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The Research Director
Transport, Local Government and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000



Dear Sir/Madam

**SUBMISSION TO THE SUSTAINABLE PLANNING AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL 2011**

On behalf of the Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) I would like to make comment on the Sustainable Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, before Committee. In particular, I would like to comment on Section 6 of the Bill amendment to the *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002* (PDA).

It is the strong opinion of the GCCC that the adoption of the proposed amendments to the PDA will adversely impact public health and safety, the environment and in the long term will financially cost the community more than current local government plumbing and drainage application fees. GCCC's opinion is supported from the incompetency shown by the majority of licensed plumbers to correctly lodge a Form 4 for the installation of solar or heat pump hot water system (SHPHWS) installations. GCCC's opinion is also supported by the failure of licensed plumbers to install SHPHWS installations, which comply with the *Standard Plumbing and Drainage Regulation 2003* (SPDR).

Recent amendments to the PDA have allowed licensed plumbers with a solar endorsement to submit a Form 4 to the local government for the installation of SHPHWS. However, until recently the majority of licensed plumbers on the Gold Coast failed to submit Form 4's to the GCCC for SHPHWS nor did they submit a plumbing and drainage application for the work under the Form 1 process. The GCCC only become aware of hundreds of illegally installed SHPHWS on the Gold Coast when the Office of Clean Energy provided the GCCC with information about applicants requesting a rebate for their SHPHWS installation. The GCCC decide to issue Penalty Infringement Notices (PIN) to those plumbers who had illegally installed SHPHWS and it was only after the GCCC started to issue PIN's did

licensed plumbers on the Gold Coast start to submit Form 4's to the GCCC for SHPHWS installations.

Furthermore, when plumbers started to lodge Form 4's to the GCCC the majority of the forms were incorrectly completed (i.e. wrong installation address and not ticking all the boxes to indicate the installation complied with the SPDR) and were not accompanied by the \$25 lodgement fee. Therefore, the GCCC had no choice but to reject the incorrectly completed Form 4's and it is still an ongoing administrative nightmare to get the licensed plumber to lodge the Form 4 correctly with the \$25 fee. This proves that unless caught out the majority of licensed plumbers will not submit a Form 4 for work carried out. Therefore, how is the GCCC going to be able to audit their work if none of their work is known to the GCCC? In addition, the Form 4 process for SHPHWS installations is open to exploitation as the GCCC has received several Form 4's where the plumbers details have been falsified and their signatures forged.

The GCCC was also concerned that SHPHWS installations under the Form 4 process were not complying with the SDPR and as a result the GCCC implemented a SHPHWS audit program. In the first several months of the audit program the GCCC carried out approximately 600 audits of SHPHWS installations. Appallingly, 95% of the SHPHWS audited failed to comply with the SPDR. The GCCC has since invested a considerably amount of time and money to "educate" plumbers on how to correctly install SHPHWS. The GCCC has held workshops, sent regular communication via the "Pipeline" Newsletter to plumbers and has presented at TAFE during Solar Endorsement courses. Even after considerable effort from the GCCC there is still a 70% failure rate with SHPHWS audited by the GCCC. The experience of the GCCC clearly demonstrates that licensed plumbers on the Gold Coast are not capable of certifying their own work or of any self regulation.

Considering the major difficulties experienced by the GCCC with the introduction of the SHPHWS installed under the Form 4 process, it is firm opinion of the GCCC that the proposed changes to the PDA are inadequately structured. It is the GCCC's opinion that the proposed changes to the PDA will not protect the community from illegal and potentially hazardous plumbing and drainage work. Therefore, I recommended that the proposed changes to the PDA be withdrawn until further consultation between all relevant authorities and industry can adequately ascertain the potential liabilities associated with these or any future changes.

Should you wish to clarify any issues contained in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Keith Farrelly on telephone (07) 5582 8693.

Yours faithfully



Keith Farrelly
COORDINATOR PLUMBING & DRAINAGE
For the Chief Executive Officer