



The 100th issue of the Fellow Practitioner dated 11 May 2012

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News Flash: Does it exist?

At the beginning of the month we noticed the new policies on the Boards website stated this:

3.2. The following policies are relevant to this policy: the decision-making policy, which is complied with when making any relevant decisions.

We thought it was very interesting that the decision making policy which is used for all relevant decisions wasn't on the Boards website under "our policies". You would have thought this would have been the first policy.

We requested a copy to have a look and got this reply:

Thanks for your email. We'll be in touch in due course in regards to this policy.

How long does it take to hit a send button to get a copy to us. You would have to ask the question now "Does it actually exist or did it exist when the policies were written?"

Eleven days after the request we still don't have a copy. So much for the Board being open and transparent.

The 100th issue of the Fellow Practitioner

This is the 100th issue of the Fellow Practitioner and a huge amount has happened since the first issue was sent out in June 2012. Wal Gordon, the recently appointed Chairman of the Federation, has been involved with the Fellow Practitioner right from the start so we thought we would get his personal views of what has transpired over this time.

How do you feel about being involved in launching 100 editions of the Fellow Practitioner?

I think the Federation Committee has done a great job getting the information together; making sure it was right and then getting it out to Federation members and others. They put in some huge hours and they do it not for pay, not for position, but because they know what they are doing is the right thing to do. They deserve a huge vote of thanks from the industry.

Why do you think the battle with the Board has gone on so long?

I wouldn't call it a battle it's more like a war. Look, it started out as opposing opinions on issues affecting the industry but then the Board attempted to use its perceived authority to impose its will and

- In the last few weeks the Federation has been accused of destructive behaviour, that the behaviour is from three people and you were also referred to as a small disaffected group who attempted to overturn the PGDB's right to require CPD as a condition of licensing. What do you say to that?
- What has been the highlight of your time with the Federation to date?
- What has been the lowlight?
- How do you feel about Master Plumbers and the "cold war" that's going on between the Federation and the Board and Master Plumbers?
- Do you feel the Federation is in competition with Master Plumbers?
- What would be the top three things you think need to happen for real change in industries?
- We have apprenticeship training don't we?
- How far away are some sectors of the industry from total rejection of the Board's governance and the training system?
- What do you see for the future of the industries we work in?
- If you could say something to every person in the industry what would it be?

IN OTHER NEWS

Ask the Question from a supporter.

How's things, ...hey I wondered if it would be a good idea to email all your members and have them reply with a simple YES or NO answer, as to whether they sent in your submission

unfortunately for them they weren't as squeaky clean as they thought. Their past, present and future caught up with them.

What do you mean "squeaky clean"?

When you regulate people you need to lead by example and have your shit together. Unfortunately when people find one thing wrong and see a pattern of behaviour they look for more. It's like finding a cockroach - when you find one you know there will be more and you go looking and we found more cockroaches than there should be in an organisation that claims to be a specialist Board and professional organisation.

Why do you think the Board have been non responsive to the Federation?

Probably because the Federation isn't intimidated by them and is uncovering the dodgy behaviour from past and present. It seems they feel their position gives them certain rights to respect and trust, and basically the Federation don't suck up to them. Respect and trust must be earned and don't come as part of your employment agreement.

How do you feel the PGDB are getting on in their bid to win the trust and confidence of industry?

That's a laugh. They stood a chance when the new Board and new CEO were appointed but then they shot themselves in the foot when they shafted the industry over the Regulation Review Committee decision. Had they accepted the decision and got on and corrected the situation they would have gained a huge amount of trust, but they didn't. They chose to get the industry to pay for their incompetence. More issues are being identified all the time and the truth is coming out. I feel they won't be trusted or respected until there are new ideas and attitudes. I wouldn't say it's a lost cause, but I don't think this Board and CEO have the capability to gain the trust and confidence of industry.

Do you feel the right people are being appointed to the Board?

