

2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum

This series of reports summarize the papers presented to the 2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum held 3 to 4 September 2004 at the Sheraton Perth Hotel, Perth Western Australia and also provide conclusions reached by the attending Plumbing Professionals from Australia and the World. The Forum was hosted by the Institute of Plumbing Australia Incorporated.

Note: The following has been transcribed and condensed from audio recordings and notes of the forum proceedings and not from written papers provided by the speakers. As such, matters in these reports do not constitute advice of any kind but provide a general overview of items discussed. Anyone reproducing, quoting or acting in any way on items contained herein do so at their own risk.

Saturday 4 September 2004 - Forum Session Two

We will kick off the session this morning similar to the one yesterday afternoon it is an open forum, you the delegates are going to run it I will just stand up here as a talking head. We have put together some bullet points that we will display in a minute that came out of this mornings earlier session, we will run through those and then given time we will reintroduce a couple of topics from yesterday's forum session as well just to finalise decisions or take further discussion.

These are the items that our committee put together that they felt were the ones that came out of the discussion which took place which was quite a long debate and virtually part of the forum type debate. I don't know whether anyone wants to revisit any of those or look at rewording or whether anyone is happier to move that some of them be adopted as a conclusion of the forum the floor is yours.

Bullet Points as displayed:

New National Training Packages

Discussion Outcomes

- Industry funding (for training) seems to be a National problem. This being the case do we seek additional State or National govt funding or put pressure on the apprentice applicants to pay more for there training. Similar to university funding.
- Industry needs to work more closely with state education committees to further develop a further reaching career path for industry operatives beyond plumbing license level to include areas like consulting, teaching, business management, estimating, foreman training and even inspectorial auditing training.
- Potential to lift entry level of apprenticeship applicants to secure more interest from applicants.

2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum

- Independent (third party) end of apprenticeship assessments , plumbing license assessments, plumbing diploma level assessments to assure industry acceptable standards are being achieved from employers and training providers.

Funding is controlled by state government. So it is a bit hard to put pressure on the actual apprentice to pay more money.

So you put pressure on the apprentice applicants to pay more for their training. Really has to come through pressure on the government. The State government as to what they pay.

.....Some time to get some good professional development and time to develop resources that are currently in use today that is where the funding would need to be and the development of the resources for teaching to look at possibly even some form of flexible training the student can be self paced in his learning areas. Because one of the things that we hear from Industry is that they can't afford to lose an apprentice for four weeks at a time so that is where the funding would be better off used if it was available.

The intention of the first point was more about, we identified this morning that there was quite clearly a shortage of funding to provide quality training right across the Industry the question there is whether or not we put pressure on government whether it be a National or State to make up the shortfall that may be required to further develop the training, not just the training package themselves but also the infrastructure required to provide that training. You know you go to most of the training centers these days and the standards seem to be dropping off quite a lot the funding is quite clearly not there. So the question is whether we put pressure on the Government to provide the funding or we put the pressure on the applicants themselves similar to what happens currently at University. Has anyone done any calculations or comparisons between what it costs to do a University course compared to an apprenticeship? Just as a matter of interest?

Yes but like a University course might be about \$6,000 is that about right?

So just Max you probably have some idea what it costs to do an apprenticeship?

Approximately.

It is probably about \$2,000 all up.

So here we are talking about the problems with the costings and funding. And look at the difference. Well, lets start identifying that if we are serious about training then it is going to cost. The question is who is going to pay for it. Whether it is government or the applicants.

2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum

Can I just I think there is some bigger problems I mean one of the things we have, certainly here in WA, is that the building construction industry training fund and some other states have that some don't but they also put money in to support apprenticeships, apprentice or apprentice training and one of the things that is starting to be discussed at the moment and just started to be floated is that it seems that the licensed trades like plumbing and electrical are successful apprenticeships. We heard before that in and I think Tom says in a lot of other industry's people struggle to get even applications for apprenticeships enough applications for them plumbing and electrical are not we have got the other issue where we tend to have more applicants than places and so there is actually a suggestion that maybe things like plumbing and electrical should get less funding because they are more successful and the funding should be pushed in to those other trades things like wall and ceiling fixing and brick laying where they are struggling to get people through so it is not only an issue of getting more funding the issue is actually retaining the funding that is here right now and there some certainly some pressures on in that area at the moment.

