

25 February 2026

2026-27 Budget Submissions

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

ACT Government

BY EMAIL – [budgetconsultation@act.gov.au](mailto:budgetconsultation@act.gov.au)

## **2026-27 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION TO THE ACT GOVERNMENT**

### **Introduction**

The Master Plumbers Association ACT (MPA ACT) is the peak body representing Canberra's plumbing, drainage and gasfitting industries. We represent all plumbers – from sole traders through to medium and large plumbing industry businesses across residential maintenance, new home and commercial builds and construction and civil contracting.

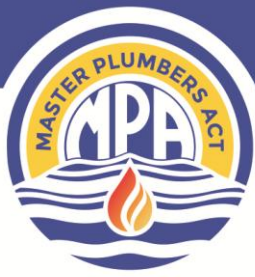
MPA ACT is also responsible for fostering a network between our industry and the local businesses and organisations that service and work directly with it, including plumbing materials and supplies, education and CIT, apprenticeships, our local water and power utilities and the broader building and construction sector.

We are responsible for representing the many thousands of Canberrans who work directly in the plumbing, drainage and gasfitting industries – either on the tools or in the office – and the secondary industries they work with.

### **Challenges**

Our sector is facing numerous challenges. These include the difficult prevailing economic conditions, the industry uncertainty surrounding the ACT Government's decision to shut-down Canberra's natural gas network by 2045 and high commercial rates, fees and charges, including ACT payroll tax. Red tape navigation, ensuring a present, qualified and professional local workforce that keeps up with technological changes, maintaining the industry's high reputation with a prevalence of dodgy or unethical operators, and making sure plumbers get paid for the work they do, also remain challenges.

MPA ACT acknowledges the positive engagement and result with the ACT Government following sustained advocacy to remove redundant greywater piping requirements for new homes and existing home extensions. The plumbing community is pleased the removal of these requirements is coming to fruition.



## Natural Gas Network & Industry Plan for the Future

The ACT Government's 2023 decision to decommission the Territory's piped natural gas network by 2045 will have an unprecedented impact on our local plumbing sector. That impact will be incredibly damaging if the Government fails to partner with industry to develop and execute a transition plan.

Gasfitting, including connection and disconnection of natural gas appliances, like home and commercial heaters, hot water units and cooktops to the natural gas network accounts for up to half of a Canberra plumber's work. Taking this work away, without a plan to support plumbers and gasfitters, is being perceived as a direct attack by the ACT Government on the industry itself.

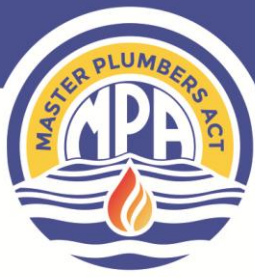
It's not only the plumbing and gasfitting sector, removing residential and commercial natural gas connections will reduce energy choices for Canberra, where Evoenergy still counts over 140,000 gas customers. The decision will also destroy a \$400 million gas network asset and questions remain about who will pay for the potentially hundreds of millions of dollars in transition costs (including gas network decommissioning and customer appliance changeout costs). How to deal with Queanbeyan (which is connected to Canberra's gas network – but sits outside the ACT jurisdiction) and use of liquid petroleum gas (LPG) as a replacement for natural gas, remain further questions.

**MPA ACT would much prefer the ACT Government reverses its decision to decommission the local natural gas network.** However, we recognise that the Government is committed to the process. In this case, the development of a transition plan with industry is critical.

This plan should include policy change and funding across a range of different areas including:

- Training and education
- Government fees, charges and red tape levers impacting industry; and
- Sensible regulation which recognises the role of plumbing, drainage and gas industry professionals undertaking hazardous and dangerous activities to ensure community health and safety

**REQUEST:** *The 2026-27 Budget allocate funds to kick-start the gas and plumbing industry transition plan process in conjunction with MPA ACT and other industry stakeholders.*



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## Reduction in Payroll Tax and Apprentice Exemption

Lowering the taxable wage threshold for payroll tax from \$2 million to \$1.75 million in the ACT will further impact plumbing businesses already dealing with challenges previously mentioned in this submission.

