
THE INSTITUTE OF PLUMBING AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

THE NATIONAL BODY FOR PLUMBERS AND PLUMBING

E-INSTITUTE

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<<<EDITORIAL>>>CAREER PATH FOR PLUMBERS:

I am not sure if it was what I said in the previous issue of E-Institute or from my other comments elsewhere but I raised the ire of one prominent Australian plumber who rang me to voice his concern that this Institute and/or the Plumbing Coalition Australia had a particular view on the subject of pre-requisite(s) for entry into Certificate IV. After assuring him that neither organisation had debated the issue to a conclusion either way, I started to think about this question of an academic approach to a career in plumbing.

The introduction of Certificates IV to VI in Plumbing now provides a career path from Taste-a-Trade courses for Secondary School Students to Advanced Diploma. However, it is not all plain sailing with some employers looking for special skills above tradesperson level wanting to join the pathway half way through and housing constructors wanting to shortcut the very basis of the career. If you take these views some years down the track and you may end up with designers without knowledge of installation parameters and installers without the knowledge to interpret the design.

In the last issue, I suggested that maybe there was merit in a design stream in Certificate III but on reflection, I no longer believe that this is the way to go. As plumbing apprentice training is now competency based the plumbing industry should be insisting that the additional skills this method of training and assessment can produce are produced and that any opportunities for shortcuts are apposed. What is wrong with an apprentice aspiring to coming out of a 4-year apprenticeship with a Certificate IV or part thereof in addition to the mandatory Certificate III? I know that training in this way will cost but surely government's, prior to committing to competency-based training, have done the cost analysis and factored in the additional people, equipment and facilities to effectively allow students the benefits of self paced learning and competency based outcomes. There is nothing new about any of this. A form of self-paced learning practiced back in the dark ages when I did my apprenticeship allowing those with the aptitude to graduate not only with their trade certificate but also with all the practical subjects completed for the plumbers licence and enough night school learning to sit the license theory exams at the earliest opportunity.

But back to where I started and the question of attracting students to the academic end of plumbing and in particular the design sector. Rather than trying to break into the aforementioned career path part way through why not allow designers to embrace the group training system and negotiate to take apprentices for periods of time under the normal trading terms of the group. This would only suit apprentices that have shown aptitude for this type of work and after they have demonstrated competency to Certificate III level. I am sure that designers, as contractors do now, will find that apprentices hired from a group training scheme will often end up working for them after graduating. Taken a step further designers could introduce people to the group training schemes with an agreement to take them on as trainee designers when they complete their apprenticeship.

If we are to attract motivated people to plumbing apprenticeships, we must provide them with a total package that demonstrates a pathway with steps as high as they wish to go. The introduction of Certificates IV to VI whilst it may give some pain to those involved with existing plumbing diploma type courses does provide that continuous career path that many have been seeking for some considerable time.

An argument put by some when promoting joining the career path part way through is that other "engineers" in project design teams do not come from a trade background so why should plumbing designers have to. Well maybe that is what makes plumbing just that bit different. The academically trained design engineer often produces concept drawings with the contractor having to provide the actual working drawings that fit the project as the project proceeds but the plumbing design needs to be generally complete at the start as our work starts below ground and finishes above the roof.

Stephen Movley
Editor

ANOTHER VIEW ON TRAINING:

Training has featured in most issues of E-Institute.
Institute Member Bill Blake of NSW has this to say:

Firstly I think that the E- Institute is a good idea, being both quick and to the point and I have read with interest the comments on apprentice training.

Having been in the game since 1955 I have experienced 50 years of training as apprentice, journeyman, supervisor, business owner and consultant..

The system of training in NSW in the 50's & 60's was I felt wide ranging and comprehensive introducing the boy's to, and giving them a working knowledge of all most all of the various branches of the trade, a number of which they would not have experienced depending on the sector of the industry that their employer traded in.

While this system was good it was much improved when the pre apprentice scheme was introduced.

The advantages to this included:

1. The apprentice had been exposed to the reality of the trade and its merits or short comings as related to them selves when as part of the course they were employed on the job for a couple of weeks at a time by potential employers ie it could be dirty, hard work in extremes of weather conditions with work mates seemingly dubious character and sanity, in other words they experienced the reality of the profession and could, if it was not what they expected bail out and take up another vocation .
2. By the time they had finished the first years training they had learnt the basic use of the tools and equipment and could be set to productive work with much less loss of time by the journeyman watching over them.
3. Getting to use the tools and equipment in a controlled environment avoided injuries that may have otherwise occurred.
4. They were at an age that they could get a licence to drive to the work site, an important issue when jobs are often difficult to reach by public transport.
5. For the above reasons they were seen to be very employable and were taken on, often by the company they spent their on site training with.(Once they were accepted into the TAFE course their future employment in the trade was assured)

NSW Plumbing Services P/Ltd drew all of their apprentices through the scheme and were never disappointed in fact Shane the first pre apprentice boy is still with us as part owner of the company. We have taken advantage of the master plumbers apprentices from time to time and found it pretty good, however I believe that the trade as a whole would benefit greatly from a re introduction of the pre apprenticeship scheme and the TAFE teachers I have spoken to that had experience it lament its passing and agree with my views. Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns
Yours faithfully

Bill Blake

MASTER PLUMBERS ARE TALKING:

Once again, we have the bulk of the State Master Plumber Associations presenting a united front with the formation of an alliance between ACT, NSW, NT, SA, TAS, and WA forming the National Plumbing Associations Alliance (NPAA). This same group of organisations, both individually and collectively, has supported the Institute and other Industry Organisations in the formation of the Plumbing Coalition Australia. The Institute of Plumbing Australia looks forward to continuing a close relationship with the NPAA as we appear to have the same goals of maintaining world's best practice of training and regulation of plumbing in Australia.

PLUMBING OCCUPATIONS ACTION GROUP (POAG)

E-Institute has previously outlined the work of the Plumbing Occupations Action Group with its investigation into the harmonisation of the licensing of tradespersons in the plumbing vocation across Australia. It appears that this is proving to be a daunting task with over a hundred different licenses across the country. Even the definition of a Plumber differs from state to state. The concern of all thinking plumbers that E-Institute talks with is that due to the tight time lines set by COAG the lowest common denominator will rule.

MEMBERSHIP:

Members are the lifeblood of any organisation and your Institute is no exception. Your Institute Council took a decision to expand our exposure and input to the national scene on behalf of the wider plumbing community. We are working alongside and with the specialist organisations to maintain and improve the standing of plumbers and plumbing. All this takes time, effort and funding. What can you do? One thing that every member can easily do is replicate themselves, introduce new members to the only truly national organisation for the wider plumbing fraternity, the Institute of Plumbing Australia Inc. Forward this newsletter to your associates, follow it up with a phone call. If that is too hard just provide the names and contact details of prospective members to the Secretary and we will do the follow-up.

Application forms are downloadable from
www.plumbing.org.au/ipa_howtojoin.htm

WHAT'S ON?

ANZRA Biennial Conference 2006 -