I wanted to just raise it from a completely different perspective and basically say maybe we have got the whole system wrong right from the start. And I know this is going to be reasonable controversial because there are a lot of TAFE people in the room and people who work for government and are directly involved in funding of the system etc etc. But I think our problem with recruitment of apprenticeships, the training of apprentices comes back to the fact that we have lost the community ownership and desire to train apprentices and we have lost it because we have given up the process to the academia within the school system to say where people go. We are looking at a proposal and we are just starting to compile it in NSW where we want to change the funding profile by which we don't just fund TAFE for an extra \$100,000,000 and hope to god there is going to be an outcome for training of it an extra hundred apprentices or 25 apprentices it doesn't matter because what happens is that when the bureaucracy gets a hold of that money especially central agencies that hundred million dollars that came into the system that we call TAFE will end up at the coal face maybe only 2 or 3 million dollars it will get broken up to cover other problems, debt, whatever else it might be. And this is the major problem for the Industry because when you talk about throwing money into the Industry and the Industry putting money in whatever dollars you put in you are not going to see and outcome for the dollars you put in you are going to see only an outcome for a very small proportion of the dollars you put in. Now what we have started to talk to with our TAFE people in NSW in one particular area is a pilot and we have well we had until the election was called a meeting scheduled with Dr Nelson to raise this with him is that the ownership of apprentices should be at the very base school level in other words we need agents to encourage kids to become apprentices and that should be at in NSW we have P & C associations. Other States may have other names.

But you take the funding directly to there. Now we have seen the Federal Government do it just recently on an education programme for young people in the schools it is not being funded directly into the large State Education bodies it is being funded directly in to the schools to produce the outcome. And we would say that there has to be a linkage between the P & C local employers the TAFE college and that linkage will allow the government to fund each parts of the link. So the school, P & C, would get funded for the number of kids that they encourage and actually get them placed as apprentices. They get that money whatever it is per capital allowance, they then get to hold that

2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum

money and do develop them with in the school. There needs to be fundamental base training in the school system of careers advisors about a knowledge about what Industry is. And that has to be funded directly into the schools it is no good giving it to the Department of Education or to TAFE and say you train these careers advisors go directly to the school through the P & C someone gets released for 3 months goes and works in the Industry funded by government and comes back has a knowledge about what Industry needs.

Then you go to places like TAFE if that is your trainer and for all of that number of apprentices who come via this system into the TAFE College, they are paid directly funded to that College to produce the outcome for the apprentice. Not to the central bureaucracy of TAFE where they manipulate it in other ways. So you get a per capital allowance in that plumbing school to train that apprentice for the period of the time of the apprenticeship.

Now that is a completely different way to look at it and I know might be controversial but we have to find some other way of doing this because let me tell you in NSW TAFE has been cut by the Federal Government this year 323 million dollars. That 323 million dollars has meant that every public service budget has been cut by 10% and TAFE has been cut by a substantial amount because that is what the Federal Government has said we are going to give you less, the State government says you work with less, so the pressure goes right onto the system about how you will produce outcomes of apprentice numbers and we are always the end of the pecking order there is no doubt because when it comes to cost structures in TAFE it costs a damn sight more to run a plumbing school then what it does to buy a thousand computers and put people through to computer training IT training for which they have got no guarantee of a job at the end. But it looks good and it is cheaper.

So that is a different model of looking at it. We want to go and talk to Brendan Nelson about it or the new Education Minister and we already do know that he has sympathy and he has some support within his own general office for this proposal.

There is another issue thanks Paul I agree with you 100%. Another question or issue I would like to throw in the air we have got a building construction industry training fund here in WA just how much money that have got sitting in that account. Fifteen million dollars. And here we are battling, scratching for money, I would like to question isn't the money out in there providing funding for TAFE also at college so that the other side there the private providers, plumbing painting and training skills group. So fifteen million guys. So this fund a little bit further follows a smart investor or could say to them hey invest in my company or in these shares, guess where that money is going to go, not into training it is going to go out the door isn't it.

