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PLUMBERS
NSW

WINTER 2024

EXECUTIVE New MPA NSW Committee elected

CONFERENCE Don't miss our 2024 conference in Fiji

WOMEN Plumbing is losing its 'male-dominated' tag

THE MASTER PLUMBER

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF
THE MASTER PLUMBERS
ASSOCIATION OF NSW

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**Dodgy
heat pumps
threaten
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12 COVER STORY

Beware heat pump cowboys

The NSW Regulatory environment has been slow to keep up with the rapidly expanding heat pump sector in recent years. Government incentive programs to promote the installation and use of heat pumps have, arguably, been abused by rogue operators who have seen a lax regulatory scene as an opportunity to import and sell rubbish products. In some cases, heat pumps have been offered for sale for as little as \$33 each! You can practically smell these cowboys' Akubras!

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Contact Julie Woods,
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We are thrilled to announce the creation of a new, multi-tiered membership structure.

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There is a lot of discussion in the community about alternative energy sources involving hydrogen and biogas. See the first part of our 2-part analysis.





EDITORIAL

From the CEO's desk

Dear Members of the Master Plumbers Association of NSW (MPA NSW). I am thrilled to update you on the significant progress we've made as an association, especially with the impending launch of MPA Insurance Services NSW.

As many of you know, the issue of underinsurance among plumbers, particularly concerning public liability, has been a pressing concern. We must take action with significant insurers withdrawing coverage for plumbers working on projects over three storeys. After rigorous planning and collaboration, we are in the final stages of launching MPA Insurance Services NSW. This initiative aims to provide comprehensive coverage explicitly tailored to the needs of plumbers, ensuring that our members are adequately protected in their line of work. We understand your challenges, and MPA Insurance Services NSW is committed to supporting you through them.

Additionally, we are facing a significant challenge in the form of misguided calls to ban gas for all new builds nationwide. Despite gas's vital role in many aspects of construction and daily life, voices advocate for its elimination without fully understanding the implications. We must continue our efforts to educate uninformed Local Government councillors and members of parliament on the importance of gas in our industry and economy.

I am calling on the NSW Government to review and amend the current heat pump rebates in my editorial feature piece in this issue of *The Master Plumber*. We have observed Phoenix-style companies exploiting these rebates, diverting funds to support genuine initiatives. Last year (2023), around 130,000 Heat Pump grants were lodged in Australia, with 75,000 in NSW. We must safeguard these grants to ensure they benefit legitimate businesses and contribute meaningfully to our industry's advancement.

Earlier this year, we achieved a significant milestone by successfully amending the constitution of MPA NSW through the Fair Work Commission. This accomplishment paves the way for important changes within our association, particularly regarding membership. We recognise the value that tradespeople and apprentices bring to our industry, and, as such, we are introducing associate memberships explicitly tailored to their needs. Expanding our membership will foster greater inclusivity and collaboration within our community. See details on page 8.

As we move forward, let us remain united in our commitment to advancing the plumbing industry in NSW. Together, we can overcome challenges, seize opportunities, and ensure a prosperous future for all members of the Master Plumbers Association.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication.

Nathaniel (Nat) Smith
CEO



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A new Board for new times

The 2024 Master Plumbers Association NSW election was concluded in late February 2024; thank you for having faith to elect me as your President for another year.

By taking part in your Association (it assists the Organisation in implementing best practices), we heeded members' advice and modernised and reduced the number of representatives from the Master Plumbers Board's previous and longstanding number of thirteen members (13) to nine (9) members. The new amendments to the Association rules allowed for this change.

This transition allowed longstanding board members to stand down and gain confidence that the Association was advancing.

That being said, I would like to thank the past Board members such as, but not limited to, Peter Richardson, who still contributes to this magazine, writing articles that reflect the rural and regional view of the state of affairs in the plumbing industry. Peter Honey, a longstanding contributor to the Association, has an awesome passion for helping



business owners improve their business practices (check out his Facebook page).

For all members reading this, it should be a notable reminder of the unpaid and time-gobbling contributions of all the Board members who contribute to making this Master Plumbers Association one of the best in Australia. All your representative Board members are just business owner members of the Association who have put their hand up to be on the Association Board to direct the MPA Management Team in the strategic planning and goal

setting to better the industry for our fellow plumbers. We form the goals, not the management.

BOARD DIVERSITY

The new 2024 Board has awesome diversification; whilst not all are licensed plumbers, we are all plumbing business owners, and we all bring to the Association a collective skill set that we never had before. At times, we invite consultants (who donate their time free of charge) to sit with us and advise us on issues we recognise outside our skill sets.

The Board has new Board members, such as Ryan Aquilina, a dynamic young construction plumber with a sizable business who has already demonstrated a passion for leading the representation of construction plumbers on this new 2024 Board. This year, we have an excellent team and a few other construction plumbers on the Board. The type of businesses owned by Board members is best described as being pure: 33.3% are construction business owners, 33.3% are home service maintenance business owners, and 33.3% do a blend of both. Everyone who owns a plumbing business has accurate and equal representation.

CONFERENCE IN OCTOBER

With about 50% of the business owners who sit on the 2024 Board being under 50 years of age, the Board now has experience from the boomers with the likes of me and an appetite for innovation and change from the younger Board members. These younger Board members are the future of the

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MPA NSW New Members 2024

The Master Plumbers Association of NSW continues to expand and consolidate its industry representation. We are delighted to announce the following new Members and Partners...

The new 2024 Board has awesome diversification.

success of maintaining Standards of installation and material, training (apprenticeship skill sets) and stopping the dilution of who can do plumbing, such as the rise in the delivery of pre-assembled modular complete bathrooms in a factory warehouse, where it appears NO Licensed Plumber completed the work, but others are expected to sign off when installed on site; don't worry, we are already swinging punches on this issue.

In conclusion, I am looking forward to chatting with every one of you at the Master Plumbers Association Fiji conference in October 2024; it is an awesome opportunity to reward yourself and your partner or a key staff member with a week away (and it is all tax-deductible). And you may return rejuvenated and have a handful of ideas for improving your business profitability and performance.

Stay safe and stay happy. **TMP**
Greg McElroy
President



Greg McElroy has been a member of the Master Plumbers Association NSW for some 40 years. He was active on the Executive Committee from early 2000 until 2009, serving as President for several of those years. He is now serving on the Executive Committee again in 2024, with a special focus on business training and knowledge.

We would like to extend a very warm welcome to our Members who have joined us in 2024. Strength comes in numbers, and the continued growth of the Association will ensure Members receive additional business and lifestyle benefits, value services, essential support, and paramount advocacy.

We appreciate the support of all of our Members and encourage you to recommend the Association to your industry peers who have not yet taken advantage of membership.

