

24th February 2020

Iraq and Canberra- a world of plumbing difference!

There's a vast difference between being plumber in Iraq and a plumber in Canberra. And no-one knows this better than local Canberra plumber Mohanad Al-Ani, who is telling his story for World Plumbing Day.

"Al", as most people call him, never stops counting his blessings that it is now Canberra where he plies his trade, having fled from war torn Iraq in 2003 following the fall of Saddam Hussein. At that time, as an electrician in the Iraq Army, Al also worked on plumbing related tasks.

"As the army technical unit we were responsible for setting up army camps and bases for the soldiers so needed to be qualified across the trades. Every time we moved from one border area to another, I had to connect generators to the main, help set up pipes for mains and other plumbing tasks."

When war broke out, he and his family were very vulnerable due to his army role so fled to Jordan where they were granted protection by the UN. Here they had no citizen rights, so work was spasmodic and generally unskilled. Then after 7 years they finally got the happy call telling them that Australia would welcome them.

"When I arrived, I could not speak English so went to CIT as I wanted to re-qualify for my electrician licence in Australia." But before starting he decided that it was plumbing he was more interested in.

"Plumbing is more creative – every plumber has a different way to do a certain job. And every day is different."

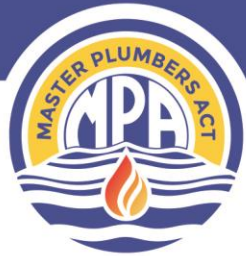
Finally, his English was good enough to allow him to start his apprenticeship – by now he was well and truly a mature aged student at the age of 32. Al was incredibly impressed with the quality of training he received through his apprenticeship both on and off the job.

"Everyone – the teachers and my boss were very patient and good teachers – I learned so much from them."

Now, as a commercial plumber working for Canberra firm Laser Plumbing, Al generally works in a "clean" environment installing plumbing fit outs for new buildings such as gyms, restaurants, etc. He also manages to do some volunteer work for his children's school, fixing their toilets and generally keeping the plumbing fixtures running. He does not miss the days working on the Iraq border in 50+ degree heat.

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The main differences between Iraq and here?

“In Iraq there is not much respect for tradies – they feel it’s a dirty job. Where here you get paid better and people respect you for working hard for your skills,” said AI.

“And most importantly” said AI, “I don’t get shot at here while I’m working!” – referring to the time in Iraq he got in the way of crossfire while in the line of duty, and sustained shrapnel wounds to his backside!

Contact: Leigh Watson, Executive Officer 0433 831 403

March 11 is World Plumbing Day which celebrates the important role plumbing plays in the health and safety of modern society.

Executive Officer of Master Plumbers ACT, Leigh Watson, says the ACT has much to celebrate on this day, supported as it is by a strong plumbing sector providing professional services across plumbing, gas fitting and drainage.

“There are currently around 2,000 plumbers in the ACT working across all sectors from individual home maintenance to large scale apartment fit-outs – a number that is bound to increase over coming years. Our member plumbers are contributing greatly to this critical health infrastructure in the ACT. While this is something that is often taken for granted, we would know very quickly if this wasn’t being done well,” she said.