Well yes I would have thought a fund like that fund should be spent in the same area that is collected because it is collected by an levy on buildings and so on and it really shouldn't be a fund that accumulates funds it should be a fund that is spent in the same area where it is collected and I think that is where you are probably looking for.

2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum

.... Apprentice comes direct from that training fund so some of that money is being used there has been some concern that the amount that is held could be better utilized.

Steve, over here I am. In Tasmania this year they introduced an employer subsidy for apprentices through the building training organization that is there. Now it goes a little bit against what we are saying here in saying getting the apprentices to pay more. They took the view they need to subsidize the employers to put the apprentices on. Now that subsidy is four thousand dollars per apprentice. Now this year in plumbing they had over 50 new apprentices in that field whereas the using in other years they have only had 8 to 10 so if we are looking to drive an increase in the Industry maybe there needs to be looking at this 15 million dollars that they have got there and saying that needs to go back to employers to help offset them in that initial first year of training. Maybe that is something that can be looked at for the Industry. And the other side of it this is that if you get more apprentices coming into the system then it becomes a supply and demand against TAFE if those people can't be trained then the Industry can go back and argue with their respective Ministers and say we need more support more dollars for them. So you are driving it by demand not by what you believe is what you want at the end of the day.

Have those issues been raised and pointed out to the State Government so this part of where we need to be taking our training?

I mean the apprentices is an issue but just looking at the amount of people that have attended say this conference here or plumbers and contractors the up-skilling and continual new technology of plumbers out there I would say our apprentices are probably more skilled than some of our guys out there that are operating as the contractors. What are we going to do about making sure that these guys keep up with the trends and are aware of new technologies? I don't know in Victoria I think they have a points rating system that they have to get a certain amount of points out of the plumber but in WA we don't have any point rating system to make sure that guys are keeping up with the new technologies.

Well on the local thing we should be lobbying the licensing board on that one for renewal of licenses requiring CPD.

Ok. I would like you to maybe to drop to the bottom of the bullet points and maybe discuss this last one because that appears to be something that came out fairly strongly in the earlier discussions. The middle two are fairly self evident that they need to happen I don't know whether we can much of a statement about them at this stage in time other than to say that we support that, that Industry needs to work more closely and that we need to lift the entry level of apprenticeship applicants. More to the point on that one is that we really need to lift the level of the school leavers it is the same thing but we are talking about coming in to something that the people that are coming out of the other scheme is the problem so I don't know that we are in a position to do too much about

that although we may be but if you could look at maybe the fourth bullet point and maybe have a bit of debate on that before we clean up the others.

- **Independent (third party) end of apprenticeship assessments, plumbing license assessments, plumbing diploma level assessments to assure industry acceptable standards are being achieved from employers and training providers.**

Now Steve that point there is obviously the third party being the key point we spoke this morning about you know the career paths and so forth and providing the Independent and I don't know whether other States are going down the same path but a question that I have for the floor is those that are from other States is do they see the need to have the Independent third party assessments that is to keep employers and training providers on their toes as far as what the Industry actually requires as far as standards are required and of course the other thing not just at the apprenticeship level but also at plumbing license level and further on into Diploma type areas. What happens in other States at the moment?

Well that is precisely what we have had in Western Australia is an identification in the recent years that the standards seem to be dropping with applicants coming up for plumbing license examinations, and those applicants are no where near ready to be sitting that exam and the failure rate at that level is evident of the problems that we are actually seeing.

Independent from the trainers, Independent from the employers so it is an independent third party.

I think one of the issues one of the problems here is we are confusing a couple of things and it is the Industry has had a problem I believe in the past of confusing training and licensing and training is not licensing. I think it is quite legitimate that the regulator has a, some sort of examination assessment or whatever for a person to be licensed. I think that is quite legitimate, but I don't see that there is a particular need to have a separate body to do an assessment at the basic certificate 3, the apprenticeship level - that person is assessed all the way through. As a training organization we are assessing constantly those people all the way through so completing the apprenticeship level - I don't see there is a need for a separate examination on the way through.