NEW MEMBERS

Agent Plumbing
North East Plumbing
South Sydney Plumbing
Planet Plumbing NSW
CarterCo Plumbing & Relining
Lancelot Plumbing
Matt Walsh Plumbing
A Murray & Sons
Precision Plumbing & Civil
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NCOV Pty Ltd
Home First Services Australia
Doolan's Plumbing
Dynamic Tradies
Australian Civil Water
Elite Plumbing & Civil
High Country Plumbing & Gas
JB Roofing & Cladding
Aquajak Plumbing
Peninsular Plumbing
Port Stephens
Pip'n Hot Plumbing
Beachpoint Plumbing and Drainage
Ewing Plumbing & Gas
Affordable Hot Water Pty Ltd
New Level Plumbing
iPlumb Plumbing Services
Thomas Contractors
Crossroads Plumbing
Zahra Plumbing and Roofing
The Real Rhys Plumbing Pty Ltd
Parrish Group
049Plumber Pty Ltd
Imperial Plumbing and Gasfitting

NEW CORPORATE PARTNERS

Since our Autumn issue the following Corporate Partners have joined the MPA NSW community – welcome onboard and thank you for the support.

SILVER PARTNER

Plumboss
Dux Manufacturing

BRONZE PARTNERS

Easy Fall Gutters
Galvin Engineering
Solargain Pty Ltd
Foton Mobility Distribution
Reliance Worldwide Corporation

CORPORATE MEMBERS

Arrow Airconditioning
Graf Australia
Supagas



FEATURE: MPA NSW membership restructure

A new era for members

Beginning 1 July 2024, the Master Plumbers Association of NSW (MPA NSW) is set to implement significant changes to its membership structure. These changes aim to offer enhanced benefits and accommodate a broader range of members.

Introducing our new membership tiers, we're offering proprietors the opportunity to select from various packages tailored to their team size. This means you can now enjoy benefits that directly align with your business needs, providing more value for your membership. Options include:

P1 Encompassing the proprietor plus one tradesman, will be priced at \$1,000 plus GST.

P2 Covering the proprietor plus two to four tradesmen: \$1,300 plus GST.

P3 Accommodating the proprietor plus five to nine tradesmen, will cost \$1,650 plus GST, with subsequent tradesmen incurring an additional \$100 per tradesman capped at 30.

It's important to note that our pricing structures do not include apprentices. This decision reflects our unwavering support for training and development within the industry and our commitment to ensuring that apprentices have access to the resources they need to succeed.

MAJOR CONTRACTORS

As part of our commitment to serving all members, we have introduced the T1 specifically tailored for Major Contractors.

Priced at \$6,500 plus GST, this is designed to cater to the unique needs of larger entities operating on EBA sites within the plumbing construction sector. By joining this tier, you will gain access to a range of specialised benefits and services ideally suited to the scale of your operations, further enhancing your professional capabilities.

MPA NSW INSURANCE

We are introducing new benefits as part of our ongoing commitment to enhancing member experiences and professional standards. One of the most significant additions is the launch of MPA NSW Insurance, which offers comprehensive coverage tailored to the needs of plumbing businesses. This insurance will give you peace of mind, knowing your business is protected. Additionally, from 1 July, we will be offering members the opportunity to provide clients with a \$20,000 guarantee on workmanship for residential free-standing homes, a testament to the quality and reliability of our members' services, which will drive more business opportunities to our members.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Furthermore, members will gain access to up-to-date Australian standards and safety management programs, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements and

fostering a culture of safety within their operations. Collaborating with HazardCo, the MPA NSW aims to equip members with the necessary tools and resources to navigate occupational hazards effectively.

Moreover, MPA NSW is forging partnerships to secure exclusive fuel deals and discounts on a broader range of vehicles, empowering members with cost-effective solutions for their business needs.

Recognising the diverse nature of the industry, the MPA NSW is expanding its membership categories to include Associate Tradesmen and Associate Apprentice memberships. These categories will cater to individuals at various stages of their plumbing careers, offering them tailored benefits, discounts, and regular updates to support their professional growth and development.

In summary, the changes coming into effect on 1 July 2024 signify a significant milestone for the Master Plumbers Association as it evolves to meet the changing needs of its members and the broader plumbing community. The MPA remains committed to supporting and empowering plumbers across NSW through revamped membership structures, enhanced benefits, and expanded membership categories. **TMP**



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ASSOCIATION UPDATES



There are plenty of updates to report, ranging from the election of our new MPA NSW committee to important announcements about major upcoming events!



Our committee members play an integral role in the growth, progress and accomplishments of your Association by providing a strong governance and insightful direction to the management team.

The experience of each committee member enhances our team's overall performance and the initiatives we work on for our members. We are able to provide our members with a competent support network because of our wide range of credentials, expertise, and collaboration.

The voluntary support provided by the committee does not go unrecognised, and we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for their time and efforts in contributing to the ongoing success of the Association and the industry as a whole.

The 2024 committee members are:

- **President** – Greg McElroy, Killara and Rose Bay Plumbing
- **Vice President** – Nathan Broughton, Chiswick Plumbing Group Pty Limited
- **Treasurer** – David Dighton, Thornleigh Plumbing Services
- **Guardian** – Andrew Murphy, Murphy Plumbing Projects Pty Ltd
- **Guardian** – Bill Armstrong, B&J Armstrong Plumbing
- **Guardian** – Ashley Lowther, Panania Plumbing Pty Ltd
- **Executive Committee Member** – Matthew Braid, Network Plumbing Professionals Pty Ltd
- **Executive Committee Member** – Kevin Yau, The Clean Plumber
- **Executive Committee Member** – Ryan Aquilina, Rytec Plumbing.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank our departing committee members for their past dedication and valued support – Peter Richardson, Peter Honey, Gary Cook and Craig Scott.



MEMBERS' CONFERENCE

Book now the upcoming MPA NSW annual conference, which will take place from 14–29 October 2024 at Shangri-la Resort, Yanuca, Fiji. If you haven't registered yet, we still have some spots left, but they're filling fast.

Take this opportunity to network with your industry peers whilst enjoying the idyllic surrounds of this paradise destination. The conference is structured as a family-friendly event, with lots of activities, day tours and social events organised.

You also have an option to extend your time in Fiji with pre- or post-stay extension tours available.

For full package details, contact Master Plumbers Association NSW on 02 8789 7000 or email info@masterplumbers.com.au

(Reminder, the Conference Package costs are tax-deductible.)

JOIN US FOR LUNCH!

Members are invited to the MPA NSW Annual Industry Luncheon, a major industry event that will take place on Friday 20 September 2024 from 12–4pm at La Montage (Navarra), Lilyfield.

We are excited to announce this year’s 116th Gold Medal Awards event will be a luncheon highlight at the opulent La Montage restaurant, one of Sydney’s most iconic venues.

The event will be hosted by one of Australia’s most respected comedians, Vince Sorrenti, and we are sure to be treated to an afternoon of great entertainment with lots of laughs. We will also have an engaging keynote speaker



presentation, lucky door prizes, and a lavish three-course menu to enjoy.

The main feature on the agenda will be the Presentation of the 116th Gold Medal Award. This prestigious award carries with it a great deal of distinction and is highly revered throughout our industry.

Award nomination and event booking forms will be available soon.

We hope to see you there.



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COVER STORY: Heat pump alert

Beware heat pump cowboys:

Dodgy heat pumps threaten NSW homes

MPA NSW is issuing an urgent alert to NSW homeowners and plumbing professionals to be aware of the dangers of inferior-quality heat pumps. **NATHANIEL SMITH** comments.

