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| Upskilling Plumbers  Round 3 |

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| Acknowledgment  We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.  We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond. |
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## What is the Upskilling Plumbers initiative?

Solar Victoria operates one of the largest sustainability and renewable energy programs in the country, accelerating uptake of solar and electrification in Victorian homes.

Solar Victoria delivers the Victorian Government’s flagship Solar Homes program, a $1.3billion investment over 10 years to support hundreds of thousands of Victorians to participate in the renewable energy transition. It also develops policy including legislation, regulation and program specifications to support the Victorian Energy Upgrades Program – Australia's largest energy efficiency obligation program.

The [Victorian Energy Upgrades (VEU) program](https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/victorian-energy-upgrades/about) joined Solar Victoria in June 2024, bringing together two of the Government’s most important household energy transition programs.

The Electrification Training and Workforce Development Program will build upon Solar Victoria’s significant $12m workforce development and training program which ran from March 2019 to June 2025.

This new initiative is part of a $5 million, 3-year investment in subsidised training initiatives for industry participants, such as plumbers, electricians and construction workers, to develop the skills needed to support residential electrification, and comply with regulated requirements, such as the National Construction Code.

The Upskilling Plumbers initiative provides grant funding to training providers to equip registered and licensed plumbers and fourth-year plumbing apprentices in Victoria with the knowledge and skills needed to understand energy efficiency requirements and to design and install energy efficient heat pump hot water systems. This initiative will grow workforce capacity and skills to meet the higher consumer demand for electrical appliances driven by the government’s gas substitution reforms, including new building electrification and minimum energy efficiency standards commencing in 2027 for new builds, rentals and water heater replacements.

Heat pump hot water systems have become the leading choice in energy-efficient electric systems in recent years. In comparison to conventional electric water heaters, these systems are a lot more efficient, using 60 to 75% less electricity. To maintain such efficiency and to be fit for purpose to meet household needs, heat pumps require quality and compliant installation. Poor or non-compliant installation may cause issues that can compromise the comfort and energy efficiency of a home. In addition to the knowledge and skills needed to design and install heat pumps, the training will show participants how to avoid common heat pump installation mistakes and common faults.

The Victorian Government is funding this grant to support ambitious energy transition targets and increasing industry demand by encouraging licensed and registered plumbers and fourth-year plumbing apprentices to become trained in the design and installation of energy efficient heat pump hot water systems.

By **31 May 2026,** the aim of this funding is to:

* Provide energy efficient heat pump-related training to at least 1,000 registered and licensed plumbers and fourth-year plumbing apprentices.
* The delivery component of the contract must be completed by 15 May 2026 with final reporting due by 31 May 2026.

## Who can apply?

The following organisations can apply for funding:

* Private sector businesses
* Educational institutions
* Trade unions
* Peak industry associations.

In addition, to be eligible for funding applicants must:

* be an incorporated body, cooperative or association (including business associations)
* be financially solvent
* have a learning facility in Victoria
* have demonstrated capacity to deliver training online
* experience in delivering training to the plumbing industry
* capacity to deliver industry-relevant heat pump hot water systems and home energy efficiency-related training
* capacity to administer training, including managing enrolments, participant queries, issuing certificates, ensuring participants are eligible in accordance with grant conditions, reporting
* experience and capacity to promote and advertise training to the plumbing industry and generate an ongoing pipeline of participants.

## Who cannot apply?

The following organisations and individuals cannot apply for funding:

* individuals
* government agencies
* local government authorities.

## What will be funded?

Five activity streams are to be delivered under this program:

**Stream 1: Self-paced online module/s covering energy efficiency and an introduction to heat pumps**

* Non-accredited content on energy-efficient plumbing measures to support clients and installations
* Non-accredited content introducing what a heat pump hot water system is and how it works
* Non-accredited content on other energy efficient hot water technologies (e.g., solar diverters, demand response electric storage, and instantaneous electric)
* Training content should include:
  + Building and Plumbing Commission (formerly VBA) licensing and registration requirements
  + Refrigerant safety and siting considerations for flammable refrigerants
  + ARC licensing requirements
  + Gas decommissioning
  + Electrical requirements at different stages of installation
  + Maintenance and repairs of heat pump hot water systems
  + Victorian government priorities, such as electrification and new regulations commencing in 2027 for new builds, rentals and water heater replacements
  + Government supports (including VEECs, Solar Homes program rebates, STCs)
* Knowledge checks to confirm understanding (e.g. multiple choice and/or short answer)
* Payment will be made for participant completion of all online content (including successful completion of all knowledge checks), not participant commencement or partial completion.

