Solar and heat pump hot water system endorsement

Approved course guidelines

These guidelines provide advice about the courses approved by the Plumbing Industry Council for a licensee to attain a solar and heat pump hot water system licence endorsement.

Background

To improve the water and energy efficiency of Queensland homes, electric resistance hot water systems are being phased-out under new sustainable housing laws introduced by the Queensland Government. Since 1 January 2010, owners of existing houses situated in natural gas reticulated areas must have a greenhouse-efficient hot water system installed (i.e. gas, solar or heat pump) when their existing electric system requires replacement. Electric systems that have failed but are covered under a manufacturers’ warranty may be installed.

Householders who replace an electric hot water system with a solar or heat pump hot water system (SHP) may be eligible for the new Queensland Government rebate. The rebate applies to systems purchased on or after 13 April 2010. To prepare the plumbing industry for increased SHP installations, a new licence endorsement has been introduced to reduce the costs and approval timeframes for installations. From 1 January 2011, plumbers and provisional plumbers will need the endorsement to install, replace, test, repair and maintain SHPs (see newsflash 427).  The installation of SHPs is regulated work under the Standard Plumbing and Drainage Regulation 2003.

Current requirements

Until 31 December 2010, plumbers who do not hold the endorsement must use the Form 1 and Form 2 process for the installation of SHPs and request a local government inspection at the completion of the work.

Plumbers or provisional plumbers who hold the endorsement only need to lodge a Form 4 (Notifiable minor work), inspection of the work is not required. Local governments may, however, randomly audit completed SHP installations under the Form 4 process to monitor compliance. Any identified defects must be rectified by the plumber who carried out the installation. The licensee is responsible for any additional inspection fees incurred due to the defects—not the home owner.

When installing SHPs in new homes, plumbers who hold the endorsement may use the Form 1 and Form 2 process, as the installation of the SHP will be part of the building’s plumbing approval process.

Alternatively, plumbers with the endorsement may use the Form 4 process for that part of the work.

The scope of work for a restricted water plumber—electrical (RPE) is not affected by the endorsement. RPEs can continue to disconnect and connect electric resistance hot water systems being replaced under warranty or where an existing system is being replaced in a non-gas reticulated area. RPEs cannot however install a solar or heat pump hot water system. If they have the appropriate electrical qualification they can repair an electrical component of an existing system, but they may not replace the whole unit.

New requirements from 1 January 2011

To obtain the mandatory SHP endorsement, a licensee must successfully complete a course approved by the Plumbing Industry Council (PIC)—either a non-accredited course or an accredited course.

Non-accredited course pathway

The non-accredited course is designed for plumbers and provisional plumbers who have experience in installing SHPs.
Plumbers or provisional plumbers may opt to have a condition on their licence to specialise in either solar or heat pump installations.

To apply to undertake the non-accredited course, a plumber is required to take the following steps:

**Step 1**—submit documented evidence, application forms and fees

Contact the PIC to request a solar and heat pump hot water system endorsement kit:

Plumbing Industry Council  
Ground floor, 63 George St Brisbane  
tel (07) 3235 4149  
fax (07) 3012 9826  
plumbers@dip.qld.gov.au

Include the following with your application to PIC:

- **course application form**—to apply to undertake the non-accredited course
- **Form 21** (Application for a licence)—to apply for the licence endorsement
- payment of the application fees—$158 ($95 assessment fee, $51 administration fee and $12 for the licence endorsement)
- existing plumber's or provisional plumber's licence or two passport-sized photographs with a completed **Form 27** (Proof of identity and document declaration form)
- copy of **Forms 1 and 2** lodged with a local government for the successful installation of one solar and/or heat pump systems during the past 12 months. The local government must have assessed the installations as compliant
- a **statutory declaration** declaring you took appropriate action when installing a solar system to ensure the roof structure was capable of accepting the additional load
- if copies of Forms 1, 2 and a certificate of compliance cannot be provided, a **statutory declaration** must also be submitted. Local government will be contacted, where possible, to confirm that Forms 1 and 2 were submitted and a certificate of compliance was issued.

If the application fails to meet the requirements, the applicant may be refused or be required to supply additional information. If refused, the applicant must undertake the accredited course pathway. If the documented evidence meets the requirements, the applicant will proceed to step 2.

**Step 2**—complete the online assessment

After satisfying step 1 the applicant will be given a web address, unique access code and instructions to complete an online assessment. The online assessment is an open book test comprising 25 multiple choice questions. The applicant has 30 minutes to complete the test. Applicants will be provided with two attempts. A minimum 92 per cent pass rate must be achieved by the second attempt for the applicant to pass. Following successful completion of the non-accredited course, a certificate of completion will be sent to the PIC. If the applicant fails the online assessment, the applicant will be advised to undertake the accredited course.

**Accredited course pathway**

The accredited course is recommended for plumbers and provisional plumbers who do not regularly install SHPs but intend to in the future. This course content is more comprehensive than the competency currently taught in the Certificate III Plumbing apprenticeship.

This course takes two to three days to complete and is offered by the following registered training organisations:

- Careers Australia Institute of Technology—phone 1300 887 696
- Joint Industry Skills Training—phone (07) 3255 5698
- Master Plumbers Association of Queensland—phone (07) 3273 0800
- SkillsTech Australia—phone 1800 654 447
- Gold Coast Institute of Tafe—phone (07) 5581 8200.

Recognition of prior learning assessment can result in applicants being granted partial or full accreditation without having to undertake formal study. Please contact your preferred registered training organisation for further information.

Following the successful completion of an accredited course, the registered training organisation will send a statement of attainment to the applicant. The applicant must then forward the following to the PIC:

- statement of attainment
- **Form 21** (Application for a licence)—to apply for the licence endorsement
- payment of the application fees $63 ($51 administration fee and $12 for the licence endorsement)
- existing plumber’s or provisional plumber’s licence or two passport-sized photographs with a completed **Form 27** (Proof of identity and document declaration form).

**Issuing a licence endorsement**

When the PIC receives a certificate of completion or a statement of attainment, a SHP endorsement will be added to the applicant’s licence. If obtained through the non-accredited course, the reprinted licence with the SHP endorsement will be sent to the licensee, along with the certificate of completion and a receipt for payment of fees.