Quality heat pump water heaters installed adequately by plumbers should be a win-win for NSW homeowners. With a staggering 75,000 heat pumps installed across NSW in 2023 alone, the Master Plumbers Association of NSW (MPA NSW) is raising a red flag to spotlight the proliferation of inferior, primarily overseas heat pump water heaters flooding the market.

Despite the strength of the local industry, shockingly only one in 13 heat pumps sold last year originated from trusted Australian-made brands. This statistic is a stark warning of the reliance on cheaper, lesser-known alternatives that may compromise the integrity and safety of water heating in NSW homes. Incredibly, there are currently no minimum energy performance standards in Australia for heat pump water heaters, and it could take several years until such standards are mandated.

CALL FOR ACTION

MPA NSW demands immediate action, drawing attention to the risks associated with sub-par products and the misuse of government incentives to subsidise their installation. Heavily promoted through social media platforms, doorknocking and call centres at suspiciously low prices (as low as \$33), poor-quality heat pump units have prompted concerns amongst plumbers and homeowners alike.

MPA NSW has learned that some imported heat pumps lack critical after-sales services and effective warranties, posing a severe risk to vulnerable members of the community ahead of winter. Drawing parallels with past debacles such as the infamous pink batts scheme, MPA NSW underscores the urgency for a comprehensive review of the governance and oversight of NSW Government incentives allocated for heat pumps.

To avert this looming crisis, MPA NSW advocates for a decisive shift

towards promoting the installation of trusted Australian-made or established brands through traditional plumbing merchants and plumbers, who are best placed to advise homeowners on all matters relating to hot water.

The proliferation of inferior heat pump models in NSW presents a multifaceted problem with far-reaching implications. These sub-par units are being sourced in bulk overseas with little regard to unique Australian conditions. Even more concerning are revelations that unqualified and unlicensed individuals are being enlisted to install these units, often at a meagre rate of \$300 or less per installation.

Further investigation has unearthed a disturbing trend: many of these installations are being undertaken by individuals lacking the necessary Certificate III in Plumbing. To add insult to injury, plumbing license numbers are used to sign off on rebate paperwork, a term known as 'license lending', adding a layer of deceit to an



Swift and decisive action must be taken.

already precarious situation. Incorrectly installed water heaters can be hazardous, even deadly.

Not only are consumers being sold inferior products that pose a risk of failure and potential harm, but they are also being misled into believing that qualified professionals carry out these installations. This activity undermines the integrity of the incentive system and puts consumers at risk of legal repercussions should any issues arise with their water heaters.

DIRE CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of these actions are dire. Beyond the immediate safety concerns posed by improper

installations, there are broader implications for the plumbing industry. The erosion of trust in licensed professionals and the circumvention of regulations set a dangerous precedent that undermines the integrity of the entire industry. To address this issue effectively, a multifaceted approach is required. Firstly, there must be stricter enforcement of licensing requirements and compliance checks. Harsh penalties should be issued to those engaging in unlawful practices. Additionally, there needs to be greater awareness among consumers about the importance of hiring only licenced professionals for water heating system installations.

Moreover, regulatory bodies must collaborate with industry associations like the MPA NSW to uphold industry standards. Whilst



Nathaniel (Nat) Smith is the CEO of MPA NSW. Prior to joining the Association in May last year, he had a successful career as a qualified plumber and subsequently as a politician (State Member for Wollondilly). He has strong advocacy experience at all levels of government. Contact Nat at nathaniel@masterplumbers.com.au

we welcome the NSW Government's decision to raise the heat pump co-payment to \$220 in June 2024, which is a step in the right direction, a compelling argument exists for a much more significant increase. This would signal the government's commitment to prioritising quality and safety.

In conclusion, the threat posed by low-quality heat pumps in NSW is real and immediate. Swift and decisive action must be taken to address this issue, protect consumers, and uphold the integrity of government subsidies paid for by energy users through higher electricity prices. The time to act is before the winter chill sets in and vulnerable households are left out in the cold.

Let us not wait until disaster strikes before we take action to ensure the safety and well-being of our communities. **TMP**



FEATURE: Renewable gases

Hydrogen vs biogas

PART I: BIOGAS

Australia's future energy supplies will have to be clean and varied. Hypothetical components might involve the 'green manufacturing' of hydrogen or the harnessing of biogas, which could be admixed into natural gas lines. Will such systems ever become mainstream? **JOHN CHAUMONT** begins his two-part assessment with an analysis of biogas.

The push toward renewable gas has caused many in the plumbing industry to be cautiously optimistic about the future of the gas industry in Australia. In recent years, the renewable gas challenge has been admirably taken up by major gas providers all over the country, who have created world-class production and demonstration facilities for the two leading renewable gas candidates: hydrogen and biomethane.

But why should we move away from (and in some cases ban) the use of existing sources of gas? What is hydrogen and biomethane? Which is more potent, producible at scale, energy-efficient, and reliable? What are the pros and cons to each gas? The following is an overview of the two renewable gases, with a comparison against the two existing forms of gas available in Australia: natural gas (NG) and liquified petroleum gas (LPG).

WHAT IS IT?

Biogas can exist in two different forms: *Raw biogas*, which is a naturally occurring gas that comes from the breakdown of organic matter such as compost heaps, swamps, human and animal waste. It is human, animal and plant waste that can be used to produce the biogas that can be used as energy. Then there is *purified biomethane* (biogas, as it is commonly understood), which is produced from raw biogas and burned to generate heat or electricity.

HEAT VALUES/ENERGY VALUE

Gas energy output is known as its 'heat value', which is how much energy it can produce when burned. According

to the table below, the traditional gases (LPG and natural gas) are far more potent than both renewable gases in terms of raw energy output by volume.

Energy Source	Heat Value (Mj/m ³)	% Heat Value of LPG	% Heat Value of NG
LPG	96	-	-
Natural Gas	38.8	40%	
Biogas	21.5	22%	55%
Hydrogen	10.8	11%	28%

HOW IS IT PRODUCED?

Biogas is produced commercially as a supplement to the gas network from human waste. It must be upgraded to pure methane form (also known as purified biomethane) from raw biogas. During the primary treatment phase of human sewage, a sludge is produced which gives off *raw* biogas. Raw biogas normally consists of methane, carbon dioxide, and moisture plus traces of hydrogen sulphide, siloxane and other contaminants or impurities. These non-methane products must be removed from the raw biogas, which results in purified biomethane that "meets the gas composition limits per Australian Standard AS 4564: 2020 Specification for general purpose natural gas". The biomethane produced is then injected into the gas distribution network.¹

RESOURCES REQUIRED FOR PRODUCTION

Production of biogas requires two resources: *human sewage and electricity*.

Human sewage: There is no shortage of human waste that could be used for the generation of biogas. It is estimated that households produce an average of 200-300L of wastewater per person per day. The advantage with biogas lies in the fact that a by-product of human waste (gas) is used as the fuel source, as opposed to using precious water. This by-product would otherwise need to be dealt with through a treatment process, but is instead used to generate a useful energy source.

