



AUSTRALIAN  
TATTOOISTS  
GUILD

Dan Pollock

NSW

(Tattoo Operators License Number 010684)

Initial impact (August 2015)

I applied for my Tattoo Operators License around 6 months prior to the license cut off date (October 2013). To say it was a difficult process Would be an understatement.

The first problem I encountered was the fact that each & every time I had a question regarding the process or the paperwork requirements, I had to make a call to the Department of Fair Trading. Every time I contacted them about a specific problem (there were numerous instances of this), I was shuffled from one person to another, with no one seeming to be able to answer even Some of the most basic questions in regard to my application. Numerous times I was told different answers to the same question. My apprentice, during his application process was shuffled between 7 different operators & didn't get an adequate answer after that Due to ongoing frustration with this, I even went to my local office of the Department of Fair Trading in person. After asking them a question about my application, the person disappeared for about 5 minutes & returned with a print out from their website as an answer. I had already had access to their website so this was completely ridiculous to me. The people who were implementing the license process couldn't answer my problems regarding the license application at all. How was supposed to fill in the application Correctly without having these issues addressed?

Another issue was in regard to the close associate forms. Apparently had to submit the details of my landlords (since rent my shop) so they could have police checks done on them. I rent through a real estate agent. At no point had/ have I met the owners of the building at all. So, now I have to ask for their personal details & their permission for a police check to be done on them, just because I rent their shop & I need a license to continue my business. I am faced with this again next year when the whole

process must be repeated, since there is no simple renewal process at all.

During the time I have had my operators license, the police have visited my shop on 3 occasions to check on my license & those that have been working for me. I have no problem with this & welcome any scrutiny. The only issue I have is the fact that during the last visit, they asked questions regarding sharps disposal bins, tattoo procedure and the like. We had, probably 3 weeks prior, been visited by our local Council (Health Department) & been questioned regarding all of our procedures & received a certificate (as we always do) proving our methods & procedures are acceptable to them. Why does the police need to be involved with that type of enquiry & are they even trained to know what they are asking? It kind of looked like they were checking off a list. Also, the police asked me questions regarding certain paperwork they said I was supposed to be using & I told them I had never heard of it. They backed pedalled a bit & said that it must not have been brought in. I checked with the Department of Fair Trading website later & could find no reference to the paperwork they referred to at all. Also, they provided me with a written request to supply my financial records for the month prior to the visit, which was to be collected by them the following day. I had the records ready for collection, however, they never returned to make the collection & still haven't as of now. I have nothing to hide & all of my financial records are supplied to the Australian Taxation Office so why do the police need copies of them? Do the police ask for these details from licensed builders or plumbers for example? I'm sure they don't. Apparently, since I tattoo for a living, I am a criminal, despite the fact that I have never had any problem with the police & received a clear police check during the license process.

Next year, I am due to apply again for my operators license. Instead of having a renewal process, I have to resubmit all of the paperwork again. I could understand if some of the details had changed, although, according to the rules, changes have to be reported to the Department of Fair Trading. This is a very time consuming process. I have to reapply & submit all of my details even though nothing has changed since the last time I applied. I am still at the same address, I still have the same people working for me, I still rent from

the same people, I find this to be absolutely ridiculous. Why is there not some form of renewal process rather than the whole re apply process?

Another problem with the whole process is the cost of the operators license itself. I wouldn't mind paying over \$2000 for 3 years if I thought the money was going toward the improvement of the industry as a whole but I do not see that being the case. During the license application process, there is not one mention of anything to do with disease control or the correct cleaning methods or the like. There isn't even any check on the

standard of work that people are doing. So, it is possible for some home job tattoo 'artist' to apply for a license & Continue working from their home, completely legally, despite the fact that they may know nothing regarding cleanliness/ disease control. They may not even have a steriliser or even know how to use one! They almost certainly wouldn't know how to do a good tattoo either. It really seems to me that there should be some form of certified minimum standard in regard to the disease control matter. Is there something that could be offered through TAFE that had to be completed before the license was granted?

