

# PLUMBING INDUSTRY UNITES BEHIND GROUNDBREAKING PLEDGE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

*Historic commitment leads new program to break barriers and reshape the Plumbing Industry*

Industry leaders across Australia's Plumbing Industry demonstrated national leadership and unity by signing an historic industry-first Pledge for Change, a powerful commitment to build inclusive, respectful workplaces and open new opportunities for the next generation of plumbers.

The pledge was signed at the official launch of *Building Futures: Breaking Barriers*, a bold, three-year initiative led by the Plumbing Industry Climate Action Centre (PICAC) in partnership with ten leading unions, employers, industry bodies and industry training organisations from across the sector.

Supported by the Australian Government's Building Women's Careers Program, the initiative is focused on driving lasting cultural and structural reform across the plumbing, pipe trades, and fire protection industries.

Launched by Minister for Skills and Training, the Hon Andrew Giles MP at PICAC Narre Warren, *Building Futures: Breaking Barriers* brings together the industry from all corners of Australia to tackle the barriers that have limited women's participation in the Plumbing Industry, and to build modern, inclusive, and sustainable workplaces for the future of the industry.

A key feature of the program is its emphasis on shared commitment. Through the Pledge for Change, partners have formally committed to taking practical action, embedding inclusive leadership and education, creating safer, more flexible workplaces, and ensuring the industry is accessible, supportive and successful for a more diverse future workforce.

The ten partners working alongside PICAC to lead this transformation are:

- Master Plumbers and Mechanical Services Association of Australia (MPMSAA)
- National Fire Industry Association (NFIA)
- Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors' Association (AMCA)
- Cooke & Dowsett
- Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU)
- Axis Plumbing
- International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO)
- Leemark Fire Protection
- Master Plumbers QLD
- RAW Group GTO



## Project Partners



Together, PICAC and its partners represent a powerful alliance, spanning employers, unions, peak bodies and training providers, demonstrating that meaningful change must come from within the industry, and be led by those who shape it every day.

Over the next three years, *Building Futures: Breaking Barriers* will roll out in stages, starting with research to understand the barriers facing women in the Plumbing Industry, followed by training and education and a best practice national framework to support inclusive leadership and respectful workplaces.

The program will provide practical tools and resources for employers, deliver targeted support to help implement change on the ground, and launch a national storytelling campaign to challenge outdated perceptions and attract new talent to the industry. Change will be embedded across all levels of the workforce, from apprentices to executives, ensuring this is not just a moment, but a sustained shift in how the industry works and who it works for.

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### Minister for Skills and Training, the Hon Andrew Giles MP

*I am proud to announce the launch of the Building Futures program, a transformative initiative designed to dismantle systemic barriers and pave the way for greater gender equity across the Australian trade sector.*

*This project is not just about training, it's about cultural change.*

*Increasing women's participation is not only a matter of fairness—it's essential for the future sustainability, innovation, and resilience of the industry.*

*I want to congratulate PICAC and all the partner organisations for stepping up and leading the way with this powerful Pledge for Change.*

### Shayne La Combre, CEO of PICAC

*This isn't about awareness. It's about action. We're not ticking boxes, we're taking responsibility.*

*As the Plumbing Industry's Centre of Excellence for training, PICAC has seen firsthand what happens when we invest in skills, safety and people. Now we're applying that same focus to culture. If someone wants to become a plumber, there should be absolutely no impediment—no cultural barriers, no unsafe environments, no outdated assumptions.*

*This isn't a campaign. It's a commitment. One pledge. Ten partners. A future for everyone.*

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### Project Partners



**Scott Williams, CEO – Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors' Association (AMCA):**

*If we want to build a future-fit plumbing and HVAC workforce, we need to make space for different people, different perspectives and different pathways into the trade.*

**Chadd Cooke and Scott Dowsett, Directors – Cooke & Dowsett:**

*From the back of a garage to delivering some of Australia's most complex projects, we've built Cooke & Dowsett on high standards, trust and a passion for the trade. We know what it takes to succeed in this industry—and we know it shouldn't be harder for women to do the same. We're proud to be part of a program that's about real change, backed by practical action and shared responsibility.*

