

## **AUSSIE GREEN PLUMBING TECHNIQUES TO CREATE NEW SKILL**

### **LEVELS FOR PLUMBERS IN USA**

Plumbers in the United States will soon begin learning greener ways after signing on to the Australian *GreenPlumbers* initiative developed by the Master Plumbers' and Mechanical Services Association of Australia (MPMSAA).

Last May, the California Plumbing, Heating, Cooling Contractors (CAPHCC) signed a 15-year agreement with the MPMSAA to implement in the United States, Australia's most ambitious environmental program. Under the agreement up to 40,000 plumbers are set to receive training in water and energy saving methods.

Ray Herbert, CEO of the MPMSAA negotiated the agreement with California after addressing environmental leaders at the State Capitol in Sacramento in April. The discussion on global warming highlighted the significant impact 'green' plumbing has had on water and energy savings in Australia.

The *GreenPlumbers* training and accreditation initiative started in 1999 when research by the MPMSAA showed that Australian industry broadly lacked any knowledge of green plumbing technologies required to meet the emerging issues of greenhouse gas reductions, global warming and water shortages.

With up 70 per cent of all water and energy saving options within buildings are estimated to be plumbing related, the *GreenPlumbers* program was developed to give practitioners in the industry the knowledge and tools they need to present 'green' options to their domestic and commercial client base - and keep abreast of emerging trends in heating, venting, cooling and water saving technologies.

Commenting on the US deal, Stephen J. Lehtonen executive vice-president of CAPHCC said: "The CAPHCC and the MPMSAA believe that the *GreenPlumbers* training program will be an essential part of our industry identity in the coming years – certainly one that will draw new workers to the trade, making our associations stronger and more viable."

*GreenPlumbers*® is an initiative of the Master Plumbers' and Mechanical Services Association of Australia. It is a private industry business model providing self-regulated, high standard green plumbing and environmental services for the more efficient use of water and energy resources and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in response to the emerging issues of climate change.

Its goal is to create sustainable communities by promoting and educating industry, governments and consumers on the concept of green plumbing and the importance of reducing the consumption of our important natural resources through the use of new technology, skills and knowledge now available to the plumbing industry.

Since 1999, the MPMSAA National GreenPlumbers® Accreditation Plan has trained and accredited over 5,000 plumbers representing more than 3,000 businesses in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, and the Australian Capital Territory. The program has also been accepted for introduction into New Zealand by their Master Plumbers Association.

Mr Herbert says the agreement with California highlights the fact that Australia's plumbing industry, and more specifically the *GreenPlumbers* program, is leading the way in helping to create sustainable communities.

In Australia, the *GreenPlumbers* initiative has been able to bridge the divide between practitioners, manufacturers, government and consumers, keeping the plumbing industry at the forefront of environmentally friendly efforts.

"With more than 5,000 accredited plumbers working across the country, the *GreenPlumbers* program has already saved more than 3 billion litres of water," Mr Herbert noted.

"The arrangement with the California Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors gives us the opportunity to train up to 20,000 plumbers in California alone, and we have already received inquiries about the program from eight other states."

"The potential impact that the expansion of this program will have on water usage and green house gas reduction in the US is magnified a hundred-fold with more than 100,000 green plumbers to be trained and given the opportunity to practise in this field," he said.

More than two million San Francisco Bay area water users face mandatory water restrictions similar to east coast Australian cities. With rainfall over the catchments at the lowest level since 1987 and at the fourth lowest level since 1919, introduction of restrictions appears likely for the first time since 1993.

Mr Herbert says in recent years his team of Australian plumbers have gone about their business diligently and with a strong commitment to the environment and sustainable practices. They are now reaping the benefits of "global recognition for a global problem".

"The perceived cost increase has perhaps been the greatest impediment to building green," he says. "Studies by the Australian Green Building Council have shown that while there is some increase, it is unlikely to exceed three per cent. Over time this is anticipated to decrease as green design and construction become more commonplace.

"Climate change will actually drive the economy. It will create new technology and new jobs."