The whole application process took about 6 months from the time I initially applied until the time I received my license. I find that time frame to be excessive & I am sure there will be a similar amount of people who will reapply again next year since they all will be due again. I would hope that it is processed in a much more timely manner this time around but I won't be taking my chances. I will be re applying about 6 months before the expiry date.

I really think there needs to be a license renewal process rather than having to do everything from scratch & having us reapply for Our license every 3 years.

August 2017

Since writing the above, I have encountered another issue with the licensing system. We are given a licence number when our licence is approved, which We are supposed to have on ANY advertising material. I can understand that it needs to be included on business cards, signage, letterheads & the like, but a lot of tattooers produce

stickers, tshirts & similar items. Is it really necessary to have the licence number displayed on these type of things? I would think not!

Also, I have found out that We are issued with a new licence number each time we are issued with a new licence (every 3 years) which means all our advertising material has to be changed every time we get a new licence. This is a huge Cost burden (on top of the cost of the actual licence) which I feel is extremely unfair. Why can't We be issued with the same licence number every time, provided We are continually holding a licence? I'm sure other trades are issued with the same licence number. A renewal process Would probably help this issue as well.

I have also noticed that, after 4 years of the licence system being in place, there is nowhere on the Department of Fair Trading website where anyone can go & check to see if a particular person actually holds a licence. I can check if a builder or security firm is licenced, but not a tattoo artist. Why is this not something that is available to the general public? I feel that a list of licenced tattooers should, at the very least, be available to the public so they can check if a person holds a current licence.

If there are any questions regarding any of this, please don't hesitate to Contact me.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Pollock', written in a cursive style.

Dan Pollock

1.8.2017



AUSTRALIAN  
TATTOOISTS  
GUILD

Evan Griffiths  
Tama Tattoo  
Victoria

A number of years ago I met my wife in Far North Queensland, I moved up and lived and worked in Cairns for a couple of years at Cairns City Tattoo under Duane Cash. Duane and I became good friends and therefore once my wife and I left to move back to Melbourne we continued to visit Cairns on a regular basis as all her family is there and I could easily work a week or two with Duane to help offset the cost of travel and time off.

Once this licensing came into the scene it became evident that this was not going to be as easy to do in the future but as it was a must to keep in contact with family I would have to figure it out.

On my last working visit the changes were imminent but there was not much information on how to actually go about receiving a Guest Artist permit, there was limited info online but it was unclear on what I had to do and also unclear on what Duane had to do as the employer.

Before my next visit I tried again to arrange a permit, when I was doing this I believe the law had not yet come into full effect but I was trying to obtain the permit for a few months ahead when it would be in full effect.

I rang the number given on the Queensland government website and got to speak to a lady there and explained the situation she informed me that for someone in my situation (only wanting to work a week) I could get a guest artist permit that was advertised on the website, I said yes but that's for visiting overseas artists and it seemed I couldn't do that being from Victoria. She seemed unsure but looked it up and confirmed that it was just for overseas artists, she then explained that being an Australian resident I would need a full license. I explained that it would seem unnecessary and incredibly hard to get a full license to only work once or twice a year for a week or so and she totally agreed. She asked when I was travelling up and I said in a few months when the law would be in effect and when I explained that I only wanted to work for a week of our 3week stay she asked me "why I really needed to work when I was there?" Her exact words were something like "do you really have to work while your on holiday?" I said I don't "have" to but I would like to and without going deep into my personal home/financial life that it was a regular thing I did and it made it possible for my family to stay in contact blah blah. She then explained that she really didn't know what was going on with these new laws and it had all just come up quickly so if I waited they would "probably" sort something in the future that could cater to this. I explained that I needed to get it sorted for my trip coming up and to this I was told that it was all so new and quite unorganised that I should just go and work and if I do get caught I

could take it to court and would "probably" get off as it was such a new process and they were still working out the "bugs"

To this I just said that it would be insane to put myself through that let alone my boss and friend up there, to have court dates in another state, possible massive fines, possible loss of license to him or denial of a future license to me. To this she said "I doubt that would happen"

She was nice enough and really did try to help me out but really had no decent solid knowledge on this variation to the license.