Electricity: Existing technology for the extraction of biomethane from raw biogas has varying electricity requirements, depending on the manufacturer and scope of project. Using the Sydney Water/Jemena biomethane injection plant as an example, electricity requirements come in at 0.26kWh/kg biogas produced².

Therefore, the biogas energy trade-off looks like this:
0.26kWh electricity INPUT = 6kWh biogas energy OUTPUT.

ESTIMATED COST OF PRODUCTION

Due to the low electricity input required to generate biogas, costs associated with production are relatively low. A report from IRENA (International Renewable Energy Agency) estimates a cost of AUS\$ 0.17 to 0.77 per cubic meter of methane for industrial waste-based biogas³. Biogas plants that are built at a wastewater treatment plant can also use cogenerated energy from biogas to power the plant on a continuous basis.

PLANT & EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR PRODUCTION

The Malabar Biomethane injection plant should be used as the model to base other projects from. The project was completed by specialist company Enraque⁴ who installed a biogas upgrading station. The equipment for this project cost a total of \$14 million to complete.

INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS: STORAGE, TRANSMISSION, DELIVERY

Once biomethane has been extracted from raw biogas, there are no further changes that need to be made to inject it into the natural gas pipe network. Biogas is "completely compatible with existing gas appliances and can be used in those manufacturing processes which currently rely on gas for heat⁵." This means that there would be little to no upgrades required for existing natural gas infrastructure, in the home by domestic users, and in industry by commercial users.



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COMBUSTION PRODUCTS/EMISSIONS

Although biogas has almost identical characteristics to natural gas, it produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions. This is because total emissions must be considered against the fact that they contribute a reduction in emissions that would otherwise be created from waste that decomposes naturally⁶. Methane can be captured and upgraded to biogas from other sources such as landfill sites, animal waste collection points, organic matter processing plant, and meat processing. Biogas is not perfect, however, and produces emissions when released into the atmosphere as a gas, as it consists mostly of methane.

INVESTMENTS & KEY PROJECTS

The Malabar treatment plant (Jemena & Sydney Water) is the only commercially operating biomethane project at scale. With the success of this project, future projects should be undertaken.

There are many biofuels-related projects that are either complete or underway in Australia. Some notable projects include:

- **Logan City Council Biosolids Gasification Facility – Queensland:** This facility, completed in 2022, uses recycled heat to dry sewage sludge to produce a product called 'biochar', which is a soil-like material rich in nutrients. Biochar has agricultural and building industry applications. Estimated cost: \$28 million⁷.
- **Re Energi biomass pyrolysis plant – Western Australia:** This facility converts inedible plant material (biomass) and municipal solid waste (garbage) into bio-oil (which can be used to fuel electricity generation or produce a renewable component of aviation fuel⁸ and biochar⁹). Estimated cost: \$9.8 million.
- **Kwinana Waste to Energy Project – Western Australia:** This project (set for completion in Dec 2025) aims to collect non-recyclable waste, remove recyclable materials, and burn the remainder which reduces the volume of the waste by up to 90%. The heat generated from this burn is used to produce steam, which can be used to generate electricity. Estimated cost: \$696 million¹⁰.
- **The Hazer Process – Western Australia:** This is a demonstration project (set for completion in September 2026) which aims to demonstrate a patented technology that will convert raw biogas produced from sewage treatment into hydrogen and graphite. Estimated cost: \$22 million¹¹.

OUTLOOK

Biogas cannot be produced at enough scale to meet Australia's energy and gas needs but can supplement them. Australia is in a very advantageous position for

the development of a biogas industry, with a strong gas industry, world class expertise, and high-quality natural gas network that could be utilised for the production and transport of biogas. Biogas is also compatible with natural gas appliances which would require no investment from the end user. Biogas appears to be cheap to produce, with a low energy input required. The main benefit in biogas and other biomass energy projects is that it contributes to solving the ever-increasing waste problem that our world faces. The projects convert different forms of waste gas, and waste material into energy and useful products. There are also downsides, such as the risk of methane escaping to the atmosphere through leaks, venting and purging, and the low heating value in comparison to existing available gases (NG and LPG)

SUMMARY

The future of renewable gas is something to be highly optimistic about, though not perfect. It is promising to see federal, state, and local government pursue the development of each respective energy source.

However, this pursuit should be done in a cautious manner, mixed with a dose of reality and healthy scepticism. In regard to the pursuit of and investment in renewable gases, the words of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre ring true: "it must not come at the expense of consumers or with added risk to their efficient and affordable access to essential energy."¹²

While the benefits of renewable gases should be investigated, we should be honest with ourselves about the trade-offs and ask ourselves some hard but important questions:

- What are the negatives to renewable gases?
- Are there better energy options available?
- Should we progress down the path of renewable gases with such urgency?
- Should we ban new connections of fossil fuel gases (NG & LPG) and mandate the use of renewable gases?
- Or should we let the market innovate, and consumers indicate which gas is more reliable, efficient, and more affordable?
- On what grounds are state governments and local councils imposing bans on the use of natural gas?
- Are federal, state, and local governments banning gas and pursuing renewables because they care about the planet?

If so, why does Australia sell most of its mined coal, natural gas, and uranium on the international export market? (As of 2023 – Australia exports 93% of the black coal, 79% of the natural gas, and 100% of the uranium that is produced or mined from its land)¹³.

Or does environmental concern come second to financial gain? (Australia’s natural gas exports for 2023 came in at around \$92 billion, uranium exports at \$1.2 billion, and metallurgical coal exports at \$62 billion).

By mandating renewable energy use domestically, and selling fossil fuels internationally, are we shifting the burden of responsibility of fossil fuel emissions to other countries? **TMP**



John Chaumont is a licensed plumber and former hydraulic consultant, currently involved in industry research and training.

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RENEWABLE GAS,
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TRAINING

As the government emphasises the need for real-world expertise in the vocational education and training (VET) sector, the call for experienced professionals to consider roles as trainers and assessors is vital, writes **MARK BROWN**.

Become a plumbing trainer and assessor!

A career transition into training not only offers a chance to share valuable skills, but it also provides flexible options that cater to the needs of working parents.

Recent research underscores the strong desire among working parents for flexibility in their careers, with over three-quarters expressing passion for their industry. This passion, coupled with the pursuit of work-life balance and the opportunity to utilise existing skills, positions teaching in the VET sector as an attractive option. With a significant percentage of trainers holding part-time contracts, it's a viable avenue for parents seeking flexibility while remaining connected to their field.

Prospective trainers and assessors need not possess formal teaching qualifications initially, but must demonstrate expertise within the plumbing domain. While a teaching degree isn't mandatory, completion of a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is required. Registered training organisations (RTOs) offer support programs to facilitate this transition, guiding candidates through the necessary qualifications and providing mentorship opportunities.

Transitioning from industry to education involves familiarising oneself with government training packages and educational processes. Collaboration and teamwork within departments



Training... provides flexible options.

aid in understanding the broader educational landscape, while proficiency in computer skills is advantageous for navigating college systems.

ENERGY & PASSION

Energy, passion, and enthusiasm are pivotal attributes for delivering impactful learning experiences. Trainers play a significant role in nurturing life skills alongside technical expertise, shaping the future workforce of the plumbing industry.