Separately, later on if those people want to go and get a contractors license, you know I think the contractors license is different that is issued by a regulator however that person gets the skills or knowledge or whatever to go for that contractors license is up to them they may go on a training course they may get it by experience they may get it by talking to people so lets not confuse apprenticeship training from license examination or some sort of assessment to get a license and I think one of the problems in the past we have moved all these things together. Lets keep them all separate and do what they need to do for each of them. So I guess my view is I don't really see a point in having yet another examination at the end for an apprenticeship when a person has been assessed all the way through.

Just on the question that was asked for the gentleman over here about what happens in other States in relation to the training. We I think are unique because in Australia we are still the only state in NSW that has a vocational training order system and we will embrace these equally three and we have already gone about the processes of establishing the vocational training order for it and that sets a level that has to be obtained. Our difficulty is the same with all TAFES in the competency based type system is that at the end of the day what is going to be the standard of the outcome and that is all our concerns it is about what is the standard. And we will be discussing as TAFE works further down this path in NSW about a in assessment whatever form it takes to be able to assure that somebody who does training at Tamworth TAFE in the North West of the State actually delivers an outcome for both himself and that the Industry similar to that which is delivered out of say Sydney's Eastern Suburbs. Unless we can have that competency based training and the whole system is just going to fall apart. At the end of the day we will end up with varying degrees of training, which is not to the benefit of the overall industry. Then someone will say that you will correct that because at the licensing stage you then have everybody sit for an exam, which brings everybody up to that level.

A gentleman here a moment ago sort of said well what do you do with them on the basis of time served. I use the analogy a lot of time because I have a previous background in the Health Industry. If you are a student doctor and you go through the system at the end of the day if you don't cut the mustard you don't get to go out there and hang a shingle up as a doctor. And it is simple as that. Just because we have a historic view that apprenticeships are about time served and then with some training on top of it that at the end of the day what that means is that you can practice as a plumber I would say that is rubbish this is 2005 we are not back in the 1950's. The difficulty you have is there has got to be regimentation because when somebody goes to a licensing authority and this is where the world has changed, they get a license to contract and what that says is that you now have the right to charge a consumer a price to do a job and that is where the big change is because there is enormous amounts of legislation now that wasn't around 50 years ago to protect the rights of the consumer.

So unless you do have everybody at that same level, and it should be National type levels, I would agree with that, that you will always have a problem. If you don't have one standard met by everybody because let me tell you the consumer legislation will tear those people apart if they are not competent and that is the difficulty for us all because we don't have the uniform consumer legislation we have different approaches about how it should work and but at the end of they day if the education system, the training system can't produce the outcome where the person is able to run to their business if that is what they want to do and contract in a fair equitable tradesman professional way the consumers legislation will tear them apart anyway.

And that is not good for the Industry.

2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum

Could I just while the other microphone is going around, raise a point please we do talk about the training the 83% that the training is actually on the job with an employer. This would obviously indicate that employers of what their training skills have to be as well. Now do we have in our plumbing industry those skills for training anyway and should we looking at this comes back to post trade training for licenses that they are competent in training apprentices anyway.

In Victoria right at the moment the assessment with our old system is the 32 CDA system we have got for apprentices we are auditing that an assessment at the end of the training system the apprentices must do that assessment and everyone of them assessed.

When the fail rate of that assessment is a 32% fail rate these are guys that come right through the system the training providers have told us that they are competent and we are still getting a 32 % fail rate.

For the licensed area they do a theory assessment at the end of that, and that will continue and the commissioners made a commitment with the new national competencies the assessment we got at the moment will remain for a minimum of three years and we will trial both systems.

Steve, just as a, I'm involved in another industry where we testing gas cylinders and we are audited every twelve months for Australian Standards to make sure that our equipment our training is at a level that is still competent. Why cant someone like Anta who is the National Training Authority become the organization for auditing the TAFE'S the RTO's everyone that is down the line is doing that training and delivering it, say right you are delivering at a Nationally Accredited Level so that we have that uniformity across Australia rather than individual States being responsible for it, we could then put it the control of a National Body to deliver it as a standard.

At one stage I understood that employers of apprentices had to keep a record and provide records of what the lad had been doing is that still happening? Is that just a bit of paper that ends up in a file somewhere in a dusty box or does someone do something with it?

