

Quick it ain't...

It's a great idea to set up a shop front for customer queries, but you may be wasting the customer's time if the shop has nothing to offer!

About six months ago, I wrote to the Sydney Water Corporation (SWC) requesting approval of an unusual water connection for one of my projects.

Some days later, I received a phone call advising me that my letter had been received, that my request was being processed, and that in future I must make such a submission via one of the SWC Quick Check agencies and not directly to the SWC.

Following this advice, I recently went to one of the Quick Check agencies to submit an unusual water connection application for an industrial subdivision.

At the agency, there were two customers (plumbers) in front of me waiting to be served. In serving the first plumber, the agency representative had to ring the SWC to request assistance. After some time, the representative was told to ring



Studor's recent demonstration of the new positive air pressure attenuator (PAPA).

another department. After another wait, the information was obtained.

The next customer also spent some time waiting until the computer finally showed the relevant information.

Finally, after 20 minutes, I arrived at

the counter. After discussing my drawing and accompanying letter, we waited while the very slow computer fired up and found the relevant site details. The Quick Check representative advised me that he had not processed this type of application to the SWC before, and finally handed me the phone, as he was not getting anywhere.

I described the situation and was told to ring another department, which I did, only to be told that person I needed to speak to was out at lunch. I left my drawing and letter with my particulars at the Quick Check counter and went back to my office.

That afternoon, I finally had a call from the SWC about my application.

Where is all this leading?

This experience, including travelling time and waiting time, took over an hour, yet the result was that I ended up on the phone to SWC back in my office discussing my application.

This is not about the individuals, who by the way were very helpful, but about the process and procedures they have to work within.

Quick it ain't! There was a time when you could ring an SWC department (if you know which one and where it was), discuss your application direct with the relevant person and get advice there and then.

By the way, after all that, the SWC would not approve my proposal.

So back to the drawing board – or as we say now, the computer!

Positive air pressure attenuator

As a junior designer at Ledingham Hensby & Oxley (now LHO Group), I can remember being told by Cliff Hensby of the company's





Can you spot the design error in this Sydney fire hydrant/double check valve installation?

involvement with the Sydney Water Board in the first installation of a single-pipe, unvented stack system in a residential block of home units at Double Bay, Sydney.

Back in the 1960s, this was considered revolutionary!

Now, in 2005, another major innovation in the design and installation of vented stack systems has emerged. Recently, in the company of my peers and other industry representatives, I attended a presentation by Studor, which was launching its new PAPA pressure attenuators.

Put simply, the attenuators are like an oversized water hammer suppresser fitted to the sanitary plumbing system in stead of a relief vent and combined with air-admittance valves on the branch lines.

The benefits are immediately obvious – space saving and time saving on installation.

The engineering research is being led by Professor John Swaffield in Scotland, a world-renowned researcher into plumbing drainage systems.

We understand that Sydney Water Corporation has accepted this Studor innovation and that it has been included in the new draft AS/NZS 3500.2.

What's wrong with this picture?

Back in the December issue 2004, I noted in my column the need to install a double check valve for backflow prevention on a typical fire hydrant service (see photo).

On one project that I am working on, the plumber questioned my design and correctly noted I had it wrong – oops!

Can you see the problem?

Email me with your answer – Michael@michaelfrost.com.au ■