The satisfaction derived from imparting knowledge and shaping future talent is immensely rewarding. A career in training and assessment

offers sustainability, with interim holiday periods allowing for recharge and reflection. If we compare the roles of a practitioner in the industry to that of an assessor, advantages such as weekends free from callouts, ample holiday opportunities, and the potential for additional income through sideline work underscore the appeal of transitioning to education.

Ultimately, becoming a plumbing trainer and assessor presents a fulfilling opportunity to give back to the industry while enjoying flexibility, job satisfaction, and the chance to positively influence the next generation of plumbing professionals. Whether seeking a fresh start or looking to align career goals with personal values, this transition offers a pathway to a fulfilling and impactful career in vocational education and training. **TMP**

If this sounds like a career path for you, then please do not hesitate to contact us at MPA Training, email: markb@mpatraining.com.au



MPA NSW's Mark Brown is Training Facilities Manager.

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SYDNEY WATER: Drainage

Preventing drainage cross-connections to reduce wet weather overflows



Wet weather overflows from Sydney's wastewater network are a growing concern in Greater Sydney.

Sydney Water is commencing a program to encourage stronger compliance with the current plumbing standards to prevent stormwater cross-connections into the wastewater system to help manage this issue.

Wet weather overflows occur when rainwater overwhelms the wastewater network, which then spills into the stormwater system. Sydney Water is actively working on reducing wet weather overflows, but also relies on compliant plumbing and stormwater connections on new and existing properties.

As licensed plumbers working within Greater Sydney, you play an important role.

ENSURING COMPLIANCE

Sydney Water is removing existing private stormwater connections to the wastewater system in developed areas. However, to reduce potential overflows, it is critical that stormwater and wastewater drainage in new developments are installed in compliance with all plumbing codes and the requirements of relevant local authorities to avoid the need for later rectification. Compliant drainage helps avoid the serious negative impacts that wet weather overflows from the wastewater network can have on the community and the environment by polluting private properties, public spaces and waterways.

As licensed plumbers working within Greater Sydney, you play an important role in ensuring that there are no cross-connections between the stormwater and wastewater systems.

If you're working on a new build or renovating an existing one, please ensure that you rectify any cross-connections you identify, or suspect are non-compliant with current plumbing codes and/or Network Utility Operator (NUO) requirements as soon as possible.

For further guidance on installation requirements, you can refer to the Plumbing Code of Australia through the National Construction Code (NCC) website and AS/NZ 3500.2 (*Sanitary plumbing and drainage*) and AS/NZ 3500.3 (*Stormwater Drainage*) and contact the relevant NUO for any specific requirements.

When working within Sydney Water's area of operations, you should be familiar with Sydney Water's connection requirements, available on our website at the following link: sydneywater.com.au/plumbing **TMP**

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FEATURE: Member Profile

45 years and counting

CALLUM MCKAY, Managing Director at Clarke McKay Pty Ltd, came to Australia in the 1970s from Scotland; since then he has helped create a dynamic business in an evolving market.

Q How and when did your career in plumbing begin?
I started my plumbing career back in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1977 with Donald Mackenzie and son, working alongside my uncle in a maintenance company. At the end of my apprenticeship I emigrated to Australia in 1981.

Q Were you destined to work in the plumbing industry from an early age?
Yes. With a grandfather and two uncles in the industry, they gave me work experience at around 14 years of age helping out in some tight underfloor areas – that gave me a taste of what was involved, and I enjoyed it.



Callum McKay (right) and his son Alistair celebrate the completion of the Woolworths JN Moorebank project.



The Clarke McKay team enjoy some downtime.

Q Have you worked in any industries apart from plumbing? No.

Q Have you had many mentors throughout your career?

I have had a few over the years, with my first one being my first boss Donald Mackenzie, who encouraged me to come to Australia to see what life here had to offer; and my last boss and partner Bill Clarke, who showed me how to run a business in both good and bad times. Bill would always remain calm in a crisis to show leadership when needed.

Q Would you describe yourself as a 'people person'?

Yes, for sure. In this industry you have to wear many hats and deal with many different people, and it is a skill I have learned over many years.

Q What have been the most significant changes in the industry throughout your career?

There have been huge changes in the materials we use today compared to the materials I used when I first started, with less hand skill required now. However, I think one of the most significant changes relates to compliance and regulation.

Q What has been your most challenging assignment or project?

I have had three major projects on the go over the last three years, with the Coles high bay fully automated distribution centre at Kemps Creek, Woolworths JN, and Woolworths JR high bay facilities at Moorebank similar to the Coles project. These were carried out during COVID 19, with supply chain issues and some of the wettest weather we have experienced. I would have to say these were the toughest projects we have ever done.

Q What has been your greatest achievement?

Apart from completing the three projects already mentioned, I would say surviving in business through three recessions, the GFC, and a pandemic.

Q How important has your family been to your career?

My family has been very important to me and the business, with my wife Pauline running the office for 20 years and my son Alistair ready to take over the running of the business with his wife Izzy.

Q Will technology ever fix all plumbing problems?

Plumbing technology has evolved since the Romans, but we still have a lot of the same problems... and sewers still block up.

Q Have you noticed any changes to the way society regards plumbers?

Yes. Plumbing is a highly respected trade and well paid. Schools are now pushing plumbing apprenticeships as opposed to going on to university.

Q Is plumbing the best career in the world?

I would not say it is the best career in the world, but it has been very good to me over the years and I have never been out of work in the last 45 years.

Q What will you be doing in five years' time? And then?

I will be retired and travelling the world and looking after my grandkids. **TMP**

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WOMEN IN PLUMBING

JONNI TE WAA may well be the only female, self-employed plumber in NSW, but her professional success is proof that women can thrive in a male-dominated industry. Below, Jonni describes her journey to business prosperity.

Leading by example

I started my plumbing career when I was 30 years old in Melbourne as a mature-age apprentice. It was extremely hard to find a plumbing company that would give me the time of day: I had an interview with one company which told me I would struggle as a woman in the trade because "I had... you know... boobs", and plumbing required you to get under houses and in roofs. Seriously?!

After three months of cold calling every day, asking to be trialled for one week without pay, I landed two trials! MJL Superior Plumbing, and I can't remember the other... two days into my trial with Matty from MJL he offered me an apprenticeship.

Matty supported me throughout my apprenticeship without any bias; he taught me a lot and I will be forever grateful to him for giving me the opportunity that's led me to where I am today.

IN THE BEGINNING

After my apprenticeship I became a contractor with a small residential plumbing company running gas mains, sewer, and stormwater drainage for new high-rise residential apartments. That was roughly 10 years ago, and at that time the only women onsite were the cleaners or cafe staff. The only female toilets were located next to the cafe, and were being used by the guys even though they had

Eighty percent of my customers are women.

porta-loos on every third floor of each building. It didn't take long for word to get around the site that there was a female plumber onsite with an oxy set, welding up gas mains and pulling branches. My first day I had lots of visitors make the long trip across site to stand at the bottom of my ladder and watch me work, wide-eyed and jaws to the floor like they'd never seen a woman before.





celebrated regardless of gender? I certainly think so. Let's face it, the women I know who have been bold enough to take on a trade have absolutely killed it – they were at the top of their class at trade school and are also self-employed now.