**Paul Bonsak, Managing Director (Oceania) – International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO):**

*At IAPMO, we believe the strength of our industry depends not only on the integrity of its systems, but on the people who build and maintain them. Just as we uphold rigorous standards in safety and performance, we must set the same expectations for workplace culture. This initiative is about making sure our industry reflects the professionalism, inclusion and accountability we've always stood for.*

**Mark Underdown, Managing Director – Leemark Fire Protection:**

*At Leemark, we've always believed that building great fire systems starts with building great teams. We invest in our people, we train from within, and we work hard to create a culture that people want to stay in. Signing this pledge is a natural extension of those values—we want every apprentice, every tradesperson, to know they belong here and have a future in this industry.*

**Norm Anderson, President – Master Plumbers and Mechanical Services Association of Australia (MPMSAA):**

*For more than a century, Master Plumbers has supported the success of our industry through training, apprenticeships and business leadership. We know the future of plumbing relies on attracting and supporting a broad, diverse workforce. This initiative is about opening the door wider and making sure our workplaces are equipped to support everyone who wants to build a career in plumbing.*



**Project Partners**



**Joe Smith, CEO - National Fire Industry Association (NFIA):**

*The NFIA is proud to partner on the Building Futures initiative to drive cultural change and build a more inclusive, future-ready workforce. By working collaboratively across the plumbing and fire protection sectors, we're supporting a strong pipeline of skilled, trained, and qualified professionals who can uphold the highest standards, deliver real fire protection, and help create a safer Australia.*

**Earl Setches, Secretary - Plumbing and Pipe Trades Employees Union (PPTU):**

*The PPTU has been standing up for workers since 1850, and we know that progress doesn't happen by accident, it takes commitment, collaboration, and courage. Building Futures: Breaking Barriers is about making sure our industry reflects the values we've always fought for: fairness, respect, and opportunity for all. We're proud to stand alongside our partners in signing the Pledge for Change and to help lead the way in building a Plumbing Industry that's stronger, safer, and more inclusive for everyone.*

**Allan Jones, Managing Director - RAW Group GTO:**

*RAW Group exists to create real, lasting change for Aboriginal people through education, training and employment. We know workplace equality—especially for women—doesn't happen through good intentions alone. It takes respectful partnerships, cultural understanding, and a holistic approach that recognises the complex factors that shape people's working lives. We're proud to contribute to this initiative and to help shape an industry where inclusion is real, and every person has the chance to succeed and lead.*

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**Project Partners**

## **The Building Futures, Breaking Barriers Leadership Pledge *Partnering for Change in the Plumbing Industry***

As a Partner Organisation committed to working with PICAC and other industry leaders, we recognise that creating a respectful, diverse and inclusive Plumbing Industry requires leadership, collaboration, and action.

Our Industry has a proud history but it has been shaped by a workforce that is mostly male. That needs to change. We acknowledge the need to understand what the barriers are and to break them down to ensure that everyone is welcomed, respected, and supported at every level of the industry.

As a partner in this change, we commit to:

Working collaboratively with PICAC and all Project Partners to create long-term cultural change across the Plumbing Industry.

- Education to strengthen our understanding of the cultural and structural drivers of inequality and inclusion
- Listening to the voices and experiences of everyone in the Industry, and using this insight to inform our programs, leadership and practices.
- Championing respectful behaviour and inclusive leadership across our organisation and throughout the Industry.
- Supporting and implementing practical policies and procedures that foster psychological safety, inclusion, flexibility, and equality in plumbing workplaces.
- Taking action to open up opportunities for everyone, particularly for women, in our Industry and actively remove barriers to their access, participation and advancement.

As a committed partner, we are proud to stand with PICAC and all Project Partners to help lead the change toward a Plumbing Industry where everyone feels safe, valued and respected.



### **Project Partners**

