

Hon. Joe Tripodi MP
Minister for Finance
Minister for Infrastructure
Minister for Regulatory Reform
Minister for Ports and Waterways



Hon. Phil Costa MP
Minister for Water
Minister for Rural Affairs
Minister for Regional Development

Cutting red-tape for plumbers

Wednesday 5 November 2008

The Minister for Regulatory Reform Joe Tripodi and the Minister for Water Phil Costa today called on trade and building industry groups to help the NSW Government cut red-tape for plumbers and simplify regulations across the state.

The Ministers have released a discussion paper that seeks feedback on how the current regulatory systems can be improved..

“Under the present system it is up to each water utility to regulate plumbing and drainage works in compliance with the NSW Code of Practice,” said Mr Tripodi.

“This leads to different interpretations of the Code and variations in the plumbing and drainage regulations between neighbouring water utilities.

“The Government is going directly to the plumbing and building industry seeking their input into this discussion paper to cut red-tape for small business.

“We are keen to hear stakeholders’ views on both the current regulatory arrangements, as well as possible options for change,” he said.

Mr Costa said plumbers across NSW are often exposed to unnecessary levels of red-tape and regulation under the current system.

“For example, if you are a plumber based on the Central Coast working between Sydney and Newcastle you would have to be across the regulations for four water utilities. These being Sydney Water, Hunter Water, Gosford City Council and Wyong Shire Council,” said Mr Costa.

“In my opinion it’s a ridiculous burden to place on small business.

“I have a simple message for plumbers in NSW – it’s your industry, you are experts. Please help the Government to get this right,” he said.

Mr Costa said the reforms would not only assist plumbers, but could also improve the standard of workmanship and ensure the health of the water supply.

“Increasing innovation in the plumbing sector, coupled with the growing demand for alternative water sources such as rainwater tanks and recycled water, means both the community and the Government need to consider if the current regulatory approaches are appropriate,” he said.

“As an example, the use of recycled water has increased dramatically in recent years, meaning we may need stronger operational protections for public health and the environment.”

Mr Tripodi said this action by NSW would position the state favourably in light of the Council of Australia Governments’ recent move towards a national approach for plumbing standards and regulatory framework.

“The discussion paper details four options for institutional change developed by the NSW Government’s Interagency Committee on Plumbing Regulation Reform,” said Mr Tripodi.

“However, we are also encouraging feedback outside the options in the discussion paper to ensure that all the issues are looked at,” he said.

The options outlined in the discussion paper are:

1. Maintain current arrangements with improvements;
2. Amalgamate on-site regulatory functions under one NSW Government agency, but leave the licensing function with the NSW Office of Fair Trading;
3. Leave on-site regulatory functions with local councils, but establish a Ministerial Advisory Committee to provide oversight and leave the licensing function with the NSW Office of Fair Trading;
4. Amalgamate all regulatory and licensing functions under a single NSW Government agency.

“The paper also considers four options for defining the technical requirements that apply to plumbing and drainage work undertaken in NSW,” said Mr Tripodi.

“Examining these options now is particularly important in light of the move towards a National Construction Code that may incorporate plumbing.

“Also, with the commencement of the *NSW Water Industry Competition Act* in 2008, we may find that some water utilities are required to regulate their competitors in the water industry, which may not be appropriate,” he said.

The review will be undertaken jointly by the Department of Water and Energy and the Better Regulation Office, in accordance with the NSW Government’s ‘Better Regulation Principles’, which promote administrative efficiencies.

The discussion paper is now open for public comment and written submissions are due to Government by 5pm, Friday 5 December 2008.

For more information visit:

www.dwe.nsw.gov.au or www.betterregulation.nsw.gov.au.

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