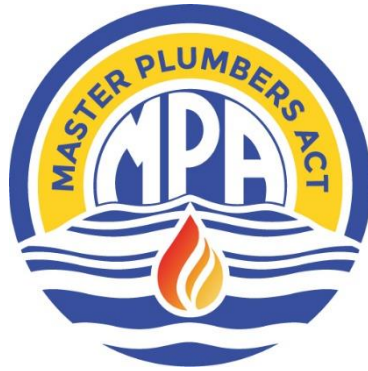


Master Plumbers ACT

Submission

to the

ACT 2024-25 ACT Budget Consultation



Master Plumbers Association ACT (MPA) was established in 1976 and is the region's peak organisation for the plumbing industry, aimed at supporting a strong and professional industry, a satisfied community, and a flourishing environment. We do this through our support of training excellence, industry leadership, an emphasis on environmental protection and sustainability, protection of public health and safety, and upholding highest ethical standards.

MPA's work importantly brings all groups together to underpin best outcomes for the ACT community & ACT Government through our collaborative endeavours.

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Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. About Master Plumbers Association – Canberra ACT	4
3. Our proposals	5
4. Conclusion and Recommendations	7
Appendix 1 – Our Programs	8



1. Executive Summary

Master Plumbers Association - Canberra ACT (MPA), as the leading membership association for the plumbing sector, is once again honoured to contribute to the ACT Government's budgetary process. Our submission for the 2024-25 fiscal year is aligned with the ACT Government's strategic priorities, particularly in promoting sustainable economic growth, enhancing community wellbeing, and supporting environmental initiatives.

Our proposals are tailored to address key areas of the ACT Wellbeing Framework, emphasizing health and community wellbeing, environmental sustainability, and the pivotal role of the plumbing industry in the daily lives of ACT residents.

MPA's Key Contributions and Achievements:

1. **Environmental Impact and Public Health:** MPA continues to play a vital role in promoting environmental sustainability and ensuring public health and safety. Our engagement extends to over 480,000 ACT residents, reflecting our growing influence and responsibility in the region.
2. **Plumbing Industry Leadership Alliance (PILA) Success:** Building on the success of PILA, MPA has led initiatives in community education about crucial plumbing issues, supported continuous training for professionals, and actively combated unethical practices in the industry. These efforts underscore our commitment to maintaining high standards in the plumbing sector.
3. **Economic Contribution:** The plumbing industry remains a critical component of the ACT economy, contributing significantly to the regional GDP and employing a large workforce of licensed professionals and support staff.

MPA's Recommendations for 2024-25:

1. **Expert Reports for Consumer Protection:** Support MPA in providing expert reports to address significant consumer concerns, in collaboration with Care Consumer Law and other partners. Proposed funding: \$200,000 per annum for 3 years (Total \$600,000).
2. **Promotion of MPA Membership and Consumer Guarantee:** Actively promote MPA Membership and our Consumer Guarantee to ensure the best outcomes for the community, government, and environment. Proposed funding: \$60,000 per annum for 3 years (Total \$180,000).
3. **Renewed Partnership for Zero Emissions Research:** Partner with MPA to extend our research on sustainable energy options, supporting the transition to zero emissions. Proposed funding: \$60,000 per annum for 3 years (Total \$180,000).
4. **Enhanced Training and Professional Excellence:** Support initiatives to expand training capacity and promote excellence within the plumbing profession. Proposed funding: \$220,000 per annum for 3 years (Total \$660,000).

The MPA remains committed to working alongside the ACT Government to ensure the prosperity and wellbeing of all Canberrans. Our proposed initiatives and funding requests are strategically designed to align with the government's priorities and to make a significant, positive impact on the ACT community.



2. About Master Plumbers Association – Canberra ACT

The Master Plumbers Association – Canberra ACT (MPA) stands as the leading membership association for the plumbing sector in the region, driven by our vision of cultivating a thriving and professional industry that significantly contributes to a safe, healthy community, and a sustainable environment.

