



Plumbers Licensing Board
Government of Western Australia

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PLUMBERS



Issue 5 January 2003

Licensing Board News

A competent and professional plumbing
industry in Western Australia

welcome

Industry forums

In June and July last year, the Plumbers Licensing Board held eight industry forums in regional and metropolitan areas throughout the State. The purpose of the forums was to provide industry members with an opportunity to meet Board members and provide feedback on regulatory matters affecting the plumbing industry.

More than 500 industry members attended the forums and provided valuable feedback. The topics that led the discussion were restricted licences, the review of the plumber licence examinations and the proposed statewide compliance and inspection regime. The proposal to introduce as a mandatory requirement, the maintenance of a register of employees engaged to carry out plumbing work, also was discussed with most attendees indicating strong support for the proposal.

Many of the issues discussed at the industry forums are yet to be finalised, however the feedback provided is being taken into consideration. It is proposed to hold further forums on an annual basis.

Identification cards for apprentices

The Board will be issuing identification cards to plumbing apprentices upon successful completion of the 3 month probationary period.

This initiative will provide apprentices with a means of identification that will indicate the apprentice's authority to carry out plumbing work and the requirement to work under direction and control.

Apprentices will be expected to produce the identification card at the request of consumers and plumbing inspectors.

While the Board will issue the identification card, the management of apprenticeships will continue to be administered by the Western Australian Department of Training.

Review of Boards and Committees

In response to the Machinery of Government Taskforce recommendations, a review of all of the Consumer Protection Boards and Committees has been undertaken. As the Plumbers Licensing Board now falls within the Consumer and Employment Protection portfolio it was included as part of the review process. The purpose of the review was to assess the appropriateness of incorporating the functions of the Boards and Committees into departments of State.

The Review has recommended that the Consumer Protection Boards and Committees, including the Plumbers Licensing Board, should be maintained to perform an advisory and consultative role. This means that the primary role of the Board would be to provide policy advice to the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection and the Director General of the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP). It is further recommended that responsibility for licensing, monitoring and investigating compliance, together with the associated administration, currently carried out by the Board, be undertaken by DOCEP.

Government has also committed to the establishment of a State Administrative Tribunal which will assume responsibility for disciplinary hearings and hearing appeals against licensing decisions of the Department.

A Consultation Draft of the Review Report has been prepared and is available upon request with the period for comment closing on 14 February 2002. Should you wish to discuss the Review or obtain a copy of the Consultation Draft please contact Amanda Coles by emailing acoles@docep.wa.gov.au or phoning 9282 0575.

The tradespersons licence assessment

Prior to the establishment of the Plumbers Licensing Board in June 2000 it was possible in some areas of the state to carry out plumbing work without the need to be appropriately licensed. As a consequence, many of these plumbers did not undertake a formal plumbing apprenticeship. With the establishment of the Board came statewide legislation that requires all people carrying out plumbing work anywhere in Western Australia to be licensed. The minimum requirement that must be met prior to the issue of a tradespersons licence is the completion of a plumbing and gasfitting apprenticeship.



During 2001, persons who had not completed a formal plumbing apprenticeship but had been competently performing plumbing work were offered a one-off assessment opportunity to prove their competency and obtain a tradespersons licence.

To be eligible to undertake the assessment, applicants had to be able to demonstrate a minimum of 4 years practical experience in water supply, sanitary or drainage plumbing. At least some of that experience must have been obtained in the 6 year period prior to 2001 and substantiating references were required.

The assessment process was divided into two parts, a basic hand skills test and a full tradespersons licence assessment. The basic hand skills component of the assessment was a practical test to determine an applicant's plumbing experience. Upon passing this test an applicant was eligible to obtain a temporary permit issued by the Board. The purpose of the temporary permit was to enable persons undertaking the assessment to comply with the licensing requirement and to continue to work within the industry.

The full tradespersons licence assessment comprised both theory and practical components and was set at the same level as the plumbing apprenticeship.

