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## 10 COVER STORY ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025 QUEENSTOWN, NZ

Our next annual conference, scheduled for 1–5 September 2025, will take place in the magnificent resort town of Queenstown, New Zealand.

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### TO BOOK YOUR ADVERTISING CONTACT

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Master Plumbers NSW  
Membership & Marketing Manager,  
[derek@masterplumbers.com.au](mailto:derek@masterplumbers.com.au)  
**(02) 8789 7000**



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## EDITORIAL

# From the CEO's desk

**A**s we enter the winter season, I'm excited to share some important updates for the Master Plumbers Association of NSW.

First, I want to remind everyone about our upcoming conference in beautiful Queenstown, New Zealand, scheduled from 1–5 September 2025. We have dedicated a feature piece on page 10 to provide you with all the details about this event. It promises to be an excellent opportunity for networking, professional development, and sharing knowledge within our industry. I encourage everyone to mark their calendars and consider attending.

In the spirit of supporting our members, I have been actively collaborating with the NSW Building Commissioner on the supervision of apprentices. We are pushing for an outcome that allows tradespersons who hold a certification to obtain micro-accreditation for supervisory positions. This initiative aims to streamline the process, enabling our skilled tradespeople to step into supervisory roles without the burden of completing Certificate IV, which traditionally takes up to two years.

We have several exciting events planned for the remainder of the year. (See page 20) Our Annual Industry Awards Lunch on Friday 1 August 2025 will be a wonderful occasion to connect and celebrate our achievements as an association. We are also organising golf days, which promise to be enjoyable and foster camaraderie among our members. Additionally, I am pleased to report the great success of our recent tradeshow in collaboration with Plumbers Co-op to mark the event's 70th anniversary, as it was set up by Master Plumbers NSW back then, where we showcased innovations and solutions shaping our industry.

On another note, I am thrilled to announce the launch of the Master Plumbers NSW \$20,000 Guarantee, which will commence in July this year. This initiative reflects our commitment to quality and service and is designed to provide peace of mind to our members and their clients.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to excellence within our industry. Together, we are making a difference and paving the way for advancements in plumbing standards in NSW. **TMP**

**Nathaniel (Nat) Smith**  
**CEO**

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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## Finding a work-life balance

**F**inding a balance between family and business is vital if you want to avoid a trip to a counsellor.

Let's be honest, running a business comes with its fair share of stress. The dream often starts with the idea of being your own boss and having choices. Easier said than done. Living that dream usually requires a few sacrifices.

In today's fast-paced world, balancing work and home life can feel like spinning plates on a windy day. Emails don't stop for school events or family gatherings. Client calls creep into family dinners. That never-ending 'to do' list keeps growing, laughing in the face of your weekend plans. For business owners, the pressure to succeed often blurs the lines between professional and personal life.

But here's the truth: it doesn't have to feel like a constant juggle.

### **DISTRESSED LIFE PLAN**

Finding a sustainable balance isn't about achieving perfection – it's about creating a realistic, flexible plan that works even when life doesn't play fair. Think of it as developing a *distressed life plan* – a concept that acknowledges inevitable chaos and prepares for it, making room for both professional ambition and personal peace.

A distressed life plan isn't a list of perfect goals. It's a down-to-earth strategy that factors in life's messiness: illnesses, missed deadlines, burnt dinners, staffing challenges, and unrealistic customer demands. Think of it as a resilient roadmap to help you navigate both smooth highways and potholes.

This kind of plan isn't about giving up on productivity or success. It's about setting up your life so that when things go off the rails, your relationships, health, and business don't have to suffer unnecessarily.

At the heart of a distressed life plan is clarity on what truly matters.

Ask yourself:

- What are my non-negotiables for family and work?
- What are the signs I'm burning out?
- What fallback systems do I have in place?

Having clear priorities helps you make smarter, faster decisions when pressure is high. For instance, if attending your child's play is a top priority, then other tasks can be rearranged or delegated. Flexibility is your safety net – it's the mindset that says, "Things didn't go as planned today, but that's okay. I can adjust."

Here are some practical tips:

- **Block out time for family, and protect it.** Schedule time with your partner, kids, and yourself just like you would a client call. If you wouldn't cancel a board meeting last minute, don't cancel dinner with your spouse or your downtime.
- **Have a Plan B for emergencies.** Who can step in? Build trust with a second-in-command employee you can swap duties with. Having a plan means you don't have to choose between a work crisis and a personal one.
- **Set tech boundaries.** We're blessed with tools that help us stay connected, but they can also tether us to work 24/7. Try email-free evenings or no-phone dinners. Use project management

tools that keep things clear without constant check-ins.

- **Check in with yourself monthly.**

Ask: Am I spending enough time with my family? Am I enjoying my work? Am I getting enough rest? These simple reflections help you stay aligned and catch burnout early.

- **Build a support network.**

No one is meant to do life – or business – alone. Talk to peers who understand your challenges. Join business or parenting communities. Sometimes, just hearing 'me too' can lighten your mental load.

At the end of the day, balancing work and home isn't about getting it all right. It's about showing up – imperfectly, consistently, and with grace. A distressed life plan isn't about avoiding stress; it's about being ready for it and choosing what matters most when things get tough. **TMP**

### **Greg McElroy**

**President, Master Plumbers Association, NSW**



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 2024-25, with a special focus on business training and knowledge.



# MASTER PLUMBERS NSW

## NEW MEMBERS & PARTNERS



**Master Plumbers NSW is continually growing and strengthening itself, thanks to a steady influx of new members and partners each month.**

Once again, it is with great pleasure that we welcome a huge number of newcomers to our great Association. Strength in numbers is a reality; we all benefit from the combined expertise, passion, and ability of our new friends and partners. Thanks to all of you.

## NEW MEMBERS

- ★ Entire Plumbing
- ★ Northview Plumbing Group Pty Ltd
- ★ G C Kings
- ★ Kennedy's Plumbing & Electrical
- ★ Excelsior Plumbing Services
- ★ Shoalhaven Plumbing
- ★ Howard Plumbing / Hot Water Sydney
- ★ TJB Plumbing PTY LTD
- ★ Mk Waters Plumbing PTY LTD
- ★ Estee Plumbing Pty Ltd
- ★ Complete Plumbing & Drainage
- ★ BMB Plumbing & Roofing
- ★ Webb and Sons Pty Ltd
- ★ Winx Plumbing
- ★ GOPRO PLUMBING PTY LTD
- ★ BDP Plumbing Pty Ltd
- ★ Rayzor Group Pty Ltd
- ★ Aquamat Plumbing Pty Ltd
- ★ S&D Plumbing & Drainage Pty Ltd
- ★ Aqua Rise Plumbing Pty Ltd
- ★ Jetset Plumbing Pty Ltd
- ★ Affordable Plumbing
- ★ Jamie Thorpe Plumbing
- ★ Qplumb
- ★ Kemna Plumbing & Gas
- ★ Aaron Miranda Plumbing
- ★ JD Hodgekiss Plumbing Pty Ltd
- ★ Top Tier Plumbing Pty Ltd

## NEW CORPORATE PARTNERS

Since our last issue, the following Corporate Partners have joined the Master Plumbers NSW community – welcome onboard and thank you for your support.

### SILVER PARTNERS

**Soudal**

### BRONZE PARTNER

**AUSTWORLD  
ServiceTitan**





## COVER STORY: Conference 2025

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# Annual conference Queenstown, New Zealand

Following the resounding success of the “Master Your Industry” annual conference in Fiji last October, Master Plumbers NSW is thrilled to announce its upcoming gathering in the breathtaking setting of Queenstown, New Zealand, from 1–5 September 2025.

**T**his much-anticipated event promises to deliver an enriching experience for plumbing professionals, featuring renowned speakers, insightful workshops, and many leisure activities, all set against the stunning backdrop of one of New Zealand’s premier resort towns.

### CELEBRATION OF INDUSTRY ACHIEVEMENT

The Fiji conference was a landmark event, marked by exceptional engagement and learning opportunities that energised attendees to take their businesses to the next level. Building on that momentum, the upcoming Queenstown conference aims to foster a similar spirit of collaboration and innovation within the plumbing community.

Highlighting the agenda is an impressive roster of speakers, including leading industry experts and business coaches who will share their insights on the evolving landscape of plumbing. One of the notable guests will be Greg Wallace, CEO of Master Plumbers New Zealand. His participation offers delegates a unique chance to gain perspective on the overarching trends shaping the plumbing sector across the Tasman Sea. Wallace’s insights will provide valuable comparisons between the Australian and New Zealand markets, empowering professionals to thrive amid the challenges of a dynamic industry.

### THE POWER OF NETWORKING & LEARNING

The conference is not just a platform for learning; it is also a vital networking opportunity. Attendees will have the chance to connect with fellow plumbing professionals, industry leaders, and sponsors who are eager to

share their expertise and resources. This collaborative environment is ripe for forging new partnerships and collaborations that could lead to future successes.

Through various workshops and panel discussions, participants will delve into topics such as new plumbing technologies, sustainable practices, regulatory changes, and business growth strategies. This knowledge exchange will equip attendees with the tools and insights to modernise their business operations, enhance service delivery, and stay competitive in a rapidly changing market.

### LUXURIOUS HILTON QUEENSTOWN RESORT

This year’s conference will be hosted at the stunning Hilton Queenstown Resort & Spa, surrounded by the beauty of Lake Wakatipu and the majestic Southern Alps. The picturesque setting adds an element of tranquillity and inspiration to the entire experience. Delegates can expect to develop professionally during the day while indulging in the comforts and hospitality offered by one of New Zealand’s premier hotels.

With spots selling quickly, swift registration is key to securing a place at this not-to-be-missed conference.

### A TRULY FAMILY AFFAIR

Beyond the business sessions, the conference offers attendees and their families a variety of thrilling activities that make this event a perfect getaway. Queenstown is an adventure-lover’s paradise, offering skiing, boating, wine tasting, and clay shooting, among many other pursuits.

Skiing enthusiasts can hit the slopes, taking advantage of the nearby ski resorts with world-class facilities. For those seeking a more leisurely experience,



wine tasting tours in the region's vineyards present an opportunity to explore the unique flavours of Central Otago wines.