No. What we need are people that are passionate about the industry and its future and are prepared to listen - not the mould of people we have at the moment who appear to be there for "position". One way of finding out who is there for the right reasons would be to stop paying them and see who stays.

Why do you think discipline has gone from basically zero ten years ago, to the level it is at now?

I believe enforcement has been used to justify empire building and to support other issues such as "Continuing Professional Development". What better way to justify your actions than to make the industry look bad through discipline - make the industry look incompetent.

Look, the industry does close to three million jobs a year and most people who get disciplined are on charges to do with administration and licensing. Not even 1% of the jobs are picked up as being faulty. I feel the industry should be congratulated for their self regulated efforts not persecuted because people want to justify their decisions and policies.

documents, ...or not.

*I asked 3 guys this morning,
2 had, 1 hadn't.*

*We need to keep the Board
honest (if that's possible)
...imagine if you get 100
'YES' replies!...but the Board
go ahead with the Master
Plumbers response.*

So if all those who
submitted a Federation
template response could let
us know with a YES, we will
know the numbers we are
dealing with.

Thanks for your help.

**Increased cost to
wastewater treatment
facilities has resulted in a
possible toilet tax.**

Matamata-Piako District
Council has recently
upgraded its wastewater
treatment facilities, costing
them nearly \$25 million.

One of the options was to
place a tax on toilets.

We think every plumber
would tell you that you
could have 100 toilets in
your house but that doesn't
mean you are going to use
them all every day or go
more just because you have
them.

Your body dictates how
many times you go not the
number of toilets.

Where do some of these
people get their ideas? Their
council members are quids
in for positions on our
Board.

Legal Opinions

Should we need a legal
opinion for all that the
Board does?

All legislation imposed by
the Government goes
through great debate
regarding its wording and
intention and we are very

What other way could the Board have gone about things?

The way that worked for nearly a century – through education and assistance, not heavy handed regulation and enforcement.

Why do you think this Board has met so much resistance?

Well it doesn't matter what experience and skills you have, if you come in to a new environment and try to stamp your authority by using the position to impose your will, then you get resistance. This Board and CEO followed on from a CEO who had a 'rule the world mentality' and then they shafted the industry with regard to CPD and the Discipline Levy within months of starting and now they expect us to believe and trust them! It just shows they believe they can do what they want with the limited support they have from one sector of the industry. I believe they have used up their credibility with a big section of the industry.

Is all about the RRC decision?

No - look you have to remember the decision of the Committee still stands even though the Government voted against it. Even Maurice Williamson had no objections to the recommendations, but in the end it boiled down to not what was right, but to 'money', and those who sided with them had the same motivations.

When the Government voted against the decision of the committee, Master Plumbers said "Yee...haaa, we did it!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" What did they do? They helped keep regulations that had been imposed without statutory authority. What ever happened to principles such as honesty and integrity?

What do you think of legal action as a way of making the PGDB sit up and take notice?

I don't think it would worry the Board or CEO as they are thick skinned. Look at the Paul Gee case - a 95% failure on the investigation and prosecution – yet have we seen any inquiry being conducted to find out what went wrong? No! It's more a case of "we got that wrong" and it's just business as usual. The investigator is still employed without any ramification.

So in answer to the question - we shouldn't have to waste more money on fighting the Board in court, but I think in the near future it is something the Federation will have to do.

What would have to happen for this to occur?

For more of the industry to get pissed off and demand more accountability from the Board.

What difference do you think the Federation has made to wider industry?

Well we haven't held back with our comments so I would say the industry is probably more informed now than they every have been. Issues have

confident it is not the Government's intention that legislation be so difficult to understand that you need a legal opinion for everything you do.

It seems to the Federation that if we can understand the legislation then it only becomes difficult when people try to go outside the legislation.

Anyone can buy a legal opinion to justify their actions particularly when you rely on implied powers rather than expressed ones.