Second, I saw a need for female plumbers. I noticed women saying they felt more comfortable having another woman in the house. Actually, that statement relates to all my customers, not just women. Eighty percent of my customers are women and if I could give any advice, it would be to listen and be respectful. Just because you are a tradie you don't have to be loud and obnoxious, or talk down or talk over not only women, but other people.

I believe the plumbing industry has a long way to go but it is changing, which is fantastic to see! There are some great girls coming through the industry at the moment: exciting times ahead!

To the younger generation of plumbers, this is a great industry full of opportunity and growth; it can take you anywhere in the world through contracting, or lead to self-employment. Don't listen to the critics, trust in yourself and chase your dreams. Get licensed because it leads to freedom, be ambitious, work with integrity and honesty, and aim high, as anything is possible if you put your mind to it – and remember, nobody owns you. **TMP**

I went on to commercial HVAC, working on the largest combined Ministry of Justice Precinct and Emergency Services Facility in Australasia based in Christchurch; the National Biocontainment Laboratory, Wellington; and the Law Courts plant room upgrade in Canberra. I started out as a pipe fitter but quickly progressed to leading hand/supervisor, at times heading a team of 20 guys. This was a huge career achievement for me and came with huge responsibility. During my time in Christchurch I was offered an opportunity to attend a 10-day industry training program in Germany and Austria, paid for by one of our biggest suppliers at the time, which covered all the leading HVAC brands across Europe and USA.

I feel lucky that I've had such broad exposure to the industry, starting out as an apprentice, learning all aspects of plumbing in new builds, renovations and maintenance, residential high-rise, and commercial HVAC, to now being self-employed. As a woman in a heavily male-dominated industry, discrimination was an issue I faced, absolutely. Not from employers or suppliers – it was usually from co-workers and customers. WHS have guidelines around racism and sexual discrimination. There is no place for this behaviour anywhere

/// **Don't listen to the critics, trust in yourself and chase your dreams.**

and it is fair grounds for dismissal. I have been able to use these tools to successfully manage and call out any behaviour that is not compliant with regulations. I have always managed and expected a respectful team to work collaboratively to get work done.

MY OWN BUSINESS

Fifteen years on, and I am licensed in plumbing, gas fitting, drain laying, roofing and kitchen, bathroom, laundry renovations. I own/operate Progressive Plumbing & Gas based in Sydney's inner west. Although the road to self-employment has not been an easy one, I wouldn't have it any other way.

Why did I choose to work for myself? Firstly, I'm ambitious. I have always been ambitious, striving for leadership roles no matter what industry I've worked in, so it's no surprise I have ended up here. An ambitious woman in a male-dominated field is criticised and viewed as a threat, whereas a man is celebrated for his achievements. Shouldn't your achievements be



Jonni Te Waa is proprietor of Progressive Plumbing & Gas.

Visit progressiveplumbingandgas.com.au



REGULATION & SAFETY

Building Commission NSW and SafeWork NSW remind plumbers that safety should be everyone's primary concern – below are the industry's latest updates to reduce the risk of harm to both practitioners and clients.

HEATED WATER TEMPERATURE CONTROL AWARENESS



With winter's arrival, it's imperative to address ongoing safety concerns regarding heated water scalding. Building Commission NSW is aware of two tragic fatalities in 2022 due to scalding incidents caused by excessively hot bath water.

The plumbing industry holds a critical responsibility in mitigating the risks associated with heated water scalding. By adhering to the Plumbing Code of Australia and Australian Standards, plumbers can significantly reduce these risks.

NSW has been at the forefront in prescribing temperature and control requirements to reduce injuries from scalding water. To prevent scalding a NSW Variation is in place within the Plumbing Code of Australia 2022 that sets out the delivery temperature of heated water at the outlet of each sanitary fixture (such as a shower, or basin):

- Not more than 45° Celsius using a Thermostatic Mixing Valve or Thermostatically controlled tap in any:
 - residential part of an aged care building
 - patient care area in a health care building
 - part of an early childhood, primary or secondary school that is used by children
 - any facility designated for use by people with a disability (this may be an NDIS house, group home, disabled bathroom in a building or public space).
- Not more than 50° Celsius using a Thermostatic Mixing Valve, Thermostatically controlled tap, tempering valve or temperature limited hot water heater in all other cases.

These regulations apply when installing new heated water services, replacing existing hot water heaters, or making significant alterations to existing systems. For more detailed guidance on complying with these regulations, plumbers can refer to the Technical Note available on the Building Commission NSW website (see below).

By ensuring the installation of suitable heated water temperature controls as outlined in the Plumbing Code of Australia, the plumbing industry plays a vital role in safeguarding our community's most vulnerable members from serious injuries and fatalities.

[Visit nsw.gov.au/housing-and-construction/building-commission](https://www.nsw.gov.au/housing-and-construction/building-commission)

ASBESTOS AWARENESS & SAFETY COURSE

SafeWork NSW, Building Commission NSW, and TAFE NSW have partnered to provide the online Asbestos Awareness and Safety Course for free to the public until 13th June 2024 to increase awareness of the safety risks relating to asbestos.

This short online course is aimed at anyone likely to encounter asbestos in their workplace. It is hosted on the Construct NSW digital learning platform and is part of a wider suite of courses built in collaboration with the Department of Customer Service and Building Commission NSW.

The NSW Government priority is to ensure the safety of workers and the community when managing asbestos.

The 2.5hr course covers:

- Recognising the risk and serious long-term impacts of asbestos exposure
- Recognising the roles, responsibilities, and legislation for asbestos related work
- How to determine if asbestos-containing material may be present

- Identifying asbestos-containing materials and hazardous activities that lead to asbestos exposure
- Identifying suitable control measures for asbestos and asbestos-containing materials (ACM)
- How to safely handle asbestos and ACM
- Inspecting worksites and communicating asbestos risks and asbestos controls with an informed perspective.

Employers of workers who are likely to encounter asbestos on the job have a legal obligation to provide their workers with asbestos awareness training. Completion of this course meets those legal obligations. Further training is required to conduct licensed asbestos removal work, i.e. to remove more than 10sqm of non-friable asbestos or any amount of friable asbestos. **TMP**

You can register here for the course at <https://store.training.tafensw.edu.au/product/asbestos-awareness-and-safety>



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 **Jemena**



4 levels in the hierarchy of safety controls to prevent falls from heights

1 Work on the ground
Or on a solid construction, e.g. use tools with extendable handles

2 Use fall prevention devices
If you have to work from a height, use a fall prevention device, e.g. scaffold, perimeter guardrails, elevating work platforms

3 Use a work positioning system
If you can't use a fall prevention device, use a work positioning system, e.g. a harness in restraint technique so workers can't reach the edge

4 Use a fall-arrest system
A fall-arrest system, e.g. a harness in arrest, catch platforms, or safety nets can only be used when it is not possible to use other safety controls

CONTROLS TO PREVENT FALLS FROM HEIGHTS

Work at heights is a high-risk activity, and a leading cause of death and serious injury in the building and construction industry in NSW.

When it comes to work at heights, plan your work right so that workers are not exposed to falls risks, and you have the right safety equipment on site at the right time.