Families can enjoy boat rides on Lake Wakatipu, offering breathtaking views and a moment of relaxation amidst the conference's excitement. The array of activities ensures that participants can blend professional development with quality time spent with loved ones, making this event an all-encompassing experience.

### LOCK IN YOUR SPOT

In today's fast-paced industry landscape, continued education and networking are paramount. The Master Plumbers NSW Conference in Queenstown promises to deliver on both fronts. With a dynamic agenda, opportunities for professional growth, and various enjoyable activities, attendees are encouraged to book their spots as soon as possible.

Master Plumbers NSW understands the importance of a nurturing and supportive community for plumbing professionals. This conference is more than just a collection of sessions; it is an opportunity to come together as a united front, sharing successes, challenges, and strategies that can elevate the industry as a whole.

As September approaches, excitement builds for what promises to be an unforgettable event. This is your chance to engage with leaders in the field, refine your skills, and enjoy the majesty of Queenstown.

Don't miss out – secure your ticket today and get ready to embark on a transformative journey in early September.

### CONFERENCE WITH A PURPOSE

This Master Plumbers NSW conference in Queenstown represents an invaluable opportunity for the plumbing community. By combining professional development with leisure and family-friendly activities, this event emphasises the importance of balance in both work and life. With an array of topics to explore, expert speakers to learn from, and a community of like-minded professionals to connect with, participants will undoubtedly find inspiration and insight that extend well beyond the conference itself.

As the plumbing industry continues to embrace innovation and sustainability, gathering at such events not only bolsters individual growth but also strengthens the trade's collective resilience. So, prepare for an enriching experience in stunning Queenstown this September, where business and pleasure come together perfectly. **TMP**





## ASSOCIATION UPDATES

It's been a busy few months! We send a fond farewell to our outgoing Marketing, Membership & Events Manager Julie Woods, and welcome a complement of new committee members.

### CHANGING OF THE GUARD...

#### FAREWELL TO JULIE WOODS

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Julie Woods for her contributions during her time with Master Plumbers NSW. As our Membership, Marketing, and Events Manager, Julie played a key role in delivering outstanding events, building strong corporate partnerships, supporting our magazine, and championing member engagement. Her dedication, professionalism, and collaborative spirit have left a lasting impact on the organisation. We wish her every success in her next chapter.

With this change, Derek Raney will step into the role of Membership and Marketing Manager, while Jeanette Nakhoul, in her capacity as Operations Manager, will now oversee the coordination of events.

#### WELCOME NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

##### Leonie Crowe

##### Murphy Plumbing Projects Pty Ltd

Leonie's plumbing career originally commenced in the family business working both on and off the tools, and later working as the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Officer for Master Plumbers NSW. In this role, she was instrumental in developing and delivering industry-specific safety systems, coordinating apprentice training programs, conducting on-site audits, and engaging directly with contractors, business owners, and government bodies to promote safe work practices across the trade.

Now with an additional 15 years' experience in the plumbing and construction industry, Leonie is a seasoned WHS professional with a strong background in the

plumbing industry, driving safety compliance and cultural change across both public and private sectors. As an Executive Committee Member of Master Plumbers NSW, Leonie brings a practical, industry-informed perspective to shaping safety initiatives and supporting the professional development of members across the state.

##### Nathan Wilson Rescue U Plumbing

Nathan is General Manager of Rescue U Plumbing, and joins as an Executive Committee Member with a strong reputation for problem-solving and customer-first service. Under Nathan's leadership, Rescue U Plumbing has built its reputation on a clear core value: Finding Solutions for Our Customers. This commitment is more than a tagline; it's a philosophy that shapes every aspect of the business.

With a focus on proactive solutions and a dedication to team training and retention, Nathan ensures his crew is equipped to tackle any plumbing issue – big or small – at any time of day. His passion for delivering reliable, round-the-clock support has not only set his company apart, but it also reflects the kind of forward-thinking and service-driven mindset he brings to our Association.

##### Callum McKay Clarke McKay Pty Ltd

With an impressive 48 years in the plumbing and construction industry, Callum McKay is a highly respected figure whose leadership and expertise have helped shape the trade in NSW. After 22 years with WG Clarke, Callum took ownership of the business in 2004,

renaming it Clarke McKay Pty Ltd and continuing its legacy of delivering high-quality commercial plumbing projects.

His extensive experience spans a wide range of complex builds – including schools, hospitals, aged care facilities, leisure centres, distribution centres and industrial warehouses – earning him a reputation with his technical knowledge, reliability, and professionalism.

Callum's influence goes beyond the job site. As a dedicated advocate for the industry, he served as President of Master Plumbers NSW for four consecutive years (2018–2021). He continues to support and shape the future of the trade as the current Chairperson of Master Plumbers Apprentices Limited and as a Guardian of Master Plumbers NSW.

Known for his mentorship and unwavering commitment to training and development, Callum remains a strong voice for the next generation of plumbers, leading with both passion and purpose.

#### THANKS TO OUTGOING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to Andrew Murphy, Kevin Yau, and Matthew Braid for their time, dedication, and valuable contributions as members of the Executive Committee.

Their commitment to the industry, thoughtful leadership, and willingness to give their time and expertise have helped shape our direction and support our ongoing initiatives.

Thank you, Andrew, Kevin, and Matthew for playing a vital role in strengthening our community. **TMP**



## INSURANCE

**P**ost COVID, insurance costs have continually outpaced inflation with regards to the increasing premium charged by insurers. According to Business NSW, one in three NSW businesses reported a greater than 30% increase to their business insurance from 2024 to 2025. Unfortunately, industries that are deemed 'high risk' are bearing the brunt of these increases and the Plumbing industry is one of the hardest hit.

### Why are plumbers deemed high risk?

The key driver in the increasing cost of Plumbers insurance, particularly for Public Liability, is the increasing frequency and severity of Public Liability claims. Water damage and injury to contractor claims are resulting in not only a sharp increase in premium, but insurers either excluding key risks such as working in multi-storey buildings (thus leaving the business exposed) or simply no longer offering to provide cover to Plumbers in general.

### Water damage claims

The combination of the proliferation of apartments in the capital cities, along with a shift towards crimping and substandard flexi-hoses leading to water damage claims has resulted in many insurers paying substantial Public Liability claims where a Plumber has been deemed 'at fault' for a water leak in a high-rise building. Unlike a domestic, single storey home where the damage is restricted to a single dwelling, water leaks in multi-storey apartments & commercial buildings have led to a significant increase to claims in the hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars.

As recently as March 2025, there was footage of significant flooding

The cost of business insurance for the Plumbing sector has increased dramatically since 2020. Andrew Faber, Account Director & Head of Trades for MGA Insurance Brokers explains why this is, and what you can do to reign in your insurance costs.

occurring at the new Star Casino Residential Tower in the Gold Coast. With over 40 floors impacted and a repair bill that has the capacity to reach \$20,000,000, this incident is an example as to why insurers are either abandoning the Plumbing sector or charging significantly higher premiums than in prior years.

*Key Tip – We are aware of some insurers that cover Plumbers, however they exclude claims when working in any building that is greater than 2 storeys. Check your policy today to see if this applies to your cover.*

### Injury to contractor claims

Injury to contractor claims are fast becoming the scourge of the construction trade industry. Many business owners operate under the false assumption that when engaging a sub-contractor who carries their own Workers Compensation insurance via iCare, they carry no risk with regards to costs associated with an injury to that sub-contractor. The reality is that iCare will proceed with legal action against the principal contractor if they believe that they had contributed to the injury to the sub-contractor.

Why is iCare doing this? In 2022, iCare reported a \$1.5 billion deficit and was compelled to act. One of its actions has been to ramp up the recoveries process whereby iCare recovers the cost of an injury claim against the contractor responsible for the worker, much in the same way a car insurance company will seek recoveries from the at fault driver in a motor vehicle accident. Whilst these claims are covered by a Plumbers public liability insurance, they are typically claims that don't settle for less than \$100,000 creating further pressure on insurance premiums.

### How can I reduce my insurance spend without putting myself or my business at risk?

Don't DIY your insurance program. Talk to an expert. The good news is that after three years of reducing capacity, we are starting to see legacy insurers and new underwriting agencies re-opening their doors to the Plumbing sector. By speaking with an Insurance Broker that specialises in the Plumbing industry, you can be assured that your business insurance is being considered by all the markets available, rather than just the same markets from three years prior. A broker that knows the Plumbing sector should be able to save you money on your insurance spend, but most importantly, will ensure that you are making an educated decision on your insurance to get you the most appropriate level of coverage.

*MGA Insurance Brokers have been working in collaboration with the Master Plumbers in NSW for over 20 years. We are thrilled to be the appointed exclusive General Insurance Broker for 2025 and beyond. If you do not feel that you are getting the best deal for your insurance program, please contact MGA Insurance Brokers on (02) 8436 9200 or contact Andrew Faber directly on 0400 130 199 or [andrew.faber@mga.com](mailto:andrew.faber@mga.com) for an obligation free review.*

*Note from Master Plumbers NSW: Should you contact MGA Insurance Brokers Pty Ltd and accept their recommendation for insurance, the association will receive a financial benefit as part of our arrangement with MGA.*

*This information is not intended as advice and should not replace professional guidance. For insurance decisions, review the insurer's policy wording from MGA. Andrew Faber is an Authorised Representative (No. 001282925) of MGA Insurance Brokers Pty Ltd, ABN 29 008 096 277, AFSL 244601.*





## WOMEN IN PLUMBING

**CHRISTINE CURBY** – Key Commercial Projects and Homebuilders Manager at Cook's Plumbing Supplies – is a leader in commercial plumbing sales in Australasia. Below, Christine describes her career in an ever-changing industry.

# Always up for a challenge

I was young when I first started in this industry 35 years ago – I'm not saying how young, as I know everyone reading can do maths, ha!

