

2023 Gender Pay Gap: Master Plumbers Employer Statement

Master Plumbers is committed to closing the gender gap in the plumbing industry, and actively seeks to encourage more women – at all stages of their career lifecycle – to pursue a career in plumbing.

Plumbing, like many other trades, has been historically male dominated, for a host of reasons. It is our experience that women tend to follow their passion into plumbing later in life – when they are unhappy in their chosen profession. It is at this time that doing a pre-apprenticeship and funding 13 weeks without pay is an unnecessary barrier to entry into the trade. But it is at this time that women have proven to want to follow their own path and not be influenced as much by others. There are also young women in secondary school who are not clear on how to enter a trade like plumbing or have never really considered it as an option in the first place. We know that there is unconscious bias in the well-meaning careers teachers and parents, reflecting in part, a lack of understanding and exposure to successful female role models in the industry.

Master Plumbers is leading from the front with the creation of two pilot programs within the last few years, aimed at removing barriers for women entering the industry. These have enabled us to attract, recruit, and retain more women through our apprenticeship programs than ever before. This headway has already delivered a substantial increase of female apprentices into the plumbing industry which is clearly represented in our Gender Pay Gap (GPG) Comparison.

Gender Pay Gap Data

Master Plumbers' total remuneration median Gender Pay Gap (GPG) for 2023 was -12.9% in favour of women while our Industry Comparison Group was 6.0% in favour of men.

Data from the Industry Benchmark Report also highlights that our gender pay gap by occupational group is closer to the target of zero than the average for the Industry Comparison Group in 3 job role types out of 6 – in All Managers and Key Management Personnel for Manager type roles, and in Technicians and Trade for Non-Manager type roles.

Our gender composition by pay quartile highlights a disproportionate concentration of men across the board due to the nature and history of the industry in Australia until now. This is driven by historic gender pay gap drivers and a lack of female representation in the industry until recently.

Master Plumbers is fully committed to continue to improve its GPG and supporting the industry in doing so. We have a range of programmes and initiatives to ensure that the Master Plumbers' talent pipeline remains strong and that we strive to improve gender parity at all levels going forward.

Women in Plumbing (WIP) Program

Master Plumbers launched an innovative new Women in Plumbing program in 2021, backed by a major grant by Apprenticeships Victoria. The two-year pilot program sought to champion a connected community of aspiring female students, apprentices and plumbers to address participation rates for women in plumbing. It was comprised of three tactical components to overcome known hurdles to attracting and retaining women in the industry, including paid pre-apprenticeships, initiatives to promote plumbing as a viable and highly attractive career

pathway for women, pathways into a full apprenticeship through our Master Plumbers and access to a crucial network of female role models and mentors already in the industry.

The two-year pilot program has achieved remarkable success at its conclusion with a surge in female applicants, from 1 in 100 (2021) to 1 in 20 (June 2023). Plumbing Apprenticeships Victoria has employed and/or trained approximately 26% of all female plumbing apprentices in Victoria.

Attracting new apprentices was not the only success for the program. 94% of pre-apprentices transitioned to full apprenticeships with an 82% retention rate, underlining the program's success in not only attracting but retaining women in the industry – further balancing the industry's gender equation.

Completion of the Women in Plumbing (WIP) program marks the beginning of a journey, not its end. In 2023 the Women in Solar program, a partnership with Solar Victoria and Master Plumbers owned - Plumbing Apprenticeships Victoria (PAV) is continuing the great momentum created by WIP.

Master Plumbers Action Plan

Master Plumbers WIP program has increased our understanding of the barriers that face women at every stage of their career and continues to shape our action plans going forward. Building on the valuable insights gained, Master Plumbers and Plumbing Apprenticeships Victoria have developed a comprehensive plan to attract, recruit and retain more women in the industry and to consider a range of future career paths within plumbing, whether that means staying on the tools or transitioning to roles in management, estimation, OHS management, or even training the next generation of plumbers.

As an employer, Master Plumbers is committed to the continuous improvement and enhancement of our Employee Value Proposition which includes flexible and hybrid work options, greater support for carers and paid parental leave. Data shows that these inclusions improve general well-being, as well as help to remove potential barriers for women entering and remaining in the workforce. Our organisation offers up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave for eligible employees in addition to the government provisions.

We are also working to ensure that our workplace is safe and inclusive for all. To coincide with recent Positive Duty legislation, we are incorporating further staff surveys and training to initiate a more proactive top-down stance against sexual harassment and gender-based harassment, in consultation with our employees.

Master Plumbers recruited its first two female Board members in 2022 and has actively recruited to increase female representation on our National Council, the body representing our membership base. In the past year we have welcomed the first female National Councillor as well as our first female trainer into our RTO. We look forward to further boosting female representation at all levels across the organisation.

Externally, Master Plumbers is a member of the BICC (The Building Industry Consultative Council), which has overseen the development of the Victorian Government's Women in Construction Strategy. The BICC continues to be a key forum for dialogue and collaboration between Government, employers, industry associations and unions. The gender equity targets and initiatives driven by the strategy will help shift the dial in the right direction boosted by ongoing collaboration between stakeholders and initiatives like Master Plumbers Women in Plumbing program.