



MEDIA RELEASE

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Safety Switches on every circuit in Australian homes required to stop deaths

The fatal electrical fault highlighted by the Rockhampton Industrial Magistrates Court case yesterday could be a tragedy waiting to happen in any household, Master Electricians Australia has warned.

The joint investigation conducted by the Electrical Safety Office and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland into the tragic death of the 16-year-old insulation installer found that “a pre-existing defect was present in the ceiling cavity. A screw had penetrated a cable and caused parts of the house, including a ceiling batten, to be live. This defect was present for at least 10 years.”

Master Electricians Chief Executive Malcolm Richards said while the investigation found proper workplace safety practices should have prevented the death, the incident should also serve as a warning to all homeowners.

“The dangerous reality is that the type of electrical defect in this tragic case could exist in ceiling cavities in homes across the country.

“In this instance, the electrical danger was present for at least ten years and anyone entering the space had risked electrocution.

“While contracting companies are required by law to follow strict workplace safety rules, homeowners may be unaware aware of the dangers from such electrical faults,” he said.

Mr Richards said the installation of safety switches on all electrical circuits in residential properties was necessary to properly protect households from electrocution.

“Unless all electrical circuits are turned off at the electrical switch board before entry is made to the ceiling cavity, a safety switch could be the only difference between a short circuit and a tragedy.

“A safety switch is designed to cut the power to an electrical circuit in as little as 0.03 of a second in the event of an electric shock.

“The technology is widely available, relatively cheap in the context of a home, and would almost certainly have saved the lives of all three insulation installers killed in the Home Insulation Program,” he said.

Malcolm Richards is available for interviews. Contact Brad Burke on 0458 291 234