**Stream 2: Metropolitan Face to face theoretical and practical training session on the design and install of energy efficient heat pump hot water systems**

* Non-accredited content on designing, installing and commissioning heat pump systems for domestic applications in accordance with relevant Australian Standards using the required heat pump equipment listed below (see Requirements for funding)
* Training content should include:
  + Building and Plumbing Commission (formerly VBA) licensing and registration requirements
  + ARC licensing requirements
  + Refrigerant safety and siting considerations for flammable refrigerants
  + Gas decommissioning
  + Electrical requirements at different stages of installation
  + Maintenance and repairs of heat pump hot water systems
  + Victorian government priorities, such as electrification and new regulations commencing in 2027 for new builds, rentals and water heater replacements
  + Government supports (including VEECs, Solar Homes program rebates, STCs)
* Written and practical knowledge checks to confirm understanding (e.g. multiple choice and/or short answer, verbal Q&A, hands on practical activities)
* The duration of the in-person training session (including knowledge checks) should be no longer than one day
* The frequency of scheduled in-person sessions should be at least 3 times per month
* Face-to-face training sessions should be offered in either a central metro Melbourne location or at multiple sites across metro Melbourne, where possible
* Payment will be made for participant completion of the entire session, not partial or non-attendance.

**Stream 3: Regional series of face to face theoretical and practical training session on the design and install of energy efficient heat pump hot water systems**

* Non-accredited content on installing and commissioning heat pump systems for domestic applications in accordance with relevant Australian Standards using the required heat pump equipment listed below (see Requirements for funding)
* Training content should include:
  + Plumbing and Building Commission (formally VBA) licensing and registration requirements
  + ARC licensing requirements
  + Refrigerant safety and siting considerations for flammable refrigerants
  + Gas decommissioning
  + Electrical requirements at different stages of installation
  + Maintenance and repairs of heat pump hot water systems
  + Victorian government priorities, such as electrification and new regulations commencing in 2027 for new builds, rentals and water heater replacements
  + Government supports (including VEECs, Solar Homes program rebates, STCs)
* Written and practical knowledge checks to confirm understanding (e.g. multiple choice and/or short answer, verbal Q&A, hands on practical activities)
* The duration of the in-person training session (including knowledge checks) should be no longer than one day
* Sessions must be held in regional Victoria, with a minimum of 5 sessions to be delivered across the duration of the program
* At least 1 session must be delivered in each of the five regions of Victoria (Gippsland, Grampians, Barwon South West, Loddon Mallee, Hume)
* Delivery of regional sessions should be costed per participant (accounting for venue hire, travel and associated costs)
* Payment will be made for participant completion of the entire session, not partial or non-attendance.

**Stream 4: Forum/Masterclass to be scheduled over the delivery period**

* This stream should offer targeted information to the plumbing industry via forums or masterclasses using industry leaders and experts to brief the sector on key industry topics, for example:
  + Economic and consumer trends influencing the plumbing industry
  + Current and upcoming regulatory reforms; and/ or
  + Other industry relevant topics (eg. new and forthcoming regulations, gas decommissioning, unsafe/non-compliant/substandard practise installations, emerging hot water technologies, etc)

All topics must be approved by Solar Victoria prior to delivery.

* Face to face and/or online forums looking at the challenges and opportunities shaping Victoria’s plumbing sector allowing participants an opportunity to stay informed, ask questions, and share how new reforms can be rolled out in practice
* Registrations will be open to all plumbers, fourth year apprentices, and anyone working in the plumbing industry.
* Forums or masterclasses should be scheduled at least 4 times across the delivery period
* Payment will be made for events delivered not scheduled or cancelled (per participant attendance) and be inclusive of any venue hire and associated costs.
* Delivery of forums/masterclasses should be costed per participant (accounting for relevant costs such as venue hire, travel, etc)
* Payment will be made for participant completion of the entire session, not partial or non-attendance.