It was an office position with a company that made baths and spas. It wasn't long before I was handed the keys to a fancy sports car: a manual, and not the usual station wagon, might I add. The car had belonged to my previous boss, and since his lease hadn't expired, it became my new company vehicle. Could I drive a manual? Heck no! I had had a few lessons years before when I was learning to drive, but that was the extent of it. But anyone who knows me knows that I'm always up for a challenge! After a few quick laps around the block with one of the other reps, I was off. Stop, start, stop, start! It also would have been nice if someone had shown me how to do hill starts – something I quickly learned while driving around the Eastern Suburbs.

### SHOCK OF THE NEW

This new role as a rep (as it was known then, rather than account manager) was a shock to me. It wasn't something I thought I wanted, at least not at the time. Fast forward 35 years, and I'm still in a similar role – just with more responsibility and an automatic car! I was placed in the role because my new boss, who had been there for all of three weeks, decided he needed to bring a female from his previous company over. Apparently, my role suited her best.

I'm pretty sure if my old desk was still around, you'd see the scratch marks on it from me not wanting to let go. But on the upside, I had just become the first female account manager for the company in both Australia and New Zealand. I guess that's exciting, though I didn't think so at the time. Let me be honest: being a female in a male-dominated industry had its challenges, especially

“BEING A FEMALE IN A MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRY HAD ITS CHALLENGES.”





**Above left:** Christine (left) and colleague Sharon Hosford. **Above right:** Christine says she works with a brilliant team of colleagues.

meeting customers face-to-face for the first time and fielding questions regarding the plumbing of spas, etc, with them not expecting me to know the answers. Little did they know I had decided to spend a day in the warehouse and turned a bath (the shell) into a spa. I drilled holes, glued jets on, etc. I was armed with all the knowledge I needed. Well, not all, but it certainly helped.

### ONLY FEMALE AT THE TABLE

In the early days, traveling to the country and being the only female rep at the dinner or breakfast table in the motel was intimidating. I soon became quite friendly with the vending machine. There were no Uber Eats back then, nor room service in most cases. My options were chicken dinner (chicken chips) or a cheese platter (Twisties) – a habit I still have today, although I rarely see Twisties in vending machines anymore. Now it's mostly chili chips and Doritos!

Quick trips to certain rural areas, which I won't name as I don't want to offend, were just that: quick. I'd go and do my calls and leave. Management told me it wasn't safe for a female to stay overnight.

I once showed up at a builder's Christmas party on a construction site as the only female invited, only to be greeted with cheering and clapping. At first, I thought it was a bit extreme, but then I found out they thought I was the stripper they'd been promised later that afternoon. God forbid a woman would be on a construction site for any other reason, ha! I guess I should be grateful they weren't booing, as they were when they realised I wasn't their afternoon entertainment. Someone else might have turned around and left, but not me; I wasn't leaving without my sausage sandwich.

### EARNING RESPECT

In a way, I think moments like that helped me earn, maybe even demand, respect. I've attended farewells for customers as the only female, and I've even shared a drink of Rakia with Croatian builders on-site at 11 a.m. to celebrate an order I'd just received. Apparently, it was a tradition (I'm still not sure about that), but I wasn't about to question it and risk offending my

customers. Not much work got done after that, but hey, I had earned my keep with that order in hand!

I've built some amazing long-term relationships with customers who've helped put me on the map over the years – you know who you are – and I'm grateful for the friendships and connections I've made along the way, both amongst the customers and colleagues I work with or have worked with in the past.

### THE UNEXPECTED

I still get that brief pause when I answer the phone, especially when someone's been recommended to me, and they expect Chris to be a man. That's why I use 'Christine' in my email signature, even though my parents are pretty much the only ones who call me that.

I get great satisfaction driving past a high-rise apartment building or when staying in a motel, knowing I played a part in its build or refurbishment, even if it was only relating to the supply of products. It's the same feeling I get when I drive through a new housing estate and come across one of my customer's signs in the streets.

I was asked if this is still a male-dominated industry, and truth is yes, it is. And I think it always will be. But that, I believe, is largely because fewer women are in the industry compared to men. However, over the years, the gap has decreased significantly.

I've been with Cook's for almost 12 years now, and we have a female manager running one of our Queensland branches, and she's absolutely killing it! We also have many other successful women across our 16 cost centres – too many to name, but without whom I could not do my job! **TMP**



Christine Curby is the Key Commercial Projects and Homebuilders Manager at Cook's Plumbing Supplies. Respected for her great professionalism, Christine has expertise in the sales of bathroom wares, kitchen appliances, and hot water systems to a broad range of builders and commercial plumbers. For more information visit [cooksplumbing.com.au](http://cooksplumbing.com.au)





## FEATURE: Wet wipes

# The art of wiping

## Part 2

In our last issue, we presented Part 1 of a two-part feature by **JOHN CHAUMONT** outlining the history of wet wipes and their potential hazards. Below, we conclude with an analysis of legal issues relating to this product category.

### FEDERAL LAWSUIT: ACCC VS. KIMBERLEY-CLARK (KLEENEX) & PENTAL (WHITE KING) 2016

In December 2016 the ACCC (Australian Competition & Consumer Commission) followed a complaint from the consumer advocate group 'Choice' and initiated proceedings in the Federal Court against two companies: Kimberly Clark-Australia Ltd (Kleenex flushable wipes), and Pental Ltd (White King flushable wipes), alleging they "made false and misleading representations in marketing their wet wipes as 'flushable'."

The ACCC alleged that:

Kimberly-Clark, between 2013 and 2016, advertised their Kleenex wipes as "flushable", "completely flushable", "able to be flushed in the toilet", and able to "break down in sewerage system or septic tank".<sup>1</sup>

Pental, between 2011 and 2016, advertised their White King wipes as "flushable toilet wipe[s]" which disintegrate as toilet paper. Furthermore, Pental marketed their products as "made from a specially designed material, which will disintegrate in the sewage system when flushed, just like toilet paper".<sup>1</sup>

The ACCC argued both companies and their respective claims "engaged in misleading and deceptive conduct and made false or misleading representations, in contravention of the Australian Consumer Law".<sup>1</sup>

Kimberly-Clark received one of Choice's annual 'shonky awards' for their Kleenex wipes in 2015, with the consumer advocate group publicly (and humorously) questioning the 'flushability' of the product.

Interestingly, Kimberly-Clark had discontinued the products in question (prior to this lawsuit) in May 2016,

the timing of which raises eyebrows. Kimberly-Clark has since introduced a new 'flushable' wipe product.<sup>2</sup>

### FEDERAL COURT RULING: PENTAL 2018

In April 2018 the Federal Court ruled that Pental Ltd made "false and misleading representations" about their White King 'flushable' wipes, ordering them to pay penalties of \$700,000. (See Figure 1.) The ruling was a win for network operators, the ACCC stating, "The ACCC took action against Pental due to concerns that consumers were being misled into believing that the wipes were suitable to be flushed. These White King wipes can't be flushed down the toilet, and Australian wastewater authorities face significant problems if they are because they can cause blockages in household and municipal sewerage systems".<sup>3</sup>

### FEDERAL COURT RULING: KIMBERLEY-CLARK 2019

The Federal Court dismissed the majority of the ACCC's case against Kimberly-Clark in June 2019, except for their 'made in Australia' representation, which was proven false. Questionably, the Court found that Kimberly-Clark's claims regarding 'flushability' were not false or misleading. Ruling that there was "insufficient evidence to show that Kleenex Cottonelle 'flushable' wipes in this case, as opposed to 'wipes' products more broadly, had contributed to the problems in municipal sewerage systems." (See Figure 2.) This meant that although it was accepted that wipes posed significant risk of harm to a sewage system, there was insufficient evidence that damage was caused by Kleenex wipes, not other wet wipe products. The Court also ruled that Kimberly-



**Left: Figure 1: Pental 'White King' products subject to lawsuit (source: ACCC takes court action on 'flushable' wipes | ACCC).**

**Below: Figure 2: Kimberly-Clark 'Kleenex' products subject to lawsuit (source: ACCC takes court action on 'flushable' wipes | ACCC).**



Clark had reasonably relied on guidelines developed by "nonwoven industry associations" to verify the 'flushable' label.<sup>4</sup> The guidelines, as referred to and related to the prior generation (2013–2016) of flushable wipes, were called INDANA/EDANA 'Guidelines for Assessing the Flushability of Disposable Nonwoven Products'. Kimberly-Clark used these guidelines in the absence of an Australian standard at that time.

This head-scratching ruling, despite Kimberly-Clark's claims that their products were "able to be flushed in the toilet", and able to "break down in sewerage system or septic tank" would quickly be appealed by the ACCC.

### FEDERAL COURT RULING: ACCC APPEAL 2019

In response to the Kimberly-Clark ruling, the ACCC argued that the 'guidelines' developed to validate the 'flushable' label "were not an independent testing regime," were developed "without substantial input from wastewater authorities," and were actually developed by manufacturers of 'flushable' labelled products (which naturally raises conflict of interest concerns).<sup>4</sup>

In July 2019 the ACCC formally appealed the decision, stating, "We will argue on appeal that Kimberly-Clark's flushable claims should have been found to be misleading because there was evidence of the risk of

harm these wipes posed to the sewerage system, and that the trial judge was wrong to require evidence that these particular wipes had caused actual harm".<sup>5</sup>

### FEDERAL COURT FINAL RULING: ACCC DISMISSAL 2020

In June 2020, despite the ACCC's argument that proof of actual harm was not required as evidence as a whole when determining whether 'flushable' claims are misleading or not, the Federal Court dismissed the ACCC's appeal, ruling that Kimberly-Clark "did not make false and misleading claims that its Kleenex Cottonelle toilet wipes were flushable".<sup>6</sup>

In an interesting turn of events, the Court validated the ACCC's concerns and proposed a potential solution, stating "blockages and fatbergs pose what has become an increasing problem for households and municipal wastewater authorities. One response would be to introduce legislation or standards governing the characteristics of what can and what cannot be marketed or sold as 'flushable'".<sup>6</sup>

### WORLD-FIRST STANDARDS

Faced with the disappointing Federal Court ruling, and suggestions from the Federal Judge for legislation regarding flushability, consumer groups, network

### COMPLIANT FLUSHABLE WIPES: AUTHOR'S REVIEW

After learning of the various compliant wet wipes on the market in Australia I made a guilt-free trip down to my nearest supermarket to purchase some of these wipes... Strictly for research purposes, of course. My verdict? It would be impolite to discuss such personal bathroom matters. You will have to go and find out for yourself.