MPA's membership is diverse and robust, encompassing a wide range of experts in the plumbing sector. This includes policy makers, contracting businesses of all sizes from large-scale operations with over 200 employees to individual sole operators, training organizations, apprentices at various stages of their 6-year journey towards full licensure, product suppliers, and allied organizations.

Our mission at MPA is to empower our members to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards. We achieve this through dedicated efforts in knowledge sharing, professional development, networking, and advocacy.

Our key objectives are:

1. **Promotion of a Professional and Ethical Plumbing Industry:** We advocate for the recognition and advancement of plumbing as an integral and professional industry within government, business, and community circles.
2. **Public Health, Safety, and Environmental Advocacy:** Our focus includes advocating for policies and practices that bolster public health and safety, as well as environmental protection.
3. **Improving Sector Outcomes for Vulnerable Groups:** We strive to enhance outcomes within the plumbing sector for various demographics and groups in the community, particularly those who are vulnerable.
4. **Leadership in Industry Collaboration:** We lead by example in promoting a collaborative environment that encompasses all stakeholders responsible for and working within the plumbing industry.
5. **Support for Training and Professional Development:** Advocacy for the highest standards in training and continuing professional development is one of our key pillars.

With direct engagement with over 480,000 members of the ACT community, MPA is uniquely positioned to positively influence both community health and safety and environmental sustainability. Our commitment to ethical practices and community wellbeing is unwavering. To continue making a substantial impact, we seek the ACT Government's support for our extensive range of programs, as detailed in Appendix 1 of our submission.

Through these efforts, MPA remains dedicated to ensuring the plumbing industry's growth and excellence, ultimately contributing to the betterment of the Canberra community and beyond.



3. Our proposals

Our proposals are framed around the central tenets for the ACT Government's budget preparations, building our economic, social, and community recovery and to support the wellbeing of Canberrans now and into the future.

In alignment with the ACT Government's objectives for economic, social, and community recovery, and to enhance the wellbeing of Canberrans, the Master Plumbers Association – Canberra ACT (MPA) presents its budget proposals for 2024-25. These proposals are designed to support the critical role of the plumbing sector in the ACT community, focusing on sustainability, professional development, and consumer protection.

1. Support for Providing Expert Reports in Consumer Disputes:

- **Objective:** Facilitate the provision of expert reports by MPA in cases of significant consumer concerns, in partnership with organizations like Care Consumer Law.
- **Proposal:** \$200,000 per annum for 3 years (Total \$600,000).
- **Expected Benefits:** Efficient resolution of consumer disputes, maintenance of industry credibility and professionalism, and cost savings for the government, legal system, and community.

2. Active Promotion of MPA Membership and Consumer Guarantee:

- **Objective:** Enhance public awareness and confidence in employing ethical and proficient plumbing professionals by promoting MPA Membership and the pioneering MPA Consumer Guarantee program.
- **Proposal:** \$60,000 per annum for 3 years (Total \$180,000).
- **Expected Benefits:** Improved professional standards, consumer protection, and trust in the plumbing industry, leading to cost savings for the government and community.

3. Renewed Partnership for Zero Emissions Research:

- **Objective:** Strengthen collaboration with the ACT Government in advancing evidence-based research on all energy options available for transitioning to Zero Emissions, ensuring the dissemination of accurate information.
- **Proposal:** \$60,000 per annum for 3 years (Total \$180,000).
- **Expected Benefits:** Accurate, evidence-based information on energy options to guide public and government decisions, supporting environmental goals and community education.

4. Support for Plumbing Skills & Workforce Needs:

- **Objective:** Address the growing demand for professional training in the plumbing sector, emphasizing the transition to zero emissions, environmental protection, and public health and safety.
- **Proposal:** \$220,000 per annum for 3 years (Total \$660,000).
- **Expected Benefits:** Easing of workforce shortage, enhancement of professional standards, and reduction in costs for the government, community, and ratepayers.



These proposals are strategically crafted to support the ACT Government’s vision for a thriving, sustainable community, underpinned by a skilled and ethical plumbing sector. MPA is committed to fostering excellence in our industry for the benefit of all Canberrans and looks forward to the continued partnership with the ACT Government in achieving these objectives.