**Stream 5: Face to face training and networking events for women**

This stream aims to increase participation of women in the plumbing industry by:

* Highlighting incentives and support programs specifically for women to gain the required qualifications and experience
* Building a supportive network of women (through online engagement and in-person networking events)
* Showcasing leading women in the industry as speakers and through written profiles
* Providing practical training and workshops tailored to the needs of women considering becoming plumbers including the following list of key topics:
  + energy-efficient plumbing measures to support clients and installations
  + what a heat pump hot water system is and how it works
  + other energy efficient hot water technologies (e.g., solar diverters, demand response electric storage, and instantaneous electric)
  + Plumbing and Building Commission (formerly VBA) licensing and registration requirements
  + ARC licensing requirements
  + Refrigerant safety and siting considerations for flammable refrigerants
  + Gas decommissioning
  + Electrical requirements at different stages of installation
  + Maintenance and repairs of heat pump hot water systems
  + Victorian government priorities, such as electrification and new regulations commencing in 2027 for new builds, rentals and water heater replacements
  + Government support (eg. VEECs, Solar Homes program rebates, STCs)
* This stream is available to all women in the plumbing industry (ie. it is not exclusive to plumbers and fourth year apprentices).
* Payment will be made for events delivered not scheduled or cancelled and be inclusive of any venue hire and associated costs.

**The following types of activities are eligible for funding****:**

* Course content development costs (online and in-person) including development and validation, handbooks, online portal and/or Learning Management System build requirements.
* Project resourcing and any salary costs associated with dedicated resources (including marketing) required to deliver training and events.
* Equipment and tools to deliver the in-person training up to 5% of the total budget. (equipment/tool expenditures must be pre-approved by Solar Victoria)
* Costs associated with partnership/auspice arrangements required to deliver training and events (partnership/auspice arrangements must be pre-approved by Solar Victoria).

**Requirements for funding**

* Provider must have (or have the ability and capacity to procure or undertake development prior to delivery) energy efficiency and hot water system heat pump training content and resources (to be pre-approved by Solar Victoria prior to commencement)
* Provider must have (or procure and install prior to commencement) the required equipment (including heat pumps) to support Stream 2, 3 and 5 face-to-face training, including:
  + Integrated air-source heat pump hot water systems
  + Split system air-source heat pumps systems, including sub-types:
    - * water circulating (between compressor unit and tank)
      * refrigerant circulating (of both synthetic and natural refrigerants)
  + Systems conforming with Solar Victoria’s local content rebate. Products eligible for the locally made incentive can be found here: https://www.solar.vic.gov.au/hot-water-rebate#products-eligible-for-the-locally-made-incentive
* Provider must ensure equipment is always maintained and is in good working condition and presented in accordance with industry best practise (e.g. no unsecured piping, damaged or crooked parts, etc). Solar Victoria may request evidence of equipment integrity at any time over the duration of the initiative
* Preparation of a detailed delivery plan which includes proposed metro Melbourne and regional Victoria locations and proposed dates for delivery
* Preparation of a detailed communications and marketing plan outlining proactive marketing strategies to attract participants to support reaching the number of completions target
* Preparation of a budget breakdown for each delivery stream
* Provider must acknowledge Solar Victoria funding in any and all promotion of the initiative
* Partnerships with other entities (educational institutions including TAFEs, manufacturers, regulators, peak or industry associations) to ensure capacity across Victoria and ability to reach targeted number of completions (partnerships to be pre-approved by Solar Victoria).