## COVER STORY: Wet wipes



Figure 3: Examples of 'Flushable', and 'Do not flush' symbols, copyright to Standards Australia. AS/NZS 5328, Flushable Products.

operators and industry standard authorities joined forces and took matters into their own hands.

In May 2022, Standards Australia published the highly anticipated standard, AS/NZS 5328, *Flushable Products*. The standard, praised by sewer authorities all over Australia, sets out strict testing and performance criteria for manufacturers who wish to classify and label their product as 'flushable.' The standard excludes toilet paper, liquids, and soluble products, appearing to take direct aim at flushable wipes. To assist manufacturers in developing these products, the standard provides six strict tests, which must be passed to validate a product's 'flushability.' It also sets out how products are to be labelled as flushable, including the size, location, position and appearance of such a label. (See Figure 3.)

Water Services Association of Australia Executive Director, Adam Lovell, praised the standard: "We welcome the release of this Australian and New Zealand Standard. Clear specifications for manufacturers and

clearer labelling for customers will help reduce pipe blockages and extra costs for water utilities and customers due to inappropriate material being flushed down the toilet."<sup>7</sup>

The standard is voluntary; however, according to WSAA, manufacturers who wish to display a flushable symbol on their product packaging must meet the requirements of the standard. WSAA also indicated there would be a two-year grace period to "allow manufacturers of products to review their packaging to ensure it reflects the requirements in the Standard."<sup>8</sup>

### DO TRULY FLUSHABLE WIPES EXIST?

*"A truly flushable wipe should not float, should quickly submerge to the bottom of a toilet bowl to be washed away and should be disposed of by the sludge. It should disintegrate under agitation, and eventually not damage any sewer system or any sewage treatment system."*<sup>9</sup>

The question therefore remains: are there truly flushable wet wipes out there? Wipes that are compliant with AS/NZS 5328, displaying the prized 'flushable' logo on their packaging? Yes, but not many. Here are the early innovators.

- 1) **Kimberly-Clark (Kleenex)**, who can simultaneously lay claim to being both one of the early innovators in this space, and the 'true inspiration' behind

## Do you need to connect to a PEX or PB System?



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**SDR 11** SDR11 PEX TO EPS PEX CRIMP



**SDR 9** SDR9 PEX TO EPS PEX CRIMP



**SDR 7.4** SDR7.4 PEX TO EPS PEX CRIMP



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Figure 4: DUDEwipes. XL. Just don't, dude.  
(source: <https://dudewipes.com/products/dude-wipes>).

the lawsuits, lawsuits, lawsuits, and subsequent Australian Standard.<sup>10</sup> Kleenex displays the logo on their packaging, stating on their website that they “meet and exceed the requirements of the Australia and New Zealand Flushable Product Standard (AS/NZS 5328:2022)”. Then again, they claimed flushability in 2013, leading to this whole saga. On sale at the major supermarkets, and elsewhere.

- 2) **CleanLife**, who produce an AS/NZS 5328 “certified to flush” wipe, on sale at various retailers across Australia.
- 3) **Sorbent**, who produce a hypo-allergenic wipe for those with a more sensitive behind. On sale at the major supermarkets, and elsewhere.
- 4) **DUDEwipes**; such a wipe could exist only in America. (See Figure 4.) Available for purchase at Amazon and Walmart. I highly recommend this product. Just kidding... Do not buy these wipes out of principle on the name alone.<sup>11</sup> **TMP**

#### Footnotes

- (1) See <https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/accc-takes-court-action-on-flushable-wipes>
- (2) See <https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/appeal-on-kleenex-flushable-wipes-claim-dismissed>
- (3) See <https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/pental-to-pay-700000-in-penalties-for-flushable-wipes-claims>
- (4) See <https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/court-finds-kimberly-clark-did-not-mislead-consumers-with-flushable-claims>
- (5) See <https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/accc-appeals-flushable-wipes-decision>
- (6) See <https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/appeal-on-kleenex-flushable-wipes-claim-dismissed>
- (7) See <https://www.standards.org.au/news/flushable-products-standard-now-available>
- (8) See <http://wsaa.stage.wsaa.asn.au/sites/default/files/paragraphs/attachments/FAQ%20Release%20of%20Flushable%20Products%20Standard%20May%202022%20updated%2029%20June%202022.pdf>
- (9) See <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1528083718795910>
- (10) See <https://www.kleenex.com.au/flushability>
- (11) See <https://dudewipes.com/products/dude-wipes>.



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

# 40

Years

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## EVENTS

Master Plumbers NSW events offer fantastic opportunities to connect with fellow members, industry leaders, and partners. Below, we itemise some of the major events taking place in the next six months...

### ANNUAL INDUSTRY AWARDS LUNCH 1 August 2025

This year's Annual Industry Awards Lunch will take place at Waterview in Bicentennial Park, Sydney Olympic Park

Celebrate excellence in our trade and honour the individuals and businesses making a difference. These awards are recognition from the industry for outstanding accomplishments, and place a spotlight on exceptional contributions to the plumbing industry. Award categories include:

#### Gold Medal – Apprentice of the Year

The Gold Medal was first awarded by the Association in 1906, and many well-known and highly respected tradespeople have been recipients during this long history. It carries with it a great deal of distinction and is competed for on a statewide basis. The Gold Medal is awarded to an Apprentice Plumber who has completed their apprenticeship in the past twelve months (since 31 July 2024) and can demonstrate that they are an exceptionally high achiever.

#### Excellence in Work, Health & Safety

This award recognises and encourages safe practices and is awarded to a business enterprise for professionalism and initiative in Work, Health & Safety.

#### Domestic Project Award

This award recognises the most outstanding work performed on a domestic/residential plumbing, drainage, or gas project.

#### Commercial Project Award

This award recognises the most outstanding work performed on a commercial plumbing project. Winning this award can enhance your reputation and showcase your skills and expertise to the industry and clients.

#### Award for Innovation

The Innovation Award in the plumbing industry recognises innovation in a product or service to the plumbing industry within NSW providing a significant financial, societal, or environmental benefit.

#### Master Plumber of the Year

The plumber who demonstrates the highest standards of work, work ethic, workmanship, timely completion of work, workplace cleanliness, technical knowledge, attention to detail, WHS awareness, compliance, and customer service. The ideal candidate will be someone who actively seeks professional development opportunities, attends workshops and demonstrates a commitment to personal growth within the plumbing industry.

Join fellow members, corporate partners, and industry peers for a memorable afternoon of great food, networking, laughter, and recognition.

#### Eligibility criteria and nomination forms:

[www.masterplumbers.com.au/industry-awards](http://www.masterplumbers.com.au/industry-awards)  
Nominations close at 5pm,  
Friday 4 July 2025.

### 2025 MEMBERS CONFERENCE: QUEENSTOWN, NZ 1–5 September 2025

After the success of our 2024 Fiji conference, we're heading across the Tasman to the breathtaking Otago region of New Zealand. Gain valuable insights from world-class speakers, build your business acumen, and enjoy an unforgettable overseas experience with fellow members in Queenstown.

You won't want to miss it!  
See pages 10–11 for more details.

### MEMBERS MELBOURNE CUP HARBOUR CRUISE, SYDNEY 4 November 2025

Experience the excitement of the race that stops the nation while cruising Sydney Harbour. Gather your team for a relaxing afternoon away from the tools and enjoy great food, good company, and spectacular views.

### GOLF DAY & REGIONAL FORUM, BONVILLE, NSW 20 November 2025

We're heading to one of Australia's favourite golf courses on the beautiful Coffs Coast. For golfers of all skill levels, a day playing Ambrose is the perfect way to network with fellow plumbers in a relaxed setting.

After your day of golf, take part in our Regional Forum – an open discussion on key industry issues and how the Association can support you. Of course, if you're not a golfer, you are welcome to join us just for the forum.

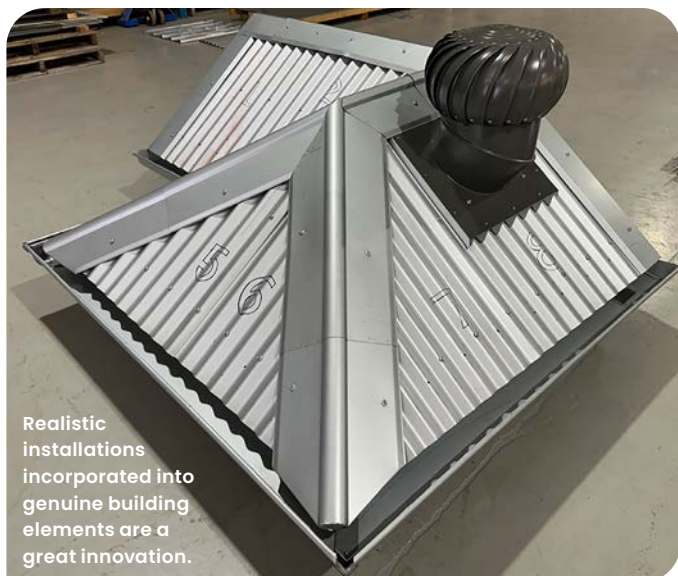
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## TRAINING

At Master Plumbers NSW's own training facility in Seven Hills, the team is constantly improving the way education is delivered to better reflect real-world industry practice. **MARK BROWN** reports.

# Roofing training: Keep it REAL!



Realistic installations incorporated into genuine building elements are a great innovation.



Training rigs include high-quality plumbing and building products supplied by members and supporters.

One of the ways we're achieving realism in our training workshop is by designing integrated training projects that blend key elements of roofing and sheet metal work into realistic builds. These projects not only reinforce student learning, but they also give apprentices a clearer picture of how different components come together on site.

Rather than treating subjects in isolation, our team has worked hard to develop training scenarios where students apply multiple skills across a single job – just like they would in the field. These might include tasks such as measuring, setting out, fabricating, and installing metal roof sheeting and associated flashings in simulated environments. This approach improves knowledge retention and gives students a stronger sense of job sequencing, quality, and safety.

