working groups,
- Open forums held after Board meetings.

We continue our liaison with other government departments especially the Electrical Safety Unit and other related functional departments like the Power and Water Corporation, NT Worksafe and the Mines Group of Department Business Industry Resource Development.

We have integrated ourselves within the electrical industry, interacting with agencies such as the Territory Construction Association, Mining Industry and the various training organizations throughout the Territory. Through the previously mentioned channels the Board has raised public and industry awareness of its activities. It has also increased the number of successful investigations over the previous years and looks forward to a continuing improvement in its effectiveness in the electrical industry. The Board continues to participate in introducing procedures to assist uniformity of licensing with other States and Territories through consultation with the licensing agencies in those jurisdictions.

We are moving towards changes to the legislation the Board administers, the Electrical Workers & Contractors Act, and have been involved in developing the changes required by the National Competition Policy review. The Board looks forward to participating in the general review of the Act over the next twelve months.

Special thanks to all the Board members for their voluntary contribution to the smooth operation of the Board.