



Office of Water Regulation  
Government of Western Australia

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# PLUMBERS



Issue 3 January 2002

## Licensing Board News

A competent and professional plumbing industry in Western Australia

# welcome

Plumbers Licensing Board News is a regular, biannual newsletter that is issued to all licensed plumbers, licensed tradespersons and key industry stakeholders to carry news of issues affecting the plumbing industry and provide awareness of the Board's activities.

Your input and feedback is important to the Board and may highlight matters that should be included in future editions of Plumbers Licensing Board News.

To provide feedback to the Plumbers Licensing Board about this newsletter please contact:

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Welcome to the third issue of *Plumbers Licensing Board News*. This newsletter has been produced and distributed by the Plumbers Licensing Board.

## Transfer of Responsibility for the Board's Administrative Support

Ministerial responsibility for the Plumbers Licensing Board has been transferred to the Consumer and Employment Protection Portfolio. This means that the administrative support for the Board will now be provided by the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection. As a consequence, the Board will be relocating. All licensed plumbers, licensed tradespersons and stakeholders will be notified of the Board's new contact details when they become available.

## Licensed Plumber or Licensed Tradesperson - Who is Responsible?

In a large number of cases plumbing work is carried out by a licensed tradesperson under the general direction and control of a licensed plumber. Clarification has been sought as to whether the licensed plumber who certified the work is responsible or the licensed tradesperson who carried out the work.

Ultimately responsibility for plumbing work carried out in Western Australia lies with both the licensed plumber who certified the work and the licensed tradesperson who carried out the work.

The system of self-certification places responsibility on the licensed plumber to ensure that work performed complies with the relevant plumbing standards while the licensing regulations also place responsibility on the licensed tradesperson to ensure that in the first instance the work is carried out in accordance with the relevant standards. This dual responsibility means that plumbing work carried out in Western Australia is of the highest standard possible ensuring protection of the health and safety of the community and the environment in the delivery of essential waste disposal and water service systems.

The Plumbers Licensing Board can take disciplinary action against both the licensed plumber and the licensed tradesperson if a contravention of the plumbing standards is such that action against the licensee(s) may be appropriate.

## Licence Numbers to Appear in Advertising

While plumber licence numbers are appearing in newspaper advertising, it is noted that a number of licensed plumbers have not made the necessary arrangements to display licence numbers in other forms of advertising, especially signs on vehicles, promoting their plumbing businesses.

The March 2001 edition of Plumbers Licensing Board News contained a brief overview of the *'Guidelines for the Inclusion of Plumbers Licence Numbers in Advertising'* to assist in compliance with the requirement to display licence numbers. A lead up time until 1 July 2001 was allowed.

In accordance with Regulation 25 of the *Water Services Coordination (Plumbers Licensing) Regulations 2000* the holder of a plumbers licence must ensure that the number of the licence appears in any advertising relating to his or her plumbing business. Any licensed plumber who does not comply can be liable for a penalty up to \$2,000.

## Duplicate Licences

All licensed industry members are issued with a wallet sized identification card. In addition, licensed plumbers are issued with an A4 size licence for display at their principal place of business.

Duplicate licences will only be issued in circumstances where the licence holder is able to satisfy the Board that the licence card has been lost or destroyed.

If a licence is lost or destroyed and a duplicate licence is required the licensee must:

- Satisfy the Board in writing that the licence has been lost or destroyed; and
- Pay a duplicate licence fee of \$20.

For more information about applying for a duplicate licence contact the Board's Licensing Officer on (08) 9213 0100.

## Introduction of Register / Change in Licence Terminology

In June 2001, the Plumbers Licensing Board extended an opportunity through an industry survey, to all licensed plumbers, licensed tradespersons and stakeholders to comment on two proposals that would affect the regulation of the Western Australian plumbing industry. The two proposals were:

1. Introduce as a mandatory requirement on persons employing or engaging under contract other licensed plumbers and/or licensed tradespersons the obligation to keep a register of those persons and their licence particulars; and
2. Change the licence terminology of 'Plumbers Licence' to 'Plumbing Contractors Licence'.

More than 290 licensed industry members and key stakeholders responded to the opportunity and had their say. Support for the proposals was as follows:

- 89% of respondents indicated support for the introduction of a register; while
- 57% of respondents indicated support for the change in licence terminology.

Given the extent of industry support the Board has resolved to implement both proposals.