Use a safe work method statement (SWMS) to plan for safety for work where a person could fall more than 2m.

Under WHS laws you have a duty to keep workers safe and to use higher order risk controls in the first instance, before considering less effective controls. SafeWork NSW inspectors are currently checking that employers are using falls controls in this order:

- Work from the ground, or on a solid construction, e.g. use tools with extendable handles

- If you have to work from a height, use a fall prevention device, e.g. scaffold, perimeter guardrails, elevating work platforms
- If you can't use a fall prevention device, use a work positioning system, e.g. a harness in restraint technique so workers can't reach the edge
- A fall-arrest system, e.g. a harness in arrest, catch platforms, safety nets, can only be used when it is not possible to use either a fall-prevention device or a work-positioning system.

You can use a combination of these controls, as well as site safety rules, to keep workers safe.

For more safety information:
www.safework.nsw.gov.au/your-industry/construction/work-safely-at-heights-in-construction

WORKING SAFELY ON SCAFFOLDS

The main risks with scaffold include falls from incomplete scaffolds, being hit by tools or materials that fall off them, and scaffold collapse.

Tradies who don't hold a scaffold licence must not erect, alter or dismantle a scaffold where the risk of a person or object falling is more than 4m.

These are some of the things that you should visually check from the ground, before using a scaffold:

- Constructed on solid foundations (preferably using one board)
- Mesh installed to prevent debris falling onto neighbouring properties
- Diagonal bracing installed (every fourth bay)
- Adequately tied to the supporting structure
- Platforms are not overloaded with materials
- Handrails and mid-rails installed (to prevent external and internal falls)
- Kickboards installed to all working decks
- Safe access and egress onto stairs and between deck levels
- Scaffold tag at scaffold entrance – showing last inspection no more than 30 days ago.

SCAFFOLDING RESOURCES

Consult with your workers using the SafeWork NSW Toolbox talk:

USING SCAFFOLDS.

www.safework.nsw.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0010/991981/using-scaffolds-in-construction-toolbox-talk.pdf

The Toolbox talk is also available in Chinese and Vietnamese.

Or download the scaffold **SAFETY INSPECTION CHECKLIST** for site supervisors www.safework.nsw.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0007/980683/scaffold-inspection-checklist.pdf

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APPRENTICE STORIES



Q What level have you reached with your apprenticeship? Where are you doing your apprenticeship?

I'm currently in the third month of my first year into my apprenticeship. I've been lucky enough to start my apprenticeship with Central Plumbing on the Randwick Children's Hospital site.

Q Did you feel prepared for the first day of your apprenticeship?

Yes and no. I definitely was overprepared as I had brought EVERY tool I had to my first day on site, which I later learned wasn't necessary for day one!

I also felt underprepared in the sense that I had no idea what I was going to be walking into, and what I'd be doing, which can be quite daunting at first.

First-year apprentice **EMILY SUSHILA CRUMLIN**, who is receiving instruction at Master Plumbers Training, says she learns something of value every day.

Just take the leap

Q Has it been hard to balance training and work obligations?

Not in the slightest. It's very convenient having Monday to Thursday on the job site and Fridays in class. I find that the tasks I do at work and the subjects I complete in class, while being different topics, complement each other.

Q Have travel requirements during your apprenticeship posed any issues?

Unfortunately, I do not live close to work. So I'm definitely up super early, getting the train (and the light rail) in order to make it to work on time. The journey is just over an hour, so it's definitely not around the corner! However, it's easily manageable, and it's not hard to figure out the trains to the city.

Q Have you learned everything you expected to during your apprenticeship? Or has it been more of an introduction to real 'on the job' instruction later?

I'm still very new; however, it's unequivocally not what I expected. I'm definitely learning so much on a daily basis, and I've been given more and more responsibilities as the weeks carry on.

Q You must have had some great training mentors along the way – what makes a 'good instructor'?

I think there are many definitions of a 'good instructor'. I've been lucky enough to be partnered with a tradesman who is an excellent teacher and genuinely takes the time to show me

"It's amazing how much progress you can make..."

every step in the process, which I'm undoubtedly so grateful for.

Q What advice would you give to a new apprentice about to start day one?

Just take the leap. I was nervous too, but I haven't looked back since I started.

Q Looking back, what have been the main highlights?

The main highlight for me would be looking back to when I started and comparing it to how I am now. It's amazing how much progress you can make in such a small amount of time, and it really encourages me to keep going.

Q Where are you working now? Main fields of expertise?

At the moment I'm working in Randwick on the Children's Hospital site. I've been doing a lot of stack and riser work lately; however, I move around here and there, and help where I'm needed.

Q When you're not working or studying, what are your favourite hobbies or pastimes?

I'm a big fan of spending my time outdoors. In my free time I prioritise getting myself into nature, whether that be sunrises by the beach or a camping weekend in the Blue Mountains with my mates. **TMP**



REGIONAL RAMBLINGS



Staff shortages in regional NSW don't just affect the trade sectors, writes **PETER RICHARDSON**. The problem goes far deeper...

More staff wanted

Ok, so this Ramblings is to make people aware that it is not only our tradies having difficulties with staff shortages; to highlight this, we need look no further than a Local Council like Ballina Shire, where I live, which is facing the same kinds of issues. NB: staff problems relate to many other coastal and inland Shires and Councils.

Our Council, like many other businesses, is currently struggling to recruit employees, with our vacancy level over the last 12 months at a long-term high: up to 60 vacancies against a base of approximately 400 staff (15%).

Factors making it difficult to recruit and retain employees include:

- shortage of affordable housing on the Far North Coast – very difficult to recruit people from other areas in the State when the average house price is well above other regional areas;
- cost of living, including high rents – makes it more attractive to move elsewhere;
- a highly competitive employment market – the Ballina Shire unemployment rate is currently at 1.7%;
- currently we have a large number of people reaching retirement age, especially skilled tradespeople, and we are struggling to find replacements. Combined with this is the fact that there have been workforce supply shortages, especially for Trades and skilled employees;

- workplace flexibility is a standard expectation, and this is not always easy to provide for a community service-focused organisation.
- banking industry policy requires workers to demonstrate job security and prioritise financial health – we have had a number of employees move to more affordable areas in Queensland and Western NSW.

MASTER BUILDERS AGREES

Note: The following information is from the Master Builders Association of Australia:

It's been a big few months for Master Builders Australia. You may have seen recently that Master Builders Australia released our Building and Construction Industry Forecast for April 2024.

This was the first time MBA forecasts covered the five-year period of the National Housing Accord, the Australian Government's plan to build 1.2 million new homes between July of this year and June 2029.

The bad news? Our forecast predicts that Australia will fall about 110,000 homes short of the target. Despite all the Federal Government's housing initiatives, we're on track to hit just 1,087,325 new home starts by the end of the Accord period.

Tradie shortages, long build times, inflated cost of materials; industrial relations changes, and low productivity levels and far too much red tape are just some of the challenges we face and need to

be urgently addressed if we are to reach the 1.2 million home goal.

Just last week, BuildSkills Australia told us that we will need 90,000 tradies in the next 90 days.

