

15 August 2011

Manager, MCE Secretariat
Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism
GPO BOX 1564
CANBERRA ACT 2601

RE: Response to GTRC Draft Gas Appliances (Carbon Monoxide) Safety Strategy

Master Plumbers and Mechanical Services Association of Australia (MPMSAA) submits the following comments:

The MPMSAA is a National Plumbing Association and a leading stakeholder in the Gas Appliance Services sector and is committed to providing its member companies with up to date information, training and support to ensure that the highest quality of service and safety is provided to consumers.

In regards to Carbon Monoxide safety the MPMSAA is supportive of a strategy that addresses the importance of appliance maintenance on a regular basis.

MPMSAA strongly supports and is active in providing upskilling of plumbers/gasfitters and educating consumers on the importance of keeping their appliances serviced by competently trained and licenced gasfitters.

The MPMSAA is currently conducting free short training programs.

The first 6 courses held at the Plumbing Industries Climate Action Centre in Brunswick (Melbourne) were booked out and due to popular demand, additional series of 5 training sessions on Carbon Monoxide (CO) Training for plumbers have been scheduled.

The course provides participants with the skills and knowledge required to use CO testing equipment and complete the practical procedure to test gas appliances for CO emissions. The course will also cover the process plumbers should follow to identify solutions that could result in CO spillage within a residence.

The new schedule includes several sessions in regional Victoria, further regional sessions will be organised in the coming months.

The MPMSAA believes that this program should be provided Nationally and would be interested in seeking Government and Regulatory stakeholders support for its delivery.

Comment: The GTRC Strategy is treating the symptoms, not the disease. Qualified gasfitters are the only ones who can do that. Plumber/gasfitters are the only means by which any GTRC initiative could be enacted.

We therefore support the GTRC strategy in seeking input from the Gasfitting Industry in its effort to address this important issue.

- Executive Summary No. 7 'Rentals'.

We recommend that this could easily be expanded to include all properties being put up for sale, all appliance renewals and when *any* work is being performed on a gas installation other than a heating appliance.

In the last case a consumer could be made aware of potential problems whilst the gasfitter was on site, and could make skilled observations.

The gasfitter would make a note of the job, record the situation found, provide advice to the consumer and the action, if any, to be taken.

Refusal by the consumer to act in a dangerous case would be passed on to the Gas Retailer and the Regulator (after the gasfitter got paid for the completed work first).

We also believe this should be mandated.

- Regulator's websites are not always the best means of informing the public.

Mailed information sheets backed up by TV and radio ads would be very effective.

Newspapers are not that effective these days.

This info sheet would point out all the facts about CO and the need for regular appliance servicing, but would also pre-warn the consumer that their gasfitter will be obliged to check for all the contributing factors such as flueing, ventilation, exhaust fans, chimney condition and gas supply etc. as well as the condition of the appliance(s).

This of course will have a cost in addition to a normal clean of the appliance.

A Regulators official form to be filled in by the gasfitter to identify all the checks made. A copy kept and one given to the consumer.

This would provide confidence for the consumer.

MPMSAA could develop such a form and offer this to gasfitters.

Peter Kikos
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