While there was support for the proposed change in licence terminology, many respondents indicated on their survey form that they would also like the term 'licence' in the terminology 'tradespersons licence' removed. The plumbing industry is regulated under an official licensing system with both tradespersons and plumbers issued with licences. In recognition of the fact that tradespersons are in fact 'licensed' and not registered (as they were prior to the establishment of the Board), the term licence can not be removed or substituted.

The amendments to the relevant plumber licensing regulations to implement the changes will be progressed in the near future. All industry stakeholders affected by the changes will be notified. Please note that a transitional period of 3 months will apply for compliance with the requirement to maintain a register and a maximum penalty of \$5,000 will apply after this time for non-compliance.



# Industry Survey: Restricted Licences

The establishment of the Plumbers Licensing Board provides an opportunity for licensed plumbers and licensed tradespersons to influence the development and direction of the plumbing industry in Western Australia.

As a stakeholder of the plumbing industry you are invited to have your say about restricted plumbing licences.

## Restricted Plumbing Licences

The plumbers licensing regulations provide that plumbing work in Western Australia can only be performed by a licensed plumber or licensed tradesperson working under the general direction and control of the holder of a plumbers licence, with the exception of apprentices.

As a consequence, concern has been raised that consumers may be required to engage the services of more than one person where there is an overlap between the trades. For example the installation of a hot water system may result in a consumer having to engage both an electrician or gasfitter and a licensed plumber. Representations have been made to the Plumbers Licensing Board to establish restricted plumbing licences.

In the early 1990s the then Water Authority adopted a policy allowing electricians and gasfitters to replace water heaters in circumstances where all that was required was disconnection and reconnection of the water unions. This policy was inconsistent with the plumbers licensing laws that existed at the time. As a result of the policy, electricians and gasfitters have been able to perform limited plumbing work over a number of years and have established businesses on that basis.

It has been suggested that restricted licences should only be made available to electricians and gasfitters as limited plumbing work is incidental to these occupations. If introduced, the granting of a restricted licence would be subject to the provision of satisfactory evidence that the applicant has sufficient experience and knowledge to competently carry out the limited plumbing work that the applicant would be authorised to perform under the licence. This satisfactory evidence would be demonstrated through rigorous testing processes. It is anticipated that the plumbing work that would be permitted under a restricted plumbing licence would relate to such things as the repair and replacement of water heaters and evaporative airconditioners.

The establishment of a restricted licence would enable persons from related trades to undertake limited plumbing work reducing costs to consumers and assisting in the protection of public health and safety by ensuring that only those persons appropriately qualified undertake plumbing work.

Since 1993 members of the plumbing industry have been able to obtain restricted electrical licences. The availability of restricted plumbing licences to persons from related trades (such as electricians and gasfitters) would provide a reciprocal arrangement and is consistent with other Australian licensing jurisdictions.

## Have Your Say!

The Plumbers Licensing Board welcomes your comments in relation to restricted plumbing licences. Please complete the survey form below and **return it by close of business Friday 1 March 2002** to:

***The Plumbers Licensing Board, Locked Bag 5013, PERTH WA 6001***

- Are you a (Circle one only)

Licensed Plumber	1
Licensed Tradesperson	2
Other (please specify)	3 _____
- What type of plumbing work do you carry out? (Please specify)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Do you believe that it is beneficial for licensed plumbers and tradespersons to have access to restricted electrical licences? (Circle one only)

Yes	1	No	2
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- Given that the repair and replacement of water heaters/evaporative airconditioners by electricians and gasfitters can involve limited plumbing tasks, how strongly do you agree or disagree that electricians and gasfitters should have access to restricted plumbing licences allowing them to perform these tasks? (Circle one only)

Strongly Disagree	1	(Continue)
Disagree	2	(Continue)
Neither Agree or Disagree	3	(Go to question 6)
Agree	4	(Go to question 6)
Strongly Agree	5	(Go to question 6)

*Continued overleaf*

# Summary of Complaints Received

1 March 2001 to 16 November 2001

65 complaints relating to the plumbing industry have been received:

Complaint	Total Received	Finalised		Still Under Investigation
		Justified	Not Justified	
<i>Unsatisfactory Workmanship</i>	37	33	3	1
<i>Alleged Plumbing conducted by unlicensed persons</i>	19	2	12	5
<i>Advertising Plumbing work with no licence</i>	3	3	-	-
<i>Excessive Charges and Improper Behaviour</i>	6	-	1	5

