



7th September 2020

Plumbing a safer, more sustainable Canberra

Master Plumbers ACT is calling on the ACT Government, opposition MLAs, and other candidates, to consider plumbing-related impacts on sustainability and public safety as we head into the 2020 election.

Executive Officer of Master Plumbers ACT, Ms Leigh Watson, said in revising its vision last year, the Association identified both sustainability and public safety as key principles that should underpin all their work and outcomes.

“It is often not recognised what an important role the plumbing industry plays in both safety and sustainability and there are several government commitments and election calls on the table we would like to support and strengthen in this regard,” she said.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Energy efficiency
- Water saving

“Regarding sustainability, we will continue to provide our broad backing for the Green / Labor commitment to make the ACT the nation's climate action capital with a focus on water saving, energy efficiency and 100% renewable energy,” she said.

“We support the Labor Party election promise for low interest rates for loans for solar, battery, and heat pump installation though we recommend that a broad-scale customer rebate scheme for heat pump installation would deliver increased take-up, providing energy cost savings and reliance on gas-heated water. Retro-fitting all public housing properties would provide additional benefit in reducing the cost impact to tenants.

“Broadening the availability of rebates for installations to replace old inefficient appliances with new energy-efficient appliances, currently only available when the work is undertaken by ActewAGL plumbers, would mean increased take-up of energy-efficient measures by the community.”

And while the Association believes the Government is already doing much work on energy-saving, Ms Watson said the Association believes water saving should also be a key focus as a critical sustainability issue.

“We would like to see the Government refocus efforts on saving water and bring back the water saving initiatives that were rolled out during the last drought. As well as reducing water use, the process of saving water also delivers energy saving measures.”

“We have developed an holistic water saving program that includes rebates to householders for water audits and upgrades plus a range of other initiatives. If implemented, the program would deliver a comprehensive universal water-saving

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program that would see the ACT become an exemplar jurisdiction of best-practice in water saving methods that utilise innovative and sensible plumbing solutions,” she said.

BUILDING QUALITY REFORM & PUBLIC SAFETY

- Security of payments
- Quals for unlicensed trades
- WH&S grants, increase inspectors

“We will be strongly supporting the ACT Government’s push to ensure the ACT continues to maintain its focus on improving building quality as outlined in its Building Reforms review 2020, and also including its relation to safety.

“One of the inarguably negative impacts on both building quality and safety is the current practice of contract and payment processes for contractors, such as plumbers, undertaking work as “subbies” for builders or developers. We believe that a breakdown resulting from current processes can have a direct impact on both safety and building quality, and we will be supporting the ACT Government’s commitment to implementing Reform 41 to improve security of payments for subbies, to institute a more professional and fair way of paying plumbers and other contractors for major works and to make sure they are paid what they are owed when payments are due,” she said.

“We will also be supporting the ACT Government’s call for upgrading of qualifications and /or accreditation for non-licenced trades, as per [Reform 35](#), with a focus on roofing. It is no coincidence that the ACT Government has identified the issues of waterproofing and water ingress in multi-unit developments and single residential dwellings due to design issues or poor product or workmanship, as an area of major concern.

“The importance of the quality of all roofing work has a direct impact on the integrity of the building overall but especially on water ingress. We believe that this licensing issue is of critical concern as it has a direct impact on both initial construction and any follow up repair or maintenance with a reduced outcome in building quality through poor water proofing work. And it’s a fair bet this also has a direct impact on worker safety,” she said.

“To further ensure that our workers on construction sites get home safely to their families we believe that more ACT Government WorkSafe inspectors on the ground for residential and commercial construction would go a long way to ensuring safety for plumbers and other construction workers.

“And as many small businesses struggle during COVID, we would also like to see grants provided for small medium construction businesses to purchase relevant safety equipment – not just for COVID safe implementation but WH&S in general,” she said.

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