As most artists know travelling to learn/work between States is and has been common for tattooing for years, some sort of unified license would work otherwise the simple guest artist permit that is already available to overseas artists can just be granted quite easily to ALL artists you'd think?

So despite her solid knowledge on the subject I chose not to risk it on recent trips and am now in the process of getting a Full Queensland tattoo license.

In saying that I was already denied once as I filled the forms in stating I worked at Tama Tattoo (my studio in Melbourne) and was told I didn't need a license to work in Melbourne. I called and said I was aware of that and explained the situation and I was told I would have to fill the forms out as a permanent employee of Cairns City Tattoo. Not sure if this will have implications on me Tax wise? Or even if licensing in Melbourne comes into effect and it turns out I hold a Queensland license will it affect my ability to hold a license in VIC? We'll see I guess?

Good luck to all.

Evan Griffiths  
Tama tattoo,  
Melbourne, Australia.  
02/08/2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Evan Griffiths', written in a cursive style.



AUSTRALIAN  
TATTOOISTS  
GUILD

Kel Tait  
Skin Deep Tattoo Gallery  
FRANKSTON, Vic

The most saddening thing regarding the recently implemented licensing requirements in NSW and QLD for an out of state artist is having to go through the whole process and paying the full fee the same as a resident of those states to work for only one or two weeks for a guest spot.

I had to cancel my guest spot in Brisbane this year as it wouldn't have been processed in time. 7 months is a ridiculously long wait.

As an ex high school teacher it's disgusting that the licensing requirements for tattoo artists is more strict and complicated than the teaching license/working with children act. More expensive and has to be renewed more often.

And the pitiful excuses for bringing in the license is an even more pathetic smokescreen for the government to squeeze more money out of us.

If the license ensured anyone was up to date with the c.c and bpp knowledge instead of their criminal record it may have even been welcomed..... Shame nothing can be done about all the terrible people who can't draw or tattoo..... But let's not get into that.

I could carry on but I'd still be writing this time next week.

I have a license in Oregon in the USA also and its a simple process as well as being only \$75.

Why Australia couldn't have mirrored that I don't know



The license exists simply for the wrong reasons  
Kel Tait

*Kel Tait*

02.08.2017



AUSTRALIAN  
TATTOOISTS  
GUILD

Luke Braniff

Gold Coast Tattoo, QLD

Since the licensing came into effect the biggest change has been the opening of a lot of new tattoo studios, a lot of these studios are from people who are not tattooers and have no idea about the industry at all, and are using it for nothing more than to make money. They are hiring unqualified tattooers people who cannot even draw. These are people (mostly young kids) who now have the right to obtain a licence for tattooing without even having to do an apprenticeship or be taught by another professional tattooer. All that is needed to successfully tattoo another person and mark them for life properly and safely. There are shops on the coast that these persons are hiring these kids and calling them apprentices handing them machines and letting them tattoo with no training. Also these apprentices are then given apprentices under them as long as they have a tattoo license.

This is leading tattooing into bad territory, bad tattoos, using inferior equipment which can lead to bad reactions, infections, scarring and worse. These people would have never been hired and brought into the tattoo industry to put customers at risk if the new licensing wasn't so easy to obtain.

The more studios opening and hiring new people to tattoo is also forcing some professional tattooers to lower their cost because these others are cutting prices in half! One shop near skin fx was doing 13 dollar tattoos!!

We have over 50+ tattoo studios on the coast. And that number is growing fast!

We have had police march into our studios on many occasions with(4-7) officers at a time demanding our papers asking the same questions they asked last time, we had police come into our studio during schoolies, our staff were all busy, they demanded our body piercer stop piercing and supply them with what they needed. She had to stop half way through the piercing and get all the info for the police. This does damage to our business every time they come in. We lose customers and who knows what they say to others, makes us look like criminals!