## Prosecutions for Breaches of the *Water Services Coordination (Plumbers Licensing) Regulations 2000*

As at 31 October 2001

Breach	Name	Lic. No	Fine & Court Costs (\$)
<i>Carried out plumbing work without an appropriate licence</i>	Bedford, Peter Raymond	N/A	\$410.20

## Inquiries held by the Plumbers Licensing Board in accordance with the *Water Services Coordination (Plumbers Licensing) Regulations 2000*

1 September 2001 to 31 December 2001

The Board has conducted 5 disciplinary inquiries relating to breaches of the plumbing standards:

Disciplinary Matter	Date	Name of Licensee	Outcome
<i>Failure to comply with By-law 16.1*</i>	26/11/01	Stergiou, John (PL575)	Reprimand & \$200 penalty

- 2 disciplinary inquiries are currently the subject of appeal in the local court;
- 1 disciplinary inquiry has been adjourned; and
- 1 disciplinary inquiry was dismissed.

\* of the *Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage By-laws 1981*

## Have Your Say! continued...

5. Why do you disagree with electricians and gasfitters being able to obtain a restricted plumbing licence? (Please specify)

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6. How strongly do you agree or disagree that restricted licences offer customers 'value for money' when the work to be undertaken overlaps between electrical/gasfitting tasks and plumbing work (eg the repair and replacement of water heaters/evaporative airconditioners)? (Circle one only)

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Strongly Disagree         | 1 |
| Disagree                  | 2 |
| Neither Agree or Disagree | 3 |
| Agree                     | 4 |
| Strongly Agree            | 5 |

7. Any additional comments you would like to make regarding restricted plumbing licences? (Please specify)

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*Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey form*

# Tradespersons Licence (Drainage Plumbing)

During 2001, persons performing drainage plumbing work in Western Australia who had not completed a plumbing apprenticeship were offered a one-off opportunity to prove their competency in drainage plumbing at tradespersons licence level.

To be eligible to undertake the assessment, applicants must have worked as a drainer for all or part of the 5 year period ending 20 April 2001 and provided written references from licensed plumbers/drainers evidencing relevant experience. The assessment comprised both theory and practical elements designed to assess hand skills and knowledge of the current standards relating to drainage plumbing.

Those that passed the assessment are eligible to obtain a Tradespersons Licence (Drainage Plumbing) issued by the Plumbers Licensing Board.

The Tradespersons Licence (Drainage Plumbing) authorises the holder to carry out drainage plumbing work and supervise the carrying out of drainage plumbing work by an apprentice under the general direction and control of the holder of a plumbers licence.

More than 90 drainers took advantage of the opportunity following which 79 Tradespersons Licences (Drainage Plumbing) have been issued.

## Water Delivery Temperature: Sanitary Fixtures

Concern has been raised that in some instances licensed plumbers and licensed tradespersons carrying out new water heater installations are not checking the temperature of the water at the relevant outlets following the installation of a tempering valve.

In accordance with AS/NZS 3500.4.2:1997 clause 1.6.2

*"...all new hot water installations shall, at the outlet of all sanitary fixtures used primarily for personal hygiene purposes deliver hot water not exceeding –*

- a) 45°C for early childhood centres, primary and secondary schools and nursing homes or similar facilities for young, aged, sick or disabled persons; and*
- b) 50°C in all other buildings".*

Compliance with these temperatures does not apply to the replacement or servicing of an existing water heater and is optional for kitchen sinks and laundry tubs).

To ensure compliance with the above temperature specifications, in most cases tempering valves are fitted. While the installation of a tempering valve is consistent in ensuring the temperature requirements are adhered to, the licensed plumber or licensed tradesperson undertaking the installation has a legal responsibility to ensure that the water delivered at the outlet does not exceed the temperature prescribed. Therefore, it is necessary to confirm that the water temperature at the outlet of all sanitary fixtures used primarily for personal hygiene purposes does not exceed that prescribed by AS/NZS 3500.4.2:1997 clause 1.6.2.

## Change of Address

Licensed plumbing industry members must advise the Plumbers Licensing Board in writing of their change of address details.

Plumbers and tradespersons should be aware that it is a legislative requirement that the Board is notified of change of address details within 14 days of the change occurring.