If it was the Government's intentions that everything end up in court they wouldn't have legislation they would just let the likes of the Board implement what they wanted and then we would take them to court to fight their actions.

Letter to the Editor

Dear editor.

I sent this to the Chairman of the Board so I thought you may like to share it with others.

Dear Mr Bickers,

I was concerned to read some of your comments, quoted in your speech at the Master Plumbers Conference in Queenstown.

The main comment I refer to is "Unfortunately, a lot of the Board's time is being taken up dealing with the destructive behaviour of a small number of people within our industry.....probably only three people in reality" unquote.

Your comment suggests to me, that you have not come into your position with an open mind but a predetermined agenda.

That agenda unfortunately, appears to be, to continue

been put out there for debate.

I believe the Federation has shown a lot in the industry that what they have been getting told by the people in positions of trust was, in fact, garbage. Look at the CPD scheme - it had no statutory authority under the old Act and was carried over to the new Act and is still in place. Most of the industry accepted it was legal and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on a scheme that had no statutory authority. They believed the self proclaimed "voice of the industry" was looking after their interests but even that's up for debate now.

I think the Federation is showing the industry they don't have to be afraid of the Board and Secretariat and that they can stand up and be counted. There have been a lot of oppressive regimes toppled in the last year, and the Board may just end up another statistic if they don't change.

In the last few weeks the Federation has been accused of destructive behaviour , that the behaviour is from three people and you were also referred to as a small disaffected group who attempted to overturn the PGDB's right to require CPD as a condition of licensing. What do you say to that?

No much really - if we criticise others we also have to accept criticism, but there is a big difference, we base our criticism on fact, where the comments made about us so far are just trying to downplay the impact of the Federation. A few people are going into the denial stage and are looking for someone or some thing to blame when it all turns to shit on them.

You see all these like minded people on the Boards and from Master Plumbers are banding together to downplay the Federation because it's eroding their influence, but that's fine, if they want to band together they can collectively take responsibility when it all falls down around their ears. We certainly won't be backing down.

The Federation represents 942 people – from trainees, to tradespeople, from business owners and people employed in this industry in offices and on the end of shovels, as well as associates of plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers. We see our support in the grass roots of industry – the everyday practitioner who has chosen this as their profession. If people look at 942 people and see "three" or only a "few" – perhaps they need their eyes tested.

What has been the highlight of your time with the Federation to date?

I don't know if there can be a highlight as every time we have a win it's identified another problem or issue in the industry, so they are all hollow wins. There have been a couple of times when we have seen justice done and that has been very satisfying, but honestly every time I see a new member join the Federation it's a highlight as it reinforces what we are doing is right and makes the hours put into getting the industry fairness and equality all worth it.

the dictatorial and arrogant attitude, established by Routhan/Singleton, of the Board.

Have you bothered to ask why the PGD Federation was established, or why fewer apprentices are being employed, or why so few tradesmen pass their certifying exams?

A good excuse could be "Our time is taken up fighting the PGDF's claims".

In my opinion, the PGDF was established to ensure the Board abides by the law, which it has clearly been flouting for over a decade.

If one looked at the Board, one could be excused for thinking it was a law firm. Why so many lawyers on a tradesmen's board?

Answer: To circumvent the law. Surely one lawyer is more than adequate to interpret the plumbing, gasfitting, drainlaying laws.

Mr Bickers, I suggest you would be very unwise to underestimate the PGDF which now outnumbers the Master Plumbers.

The waiting game

The Federation was asked this question last week:

Can you outline the complaints that the Federation currently has in process and with whom they are lodged?

There are quite a few complaints submitted by the Federation but also by individuals so we have included all that we know of.

Government

- Petition regarding governance of the industry

Regulation Review

What has been the lowlight?

Seeing people riding on the industry's coat tails and having an influence on our direction, all for their own self gain. Hearing people claiming they are helping the industry but all they are doing is making decisions for self preservation and their organisations and businesses.