**Special conditions**

* Solar Victoria may seek additional providers should any contracted provider be unable to meet established targets as outlined in the funding agreement (following a minimum of 3 performance meetings between Solar Victoria and contracted provider)
* Funding for any additional providers will be deducted from the originally contracted provider’s contract balance and a variation to funding agreement will be undertaken
* Solar Victoria may require the provider to add, remove and/or replace equipment at its discretion at any time throughout the initiative
* Solar Victoria may arrange the use of equipment (such as hot water heat pump equipment) and the provider will be obliged to incorporate this equipment into the face-to-face delivery streams
* Solar Victoria may facilitate an industry expert to present on specific topics in Stream 4.

## What will not be funded?

The program will not fund the following activities:

* the purchase of land
* routine or ongoing maintenance activities
* activities that have already started
* where duplicate services are in operation or planned for in a targeted community
* recurrent operating costs, for example rent and utility costs, and/or activities establishing expectations of ongoing funding
* activities located outside the State of Victoria.

## What are the funding details?

The total funding available is **$950,000** (excluding GST) over the period 1 October 2025 to 30 June 2026 with all delivery of training and reporting to conclude by 15 May 2026.

Reporting requirements:

* Funding will be paid monthly only upon Solar Victoria’s receipt and acceptance of the required reporting detailing delivery and participant completions in the previous month
* Provide a proposed budget break down for each stream including proposed payment amount per participant.

## What are the assessment criteria?

* Applications will be checked for eligibility to ensure that the applicant and their activity are eligible for funding
* Eligible applications will then be assessed using the criteria listed below. Each criterion is given a percentage weighting to indicate its relative importance in the assessment process.
* Applications should address all relevant criteria and detail how they will meet the requirement.

**Criterion 1 - Resourcing (Weighting 35%)**

The provider must demonstrate that they have:

* existing facilities and equipment (or have the ability to procure/install prior to commencement) to deliver the training in metro and regional locations. Applicants must provide details of prearranged partnerships for regional delivery (partnership arrangements to be approved by Solar Victoria prior to contracting)
* capacity to schedule and deliver required sessions across all streams
* an efficient participant enrolment/booking process including any real-time booking systems. Solar Victoria to be provided read only access to the booking portal
* ability to submit monthly participation and finance reports in the format required by Solar Victoria
* a plan for periodic monitoring and evaluation of activities, including but not limited to performance and experience measures.

**Criterion 2 – Delivery (Weighting 25%)**

The provider must demonstrate that they have:

* required energy efficiency and hot water system heat pump training content and resources (to be pre-approved by Solar Victoria prior to commencement) or ability and capacity to procure or undertake development
* ability to provide both online and in-person training
* a delivery plan and proposed schedule for meeting metro and regional Victoria delivery requirements across all streams
* marketing strategy or plan that demonstrates how the training course will be promoted and how cohorts will be sourced (Solar Victoria must approve promotional materials before public dissemination)
* ability to promote the training to a significant audience (e.g. members or other existing network/contacts)
* have dedicated resourcing for project management, delivery and marketing
* a strategy that encourages engagement of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (all genders)
* willingness to attend monthly performance meetings to review performance against targets and confirm rectification action if required.

Criterion 3 – Staffing (Weighting 20%)

The provider must demonstrate that they have:

* A minimum of three qualified (TAE40122 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment or equivalent) trainers with minimum 3 years industry experience as a plumber and minimum 1 year training experience
* Staff resources available to support administration and reporting requirements.

Criterion 4 – Past and Current Experience (Weighting 20%)

The provider must demonstrate that they have:

* Experience successfully delivering training to industry on heat pump hot water system design and installation, electrification, regulatory updates and other government priorities. For example, applicants may specify the number of years the course has been delivered, the total number of students who have completed the course, etc.
* Auspice arrangements with another provider particularly for regional delivery.

## What supporting documents will need to be provided?

Please submit the following documents with your application (refer to criteria above for more detail):

* Evidence of current equipment or statement describing equipment that will be provided
* Evidence of facilities for in-person delivery including arrangements for all regional locations
* Detailed delivery plan addressing criteria requirements above including proposed locations in metro and regional Victoria, proposed dates for delivery and any partnership arrangements
* Detailed marketing strategy to attract participants
* Detailed budget breakdown including per participant rate and total expected number of participants per stream.