Steve the problem with that is of course we have seen many times that and there is no disrespect to any trainers or training providers or employers for that matter but we have already identified at the moment that we can't get decent trainers because we are not paying them enough, so that tend to suggest that we have a problem with training, yet the training providers are the ones that are signing off as well as the employers on competency based training. We have identified that the standards are dropping, I sit on a panel of examiners here in West Australia at the moment and in one module on the last exam we had a whopping 68% failure. Now these were students that came up with the assumption that they had been prepared through training for the examination. Now with a 68% failure, had there not been an independent body put in place to examine

2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum

these guys that 68% would have gone through as being competent and passed. So until we resolve the financial issues and the training issues, we need to have independent, third party examinations at almost all levels. IF the training providers, the employers, and the Industry as a whole lifts its standard in the future, we could possibly look at reducing that independent examination, but in the meantime I don't see any choice at all - to maintain the standard that we expect within Industry. And I employ apprentices, I am an employer myself, but we need to maintain that standard, and I say the only to do that, is to have that Independent third party examinations.

Well I put it to you that the forum was to take on board that 4th bullet point as an outcome of this forum, is anyone against that motion, I will make it a motion, somebody will second it, anyone like to speak for or against the motion?

It is the fourth bullet point, if we take it as an outcome of this forum to be put into the final report of the forum and being able to utilize it as a lobbying tool to keep this type of outcome for apprenticeships.

I put it to the vote, a show of hands, all in favour? Anyone against? Okay, it is not unanimous but it is passed.

The other points on there is anyone like to make any of those any stronger or do something with them or if not we will no one want to make any motions I am not going to make them all from here.

We will just move onto the few points that came out of yesterday's discussion, have a look at those and see if you want to revisit them, if you want to make them any stronger or into an outcome?

Bullet points as displayed:

Summary from Fridays Forum Discussion

- There is a need to investigate locations of sewer vent terminals in relation to air intakes due to the longer life of viruses such as the SARS virus.
- There is a need to increase requirements in relation to maintaining trap seals.
- National Regulations should include for all commercial and industrial properties to prepare a water management plan as part of the building approval requirements.
- The plumbing industry should liaise with the insurance industry to increase policy requirements in relation to the installation of non approved plumbing products.

2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum

The first one is more of a statement and I think we need to probably come up with a stronger statement on the importance of plumbing in relation to containing communicable diseases. But it is a start and that appears that that is needed and I am not quite sure who in Australia we would be lobbying to take on that kind of study or whether we just provide support to the WPC to continue with those discussions with WHO and their advisors such as Professor Swaffield as someone like that who has the facilities to do that sort of work.

.... A study of that nature. That is just one organization that probably could do it because I don't think there is any other body that I am aware of that does building research.

If I might make that similar point given that those items are relevant to AS 3500 the committee looking at that is WS14 of the Australian standards. I think that they should also be asked to assess that and I would suggest that what we do is actually write to them and advise that this is actually our problem and ask them as part of AS3500 if they have a closer look at those two questions. Whoever suggest the forum communicate those first two bullet points to WS14 Australian Standards Committee that looks after AS3500.

The second point should also have reference to relief DG charge methods? An example there is I know in West Australia we rely on a hose tap over a DG that is not charged by a fixture to keep the trap seal there, whether or not that is effective because a relief DG without water obviously is a dry trap directly at ground level discharging large volumes of effluent or air polluted air into the atmosphere.

Yes it is being kept fairly broad I mean it actually states, maintaining trap seals it talks about any trap that is required and so rather than start to specify particular traps in a statement like that we are better to keep it as broad as possible so that it is an overall that those sort of points as part of the instructions or communication to the committee that a few bullet points below and including those sort of traps where they are manually maintained at the moment which I think is the way we looked at it yesterday was that the problem was wherever a trap required manual maintenance rather than an automatic trap primer or a fixture and that is the actual reason for it.

Steve, it is my understanding that Professor John Swaffield at Heriot-Watt University is currently investigating the problems of SARS and is certainly looking at the venting techniques with a view to find a solution so I think you will probably find that in the very near future that that information will become available and from our point of view we will be releasing a statement on that in March at the World Plumbing Council so I think you will find that that is being done and is certainly a concern.

Thank you.