How do you feel about Master Plumbers and the "cold war" that's going on between the Federation and the Board and Master Plumbers?

I don't think it's going to stay as a cold war for long as it's starting to heat up. Look people join Master Plumbers because that's what they are in to. I know a lot of Master Plumbers who are really nice people and good at what they do. Quite a few are members of the Federation.

It seems to me that the executive is relying on past reputation and making claims such as that they have "cemented its role as industry leader". So from "self proclaimed voice of the industry" to industry leader. It seems the executive put out a lot of hype with all the right words about how successful they are but what truth is behind it? If their leadership got us to where we are as an industry - we are in the shit.

Having Master Plumber's members on every Board where they can stroke each other's egos doesn't help as it just leads to one line of thinking and the single line thinking hasn't got the industry anywhere. Wasn't Phil Routhan a Master Plumber?

Just because Master Plumbers members are expected to do something it doesn't mean the rest of the industry should be forced to do the same.

Do you feel the Federation is in competition with Master Plumbers?

No it's not. The Federation is about fairness and equality in plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying regulations and legislation - Master Plumbers is a membership organisation built about benefits for its members. Members pay for a service and hopefully they get it. The Federation isn't going down that track but if the legislation and regulations continue on their current path I feel the Federation may have to go in direct competition with Master Plumbers to get the rest of the industry a fair deal. Anything is possible.

What would be the top three things you think need to happen for real change in industries?

First we need real industry representation on the Board to stop the single line of thought. Have the Board "industry appointed", with limits on the number from organizations such as the Federation and Master Plumbers. Get people who want to be there. We don't need lawyers, project managers, accountants and such like on the Board because the Board have a governance role. We pay a CEO nearly quarter of a million dollars a year to do all the nuts and bolts stuff.

Secondly the industry needs a performance measure. At the moment we are told we need to do better, but how is it getting measured and how do we know if we are improving? How do we know if we need to improve as you can't fix something if it isn't broken?

Committee:

- 2 x Complaints regarding Discipline Levy and Offences Fee.
- Complaint regarding CPD

Office of the Ombudsman

- Complaint by five overseas tradespeople regarding treatment from the Board.
- Complaint regarding CPD
- 2x Complaints regarding Fees and Discipline Levy
- 2x Complaints regarding withholding of information
- Complaint regarding terms and conditions of licensing.

Charities Commission

- Complaint regarding the Board's status as a registered Charity

Office of the Auditor General

- Complaint regarding the governance of the industry
- Boards Historical complaints process*
- 3x Complaints regarding treatment by the Board

Members of Parliament

- Numerous complaints from individuals
- Numerous complaints from individuals

Just not on

This week we heard of an individual who had been the subject of discipline action from the Board who was declined a job because the prospective employer was afraid the business may become the subject of unwanted attention from the Board.

See how vindictive people believe the Board are.

Thirdly the industry needs real apprenticeship training, as this forms the future of the industry.

We have apprenticeship training don't we?

In a word no. I feel what we have in place is a money wasting scheme that places all the onus of success on the employer, not on the apprentice. I feel one of the reason CPD has come about is because people are qualifying with less hands on skills than they should have. The technical side is only part of being a good tradesperson.

How far away are some sectors of the industry from total rejection of the Board's governance and the training system?

I give it until March 2013. There is only so much people will take before they break and I believe more and more people are reaching that point daily.

What do you see for the future of the industries we work in?

In the short term a lot of confusion and mistrust. A lot of action against the PGD Board and other Boards, to hold them accountable.

In the medium term, once accountability has become a reality, there will be a skills shortage and very few apprenticeships. However the apprenticeship scheme will change and better qualified tradespeople will be emerging.

The long term is dependant on the path taken by the Government with regard to industry governance.

If you could say something to every person in the industry what would it be?

Stand up and be counted. Stop taking shit from people who are only in it for themselves and if it means you have to take a position to make change then do it!!

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