### TRAINING RIGS

Central to this model is our in-house design and fabrication of training rigs. These rigs are built with longevity and adaptability in mind, allowing us to tailor them to various roofing challenges while still targeting core competencies and assessment outcomes. The process of designing these rigs brings together trainers, technical staff, and input from external partners, ensuring the work students do reflects current industry standards and practices.

### INDUSTRY PARTNERS

We also draw on the expertise of product suppliers and manufacturers to inform our training delivery. Our longstanding relationships with manufacturers and suppliers mean we stay updated about emerging trends in roofing materials and tools – insights we actively pass on to students. Over the past year, we've hosted a number

of on-site tool demonstrations for staff and students alike, showcasing innovations such as battery-powered rivet guns, nibblers, and shears, i.e., tools that are quickly becoming the new norm on modern job sites.

By blending practical scenarios with supplier insights and tailored rig design, we're proud to offer apprentices an engaging, industry-relevant learning experience that prepares them for the challenges of today's roofing trade. **TMP**



Master Plumbers NSW's Mark Brown is Training Facilities Manager.





## FEATURE: Member Profile

# Aleck Parry

Aleck Parry, Director, Hot Flush Plumbing, has created a thriving business based around a close-knit team, strong family connections, and a capacity to keep learning.

**Q How and when did your career in plumbing begin?** I rode BMX as a kid and a couple of the older guys we rode with were plumbers. When it came time for school work experience, I worked with them and really enjoyed it. However, when I finished school I wasn't really sure what career to pursue. But before I wasted any time (BMX riding) my mum enrolled me in a plumbing pre-apprenticeship course at TAFE. I had work experience during the TAFE course with a company, and started my apprenticeship with that company once the course finished.

**Q Were you destined to work in the plumbing industry from an early age?** My uncle was a plumber, and I suppose I was influenced by his example. But I probably need to thank my mum for enrolling me in that pre-apprenticeship TAFE course because that is where it started.

**Q Have you worked in any industries apart from plumbing?** I worked as part of the ground crew for a tree surgeon temporarily during and after school. I also worked with my dad during school holidays as a house painter.

**Q Have you had many mentors throughout your career?** Each and every plumbing contractor I have worked with has taught me something about the industry, as did my dad, who ran his own business.

**Q Would you describe yourself as a 'people person'?** It depends on the people.

**“FAMILY HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE SUPPORT BEHIND EVERYTHING.”**



Aleck Parry (second from right) and the team at Hot Flush Plumbing.

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

Probably the [transition from] copper to Pex. Also, the change from using Oxy/Acc for brazing to now using press fittings. In addition, the politics regarding the use of gas has created changes to our industry. I can see that changing again very soon as customers are experiencing disappointment with alternatives to gas.

**Q What has been your most challenging assignment or project?**

I took on my first commercial project, which was a fire station, and it was during the pandemic. We did the Civil, Plumbing, Roof, and Cladding. It rained almost every week, material prices went crazy, and the client (NSW Government) was trying to screw us. We completed the project on schedule, and we were able to make a decent profit despite the challenges. I learnt a lot of lessons around contracts, commercial builders, and pushing through to finding a solution.

**Q What has been your greatest achievement?**

I would say getting my plumbing contractor's licence.

**Q How important has your family been to your career?**

Family has always been the support behind everything. From my parents and their support and the example of my dad as a business owner. Now, as a father, the importance of running a successful business for my own children to benefit from is a motivator. But they are the reason I do what I do.

**Q Will technology ever fix all plumbing problems?**

I don't think so. There will always be advances from technology, but that also brings more problems to solve.

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

Yes, there has been.

**Q Is plumbing the best career in the world?**

Definitely. The variety of work, and the different skills you can develop, are massive. Also, the ability to work anywhere and be in a valued trade provides opportunity wherever you decide to travel.

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

Sailing a yacht between Hamilton Island and the Whitsundays. **TMP**

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## BUSINESS BANTER

# Cash is still king

### ABOUT KEYSTONE

Keystone was born in 2010, but our team of legal specialists have been working in construction, law and business for over 25 years. This expertise, combined with our caring, yet no-nonsense approach, is what helps us attract clients – and keep them.

When we first started out, our focus was on helping construction clients in litigation and debt recovery matters. Since then, we've evolved in line with need. Today, we partner with select clients as construction and commercial legal advisors, in addition to acting as litigators.

Importantly, we're not just a group of law professionals. We see ourselves as a family of fast-acting legal experts committed to shared goals. In our firm we have two registered adjudicators offering a unique opportunity to clients for insight into the adjudication process.

### PAYMENT CLAIM

On and from the last day of each month (or earlier, if your contract allows), you can serve a payment claim seeking a progress payment. Your payment claim must:

- Identify the contract
  - Indicate the amount claimed
  - Itemise the works done, and
- Include a statement that "This is a payment claim made pursuant to the *Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act*".

**LOU STOJANOVSKI** from Keystone Lawyers offers some valuable advice on your ability to utilise the Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act (the Act) to enhance your cash flow and manage bad debtors.



## “THE ADJUDICATION PROCESS IS QUICK.”

### PAYMENT SCHEDULE

If your client wishes to dispute your payment claim they must serve you with a payment schedule within 10 business days of receiving your payment claim. Importantly, if the amount they propose to pay is less they must state the amount they propose to pay and the reasons they are withholding full payment.

### PAYMENT TERMS

Under the Act the maximum payment terms in the construction industry are:

- 15 business days for a Principal paying a Head Contractor;
- 20 business days for a Head Contractor paying a

Subcontractor or Supplier or a Subcontractor and Sub-Subcontractor;

- As per the contract for exempt residential construction contracts, or if no payment terms are specified, 10 business days.

### APPLYING FOR ADJUDICATION

If you receive a payment schedule that you disagree with, you can apply to appoint an independent adjudicator to determine the dispute. Strict time limits apply, and you must lodge your application for adjudication within 10 business days of receiving the payment schedule.

### NO PAYMENT SCHEDULE RECEIVED

If no payment schedule, the full amount becomes payable on the due date. If the full amount is not

paid on the due date, a claimant can elect to:

- Issue a further notice and allow another 5 business days for the client to issue payment schedule so that you may apply for adjudication, or

● Recover as a debt due in Court. If you decide to give your client a further opportunity to provide a payment schedule, you must lodge your adjudication application within 10 business days of the expiry of the 5 business day period.

## SUSPENSION

You may also, upon giving 2 business day's notice of your intention to do so, suspend works.

Suspension under the Act is powerful. You are entitled to recover any loss or expense you incur (e.g. demobilisation costs) as a result of the removal by your client from the contract of any part of your work, and you are not liable for any loss or damage suffered by your client, or by any person claiming through

your client, as a consequence of you not carrying out the work during the period of suspension.

## ADJUDICATION PROCESS

When making an adjudication application you will need to:

- Include evidence of Contract
- Include evidence of works completed, e.g. photos of works done
- Include emails agreeing to undertake additional works, and
- Address the reasons for withholding payment.

Your client will have an opportunity to make submissions to the appointed Adjudicator advancing their reasons for withholding payment.

The adjudication process is quick. Generally, a decision is made within 10–15 business days of an appointment of an adjudicator.

## ENFORCEMENT

Once a determination is made your client will have 5 business days to

pay. If they fail to do so, you can obtain a certificate and register it with the Court as a Judgment debt.

## HOW CAN WE HELP?

The adjudication process can be confusing and strict time limits apply for those wishing to utilise the Act to recover their debts. We are experts in this area and can offer you guidance and assistance to ensure you maximise your chances of success. **TMP**



Lou Stojanovski, Director, Keystone Lawyers, is an expert in matters relating to construction, law and business. For more information, visit [keystonelawyers.com.au](http://keystonelawyers.com.au)

# TURNING WASTE INTO RENEWABLE GAS: CREATING MORE ENERGY OPTIONS FOR INDUSTRIES

 **Renewable Gas**  
part of the big picture

[PARTOFTHEBIGPICTURE.COM.AU](http://PARTOFTHEBIGPICTURE.COM.AU)


 **Jemena**

Photo credit: InfraBuild







## REGIONAL RAMBLINGS

# Help me someone!

**H**i everybody! Another Regional Ramblings! I don't know who reads these Ramblings, BUT I did get an email re my last Ramblings from Greg McElroy (President Master Plumbers NSW) telling me what a good Rambling it was, especially the note about "Don't confuse my personality with my attitude." So, I present you with another poster from my office. See right.

Back in the 1980s our first computer used discs, and the computer needed two-thirds of a disc to accommodate the necessary information for a Job Costing Program and normal Accountancy. Nowadays, the modern computer systems are brilliant... when they work! So, when someone has to update their system and install a new one, as we did recently, there is mayhem. It left people with computers that are nothing like the ones they were used to, so everyone had to be shown how to get back to normal. Naturally, our job information was not entered on time, and we couldn't get our invoices to the customers on time!

First week into this month, three of the 'good people' I spoke about in the last issue came into the business saying they had had a job done the previous month and hadn't received an invoice. The office Accounts team said they could print out an invoice straight away, if they would care to wait. "Yes." Invoice printed, given to the customer, and paid there and then! Like I said, the 'good people' are still out there in majority.

In this issue, our regional expert **PETER RICHARDSON** takes us on a tour of his day-to-day observations, encounters, and even a few head-scratching frustrations!



### RAIN - AND WIPING

As everybody would know, we have had an enormous amount of rain in North Eastern NSW and South Eastern Queensland recently – every pothole, drain and lowlands was full of water, and the rain doesn't seem to be stopping. When you run a Plumbing Roofing business with employees... and you ride a motorcycle... the effects are severe, so you just move from Plan A to Plan B and maybe Plan C.

Re the article in the last issue (*The Art of Wiping, Part 1*), I and various people I showed the feature to thought it was a really enjoyable article – we're waiting for Part 2 [Ed's note: see Part 2 on page 16 of this issue].

Which reminds me of the old bloke who bought a new modern car, which had a button to press to open the doors, another button to start the car, another button to press to adjust the seat, and another button to press to operate the 'rear wiper'... The bloke wasn't game to press *that* button.

