

A 5-YEAR BLUEPRINT FOR REFORM

Laying the foundation
for a future-ready Plumbing
& Fire Protection Industry

2026

1 EMBED LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY AND LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

THE INDUSTRY CHALLENGE

Cultural change is frequently treated as a short-term, isolated “women’s project”, driven by short term funding. We know senior managers have an appetite for ownership and long-term Industry wide investment to help ensure inclusion efforts don’t stall.

This is supported by our research which confirms that interventions over 5 years help create a lasting impact.

WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?

- **Establish indicative benchmarks:** Set indicative, evidence-informed benchmarks (such as an aim of at least 15% female apprentices by 2030) that will be refined through further Industry consultation. This keeps up our level of ambition without operating as a blunt instrument or locking leaders into fixed commitments prematurely.
- **Track and report progress:** Help ensure leadership accountable by collectively committing to tracking and reporting progress against agreed benchmarks and outcomes over time, ensuring this is a collective, measurable effort in preference to an aspirational framework.
- **Sustain system-wide investment:** Move beyond short-term grant cycles by developing a shared, long-term Industry funding strategy and plan. This will include coordinated advocacy through future State and Federal Government budget processes.
- **Invest in wraparound mentorship programs:** Model and support leaders to implement successful holistic approaches that combine trade skills training with essential life coaching and support to women on site.

2 ADOPT A TAILORED NATIONAL EMPLOYER FRAMEWORK BACKED UP BY INDUSTRY RESEARCH

THE INDUSTRY CHALLENGE

While the Industry wants to improve diversity, employers generally lack a consistent, evidence-based roadmap.

Current inclusion initiatives often rely heavily on individual goodwill rather than structured organisational maturity, leaving businesses unsure of where to start.

WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?

- **Support the development of the Plumbing Industry Cultural Inclusion Maturity Model (PICIMM),** developed by Dr Valerie Francis, to help employers across the Industry benchmark their workplace culture and map achievable steps for progression.
- **Pilot with six companies:** Test the PICIMM with six representative plumbing businesses to co-design tailored 12-month action plans, moving them from basic compliance to fully embedded inclusion.
- **Deploy role-based implementation packages:** Provide highly actionable, ready-to-use toolkits, bundled for tailoring to specific roles from apprentices, plumbers to senior leaders, to translate the PICIMM into everyday practice.

3

DRIVE BEHAVIOR CHANGE THROUGH TAILORED EDUCATION PROGRAMS BACKED UP BY INDUSTRY RESEARCH

THE INDUSTRY CHALLENGE

Informality and “unwritten rules” govern many worksites, meaning safety and learning often depend entirely on an apprentice’s or plumbers’ ability to self-advocate.

Harmful behaviors and sexualised banter are sometimes protected by norms, creating an intimidating environment where misconduct goes unchallenged by bystanders who lack the skills to identify and challenge behavior.

WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?

- **Develop and roll out a National Education and Training Program (NETP)**, designed for the Industry, based on The Man Box framework, to equip leaders, trainers, and workers with a structured, multi-module curriculum designed to develop positive culture and build respectful team dynamics.
- **Move beyond basic awareness** by giving all workers confidence, practical scripts, and practical skills to safely intervene, challenge disrespect, and act as genuine allies on site.
- **To support learning, increase engagement, and document our journey**, we will develop storytelling interventions that capture the voices and experiences of men acting as genuine allies across the country.
- **By sharing the stories of senior leaders, career plumbers, and apprentices** in engaging written and video formats, we will highlight positive role models and reinforce a culture of respect and inclusion.

4

PROMOTE AND SHARE A STRENGTHS-BASED NARRATIVE

THE INDUSTRY CHALLENGE

Currently, the default response to exclusionary behaviour is often silence. Informal norms go unchallenged, and poor behaviour is unintentionally protected by a culture that lacks clear accountability. There is no overarching, strengths-based narrative to counter this, instead, the Industry’s story is left to outdated stereotypes, which discourages diverse talent from entering and leaves existing workers without a vision towards positive cultural change.

WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?

- **Unified support for expert messaging:** All project partners agree to support the core narrative and messaging framework developed by our expert communications partners.
- **Partner-led promotion:** All project partners commit to actively promoting these unified messages through their own established networks, platforms, and workplaces on an ongoing basis. To ensure success, expert partners will support Project Partners in this effort, providing the necessary guidance, strategy, and ready-to-use resources.
- **Evidence-based message testing:** We will not rely on assumptions. We will test our messaging through rigorous evidence and research to ensure our narrative genuinely resonates with the Industry and effectively targets our audiences.
- **We will be clear about why this matters:** Women remain significantly underrepresented in the trade and can face barriers to entry, retention and progression.
- **Focus on “everyone”, not just gender:** We will ensure the project language avoids framing this solely as a “women’s issue” and instead use a “everyone has a role to play” approach that connects inclusion to the strengths the Industry already values.
- **Our messaging will acknowledge today’s reality while positioning inclusion as an opportunity** to build a stronger culture that welcomes everyone, particularly women, and supports a safer, more respectful, future-ready workforce.
- **Communicate in plain English:** We will ensure that all our communications, resources, and policies are written in plain English, so they are easily understood by everyone. Using simple, accessible Industry language rather than complex legal or HR jargon is essential to making sure our messages resonate with everyone across the Industry.

5

ENSURE SAFE WORKPLACES AND EQUITABLE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR WOMEN

THE INDUSTRY CHALLENGE

Women are often systematically excluded through inadequate basic facilities.

Our research has confirmed that approximately 91% of women in the trades report being issued ill-fitting personal protective equipment (PPE), and 83% lack access to appropriate onsite amenities.

These conditions, combined with rigid working hours that ignore caregiving responsibilities, lead to women leaving the Industry.

WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?

- **Implement consistent minimum standards:** Implement and enforce consistent minimum standards across all sites, guaranteeing clean, appropriate amenities, menstruation support facilities, and PPE manufactured specifically for women.
- **Introduce Industry endorsed flexible work arrangements and robust parental leave policies in addition to minimum statutory requirements,** across the Industry, that support work-life balance for all employees, reducing perceived career penalties for caregiving and pregnancy for workers.
- **Enforce zero tolerance with victim-led restorative approaches:** While the industry will maintain strict, inescapable accountability for misconduct, resolution processes will be developed to empower the person who was harmed to guide how the situation is handled, requiring the offender to actively understand, take responsibility for, and engage in constructive steps to repair the harm and rebuild respectful relationships.