2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum

We appear to have a general consensus that the first two points should be communicated to the standards association WS14 committee and the institute will undertake to do that. The third point came out of water management and water conservation, and to some extent water management plans are put together very briefly in WA when we apply for particular types of water supply to commercial properties and it possibly could be looked at along those lines where that same reporting structure is expanded to include an actual plan of the water use. The Water Corporation here used that, what is put in at the moment as a means of assessing outfalls and incoming water and outfalls for pricing purposes and invoicing. But it came out of the discussion with the Water Corporation that, I'm not sure where the building application thing will sit once we get plumbers sort of putting license applications directly into a licensing board but there must be still, will be a building application of some sort and possibly we would communicate that back to the Water Corporation on a local level and as a statement coming out of this forum if you agree with that as a statement individual states can utilize it with their own Water Corporations if they wish. So at this point we would probably put that in the report that comes out of this forum unless anyone has got any objection to that or anyone wants to speak about it.

Can I just raise a point about this SARS thing again please? Just regarding the health and safety of the actual plumbers themselves because I have a slight concern over, being a former maintenance plumber of the risk of air borne contaminants. I used to always worry about getting cuts and what have you infected but I never even thought of actually breathing in viruses. Whether this should be investigated further whether through the World Plumbing Council, and whether any recommendations should be put forward to, from a safety point of view as in should they be wearing masks when they unblock drains and such like.

That is a very good point would anyone like to comment on that avenue of thinking?

[Inaudible]... Filtered down to the plumbing industry and I would say it would be more the case that we will be put certain conditions that we will have to apply and change our systems to apply so these conditions don't happen. Rather than us going the other way and making submissions to these people I mean they will out of an outcome they want from their, looking into the problems that SARS has caused and will filter down with ideas that would like to be addressed by the plumbing industry.

One face that obviously this would, could be a concentrated situation is working in hospitals does anyone have any experience of hospital maintenance and whether the Occupation Health and Safety requirements working in those facilities have any requirement for face masks during drain cleaning.

[Inaudible]...against the hepatitis virus on an ongoing basis. But as far as wearing facemasks there was no requirement at that time.

2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum

Steve, one of these issues is the hepatitis type viruses and there is a lot of other airborne viruses that you can probably pick up out of the sewer systems and other diseases. Perhaps the organization should be looking towards perhaps formulating a safety procedure for the people that are unblocking drains and working on open drains. As a guide that could be used for everyone across Australia whether it comes back through national body or someone else as such. But to my knowledge I haven't seen any detailed document that says this is the safety procedures that you need to be following as a guide, not necessarily as a directive but certainly to give them some information about it.

One suggestion was that specific occupational health and safety issues should be handled by employers or employer organisations.

[Inaudible]... I think we should be more concerned with perhaps combining all our thinking and all our pressures to make these things happen as an Industry rather than saying that's your fault that's our fault or we will do this and you'll do something else. I think if we combine everything we will have better outcomes for the Industry.

Steve, the situation in NSW, both in the health area and also for plumbers now, because we have such stringent requirements under our occupation health and safety acts as in relation to both the due diligence and duty of care and the requirements of safe work methods statements and a whole range of other hard documentations is now required. This will be a significant factor. The situation is once known the responsibility whether it be not yet finalized the responsibility on a employer he must do all things that will protect the staff. Whether the level of possibility of infection is deemed to be high or low it doesn't particularly matter you still have to put the thing in place. That is the way the act works in NSW. And I know from our perspective we have got a series of seminars at the present time and I will intend now to raise the SARS issue in those seminars, and we have got 20 of those that we do throughout the State.

And basically saying to plumbers you need to write this into work methods statements this is something you just can't ignore because at the end of the day, this is now public knowledge. And if it is public knowledge and you are a practitioner and it is known to you that it is a possibility that could occur you just cannot ignore it and that would, is specific in the health system. There is no doubt that in the hospital system there is a much higher upgrading of all of these sorts of precautions and we have many prosecutions in NSW that send a whole new benchmarks for working safely within those types of environments.

Ok well we can draft up another conclusion to come out that we haven't written yet but on that very well maybe on that top one we can add it to, or we will make a new one up which will indicate that this information is available and we will provide some information in the report as to just where it is all heading.

