



Green economy goes for gold

BY EMMA RUGG

Green power is being pitched as the fuel for Australia's economic future, with the launch of a new Green Skills training scheme last week.

Minister for Education and Training, the Honourable Verity Firth, oversaw the launch, which forms part of a bigger move towards 'greening' the Australian workforce. The WPC Group GreenSkills program aims to create apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities to serve the

developing 'green economy' of energy efficiency, sustainable water systems, biomaterials, green buildings and water systems.

The need to build skills in these areas won't wait until the end of the Global Financial Crisis and businesses providing services to meet these growing needs are building their skilled people now or are looking to build them in the near future, says the WPC Group.

A recent report entitled *Green Gold Rush* by The Australian

Council of Trade Unions estimates that the emerging green industries could create an

additional 500,000 jobs by 2030, as an increasing number of homes and businesses turn to more environmentally sustainable ways of living and working.

The Australian Conservation Foundation estimates that 3.25 million Australian workers will need to develop new green skills' to cater for the green expansion and maintain competitiveness in the workforce.

Plumbing has been one of the first industries to commit to developing more sustainable work practices, through the Master Plumbers and Mechanical Services Association of Australia's GreenPlumbers program.

The GreenPlumbers workshops have been run successfully around the world for eight years, and in Australia since 2006, with the support of the NSW Government.

This month, a new schedule of free workshops will be running in inner Sydney, allowing plumbers to learn about rules for water and energy efficient

housing in NSW, rebates available to householders and practical installation skills for new technologies, like solar hot

water systems.

All participants in the workshops receive a certificate and free listing on the GreenPlumbers national registry, which all consumers can access to find a local green plumber, by calling 1300 368 519.

The need to save water underpins the GreenPlumbers scheme, and it is estimated that in Australia alone, more than 1,800 million litres of water – the equivalent to 2,800 Olympic-sized swimming pools – has been

saved already through the 'green plumbing' reforms.

In terms of rolling out this idea to other businesses, the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) says they're currently busy working on a Energy Efficiency Training for Trades and Professionals Program, to be launched in July this year.

A DECC spokesperson said: "The program will include education and training on how tradespeople and professionals, including plumbers, electricians, facility managers and engineers can make their businesses greener."