But the good news is, all these problems have solutions.

As CEO of Master Builders Australia Denita Wawn told the media recently, Aussie Builders are up to the task. And other building construction Tradies also.

"Builders are up to the challenge to reach these targets but the barriers on the road need to be cleared to get the job done," Denita told them. "We need to think outside the box with better apprenticeship incentives, reskilling migrants already in Australia, and a targeted international campaign to bring in skilled migrants."

Australia needs to restore its principles of honesty, loyalty and respect for all people if we are to overcome social and workplace challenges together. **TMP**



Peter Richardson, from Sidney & Richardson in Ballina, NSW, is a lifelong plumbing professional with an intimate knowledge of regional affairs. Contact Peter at admin@sidneyrichardson.com.au

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BUSINESS BANTER

In the competitive plumbing industry, understanding your profit and loss (P&L) statement is crucial for making informed business decisions and steering your company towards financial success. We asked the team at Kelly+Partners to explain how it works.

Navigating profit and loss in the plumbing sector: A comprehensive guide

A P&L statement, also known as an income statement, summarises the revenues, costs, and expenses incurred during a specific period. Here's how you can understand and leverage your P&L statement to improve your business's profitability.

1. DISSECTING THE P&L STATEMENT: A CLOSER LOOK

Revenue

This is the top line of your P&L statement, representing the income generated from your services before any expenses are deducted. Revenue includes all income from services, parts, and sometimes, extended warranties or service contracts.

Costs of Goods Sold (COGS)

COGS pertains to the direct expenses attributable to the delivery of plumbing services. These expenses include material costs, subcontractor fees, and direct labour. The COGS figure is instrumental in the calculation of Gross Profit.

Gross Profit and Percentage

Gross Profit is calculated by subtracting COGS from your revenue. It represents the profit your business makes after deducting



the costs directly associated with providing your service, but before subtracting overheads and other operational expenses. The Gross Profit Margin, expressed as a percentage, indicates the efficiency with which your business converts revenue into gross profit. A higher percentage denotes greater efficiency and cost management in service delivery.

Operating Expenses

These expenses are related to the general operation of your plumbing business and are not directly linked to specific service jobs. Examples include administrative salaries, office rent, marketing initiatives, insurance, and vehicle-related expenses.

Net Profit & Percentage

Net Profit, the conclusive figure on your P&L statement, reveals the residual earnings post all expense

deductions from revenue. The Net Profit Margin, a critical percentage, provides insight into the overall profitability and financial viability of your business, encompassing all aspects of operations and overhead.

2. EXTRACTING BUSINESS INSIGHTS FROM P&L ANALYSIS

Trend Identification & Margin Analysis

Regular examination of P&L statements facilitates the identification of both revenue and expense trends, enabling targeted strategies for enhancing service offerings and managing costs. Margin analysis, particularly examining Gross and Net Profit Margins, is crucial for assessing pricing strategies and operational efficiency.

Financial Forecasting

Use your P&L statement to set financial goals and plan for future expenses, such as equipment purchases or expansions. Forecasting helps ensure you have the funds needed to grow your business.

Pricing Strategy

By understanding your COGS and operating expenses, you can

identify areas where costs can be reduced without compromising service quality. For instance, bulk purchasing of materials may lower COGS.

3. BEST PRACTICES FOR PLUMBING BUSINESSES

Routine P&L Review

A monthly review of the P&L statement is advisable to maintain a comprehensive understanding of financial status and to facilitate swift adjustments as required.

Expert Consultation

Engaging with financial advisors or accountants specialising in the plumbing sector can provide bespoke insights and strategies, enhancing financial performance.

Technological Integration

Investing in industry-specific accounting software streamlines financial management, offering detailed and actionable financial reports.

Profitability Emphasis

While increasing revenue is important, focusing on profitability ensures your business is financially sustainable. Analyse which services have the highest profit margins and allocate resources accordingly.

CONCLUSION

Understanding your P&L statement is vital for the success of your plumbing business. It not only offers a snapshot of your financial health, but also provides insights that can guide

strategic decisions. By focusing on key components of the P&L statement and implementing best practices, you can enhance your business's profitability and ensure long-term business success. **TMP**

If you would like to discuss your business health, please contact Kelly+Partners Wollongong on 02 4226 1000.

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For more information about accounting, or business advice relating to insurance, taxation, and more, visit the Kelly+Partners website at kellypartners.com.au

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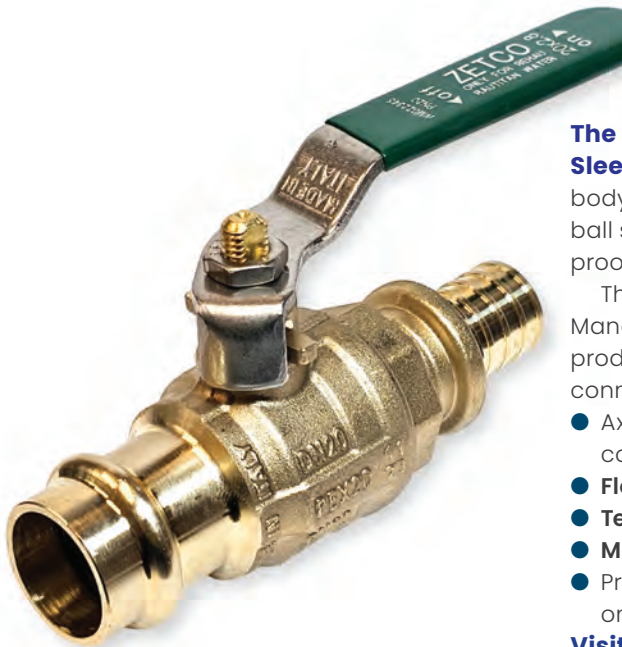


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- Axial PEX connection to be used only with REHAU RAUTITAN compression sleeves and REHAU RAUTITAN water pipe (PE-X).
- **Flow control:** on/off only, not intended for throttling.
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Bill Armstrong has been a member of the Association for over 25 years. He has served on the Executive Committee for the last 21 years. He is a Past President (2003–2005), Guardian (2007–Present) and Life Member (since 2015). Bill has always assisted new and current members. Bill has owned B&J Armstrong Plumbing since 1993. Email admin@armstrongplumbing.net.au or visit www.armstrongplumbing.net.au

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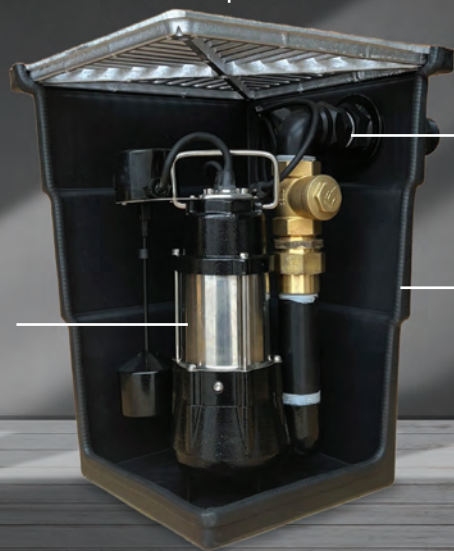
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