

A Day in the Life of a Master Plumber

Meet Mark Dunne, the plumber who has only ever unblocked one toilet!

This year, MPAQ staff are spending some time with our members doing what they do and seeing what they see. The experiences recorded in our 'Day in the life of a Master Plumber' project will be shared with potential future apprentices at career expos attended by MPAQ's Ambassadors to get an understanding of what life as a plumber could mean for them.

For our first Day in the Life of a Master Plumber experience, Lupe Paea, one of MPAQ's Event Coordinators spent the day in Cairns with Mark from Dunne Rite Plumbing.

Mark is a fourth generation plumber, with his father, grandfather and great-grandfather all having worked, or are still working in the plumbing industry. Born in Dublin, Ireland as one of five boys, he immigrated to Australia in 1988 and grew up in Lakes Entrance, Victoria until he moved to Cairns in 2007.

Mark initially did not want to become a plumber, even though the trade ran through his family line. He instead enrolled into university and completed a Bachelor Degree in Commerce. He later did some work experience with his father on the tools and found that he was actually a natural at plumbing and thoroughly enjoyed the work. This then prompted him to undertake his plumbing apprenticeship just off the coast of Cairns at Fitzroy Island.

Mark now operates his own business, Dunne Rite Plumbing in Cairns with help from his brother, Paul, on the tools. They mainly do full installations in new houses and solar hot water. Mark's Dad has also developed his own brand of solar hot water units called CMD (named after their late brother Carl) which he is proud to install and promote.

When first starting his business in 2013, he chose the name of the business based on Dunne Rite Roofing which was owned by his brother who was also a plumber. In his brother's memory, Mark has his name inscribed on the toolbox of the animated picture on the side of his work car.

Walking in Mark's Shoes – As told by Lupe Paea, MPAQ Events Coordinator

In April I had the opportunity to spend a day with Mark and Paul in Cairns, going out on site to some new residential homes. I've only worked with Master Plumbers since December 2018 and have never had any prior experience with the industry, so this opportunity really helped me see things differently!

The morning I was due to meet up with Mark, the day's plans changed very early and I received a text message from Mark at 6.30am explaining we would be doing a different job that day due to the rain (and boy did it rain). So instead I headed to Mark's newly built home in Mount Peter for a quick coffee and chat. Side note, before 7am is a little early for my liking!

After a quick coffee and breakfast, Mark showed me his home office and what's involved most morning's with ordering supplies for the day. Mark completes all his own office work and paperwork for the business from home.

We arrived onsite at a new estate in Kewarra Beach and was met by Mark's brother Paul who was already working on the kitchen and bathroom installs of the new houses.

Watching Mark and Paul doing fit outs on new houses was a great opportunity for me to come in to a blank canvas and see it all come together from the very beginning. I didn't realise that plumbers used so many tools. Honestly, I (like many others) thought a plunger was on top of the tool list, but obviously not, as Mark told me he had only ever unblocked one toilet in his whole career, and it was on a construction site.

Working on site definitely had some challenges for me. First of all (being Cairns), it was very humid and my long sleeve, high vis shirt and long pants were hot enough, let alone my steel cap boots. Within an hour, it looked like I had taken a shower (not in a good way). I also randomly got dirt everywhere without realising where it came from. At one stage I was taking notes on my laptop with

the makeshift office Mark made me (from empty toilet bowl boxes), half sitting in the dirt. I can't imagine trying to run a business with all the admin involved while on site like this or working on the road and only accessing information through your phone, it was quite a challenge!

Throughout the day I learnt that plumbers are usually the first onsite to new building developments. Mark also gave me a lesson in waste systems and taught me the difference between commercial plumbers and maintenance plumbers.

Outside of work, Mark is an avid sky-diver. He's completed over 309 skydives in the last three years. He also has a partner, Laura who is really lovely and grew up in the same town Mark was born in, Dublin, Ireland (but they met in Cairns – small world!).

He is really passionate about the industry and would like to be able to teach apprentices and pass on his knowledge, as he finds this rewarding. He spoke about his aspirations to grow his business and do more of what his Dad did, applying plumbing skills and knowledge in third world countries for people who need it. His Dad completed a water project in a village called Korando in Kenya where they installed five kilometres of piping to get water into the village, instead of children having to walk up the mountain carrying buckets on their heads.

Since working for MPAQ I have wanted to learn more about the industry and after spending time with the guys from Dunne Rite, my perception of plumbers has definitely changed. I used to think plumbers predominantly only dealt with toilets, and I expected them to just "get in and get the job done"; however, they're so much more than that. There are so many different specialties in plumbing, gas, hot water and even roofing, just to name a few. Plumbers play such a vital role in our health system and listening to Mark speak so passionately about wanting to make a difference and share his knowledge about the industry left me feeling inspired.

Being able to have this experience, spending a day in the life of a Master Plumber has made me appreciate plumbers and just how important they are in our day to day life. I have a greater understanding of our members and have more passion for the industry, and if the opportunity ever presented itself, I would definitely consider a career in plumbing.

For more information, contact MPAQ on 07 3273 0800 or at info@mpaq.com.au.