### FRUSTRATIONS!

Here's something that you all probably know about, and it's 100% frustrating. Tradies and other

service providers are given jobs – urgent and not urgent – so they have to contact the owners of properties, tenants, strata people to arrange bookings. But people don't answer their phone! Even if you try maybe four times. Of course, we need to know that somebody will be at

the premises because we are not sending our tradies 30 to 40 kms to a job if there is no one on site. I could fill up this entire column with examples, but I'll give you just one:

We receive a report that a gutter is leaking over the power point to a HWS [hot water service] and fusing out, which is important because (A) no hot water, and (B) an electrical fault might give someone a shock or worse. Four phone calls later, we finally reach the occupant, who said he did not recognise the caller, so he didn't return the call! What about the message about the gutter and power point? 'Oh,' he said, 'I didn't listen to the message.' Help me someone! **TMP**

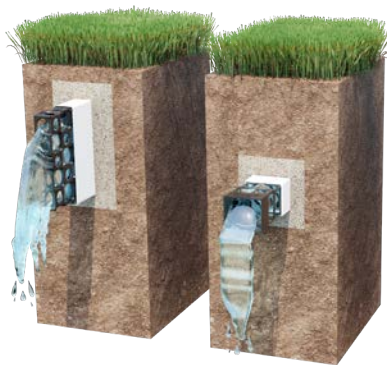


Peter Richardson, from Sidney & Richardson in Ballina, NSW, is a lifelong plumbing professional with an intimate knowledge of regional affairs. Contact Peter at [admin@sidneyrichardson.com.au](mailto:admin@sidneyrichardson.com.au)

# Greener Systems, Smarter Solutions

Sustainable Water Practices for Plumbing Professionals

## Sub-Surface Drainage



HIGH FLOW  
TRENCH DRAINAGE

### **FLO-LOG®** HIGH FLOW TRENCH DRAINAGE

#### APPLICATIONS

- RELIEF WATER LOGGED AREAS
- FRENCH DRAINAGE
- LANDSCAPING
- RETAINING WALLS

#### BENEFITS

- HIGH VOID RATIO
- HIGH ABSORPTION RATE
- VERY EFFECTIVE
- STRONG LOAD BEARING

### **FLO-PIPE®**



**90%**  
more effective  
than  
**AG PIPE**

## Surface Protection



#### APPLICATIONS

- BASEMENTS
- UNDERGROUND PARKING
- BRIDGE ABUTMENTS
- RETAINING WALLS

#### BENEFITS

- HIGH VOID RATIO
- HIGH ABSORPTION RATE
- VERY EFFECTIVE
- STRONG LOAD BEARING

- HIGH STRENGTH  
- HIGH FLOW



Perfect for planter  
box drainage and  
retaining walls.



## Underground Tank Solutions

### **FLO-VAULT®**

#### ADVANTAGES

- MODULAR
- FLEXIBLE
- COMPLETELY SCALABLE
- SUB-SURFACE
- FREES UP VALUABLE SPACE
- IDEAL FOR PARKING LOTS & LANDSCAPING
- OPTIMAL WATER RETENTION CONDITIONS
- MACRO & MICRO POLLUTANT REMOVAL



RE-USE

INFILTRATION

DETENTION (ATTENUATION)





## REGULATION & SAFETY

Plumbing comes with its fair share of safety risks – from exposure to hazardous substances to falls and contact with electricity. SafeWork NSW break down the key safety hazards for plumbers and share practical steps to help keep you and your team safe.

### PREVENTING FALLS – LADDERS

Falling from a height is the number 1 killer on NSW construction sites, and most of the time they are preventable. Working at 4 metres or less doesn't seem high, but even a fall from 2 metres can cause a serious or fatal injury.

This winter SafeWork NSW Inspectors will be out in force, checking construction sites to ensure workers are protected when working at heights. SafeWork inspectors take a zero tolerance approach to workers' lives being placed at risk when working at heights.

Each year there are hundreds of serious incidents where workers have fallen from ladders. Many of these incidents involve a ladder being used incorrectly or inappropriately.

#### A-frame-style step ladders

Many workers fall from A-frame-style step ladders because they were working from the top two steps, or over-reaching.

Here are some tips:

- Don't stand on the top two steps
- Have two feet and one other point of contact on the ladder, e.g. hand, waist, torso
- Ensure the ladder is rated for industrial use and in good condition
- Ensure all four feet of the ladder are on the ground
- Don't overreach.

#### Extension ladders

Many falls from extension ladders are because the ladder slipped outwards or sideways.

Here are some tips:

- Secure the ladder at the top and bottom, wherever possible
- Ensure the ladder extends at least one metre past the landing
- Ensure the ladder is rated for industrial use and in good condition
- When ascending or descending, face the ladder, have both hands free to grip the ladder, and have at least one hand and one foot in contact with the ladder at all times
- When working on the ladder, have both feet and one other point of contact on the ladder e.g. hand, waist or torso.

[www.safework.nsw.gov.au/your-industry/construction/work-safely-at-heights-in-construction](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/your-industry/construction/work-safely-at-heights-in-construction)

### HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES IN PLUMBING

Find out how to manage exposure to hazardous substances in plumbing, including silica, asbestos, hazardous chemicals and carcinogens.

Preserved bathroom with visible fire damage.



#### Plumbers Injured in Expanding Foam Fires (12/03/2025).

In March, two separate incidents occurred at residential construction sites during bath installations. In both incidents, plumbing workers were applying expanding foam under the baths when an ignition source ignited the foam or its fumes, leading to explosions and fires. The workers were seriously injured with burns of varying severity, requiring medical treatment and hospitalisations.

Expanding foam is classified as 'hazardous' and is extremely flammable. Even very small quantities of flammable vapours may ignite and cause serious injuries and damage. If using expanding foam products, identify hazards, assess risks and apply 'reasonably practicable' control measures in accordance with the hierarchy of controls to manage the risks associated with using expanding foam products.

**See the Incident Information Release at [www.safework.nsw.gov.au/compliance-and-prosecutions/incident-information-releases/industries/construction](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/compliance-and-prosecutions/incident-information-releases/industries/construction)**

#### New Safety Requirements for Crystalline Silica

Hazardous levels of airborne dust can be generated from uncontrolled cutting, grinding or drilling of products or materials containing crystalline silica, and exposure to silica dust can lead to several serious illnesses.

The SafeWork NSW website hosts a range of resources available for managing silica:

- Silica reform webinar
- Controlled cutting videos
- Working safely with crystalline silica video safety alert
- Safety checklists and toolbox talks.

[www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/hazardous-chemical/priority-chemicals/crystalline-silica](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/hazardous-chemical/priority-chemicals/crystalline-silica)

# JohnsonSuisse

Bathroom Solutions

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You won't believe how easy it is. With Johnson Suisse Listo you will enjoy a perfect experience from day one



### MORE HYGIENIC

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average flush  
4.5 litres per flush (1.5 litres per flush)  
In accordance with AS/NZS 4509  
Licence No. 0137  
Minimum Product Warranty  
5 years

[www.johnsonsuisse.com.au](http://www.johnsonsuisse.com.au)





An excavator arm and detached bucket on a work site.



### ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

Plumbers can be exposed to serious electrical risks on the job, especially when working near wiring and switchboards, conductive materials, removing water meters, or cutting and disconnecting metal water pipes.

Key risks include:

- Electric shock from direct or indirect contact with live parts, e.g. touching a metal pipe or surface that's become unintentionally energised.
- Fires or burns from electrical faults, arcing, or explosions caused by high fault currents.
- Step-and-touch potential, where electricity travels through the ground or surfaces, causing shocks.
- Exposure to toxic gases from burning or arcing electrical equipment.

To manage electrical risks, start by identifying hazards and apply a hierarchy of control measures:

- Eliminate the risk and remove the hazard.
- Minimise the risk with:
  - Substitution (e.g. using battery-powered tools instead of corded ones)
  - Isolation (e.g. separating live parts or work areas)
  - Engineering controls (e.g. insulation, guarding, RCDs)
- Administrative controls – SWMS, training, and signage.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – insulated gloves, safety eyewear, and arc-rated gear. PPE must suit the level of electrical risk.

[www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/electrical-and-power](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/electrical-and-power)

### WORKING IN THE TRENCHES

Plumbers face several risks when working on building sites and especially in trenches. A 4th year apprentice plumber was undertaking plumbing drainage work at a construction site when he was struck by an excavator bucket, sustaining multiple fractures and serious injuries.

[www.safework.nsw.gov.au/compliance-and-prosecutions/incident-information-releases](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/compliance-and-prosecutions/incident-information-releases)

#### Don't Dig Blind

Before you start any excavation, you must first check with Before You Dig Australia so that you know the location of essential utilities and services at [www.byda.com.au](http://www.byda.com.au)

[www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/excavations-and-earthmoving-plant-in-construction](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/excavations-and-earthmoving-plant-in-construction)

### WORK SHOULDN'T HURT: MANAGING MSDS

Plumbers often work in awkward positions, lift heavy materials, and perform repetitive tasks – all of which can lead to musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). MSDs are the most common work-related injuries in NSW and often result from hazardous manual tasks such as lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, or holding objects.

These tasks become hazardous when they involve:

- Repetitive or sustained force
- High or sudden force
- Repetitive movement
- Awkward or sustained posture
- Vibration.

SafeWork are delivering tailored information sessions and updated guidance materials to improve

awareness of the physical and psychological hazards that may lead to MSD's and provide information to NSW workplaces in meeting their legislative requirements.

[www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/musculoskeletal-disorders](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/musculoskeletal-disorders)

### STAY AHEAD & STAY SAFE

SafeWork NSW delivers a range of online and face-to-face events throughout the year to help educate businesses and workers about work, health and safety on:

- WHS responsibilities and influence
- Risk management
- Consultation
- Mentally healthy workplaces
- Safe work method statements (SWMS)
- High risk work licences
- Young and at risk workers.



Visit the building and construction safety web page, to access resources and information on worksite hazards.

### STAYING COMPLIANT

PCBUs (person conducting a business or undertaking) cannot ignore their legal responsibilities, and will receive fines, notices, stop work orders and eventually prosecution for failing to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of their workers.

