

Plumbers can show where to save

GEMMA NISBET

Most people know that simple steps such as taking shorter showers and installing a dual-flush toilet can save water around the home.

While the savings accrued by such efforts are substantial — about 20,000 and 33,000 litres respectively per year — homeowners who are really serious about water reduction should consider expert advice.

According to Master Plumbers & Gasfitters Association chief executive Murray Thomas, people building a new home are ideally placed to save water in the future by employing a plumber who had completed the association's sustainability training course, EnviroWest.

"They can design a plumbing system incorporating water-saving tapware, a rainwater harvesting system, mechanisms for grey water reuse and an energy-efficient hot-water system," Mr Thomas said.

Proposed plans to increase the stringency of the Building Code of Australia in regard to energy efficiency would also mean that new homes would need to meet a higher standard of environmental

sustainability in the future.

"The building code encompasses all areas of building from insulation and the situation of the house, to the hot-water units and use of rated appliances. It encourages people to use high star-rated appliances, such as dishwashers and washing machines, to save water and energy."

Some developers are also taking a broad view of environmental sustainability and installing products such as the "third pipe system", which involves treating wastewater at a central plant before conveying it back to individual houses for use in the garden and toilet, in new developments.

Mr Thomas said the third pipe system was not an option for most established suburbs because of the disruption caused by installing the infrastructure the system required.

Owners of existing houses also had plenty of options for saving water and Mr Thomas said that EnviroWest plumbers could usually retrofit water-saving devices.

"They can do an audit on a home and suggest things that would improve the sustainability



of the plumbing system. They can also calculate the saving you would make on water and energy in a year, so you can see how long it would take to make back your initial expenditure."

During such an audit, plumbers

may suggest a heat pump hot-water system, which uses latent heat energy in the air to heat water.

Mr Thomas said it was one of the most energy-efficient water heating systems on the market and

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compared favourably with solar hot-water systems.

But while considerable savings of water can be made, Mr Thomas said that opting out of the mains water system entirely was not recommended for the majority of homeowners.

"We promote using rainwater for your general non-potable water usage, such as the toilet and your washing machine, rather than for drinking."

To find an EnviroWest plumber in your area, call 9471 6661 or go to www.masterplumbers.asn.au.

Plumbing put to the test in competition for top crown



Finalists in the Master Plumbers & Gasfitters Association competition.

Each year, the Master Plumbers & Gasfitters Association's prestigious Plumber of the Year prize is awarded to the WA plumber who performs best in the plumber competition day, which was held on October 2.

This year's winner, Ron Hillier from Prime Plumbing, competed against three opponents — Barry Kedge and Gordon Taylor, both of Impulse Plumbing, and Alinta Assist's Paul Mudge — in a series of exercises designed to test participants' practical skills across a range of plumbing areas.

The award was presented at the MPGA's Award for Excellence night alongside a number of other prizes, including for the best WA plumbing business in maintenance and construction categories, won

respectively by Quality Plumbing and Gas, and Pipeline Hydraulics. Gasfitter of the Year was Michael Brack from Alinta Assist.

A range of awards for environmental sustainability were also given, including the Environmental Business of the Year Award, which was won by Zambezi Plumbing and Gas.

Prizes for the most innovative environmentally friendly plumbing products were also

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MPGA CHIEF MURRAY THOMAS

announced. "There's a big push for sustainability in the industry and the MPGA has been proactive in that," said the association's chief executive, Murray Thomas.

"The next progression of that is to judge both the different products in that range and the environmentally conscious plumbers who are putting these things into practice."

Advanced Wastewater Systems won both the greywater and water-saving product categories with its Greyflow 00, a below-ground greywater diversion system which has no holding tank and therefore reduces health risks.

The prize for the best energy saving product went to Stiebel Eltron (Australia) for the 300E Heat Pump hot-water system, while Geberit won the rainwater harvesting category with its Geberit Pluvia siphonic roof drainage system.

Gemma Nisbet



Plumber of the year winner Ron Hillier.

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The Master Plumbers & Gasfitters Association of WA and Plumbers Licensing Board Awards for Excellence were announced in a ceremony on November 14 attended by more than 430 guests, including plumbers, sponsors, association members and the State Minister for Energy and Training, Peter Collier.

The big night, held at Burswood, had an urban industrial theme and saw the announcement of 20 awards, including the West Australian Plumber of the Year, and prizes for the best WA plumbing, gasfitter and environmental businesses. A series of environmental product awards recognised innovations in the field.

The Apprentice of the Year awards were also announced and, as well as the prize for the best overall apprentice and the best employer, included categories for achievement in a range of specialised skills.



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Apprentice of the year Nicholas Thompson shows his skill in welding and brazing.



On competition day apprentices undergo a wide range of practical tests.

Association says awards reflect its commitment

GEMMA NISBET

The Master Plumbers & Gasfitters Apprentice of the Year prize was awarded to Nicholas Thompson during the association's annual Awards for Excellence night on November 14. Second was Nathan Archer with Luke Byrne third.

The Apprentice of the Year award is decided by an interview and a practical competition day, which was held on August 21.

MPGA chief executive Murray Thomas said that this dual selection criteria ensured the winner had a well-rounded

additional category, the WorldSkills Australia regional competition, in which experienced apprentices could go on to compete on an international level, and it attracted 51 entrants.

"It's a prestigious accolade and a good stepping stone for recognition in the industry," Mr Thomas said. "Previous winners have gone on to be very successful in the industry."

The awards included a number of categories recognising outstanding achievement, such as prizes for gasfitting, sanitary plumbing, welding and brazing, and water supply plumbing.

A prize is also awarded to the best employer of apprentices within the industry. This was won by Pride Plumbing and Gas for its contribution to training Apprentice of the Year Mr Thompson.

Mr Thomas said that the Apprentice of the Year awards were reflective of the MPGA's commitment to training apprentice plumbers through its MPA Skills program, whereby apprentices are employed by the association's group training company and hired out to work for host employers.

More than 170 plumbing apprentices are being trained through MPA Skills. The program also services the Master Painters Association of WA and is also training 122 apprentice painters.

The association also runs a school-based pre-apprenticeship program where secondary students from John Forrest Senior High and Ursula Frayne Catholic College undertake two days per week of plumbing training alongside normal school studies. They may then progress to a full apprenticeship after finishing school.

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approach to the industry.

Mr Thomas said that the competition day, at which 11 finalists competed for the Apprentice of the Year title, was designed to test a wide range of practical skills through a series of exercises.

This year's awards included an

New waterwise skills

The Master Plumbers and Gasfitters Association started its EnviroWest program to help members meet regulatory and consumer demand for environmentally sustainable plumbing.

Two and a half years later, more than 600 West Australian plumbers have completed the course and received Water Corporation accreditation as waterwise plumbers.

MPGA chief executive Murray Thomas said that the one-day EnviroWest course covered a range of key topics, including water and energy efficiency, greywater re-use and rainwater harvesting, and was part of a wider program of ongoing training.

"We continually run short courses as new products come into the market," he said.

"It's a very rapidly growing part of the industry." Plumbers who had graduated from the EnviroWest program were listed on the MPGA's website, enabling the public to find quickly and easily a plumber in their area with a good understanding of sustainability issues.

While the courses were primarily aimed at plumbers, Mr Thomas said they were also open to the public and had been attended by professionals who would find the information useful in their fields of expertise, such as environmental health officers, builders and new housing sales representatives.

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