The opportunity for tradespeople to prove their competency in carrying out plumbing work concluded with the expiry of all temporary permits on 31 December 2002. A total of 69 applicants were issued with a temporary permit, of which 42 undertook the full assessment and have been issued tradespersons licences.

If you have employed or engaged the services of a temporary permit holder check with the Board's licensing officer on (08) 9282 0478 to ensure that the temporary permit has been upgraded to a tradespersons licence.

Board membership nominations

Inaugural members of the Plumbers Licensing Board were appointed for a term of 3 years that expires on 31 May 2003.

The Board is made up of nine members, of which six represent various sections of the plumbing industry. The other three represent regulatory, training and consumer interests.

Members of the Master Plumbers and Gasfitters Association (MPGA) are represented by two Board members while the interests of the Union (CEPU) and the Drainers Association are represented by one member each.

Independent plumbers in the metropolitan and regional areas are also represented on the Board with two positions available. All licensed plumbers who are not affiliated with the MPGA or the CEPU are eligible to apply for one of the independent positions on the Board.

Expressions of interest for the independent positions will be published in The West Australian newspaper in the near future. Licensed plumbers can register their interest in receiving an application package by contacting the Board's support staff on (08) 9282 0478. All licensed plumbers with a keen interest in the regulatory direction of the plumbing industry are encouraged to apply.

Supervision of tradespersons

It is an offence under the Plumbers Licensing Regulations for a licensed tradesperson to carry out plumbing work that is not under the general direction and control of a licensed plumber.



A tradesperson's licence and tradesperson's licence (drainage plumbing) authorises the holder to carry out plumbing work under the general direction and control of the holder of an appropriately endorsed plumber's licence. This means that a licensed tradesperson cannot perform water supply, sanitary or drainage plumbing, unless a licensed plumber is aware of the work to be performed and has agreed to accept responsibility for its compliance with the relevant Australian Standard (AS5300).

There is no definition that specifies the nature of a relationship between a licensed tradesperson and the licensed plumber exercising general direction and control. However a mechanism should exist so that a licensed tradesperson can seek assistance and guidance from the licensed plumber responsible for the work. This access to professional guidance is considered to be a critical underlying element of the dual licensing system that operates within Western Australia.

Changes to AS3500

There have been recent changes to AS/NZS 3500, the National Plumbing and Drainage Code. These changes are in part 2.2 *Sanitary Plumbing and Drainage – Acceptable Solutions*.

The changes relate to the installation and use of air admittance valves. The changes include that air admittance valves:

- may now be used for trap vents and group vents.
- must now have a specified minimum air flow capacity when used for trap or group vents.
- no longer have to be 100mm above the weir of the fixture trap.
- should not be installed where the air is contaminated with solvents.
- are now to be protected from insect entry.
- are now to be protected from ultra-violet rays if installed outdoors.
- are now acceptable for individual venting of fixture traps in fully vented systems.
- may be used as a vacuum break on vacuum sewerage systems.

This is not a complete list, and plumbers should refer to the 25 September 2002 amendments for further details. These can be purchased from:

Standards Australia
Ground Floor 165 Adelaide Terrace
East Perth 6004

It is also possible to purchase these online on the Standards Australia website:

<http://www.standards.com.au>

To provide feedback to the Plumbers Licensing Board about this newsletter, please contact Kelly Whitfield on 9282 0478 or at Locked Bag 5013 Perth 6001.

Proposed compliance and inspection regime

The Board is working toward establishing a statewide compliance and inspection regime that will respond to consumer workmanship complaints, carry out statewide proactive compliance initiatives and investigate breaches of the plumbing regulations. The Water Corporation is currently performing these roles in relation to those areas of the State it services.

An overview of the proposed compliance and inspection regime was discussed at the statewide industry forums that were held during the months of June and July last year and an outline was provided in Issue 4 of Plumbers Licensing Board News.

Negotiations to implement an appropriate structure under the management of the Board are continuing with the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection. It is anticipated that a structure will be finalised in the near future and a discussion paper will be released early this year. To register your interest in receiving a copy of the discussion paper contact the Board's support staff on (08) 9282 0478. Stakeholders who have previously registered interest in receiving a copy of the discussion paper need not reregister.