## What are the funding conditions?

**Funding agreements**

Successful applicants must enter into a funding agreement with Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). The Victorian Common Funding Agreement is used for funding agreements with private businesses, training organisations and not for profit organisations.

It is recommended that applicants review the terms and conditions before applying. Information about the Victorian Common Funding Agreement is available on <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-common-funding-agreement>

The activity does not include using the Funding for political campaigning or advocacy activities for political parties.

**Legislative and regulatory requirements**

In delivering the activity grant recipients are required to comply with all relevant Commonwealth and state/territory legislations and regulations, including but not limited to:

* The Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
* The Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)
* Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

**Tax implications**

Applicants should consult the Australian Taxation Office or seek professional advice on any taxation implications that may arise from this grant funding.

**Acknowledging the Victorian Government’s support**

Successful applicants are expected to acknowledge the Victorian Government’s support and promotional guidelines (<https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/grants>) will form part of the funding agreement. Successful applicants must liaise with the departmental program area to coordinate any public events or announcements related to the project.

**Payments**

Payments will be made as long as:

* the funding agreement has been signed by both parties
* grant recipients provide reports as required, or otherwise demonstrate that the activity is progressing as expected
* other terms and conditions of funding continue to be met.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

Grant recipients are required to comply with project monitoring and reporting requirements as outlined in the funding agreement. This may include progress reports, site inspections, completion reports and acquittal documentation. Recipients will be required to take part in a program evaluation at the completion of the program.

**Privacy**

* Any personal information about you or a third party in your application will be collected by the department for the purposes of administering your grant application and informing Members of Parliament of successful applications. Personal information may also be disclosed to external experts, such as members of assessment panels, or other Government Departments for assessment, reporting, advice, comment or for discussions regarding alternative or collaborative grant funding opportunities. If you intend to include personal information about third parties in your application, please ensure that they are aware of the contents of this privacy statement.
* Any personal information about you or a third party in your correspondence will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and other applicable laws.
* DEECA is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. You can find the DEECA Privacy Policy online at www.delwp.vic.gov.au/privacy.
* Requests for access to information about you held by DEECA should be sent to the Manager Privacy, P.O. Box 500 East Melbourne 8002 or contact by emailing [Foi.unit@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:Foi.unit@delwp.vic.gov.au).

## What is the application process?

Applications are submitted online using the Grants Online portal.

To apply, go to the grant program web page <https://www.solar.vic.gov.au/training-and-workforce-development-grants-open> and click on the ‘Start New Application’ button. To return to a saved draft application, click on the ‘Access Saved Application’ button.

Attaching required documents:

Supporting documents must be in an acceptable file type, such as Word, Excel, PDF, or JPEG. The maximum file size for each file is 10MB.

You will receive an application number when you submit an application online. Please quote this number in all communications with the department relating to your application.

If you have documents to submit that cannot be attached to your online application you can email them to industrytraining@team.solar.vic.gov.au, quoting your application number. Attach all documents to one email, zipping the files if required.

Make sure your application is submitted by **4 pm on 22 September 2025**.

Note: No hard copy applications will be accepted. Late and incomplete applications will not be considered.

## Additional information

If you have further questions about the Upskilling Plumbers Training Program please email industrytraining@team.solar.vic.gov.au

## What is the notification process?

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing after the assessment process is completed. All decisions are final and are not subject to further review. Unsuccessful applicants can ask for feedback on their application.

## Key dates

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| Applications open | 25 August 2025 |
| Applications close | 22 September 2025 |
| Applicants notified | 30 September 2025 |
| Activities commence | 1 October 2025 |
| Activities completed | 30 May 2026 |
| Acquittal reports submitted 30 June 2026 | |  |

## Checklist

Read these guidelines and the information about this grant program at <https://www.solar.vic.gov.au/training-and-workforce-development-grants-open>

before applying and complete the following checklist.

Have you:

\* read these guidelines carefully?

\* checked if you are, or your organisation is, eligible for this grant funding?

\* checked if your activity is eligible for this grant funding?

\* checked that you would be able to comply with all relevant laws and regulations in delivery of your activity?

\* prepared the appropriate supporting documents?

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