#### Penalties for Non-Compliance

Businesses face on-the-spot fines of up to \$3,600 and \$720 for individuals for each offence, as well as prosecution.

SafeWork Inspectors may also refer occupational licence holders, such as builders and electricians, to NSW Fair Trading for non-licensed work.



All serious incidents **MUST** be reported to SafeWork immediately. Call 13 10 50. Failure to notify can result in up to a \$7,450 penalty. TMP

# Australian Made Clips For Aussie Plumbers



## The Importance of Buying Australian Made

Abey Australia locally manufactured range of products provide plumbers superior solutions and local support. Support the all Australian company that supports you. Insist on quality Australian made Abey clips.

**GO AUSSIE  
GO ABEY**







## APPRENTICE STORIES

**CHRISTOS KOLITSAS**, who recently completed his apprenticeship through Master Plumbers Apprentices, looks forward to creating his own business one day.

# Learning from every job

**Q Where are you doing your apprenticeship?** I'm working with Plumber and Electrician to the Rescue in St Peters.

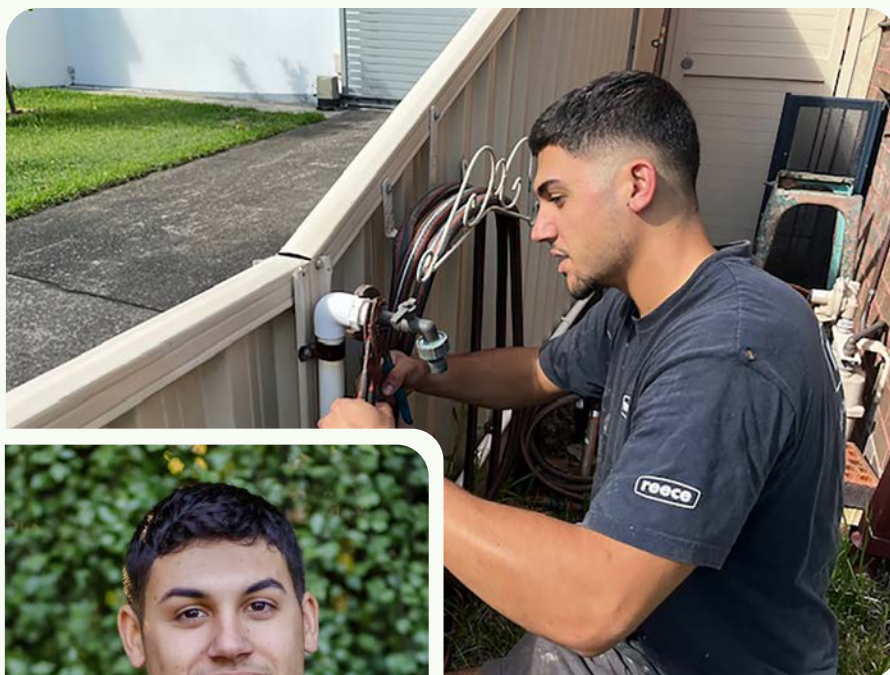
**Q Did you feel prepared for the first day of your apprenticeship?** I did not know what to expect on the first day; I had no prior experience or knowledge in plumbing at all so everything was a challenge.

**Q Was it hard to balance training and work obligations?** I was doing boxing at the time after work. Some days I couldn't make training as I would finish far away from home, or I would be feeling too tired to go after work.

**Q Have travel requirements during your apprenticeship posed any issues?** As I live near the city, travelling with transport has been convenient for me.

**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 feel like I have definitely learned and covered all the basics of plumbing throughout my apprenticeship, but I know there is still a lot to learn and experience.

**Q You must have had some great training mentors along the way – what makes a 'good instructor'?** A good instructor teaches the 'why' behind techniques instead of just the 'how', and also strongly emphasises the importance of safety throughout all jobs day to day.



**Q What advice would you give to a new apprentice about to start day one?** Have a good attitude towards work, show that you are willing to learn, and observe how the more experienced tradesmen work and solve problems.

**Q Looking back, what have been the main highlights?** Gaining real-world onsite experience was very useful. From installing pipework to diagnosing faults, every job taught me something new and practical that you can't always get from a textbook.

**“EVERY JOB TAUGHT ME SOMETHING NEW.”**

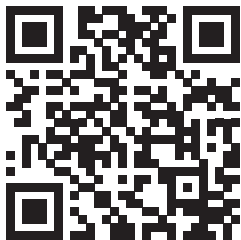
**Q Where are you working now? Main fields of expertise?** I work as a maintenance plumber, ranging from the basics of a leaking tap to dealing with blockages to hot water servicing.

**Q What kind of working life will you be leading in five years' time?** Hope to have completed Cert IV at TAFE and hopefully starting my own business.

**Q When you're not working or studying, what are your favourite hobbies or pastimes?** Hobbies are going to the gym and boxing. **TMP**

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## **SYDNEY WATER:** Water infrastructure

# Protecting our systems

As Sydney continues to grow and change, development and redevelopment are common sights. While we often focus on doing the right thing when connecting, properly disconnecting disused water and wastewater services is just as crucial for safeguarding the future of our infrastructure.



A field crew at work.

### **DISCONNECTING WATER SERVICES FROM THE WATERMAIN**

Whether you're increasing the service size, moving the water service out of the way of other building work, or disconnecting a property because it will be vacant for the foreseeable future, it's important that disconnections are done right.

Disused water services can create avoidable leaks that are far harder to trace and generally lead to more damage to roadways, footpaths and surrounding areas. They also pose a significant risk of backflow and cross-connection, and these can lead to contamination of the water supply.

To prevent these risks, disused water services must be disconnected appropriately:

- Capping must occur at the watermain connection (main tap) for standard services.
- For larger services, the tee and valve must be completely removed.

If the site requires water during the redevelopment, a water meter and appropriate backflow prevention should be maintained on any active water services. Once the water service is disconnected from the main, the meter can be returned, and the backflow prevention device updated as disconnected.

### **DECOMMISSIONING PRIVATE WASTEWATER SERVICE LINES**

We've seen an increase in damage to wastewater pipes caused by construction activities. To prevent damage:

- Private wastewater services must be accurately located before construction begins. If the sewer service diagram isn't correct, it needs to be kept updated, especially if significant works are happening at the property.
- Any disused wastewater connections must be securely capped and sealed at the wastewater main. Just disconnecting at the house doesn't stop construction materials finding their way into our mains and causing blockages for other customers. Leaving disused pipes in the ground also leads to confusion down the track when trying to locate and repair issues.
- Early detection can significantly reduce the extent of damage and repair costs. If a wastewater main is impacted, contact Sydney Water immediately. These incidents can result in significant costs – ranging from tens of thousands to millions of dollars – and may take months to resolve. They not only disrupt construction schedules but also impact essential wastewater services for residents.

### **STORMWATER TO WASTEWATER CROSS-CONNECTIONS**

Stormwater connections to the wastewater system are a serious issue that can wreak havoc at both a property and network level. Wastewater pipes are not designed to carry the large volumes that stormwater cross-connections can introduce.

Often, it leads to wet weather overflows and potential environmental damage as wastewater escapes the overwhelmed system along with the excess stormwater. Non-compliant plumbing must be fixed every time it is identified. **TMP**

# GAS SAFETY TIPS

## Keep Your Customers Safe This Winter

Winter is peak season for gas appliance use and that means safety matters more than ever. Whether you're servicing heaters, installing hot water systems, or working around underground gas infrastructure, these quick reminders can help you protect your customers, your crew, and yourself.

To learn more, visit [Jemena.com.au/gassafety](https://www.jemena.com.au/gassafety).



## Remind Customers to Service Gas Appliances Every 1–2 Years

Regular servicing helps prevent carbon monoxide leaks, improves efficiency, and extends the life of the appliance.

Customers often assume gas appliances are “set and forget,” but dust build-up, worn components, and blocked flues can all cause safety risks - especially in winter when heaters are used heavily.



## Check Appliance Ventilation and Clearance Zones

Poor ventilation and older gas appliances can cause dangerous CO build-up, especially in winter.

Check flues, vents, and clearances, and remind customers how to use appliances safely.

## Remind Customers What to Do if They Smell Gas

Many customers don't know the correct steps on what to do during a gas emergency.

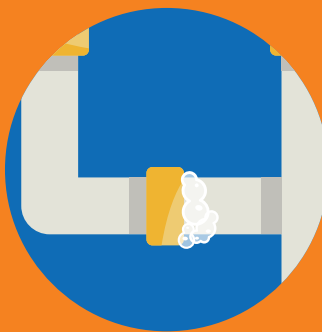
Advise them to evacuate, avoid switches or flames, and call 000, then report the leak to Jemena on 131 909.



## Always Check for Gas Leaks After Work

A quick leak test can prevent a future emergency.

Use a manometer or soap solution to test joints and connections after repairs or installations. Even small leaks can build up in enclosed spaces over time.



## Always Lodge a Before You Dig Australia (BYDA) Enquiry Before Excavating

Gas pipes can be just centimetres below the surface.

Even small jobs like installing posts, fences, or garden beds can risk hitting underground gas infrastructure. Lodging a free BYDA enquiry protects you, your crew, and your customers. To find out more, visit [www.byda.com.au](https://www.byda.com.au).





# NEW PRODUCTS

Our plumbing product guru **BILL ARMSTRONG** outlines two highly practical new releases, designed to add longevity and simplicity to your projects.

## NEW JUMPDOWN JUNCTION

**AS/NZS 3500.2 Clause 4.9.1.2** was updated recently, requiring that branch lines coming into the main drain must be installed with a minimum 15° incline to ensure they are higher than the main sanitary line. This means that the 45° junction has to be laid at 15° and a 45° MF bend has to be installed, and another 15° MF bend is installed to bring the drain back to grade.

What this change does is prevent waste moving down the main line from back-washing up the branch, or even up multiple branches. The 15° drop significantly increases the flow rate, preventing

waste and solids stranding in the main line. In the past there has been enough water flow to accommodate the sloshing motion within the drain. This is no longer the case, as we are using less water due to the use of low-flush WCs; waterless urinals; and efficient, WELS-rated tapware.