Consumer Protection representative leaves Board



Ms Teresa (Michelle) D'Adamo has resigned from the Plumbers Licensing Board after serving two and a half years as an inaugural member. Ms D'Adamo's contribution to the regulatory direction of the plumbing industry is

greatly appreciated and the Board wish her well with her future endeavours.

Arrangements are being made for a replacement consumer representative to be appointed to the Board.

Photographic identification for licence holders

The Plumbers Licensing Board is considering introducing photographic licence identification cards.

This initiative was identified as part of the Board's strategic planning process and would assist with the active regulation of the plumbing industry. In addition, the proposed ID cards would assist in generating consumer confidence that the person they have contracted with is qualified and licensed to do the work.

A process that would allow for convenient collation of photographs of licensed industry members is currently being developed and further information will be provided in the near future.

Licence numbers to appear in advertising

All licensees are reminded that, under 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. The whole licence number with the prefix PL must be clearly displayed within the body of the advertisement eg PL145. Guidelines were issued by the Board in March 2001 to assist in complying with this requirement. A copy of the Guidelines can be obtained by contacting the Board's licensing officer on (08) 9282 0478.

Summary of complaints received
May-December 2002

Type	Total Received	Justified	Not Justified	Still Under Investigation
Unsatisfactory Workmanship	23	9		14
Alleged Plumbing conducted by unlicensed persons	22	4	5	13
Advertising Plumbing work with no licence	1			1
Excessive Charges and Improper Behaviour	4		1	3

**Prosecutions for breaches of the Water Services Coordination
(Plumbers Licensing) Regulations 2000**
May-December 2002

Breach	Name	Lic. No	Fine & Court Costs (\$)
Carried out unlicensed plumbing work	Alan Thomas Hoffman	N/A	\$1,127.50
Carried out unlicensed plumbing work	Shane Van Houwelingen	N/A	\$810.20
Carried out plumbing work not under the general direction and control of a licensed plumber.	Sam Delic	TL8521 (drainage)	\$1,357.50
Carried out unlicensed plumbing work	Gary Sydney Hipper	N/A	\$2167.70

**Inquiries held by the Plumbers Licensing Board in accordance
with the Water Services Coordination (Plumbers Licensing) Regulations 2000**
April-December 2002

The Board conducted 6 disciplinary inquiries relating to breaches of the plumbing standards:

Disciplinary Matter	Date	Name of Licensee	Outcome
Failure to comply with By-law 16.1*	29 April 2002	Sam Delic (licensed tradesperson – drainage only)	Required to attend and complete training course within 3 months. Required to rectify non-compliant drainage work; \$1,000 penalty.
Failure to comply with By-law 16.1*	27 May 2002	Steven Roger Twilight (licensed plumber)	Reprimand; required to monitor plumbing work of Mr McGee for 6 months and provide written report; \$1,500 penalty.
Failure to comply with By-law 16.1*	27 May 2002	John Paul McGee (licensed tradesperson)	All water supply, sanitary and drainage to be monitored for the next six months; the status of Mr McGee's licence reviewed in 6 months; \$500 penalty.
Failure to comply with By-law 16.1*	27 May 2002	Brendon Mark Green (licensed plumber)	All water supply, sanitary and drainage to be monitored for the next six months; the status of Mr Green's licence be reviewed in 6 months; \$500 penalty.
Failure to comply with by-law 7.1(a)*.	24 May 2001 (Board Decision) 10 June 2002 (Appeal Hearing)	Stephen Kay (licensed tradesperson)	Required to undertake refresher training within six months; \$1000 penalty; Appeal dismissed; \$360 costs.
Failure to comply with by-law 7.1(a)*.	24 May 2001 (Board Decision) 10 June 2002 (Appeal Hearing)	Ray Gibson (licensed plumber)	Required to demonstrate a system of exercising direction and control over tradespersons; \$2,000 penalty Appeal dismissed; \$360 costs.

1 disciplinary inquiry is currently the subject of appeal in the local court.

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