This change will mean any business paying wages from \$1.75 million to \$18 million will be paying more payroll tax. Sadly, this will mean businesses having to forgo taking on additional employees or apprentices.

The ACT Government could also better recognise the heavy lifting plumbing business employers do by making apprentice wages exempt from payroll tax. This would encourage further take-up of apprenticeships. Right now, 'new starters' are exempt from payroll tax only if the employee is new to the industry or occupation and commences recognised training within 12 months of their first employment.

This fails to recognise the years it can take to become a fully qualified and licenced plumber.

**REQUEST:** *The 2026-27 Budget increase, or include a plan to increase, the payroll tax threshold back to the \$2 million threshold. Furthermore, the ACT Government should make all apprentices wages exempt from payroll tax, at any stage of the apprenticeship.*

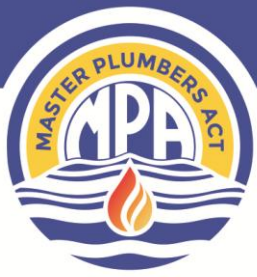
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## Focus on Quality Education to meet Changing Technologies

The Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) Plumbing School on the Fyshwick campus, alongside our wonderful local plumbing businesses, delivers the apprenticeship education that continually brings through the next generation of plumbers, drainers and gasfitters. At any one time there are between 400-500 enrolments from Cert III through to Cert IV.

The teachers in the Plumbing Department provide excellent skills education and mentorship for students, but the school requires some adjustments to maximise educational outcomes for apprentices and in post-trade.

New skills are needed across the industry in relation to heat pumps, electrification retrofits and solar thermal. Training for heat pump servicing is also becoming more critical.



**REQUEST:** *The 2026-27 Budget renews its focus with the CIT and industry to ensure the best apprenticeship and post-trade education and training is delivered, with a dedicated focus on requirements for new skills, especially heat pump servicing.*

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### **Red Tape Reduction to boost Industry Efficiency**

Like most trades, plumbers, drainers and gasfitters are constantly having to navigate an increasingly complex system of regulation and red tape. There is a myriad of issues with regards to permit requirements and accessing permits, which are time consuming and create extra costs for industry operators – including with regards to ACTPLA and Access Canberra.

The Government needs to focus on streamlining many of these processes including considering a central portal where businesses and licencees can manage regulatory requirements in one place.

### **REQUEST:**

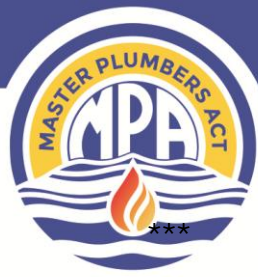
*The 2026-27 Budget allocates funding to explore red-tape and regulatory deficiencies, overreach and roadblocks impacting the plumbing, drainage and gasfitting industries, to boost efficiencies.*

### **Crack-down on dodgy and Unethical Operators**

While MPA ACT upholds and promotes the highest quality standards for the profession in the ACT through our *Code of Ethics*, unfortunately there are numerous dodgy or unethical operators posing as upright and honest businesses. These operators overcharge consumers for basic maintenance, provide inaccurate advice to increase costs of works and don't complete works to required standards, which can have grave safety consequences.

While many of these operators aren't licenced, unfortunately some are – which is completely unacceptable. We always advise consumers to engage a member of Master Plumbers ACT, because all our members are vetted for professionalism and competency before they're even granted membership.

**REQUEST:** *In the 2026-27 Budget, the ACT Government allocate additional funding and/or resources to combat unethical and dodgy plumbers.*



Submission concludes.

For further information please contact Master Plumbers Association ACT CEO – Joe Prevedello on 61128630 or via [ceo@masterplumbersact.asn.au](mailto:ceo@masterplumbersact.asn.au)