Renewal of licensing has come up for some of our tattooers they had to go through the process again. Photos, fingerprints etc.

I didn't know that fingerprints changed? The worst part is when getting finger prints done it is nearly impossible, having to wait up to a week and taking time off work to do so to fit in with their 1 officer that does that job.

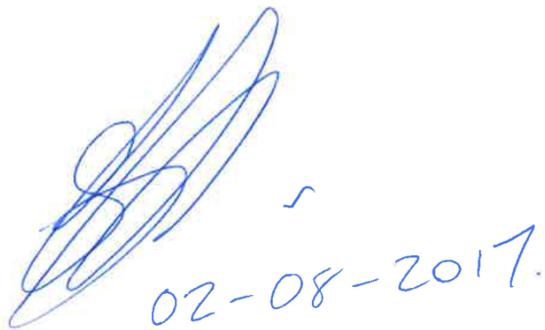
It makes it even harder when you can only have them done at 1 police station for the whole coast as well. The funny thing is even the police think it's ridiculous! No studios have been closed (OMGS) and ones that are still open have "sold" them to relatives or apprentices.

It really frustrates us all here as when we want questions answered and ask advice from police they say they have no idea what they are doing or know what is going on with any of it.

Tattooers have been left with no real knowing of what to do with filling out the proper forms and all that is demanded of us. I think some sort of training? Should have been in place to show us what was expected of us. Not being told no that's wrong here's a ridiculous fine for forgetting a date.

Lukegct

10.12.2014



A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops, is positioned above the date. The date is written as '02-08-2017.' in a similar blue ink.



AUSTRALIAN  
TATTOOISTS  
GUILD

Ray Shuttleworth.  
Townsville, Qld.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Ray Shuttleworth I have been Tattooing for just over 59 years. In the beginning I actually welcomed the concept of a Tattoo License scheme but I have now changed my mind because in its present form it has very little to do with tattooing at all. As far as I am concerned, it is just a money grab by the state government.

Unlike most other Licenses that I know of, which have strict requirements of knowledge and abilities, but for tattooing there are no such requirement needed to show one's ability or skills in the art of tattooing.

Also in Queensland there is the requirement that you have to have passed your Infection Control Certificate to operate as a tattoo artist, this is not even a requirement of the tattoo license.

The one noticeable difference now is that persons who have been operating at home with little ability and skills are now getting a tattoo license and opening new studios with no regard to the health and wellbeing of the general public, this is like the local Council Environmental Health Officers issuing a license to operate a tattoo studio and having the general public thinking, "they must be good, they have a license". Also now tattoo artists who have in the past worked as a guest artist in other studios and other states allowing for the sharing of ideas and skills, thereby raising the standards of tattoo art have now found that this has become unviable, this is also the case for overseas artists.

I found that the whole process of having to have my finger and palm prints taken was demeaning and time consuming both for me and the police, surely those police tied up doing this would be better out there catching criminals.

Overall this has, in my opinion, been a piece of poorly constructed legislation and the people who have to administer it, seem to have limited knowledge of what is all about.

I do not look forward to the time when I have to re-apply for my licence in 2017, if this legislation has not changed before then.

Hopefully common sense will prevail.

Ray Shuttleworth, Tattoo Artist.  
The Needles Kiss Tattoo Studio 17.03.2016

03/08/17



AUSTRALIAN  
TATTOOISTS  
GUILD

Mike Rossow  
Hammer & Forge Tattoo  
Mount Isa, QLD

To whom it may concern,

My name is Mike Rossow. I own and tattoo at Hammer & Forge Tattoo in Mount Isa, QLD. My experience with the OFT and the QLD Police has been lacklustre at best. I applied and paid for my license very early on, around March 2014. The payment came out almost immediately. Visits from local police also began, and although they were polite, it was clear every visit was a fact finding mission, with all questions posed to us relating to CMGs and nothing, ever, to do with tattooing. If the numerous visits from local officers wasn't enough, I had to then present myself to the police station to speak with an officer from Brisbane via teleconference, who similarly asked questions relating to my knowledge of CMGs and little else. The only question I was asked which related directly to tattooing was thrown in as an afterthought, and was something like 'what makes you a tattoo artist'? Arbitrary at best. Any contact we made with the OFT was a confusing and frustrating affair. At times my 'file' was not locatable, and the status of my application was awaiting police input, even though it was months since I'd spoken with both locals and Brisbane officers, and had also provided my prints (which I now need to do again when I re-apply?!).

