



AUSTRALIAN TATTOOISTS GUILD

[REDACTED]
Surf n Ink Tattoo
Gold Coast
Brisbane, QLD

18 Feb 2016

My name is [REDACTED] I am a professional graphic designer and tattoo artist, who has been tattooing worldwide for over 10 years. I am the owner of Surf n Ink Tattoo with three locations across the Gold Coast, Queensland. I am also the owner of Custom Irons Tattoo Supplies and organiser of SURF n Ink Tattoo Festival.

I am a strong believer in the regulation of the tattoo industry and have been a cooperative advocate since the laws were introduced in Queensland in 2013.

However, there are points and procedures within the structure of the laws that are both highly concerning and detrimental to the industry as well as the public.

A major concern is that the licensing system fails to protect the public from amateur artists who are untrained in both infection control as well as the art of tattooing itself. The ease that a tattooist license can be obtained, combined with the unaware public on what this license actually means (effectively, a criminal records check), results in a false public perception that a 'license' indicates a 'qualification', i.e. training.

A perfect example of how this has negatively affected the industry is a case that involves someone by the name of [REDACTED] came into one of my studios in late 2015 to spend time in the studio environment and offer his help (as many people interested in the industry often do). During this time he was not an employee, he was not a licensed tattoo artist, he did not have the infection control qualification, he did not tattoo, and he was not given any training whatsoever in tattooing techniques or procedures. He simply mopped the floors, cleaned the mirrors and interacted with clients so that we could access his competence and dedication as a potential apprentice. Due to being a poor fit for the role, we asked him to leave. Unbeknown to us, he then went on to obtain his tattooist license.

We received a phone call in December 2015 from the mother of an underage schoolie who was tattooed by [REDACTED] from his apartment during his 2015 Schoolies week. She explained to us that [REDACTED] had claimed to her son that he was employed at SURF n Ink Tattoo Studios and that he was a licensed tattooist with his license clearly (and proudly) displayed on his apartment wall. This gave her son false confidence that he was in fact a trained and qualified artist. It was also brought to our attention that he was promoting himself as an employee of SURF n Ink Tattoo Studios via his personal Facebook page.

The resulting tattoo - which I have seen photographs of - was absolutely disgraceful and an embarrassment to both the client, and the industry. Not only did he tattoo without training in infection control, he tattooed underage clients, in a premises that is unlicensed, in an environment that is not health approved, and performed *extremely* poor quality work.



AUSTRALIAN TATTOOISTS GUILD

These situations put our reputation at risk as a studio, but public safety is clearly compromised. The ones who suffer the most in these common situations are the innocent clients that are so easily fooled by an official government documentation claiming a person is a "Licensed Tattooist", causing them to believe that person is actually "competent" in tattooing, rather than simply that they have a clear criminal record. The clients are left with both physical scars as well as mental ramifications to deal with, on top of the very real and likely possibility of putting their health in jeopardy.

This case (and there are many similar), highlights a major issue that our industry faces and that the licensing system, instead of working to assist the issue, actually contributes to the problem.

As a starting point, we might propose at minimum the change of the name from "Tattooist License" to "Criminal Records Check" (or the like) so that it can be much clearer and easily understood by the public.

We understand that this law has no intention to regulate the quality or performance of work completed within the industry, however, we urge government officials to take this seriously and exercise duty of care in the interest of public safety.

