

## **Fact Sheet Testing Caravan Leads:**

### **Why do park owners want leads test and tagged?**

Under OH&S legislation(s), the owner / operator of the park has a duty of care to all people who come onto the premises, whether they are workers, tradespersons, contractors, guests or visitors. This creates a direct and vicarious liability for them – they are responsible for their own actions and anybody who comes onto their facility. So they must take steps to reduce the risk of someone, or even a pet, be injured or killed as a result of a faulty lead used on-site. They also want to reduce the risk of being sued for incidents that happen on the facility.

### **How does test and tagging reduce that risk?**

Test and tagging of electrical appliances is a necessary part of any workplace safety program to help ensure the safety of persons using electrical equipment in the workplace. The methodology of the inspection and testing process defined in Australian Standard AS/NZS 3760 is widely recognised to satisfy these obligations. The aim of test and tagging is to identify any electrical appliances / leads that may present a risk to users or other persons etc before they cause an injury or fatality.

### **My caravan is not a workplace, so why do I need to have my lead(s) done?**

Your caravan may not be a workplace but the parks you stay at are workplaces. You also have a legal and moral obligation to not put other people at risk due to your actions.

### **Common faults detected in leads:**

Leads can be damaged due to the frequent flexing when removing from and returning to storage and during general use, crushing from being walked on or run over by vehicles, degradation of the external and internal insulation due to abrasion or cuts from sharp surfaces, UV exposure etc.

A visual inspection is used to detect the physical damage such as cuts to the external sheath. Electrical testing is used to detect a compromised earth, break down of the insulation or incorrect wiring (polarity) of the lead.

### **Limitations of test and tagging.**

Just as a roadworthy of your vehicle is an assessment at time it is presented, so too is test and tagging an assessment of an appliance / lead at the time of being presented. This means that whilst it may pass on the day presented, the appliance / lead could be damaged the next day to an extent that it would fail the test and tagging process. Therefore there is no guarantee the appliance / lead will remain safe for the period shown on the tag attached to the lead by the tester. As the owner of the appliance / lead, you should remain vigilant in checking for any obvious signs of damage to the appliance / lead between retesting.

### **Who can test and tag?**

The base requirement is the person must meet the criteria of a competent person as defined under AS/NZS 3760. Part of this definition requires the person to have an understanding of the application and requirements of this Standard. A competent person is not required to be a registered or licensed electrical practitioner. Requirements for registration vary between jurisdictions.

### **15 Amp caravan leads:**

A common issue found with 15 amp leads used by caravaners is a modified plug or socket to assist with connection to a 10amp outlet. All 15A leads are required to have a larger earth pin on the plug – this prevents it being plugged into a 10amp outlet. Some people either modify the earth pin by grinding it down to a suitable size or replace the plug with a 10amp fitting to overcome this problem. Any such modification is illegal and would fail the test and tag process. If an incident occurred through the use of a modified lead, then you may not be covered by your insurance or may be held liable for damage or injuries.

### **Summary:**

For the majority of caravaners, test and tagging of their lead(s) will not detect any fault with their lead(s) and it may therefore seem to be an onerous and unnecessary exercise. However, a moderate percentage of leads are presented to us that are in active use but with such obvious physical damage that the average person would question their safety. In some cases the leads are in a potentially lethal condition. The reason the user has not been injured or killed comes down to good luck rather than good management.

So just like good drivers can be involved in serious roads accidents due to the irresponsible actions of poor drivers, people who look after their electrical equipment can be put at risk by those who don't.

What you don't want to happen is you do everything right and then have some pull up beside you at your next stop-over and drop an faulty live lead on the ground and electrocute you or a loved one. If the price for reducing this risk is a few dollars and a bit of time for all visitors to the site, then it seems like a good deal for one and all.