This whole time, we actually did have a huge amount of bullying from local CMG members, which both police and OFT could do little about, and in fact we felt like bait at times. Ultimately we were asked to journal any incidents with CMG and provide this to police who often pressured is to lay charges.

In any case, any and all focus was on CMG links, and not our trade at all. No one looked at work, checked our council health license or TAFE Certs. We did get a shop licence, almost 12 months to the day after applying, and we are not looking forward to doing it again.

On a side note, I also have a Bachelor degree in fine art from QCA, a diploma of art from Bremer Inst. TAFE and a Bachelor degree in secondary education. I taught high school art for around 7 years before doing my Tattoo apprenticeship. At the time of applying, I remained a registered teacher in qld. I have no affiliation OR membership of any kind with any CMG's.

The monetary cost, as well as the time and extreme stress of applying and re-applying for this license is a blight on the industry and requires immediate and serious attention.

8.8.2017.

Michael A. Rossow.



AUSTRALIAN  
TATTOOISTS  
GUILD

Matthew Cunnington,  
West Side Tattoo, Brisbane, QLD

My name is Matthew Cunnington. I have been tattooing since 1991, and have owned and operated Westside Tattoo in West End, Brisbane since 2001. Westside Tattoo was started in 1998, and has become one of Australia's premiere tattoo studios in it's 19 years.

I initially welcomed the introduction of licensing and other forms of regulation, as I had experienced threats and intimidation my entire working life. It was a constant source of anxiety. On average I experienced some form of threat to mine, or my family's safety every five years or so. I might just add that the last fist fight I was in was in 1987, with my sister. She flogged the crap out of me. I am really, really not cut out for staring down Balkan war criminals.

Westside Tattoo has grown from a three person operation in 1998, to now employing 9 artists, a laser technician, a full time manager and an apprentice. In 2011, the Australian government received tax revenue from my business that was twice that paid by Google Australia and Starbucks combined.

The introduction of licensing 3 years ago has led to my business being on the verge of collapse. As things stand now, I would be financially better off to wind up the business and tattoo my customers at home. Essentially going "underground." This is one of the things the laws were meant to combat.

The culture of tattooing has always been fairly transient. I filled 2 passports in the first 10 years of my career. I now employ 8 tattooers who all enjoy this aspect of the job. In the past when one of my crew would take off for a few weeks, there was no shortage of tattooers from other parts of Australia lining up to "guest" at Westside. There was never an empty seat in the house. There was also a freshness and excitement that came with having somebody new in the shop. It also meant that there was a sharing of skills and ideas that has elevated tattooing in Australia to a world class level.

Today I am lucky if there is a full house at Westside. We have offered to pay the license fees for any interstate artists that will commit to guesting with us. Only two people have taken us up on this offer. The red tape, and implied guilt that many people associate with the licensing process has stifled one of the fundamental aspects of the industry. The introduction of state based, non-transferrable licensing has made my business no longer viable, and I am very close to having to shut down.

This problem could be rectified by making the license transferable between states, much like a Driver's license.

There are many other problems with the new regulations, but none of these have impacted my business as seriously. The lack of consultation with the industry, and the lack of a united voice with which to consult are the primary reason for these problems. The establishment of the Australian Tattooers Guild should go a long way to addressing this. I ardently hope that the government will hear our concerns and make changes to the legislation, that will allow our industry, and the thousands of people it employs, to grow and thrive.

Matt.

16/08/2017

A handwritten signature in blue ink is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border. The signature is stylized and appears to consist of the letters 'M' and 'L' followed by a series of overlapping, scribbled lines.