2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum

Well the fourth point that came out of Friday's forum was to do with non-approved plumbing products and we had a bit of discussion about point of sale legislation and trying to do something with it and it was felt that it was possibly not able to be done. I think, I believe that we should make a statement of some sort to do with that because I believe regardless of whether government don't want to do it I believe that it should be done and we should start lobbying to bring this into being. I cant see why we cant close our borders to product that is not allowed to be used, I think someone brought up points where the points where efficient water appliances might not work in some instances and that type of thing but they can, the approval can be worked so that it can be approved to be used in certain circumstances I mean there is all sorts of different types of approvals but as long it has been approved by someone. So I would like to move that we do come up with a statement out of the forum that champions the regulating the non approved plumbing products at the point of sale. Anyone like to talk against that?

Steve, I just, if I am permitted just to make a comment on, I'm from New Zealand and also on the World Plumbing Council. And we listened to Russ Chaney yesterday and he gave us a very in depth presentation on the SARS virus and what happened at Amoy Gardens and having been in the Industry for some time I know it is always difficult to get media exposure. And I would have thought that perhaps the conference here should be considering the opportunity that you have right at this point in time to raise the question of the SARS virus and the fact that it could happen in any part of Australia if the same circumstances happened as they happened at Amoy Gardens and it occurs to me that you probably have a very good opportunity to actually at this point in time.

Making any progress I think it is a unique opportunity and I think perhaps one well worthwhile considering. Did you have any other comments to make Russ?

Thank you Graham. Let me just add when we participated in the meeting at the World Health Organization last September in Rome the chair of the meeting was Dr Jamie Bartram out of WHO in Geneva with the water sanitation and health division and at the conclusion of the meeting just prior to leaving he walked over to me and he said this is probably the biggest thing to happen to the Plumbing Industry that would provide a true benefit in recognizing the importance of what the greater plumbing fraternity does. And I believe he is spot on with that and one of the benefits, one of the goals coming out of the SARS symposium in Los Angeles, was to try and focus attention on the fact that the plumbing fraternity and the infrastructure of that supports it whether it be licensing, training, inspection, good codes of practice, product evaluation. Any part of that system, if any part of that system fails or is inadequate it subjects the remaining parts of the system and by virtue of that it exposes the greater community to severe health inflictions.

So Robert sitting right in front of me here is co-coordinating a health and environment committee on behalf of the World Plumbing Council for the purpose of evaluating these types of important messages. And I know that Robert would be most interested in having input certainly from the Institute here and the greater plumbing fraternity in Australia. So it would be a great benefit, certainly to the WPC if the participants were to take a stand on this issue.

2004 Australian National Plumbing Forum

Thank you Russ for that and Graham. Any other comment on where we should go in using the tragedy of the SARS situation to benefit the populace through to a better plumbing?

Law and liability. Where does the plumber stand there? I know Bill Berry, those that knew him as a designer - he always used to put more than what was required... floor wastes - popped them in everywhere because if there is flooding in the building that exonerated him as a designer. That being said, now if we have the old SARS virus, pops its ugly head in a hospital whatever, yes, who are they going to blame? They are going to come back at the plumber aren't they? Basically. He is at the bottom of the chain. That is an opinion. Anyway.

Yes well I mean currently the code requires that traps charged and if a trap dried out and caused an epidemic you could be right, someone could start at the plumber if it was proved that he put it in wrong.

Ok well I think we have probably done most of these things to death now as far as the forum is concerned; we have come up to closing time we are spot on. So if before we leave I would just like to do, make a few thanks mainly to my organization for the help that they have given me. Planning on this function started some three years ago with the Institute Council doing the early general planning. At a later stage the WA chapter council formed a working committee and took on the actual nitty gritty part of it. And as the Institute's Secretary I was given the job to chair that. Many members and even some non-members have contributed and should be proud of the success of what I have been told is a success anyway of this forum.

To my knowledge it is the first Australian plumbing forum encompassing all parts of the wider plumbing fraternity. There are plenty of forum's and conventions staged in Australia but they are mostly run by an organisation for their members and possibly with visitors but this is the first time I believe that the whole plumbing fraternity have been invited to come together and discuss plumbing.