

Inspection service can minimise cost of plumbing faults

THE decision to have plumbing works approved by a plumbing inspection service is one builders and consumers would be well advised to consider. At only a fraction of the percentage of the total home cost, inspection services can be regarded as insurance for the builder and consumer. If the work is not approved by a plumbing inspection service the builder and consumer run the risk of their new plumbing works showing faults.

During the six-and-a-half-year warranty period, builders are ultimately liable for any defect caused and it makes sound commercial sense to insist that plumbing works are inspected in the same way as carpentry works (framing, etc) and other stages of construction. In many cases, more than 75 per cent of the plumbing work is concealed under concrete slabs and in wall and roof spaces. Defective workmanship is consequently very costly to repair and intrusive upon the occupants of the home.

Recognising this, the MBAV has established a relationship with Casey College of TAFE. The MBAV-Casey College of TAFE Plumbing Inspection Service (phone 03 9212 4590) can provide partial or full inspection services to suit the requirements of individual builders and consumers and can offer an audit service to ensure plumbing standards are maintained.

Recent statistics from the MBAV-Casey service reveal that, of the work it has been contracted to inspect, more than 25 per cent has been found to have a defect, ranging from minor to serious.

Some examples are:

- Insufficient grading of drainage and plumbing pipework.
- Omission of expansion joints and pipe supports.
- Incorrect sizing, clipping and sleeving of hot and cold-water pipes.
- Omission of drainage ventilator pipes.
- Poor clipping of above ground drains. And
- No drainage vent installed to extended drains.

Melbourne Water ceased mandatory inspections of plumbing works in October 1993



By **Brian Welch**, executive director of the Master Builders Association of Victoria.

Melbourne Water's plumbing inspectors, are no longer required to carry out any compulsory inspections of plumbing and drainage work within the perimeter of a building. The work is accepted and guaranteed for a period of only 12 months upon the issuance of a certificate of compliance signed by a registered plumber.

Only licensed plumbing contractors can carry out plumbing work in Victoria but, as the statistics demonstrate, there are many examples of poor workmanship and poor quality control being exercised by some plumbers.

The Housing Guarantee Fund introduced a plumbing inspection policy to help raise the standard and quality of plumbing work and reduce the number of plumbing defects and claims by consumers. It is anticipated that the private warranty insurance providers under the Domestic Building Contracts and Tribunal Act will introduce a similar policy in the effort to reduce plumbing defects.

This policy will give builders the opportunity to transfer liability for many types of damage caused by water penetration and plumbing defects.

Principal contractors rely upon sub-trades to do their work professionally. However, as recent legislation only serves to highlight, the full liability for defects rests with the builder.

Under the circumstances, this service, or one like it, is a simple and cost-effective way of minimising the risk associated with plumbing defects.