4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The plumbing industry continues to play a vital role in the ACT's evolving economic landscape, especially in the context of the region's ambitious goal to achieve Zero Emissions by 2045. Strong support from the ACT Government is essential for the industry to meet these challenges and contribute effectively to the community, environment, and government objectives. Such support will not only foster a more sustainable environment but will also enhance consumer confidence, elevate professional standards, prepare the industry for future advancements, and help eradicate unethical practices that detrimentally impact vulnerable community members.

As a multi-stakeholder organization with extensive expertise, experience, and knowledge, MPA is poised to drive meaningful progress in the plumbing industry. However, to maximize our impact and continue our advancement, we need continued partnership and support from the ACT Government. It is through collaborative efforts and strategic investments that we can achieve our mutual goals for the benefit of the entire Canberra community.

For the 2024-25 fiscal year, MPA recommends that the ACT Budget includes the following measures:

1. **Support for Providing Expert Reports in Consumer Disputes**
2. **Promotion of MPA Membership and Consumer Guarantee**
3. **Renewed Partnership for Zero Emissions Research**
4. **Support for Plumbing Skills & Workforce Needs**

Master Plumbers Association – Canberra ACT (MPA) values the opportunity to contribute to the public health and safety outcomes, and the protection of our environment. We believe these recommendations align with the ACT Government's goals and will significantly benefit the community. We welcome any queries or requests for additional information regarding this submission.

Claire Howe
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Appendix 1 – Our Programs

Master Plumbers Association – Canberra ACT (MPA) has implemented and sustained a range of programs aimed at ensuring consumer protection, environmental sustainability, and support for vulnerable groups in our community. Despite challenges such as the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, disruptions in global supply chains, and a worsening skills shortage, MPA has continued its commitment to these important initiatives.

1. Rigorous MPA Membership Application Process:

- Our thorough vetting process for MPA members includes checks on licenses, insurances, industry standing, and adherence to our Code of Ethics and Consumer Guarantee.
- This process ensures that only qualified and dedicated professionals join our ranks, maintaining high industry standards and fostering a professional community.

2. Consumer Guarantee Program:

- The first of its kind in Australia, our \$5,000 Consumer Guarantee provides assurance of professionalism and workmanship quality from our members.
- This program is essential in protecting the community and environment from the impacts of unethical business practices, especially given the current skills shortage.

3. Pro Bono Plumbing Program:

- Developed in collaboration with Care Inc., this program assists financially vulnerable community members with urgent plumbing needs.
- Many MPA members have volunteered to provide services free of charge, ensuring that those in need receive necessary plumbing assistance.

4. Consumer Education Programs:

- Through various channels, including partnerships with ACT Government, Icon Water, and Evoenergy, we educate the community on important issues like health, backflow prevention, safety, and environmental sustainability.
- Our direct daily contact with over 480,000 ACT residents and our active social media and media promotional activities amplify the reach of these important messages.

5. Commitment to the MPA Code of Ethics:

- All MPA Members commit to our Code of Ethics upon joining, supporting the highest standards of personal and business conduct.

6. Support for ACT Government Legal and Consumer Protection Efforts:

- MPA's role as an industry complaints portal and our work with legal departments, fair trading, consumer legal services, and our dispute resolution service are crucial in maintaining industry standards and consumer protection.
- We seek to expand these efforts in collaboration with the ACT Government to further eliminate unethical practices in the industry.

7. Plumbing Industry Excellence Awards:

- Our annual awards recognize and celebrate industry champions and ambassadors, fostering an environment that rewards professionalism and excellence.



- The upcoming Gala Dinner and Awards event is a testament to the importance of these recognitions within the industry and community.

8. Charity Events:

- Events like the Charity Bowls Day support important causes such as road safety, the Canberra Hospital Foundation and OzHelp.
- With government support, these events can have an even greater impact on community causes and raise awareness on critical issues like road safety and support for hospitalized children and their families.

The MPA's suite of programs and initiatives represents our ongoing commitment to the plumbing industry's professionalism, consumer protection, and community wellbeing. Continued support from the ACT Government will enhance these efforts and ensure the positive impact of our work reaches even further into the Canberra community.