

22 April 2015

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Research Director
Finance and Administration Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

Via email: fac@parliament.qld.gov.au



Dear Sir / Madam

Inquiry into the Payroll Tax Rebate, Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

The Master Plumbers' Association of Queensland (MPAQ) is the peak industry body representing plumbing contractors throughout Queensland, from sole operators to medium sized businesses and large contracting firms. We represent over 1200 members across Queensland, which equates to around 4,000 plumbing professionals.

As well as being the collective voice for the plumbing industry, the Association offers its members a full range of professional services, from employment and workplace relations assistance to technical advice and training. These services assist plumbers to establish and maintain their businesses and plan for the future.

Effective plumbing services are critical to maintain and enhance community health and safety and protect the environment. Our members are at the forefront of this essential service industry and we provide support to ensure the ongoing viability of their businesses.

Master Plumbers are installers of gas, water reticulation and irrigation systems, fire protection services, heating and cooling, mechanical services/air conditioning systems, sanitary disposal, drainage, metal roofing, wall cladding and other plumbing services.

The MPAQ participates on a number of National Committees and boards including:

- Master Plumbers Australia Ltd
- Queensland Building & Construction Commission
- Plumbing Industry Consultative Group
- Service Trades Queensland
- Queensland Gas Association
- Queensland Building & Construction Commission Fire Working Party
- Standards Australia FP-001: Maintenance of Fire Protection Equipment

MPAQ provides a wide range of resources, advisory and advocacy services, opportunities and deals to assist members in receiving the correct technical and trade advice, saving

money on business, operational and lifestyle costs while also protecting the very fabric of the industry as a voice for sole operators and employers, as well as employees and apprentices.

MPAQ supports the government on their commitment to overturn the legislative amendments made by the previous government relating to the Plumbing & Drainage Act 2002.

The repeal of this section of the Bill will restore high standards in the industry by ensuring that water meters in Queensland are installed by fully licensed plumbers. Legislative amendments passed in 2014 removed this requirement which meant that water service providers were no longer required to engage a plumber to install water meters.

“Plumbers undertake a nationally recognised four year apprenticeship covering 64 units of competency encompassing the entire plumbing trade, prior to acquiring their plumbing licence; this qualifies them not only to install, maintain and replace water meters safely, but to deal with any installations issues”.

It should be remembered that plumbers help to protect the populace by ensuring the delivery of water and the removal of waste for the community and this is no mean feat. The average person thinks plumbing is easy and is able to purchase most materials from their local hardware and attempt their own plumbing, but this is not only illegal but dangerous as well.

Plumbing is a licensed trade for a very good reason, we need only point out the legionella outbreak at the Wesley Hospital, the Hong Kong SARS outbreak, cholera, typhoid and many other occurrences of disease outbreak that directly result from poorly installed or maintained plumbing and drainage systems. Many of these diseases are no longer of immediate concern and this is directly due to correctly installed and maintained plumbing and drainage systems.

There have been several significant cross contamination experiences in recent years, which MPAQ understands were associated with non-licensed workers operating (in breach of the Act). These incidents are known to Government. Non-licensed workers undertaking this work has lead to increased risk to health through cross-contamination of the water supply to Queenslanders homes and businesses.

Water meters are just one element of the holistic water supply system for safe human consumption. Importantly, licensed plumbers are qualified and experienced in understanding and protecting community health across the entirety of the water supply system. Water meters range in complexity from domestic meters through to purpose designed and large-scale water control systems.

The previous government de-regulated the work associated with this single element of the total water supply system which results in increased risks and consequences for the community, the industry and workers. They also displaced a qualified workforce of plumbers who are the most competent to perform this work.

Concerns about this Bill

MPAQ is concerned about the transition arrangements for these authorised workers. The government has indicated that they will red circle existing workers performing this work. MPAQ believes that a Certificate III in Plumbing (apprenticeship) is the minimum required

study for these authorised persons to undertake which will lead to a licensed outcome of a plumber and drainer.

1. A two year time frame has been suggested for these authorized persons to transition into an apprenticeship, MPAQ believes this transition period is excessive. MPAQ would anticipate that it should take no longer than six months to transition over into an apprenticeship.
2. MPAQ has been advised and is concerned that one of the largest water service providers has identified that they need to replace a large number of meters between now and 30 June, to meet this demand they are desperately recruiting. Our concern is that this group may bring on a number of unlicensed workers during this transition period. We believe that a retrospective approach would be appropriate.
3. It is important to state that the legislation has only been in place from 13 May 2014 so it has not even reached 12 months and the network services providers are stating that they want four - ten years to transition. Their case could be supported for more time if the changes were in place for a significant period of time, not less than a year.

When the previous government made these changes they made no provision for the impact onto plumbers and their businesses by displacing an already existing qualified, experienced and licensed workforce and replacing them with minimally trained workers (water industry workers) potentially putting the community at risk of contamination to the water supply and damage to property. It now appears this government is concerned about the impact legislative change will have on authorised persons, who are neither qualified or licensed to perform such work.

If the committee would like further clarification on any of these items please contact me on

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Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards



Penny Cornah
Executive Director