



# Plumbing newsflash number 488

## Requirements for solar and heat pump endorsement, plumbing training and local government powers

### Purpose

To advise that the non-accredited pathway for obtaining a solar and heat pump (SHP) endorsement has ceased, Plumbing Legislation and Standards courses have been scheduled and to provide clarification on the functions and powers of local government inspectors.

### Cessation of the non-accredited SHP Endorsement

The Solar and Heat Pump Endorsement was introduced in late 2009 as an additional requirement for licensed and provisional plumbers wanting to install SHP systems.

The endorsement's training program provides a more comprehensive understanding of SHP system installation than the Certificate III competencies currently provided by the plumbing apprenticeship program. As of 1 January 2011, plumbers and provisional plumbers must hold the endorsement to be able to install, commission test or maintain SHP systems.

The Plumbing Industry Council (PIC) approved two pathways for achieving the endorsement—accredited and non-accredited. The accredited course is conducted by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) while the non-accredited course allowed plumbers who already install SHPs to prove their proficiency with evidence of successful SHP installations that were undertaken within the previous 12 months and successful completion of an online test.

The non-accredited pathway was a temporary measure that could be used to recognize the skills of already proficient licensees. The non-accredited pathway has been operating for over two years now, giving licensees ample opportunity to take advantage of their industry experience. The PIC has decided to cease recognizing the non-accredited pathway as of 31 December 2011. As of 1 January 2012, any licensed or provisional plumbers who wish to obtain an SHP endorsement will need to undertake the course through an RTO.

Please note that any licensees that currently have an application for the non-accredited endorsement before the PIC, should undertake the online test and provide any and all outstanding documentation to the PIC before 31 January 2012.

### Functions and powers of local government inspectors

In recent weeks a number of Local Government plumbing inspectors have requested advice on their functions and powers. The *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002* (PDA) specifies the functions and powers of local governments and plumbing inspectors for monitoring and enforcing compliance of plumbing and drainage work.

Section 114 of the PDA enables local government inspectors to conduct investigations and inspections for monitoring and enforcing compliance for any plumbing work. This includes regulated work, notifiable minor work such as solar hot water heater installations and minor work.

Section 114 states that an inspector has the powers of an authorised person under the *Local Government Act 2009* (LGA), which includes the power to request entry to a property to inspect plumbing work. An inspector may also give a notice requiring plumbing work, such as rectification work, to be performed.

Section 116 provides local government inspectors with comprehensive powers, including the ability to issue a written notice to the responsible licensee for plumbing or drainage work or on-site sewerage work that an inspector reasonably believes does not comply with the PDA. Where the inspector does not know the licensee who was responsible for the work, the written notice may be given to the owner of the premises in the circumstances described in Section 116 (1) (a).

A written enforcement notice may require the person who receives the notice to request compliance assessment, rectify or remove works, or otherwise ensure that plumbing and drainage work complies with the PDA.

The Standard Plumbing and Drainage Regulation 2003 (SPDR) also requires that all regulated, on-site sewerage, minor and unregulated plumbing and drainage work must comply with the Plumbing Code of Australia, the Queensland Plumbing and Wastewater Code and the applied provisions stated in the SPDR. Plumbing inspectors may also issue penalty infringement notices for a range of offences.

In addition to the formal enforcement powers described above, local government plumbing inspectors have a practical discretion to provide advice about non-compliant work to licensees in any reasonable form. Where a licensee fails to take remedial action the inspector may decide to take formal enforcement action and the matter may also be referred to the PIC. In this context, licensees should also note that the PIC routinely uses its disciplinary powers to support the compliance work of local government plumbing inspectors.

The *LGA and City of Brisbane Act 2010* provide powers for local governments to impose cost-recovery fees, and these Acts specifically state that a 'cost-recovery fee' is a fee for the performance of a responsibility imposed on local governments by the PDA.

## Plumbing Legislation and Standards Courses

A number of Plumbing Legislation and Standards Courses have been established to assist licensees in keeping their knowledge of plumbing laws and technical codes up-to-date. The courses will be of interest to plumbing licensees who wish to refresh their knowledge of plumbing laws, codes and standards.

The **Master Plumbers Association of Queensland** will run courses on the following dates:

- Friday 20 January 2012; and
- Thursday 9 February 2012

**SkillsTech** will run courses on the following dates:

- Friday 16 March 2012

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- Thursday 5 April 2012; and
- Friday 1 June 2012

Contact details for each of the organisations are provided below.

## Contact for further information

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