Plastec Australia has developed and patented an innovative solution to this installation issue with their new Jumpdown Junction, a fitting which has the 15° fall and the drop from the branch to the main line incorporated into it. The junction has markings on it which allow the



correct 15° orientation to be visually confirmed as installed correctly. The junction comes in left or right configurations.

**Plastec Australia**  
[www.plastec.com.au](http://www.plastec.com.au)

## ALTERNATIVE TO FLEXI HOSES

**A NEW AUSTRALIAN PRODUCT – NO BLOWS™** – has been developed as an alternative to flexi hoses.

No Blows™, a straightforward and simple alternative to flexi hoses, is a copper adapter that will never blow out. Developed in Australia by Stephen Orr, the No Blows™ is manufactured using high-grade, quality, lead-free, certified materials, tested to more than 2,000 kPa.

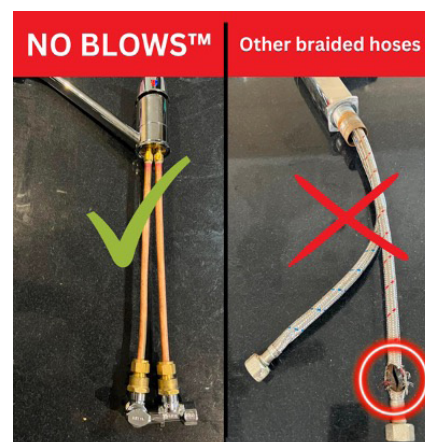
"I developed No Blows™ product to replace flexi hoses, thus stopping blowouts," says Stephen.

A large proportion of all Australia's building-related insurance claims are traceable to burst or leaky flexi hoses. Since the introduction of flexi hoses some 25 years ago, the plumbing

industry has had to address untold harm caused by faulty flexi hoses: insurers estimate that 22,000 flexi hose tap tail connectors fail every year, causing millions of dollars' worth of damage to thousands of homes and businesses across Australia.

"Poor-quality flexi hoses have no longevity and are not designed to handle high pressure; they require annual maintenance checks, and the stainless-steel braid corrodes and rusts leading to blow out," he says.

NO BLOWS™ specs: AS/NZS AS3718:2021, AS/NZS 4020:2018, WMS 060139. Safety and plumbing products WaterMark. Victorian Building Authority: NO-FAIL WATER CONNECTOR 300mm x 10mm (F) x



15mm (F), B.S.P. Operating Pressure: 2,000 kPa. Operating Temp: Up to 90°C. Suitable for hot and cold water. Copper and lead-free brass. 20-year guarantee.

**No Blows**  
[www.noblows.com.au](http://www.noblows.com.au)



Bill Armstrong has been a member of the Association for over 25 years. He has served on the Master Plumbers NSW 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](mailto:admin@armstrongplumbing.net.au) or visit [www.armstrongplumbing.net.au](http://www.armstrongplumbing.net.au)

# Attention Plumbers & Gas Fitters

## Union-Fit™ Valves Connecting Kits Promo Deal

Available only through Elson Distributors



**RPP**  
Recommended Plumbers Price  
**\$249.00**  
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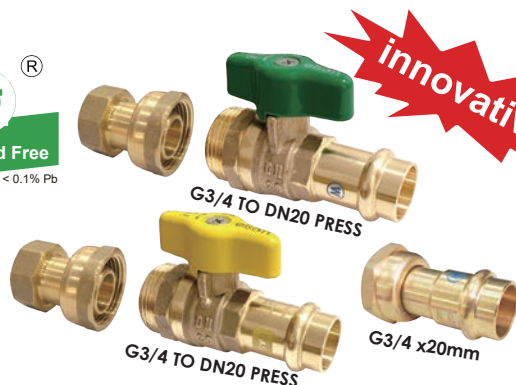
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**Deal Code (PRESS): CD73722**

**Deal includes**

- ◆ 4 x Union-fit BV Kits
- ◆ 1 x Portable Charcoal Grill
- ◆ 2 x elson Beer Coolers
- ◆ 2 x elson Beanies

**LF**  
99.9% Lead Free  
< 0.1% Pb



- ✓ Lead Free DR Brass, < 0.1% Pb
- ✓ Union-Fit connection
- ✓ No PTFE sealing tape required
- ✓ Easy orientation
- ✓ Fast Installation
- ✓ Easy Service, Easy Maintenance



**Union-Fit™**  
Connecting Method



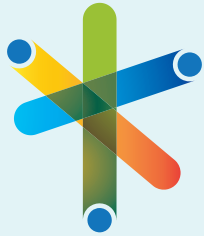
Elson Australasia Pty Ltd ABN 45 059 613 991

Call 1300 169 026  
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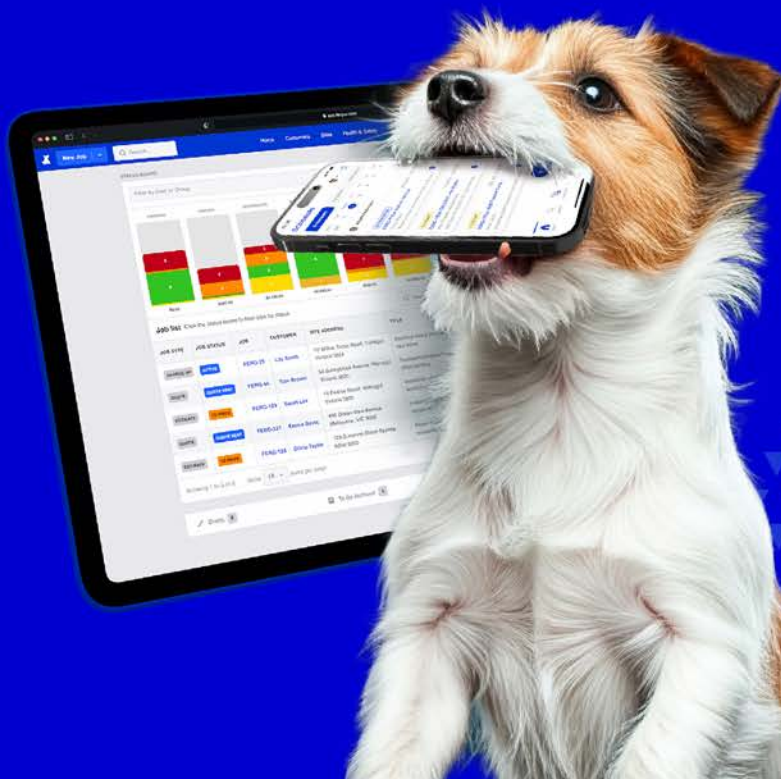
# Fergus

Job software for tradies

# Tradies, get your Sundays back with Fergus

Focus on jobs, not your admin.  
Meet Fergus.

Scan the QR code  
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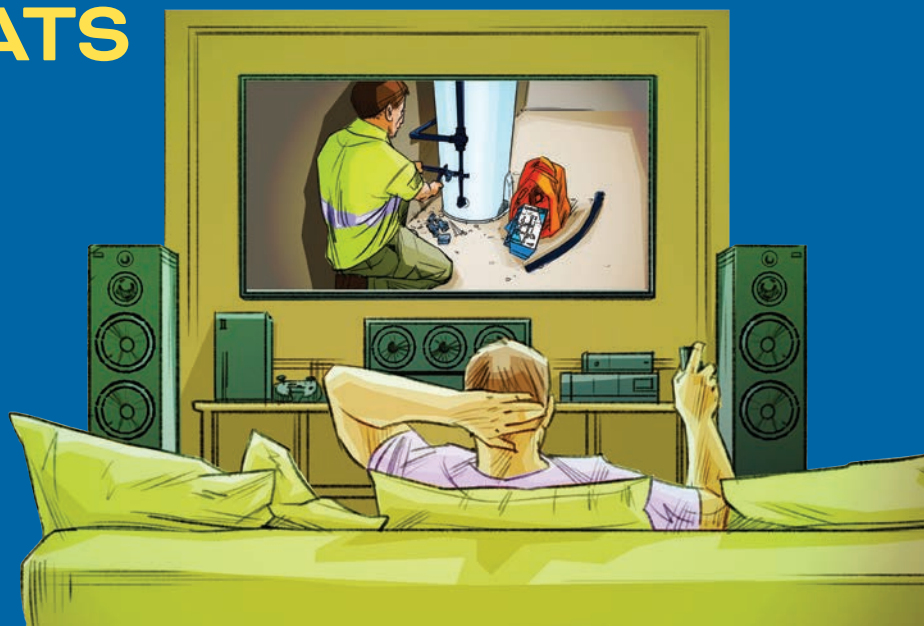




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## NOTHING BEATS A QUICKIE!

AVG Quickie® Kits save plumbers time and hassle — so we're making that extra time even sweeter! Four lucky winners will score a fantastic prize to enjoy their well-earned downtime.



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WORLD**

**\$4,000**

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**BARBEQUES  
GALORE**

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**JB HI-FI**

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**FLIGHT  
CENTRE**

Experience our experience

**\$12,000**

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PEEL

**WIN**  
**\$30K PRIZE POOL!**



Peel to Reveal  
Your Unique  
Code & Scan  
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Ends 31.08.25

**HOW TO ENTER:** Purchase eligible AVG Quickie® Kits and peel back the sticker to reveal your unique code, then enter online during the prize period of your choice.

To claim prize, Plumbers License and proof of purchase will need to be validated. All winners will be announced on AVG's Facebook page, follow us at: [www.facebook.com/AVGAustralianValveGroup](http://www.facebook.com/AVGAustralianValveGroup)

\*Eligible AVG Quickie® Kits: QIK15, QIK15-1200, QIK15R, QIK15RCV, QIK15-HEATPUMP, QIK15RCVHP, QIK15RHP, QIK15-850, QIKP-1, QIKP-2, QIKP-3 and QIK20-850. Visit this website for full competition terms and conditions: [www.avgquickiecomp.com.au](http://www.avgquickiecomp.com.au). Authorised under trade permit numbers: NSW TPL No. TP/04089. ACT May promotion TP 25/00047, June promotion TP 25/00048, July promotion TP 25/00049, August promotion TP 25/00051. SA Permit No. June promotion T25/21, July promotion T25/19, August promotion T25/43.



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