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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

Keep it coming - very sound, commonsense arguments.

Communication is the essence yet our country on a whole is being hammered with more bureaucracy...

There is so much conflict in our country - in the schools, families, work places, text bullying and all because we have lost sight of important issues and labouring on the nebulous stuff like CPD and policies; don't get me wrong these things are important but they have lost sight of the priority the coal face and impact on people and building a good society.

Dear Editor Fees Review

Is it just me or do the PGDB think that practitioners have bottomless pockets?

The background information is written in such a way as to confuse people – it doesn't say if it includes or excludes GST and the numbers just don't make sense when you divide them amongst the stated number of practitioners.

I can tell you one thing for

The size of the problem



It looks like the Maurice Williamson is using the Registrar of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board as his mentor and is copying his actions. Imitation, they say is the sincerest form of flattery!

Mr Williamson had this to say in a letter to a Federation supporter this week:

“Despite repeated correspondence, it is clear that we cannot come to an understanding. I propose that we do not correspond again on this matter.”

What's this country coming to when members of the public don't have access to an elected member of parliament remembering that Maurice Williamson won't meet with the Federation until we play by his, and the Board's rules?

Could it be that what Minister Williamson is really saying is that “because you won't do what I want, or agree with me then I don't want to play with you any more.”

We suspect that these people get their tactics from “Jackass School”. Exactly how much do they think we care if they don't correspond with us?

Cutting off communication can work both ways – and it is time the Minister and the Board realised this. What will happen if parts of the industry ignore the Board and the government?

The time is rapidly drawing closer when perhaps we won't want to communicate with the Board or the Minister and just ignore them and the decisions they make.

If the industry has nothing to do with the Board and everything is imposed on the industry without their buy in then the Board and Minister have failed the public of New Zealand. The realisation hasn't dawned on them that if more people drop out of the regulatory system or choose to ignore it, the system will not be effective in protecting public safety.

They seem to rely on our honesty and integrity not to break the law but everyone has a breaking point. We have long said that the Board need to bring industry along WITH them and they will be far more effective, but they consistently refuse to do so.

You only need to read some of the background information to the Fees Review to see that they have already made up their minds about a fee increase and do not even want to consider extending out licensing terms beyond one year. Of course we all know that a five year license in Australian is \$330.00, Australian Tradesmen do not allow leaching off of their hard earned income, let alone providing and funding a training school

sure – the sophisticated model sure ain't transparent – and isn't that what it all should be?

To all intents and purposes the fees and levies are a tax – and everyone should be entitled to see AND understand where their money has gone.

I note with some cynicism that the memorandum accounts are going to be implemented now, rather than years ago when they were first brought to the PGDB's attention.

My understanding is that the offences and disciplinary costs are meant to be used on ACTUAL costs rising out of ... therefore one would think that these should change each year – sometimes up and sometimes down.

It also doesn't seem fair that all trades are paying the same disciplinary fee – what if the drainlayers don't have anyone cause a problem but the plumbers have heaps?

Should one trade be cross subsidizing another trade's discipline? Not if it is "ACTUAL costs arising out of" they shouldn't.

This paper is muddier than my backyard and I am relishing the prospect of getting the Board to explain in depth at the upcoming meetings how they justify their costs.

Yours sincerely Concerned
'should have been an accountant'

Dear Editor Background Paper

I have read the Financial background paper from the Board – are they serious?

What do they think – lots of coloured boxes will blind us with science and

for lawyers wanting to stand at the bar!

Bully Tactics

Bully tactics just aren't going to work and the sooner the Board and Government realise that the better.

Sure there will be casualties if the industry turns it's back on the Board and those at the front will not doubt be the targets of the bully tactics first, but the more people that stand together the safer it is for all.

No doubt you are all getting sick of the fighting and just want to get on with doing what you do best. Well we are the same but we are not going to let the Government and the Board bully us to get their way.

If you want it to all stop then get out and recruit more members, spread the word about your discontent and let your local Member of Parliament know.

This is YOUR industry and YOU need to stand up and fight for it. A few hours of your time now could save you a lot later. This is now a big problem and the only way to resolve the issues is to attack them head on. Sitting, waiting is not going to achieve anything.

The Fees Review



How can you argue with that statement "the greatest shitstorm of our time" – we say that because it's been a long time since anyone has stood up for the industry and opposed the dictatorial regime.

This fees review is yet another battle about our rights. In saying that it isn't really a fees review - it's the PGDB communicating that increases WILL occur.

We are being told the Board's preferred options and asked if we agree or disagree and for us to give reasons about our opinions. We would have thought it was more appropriate for the Board to justify the increases as they have all the information and as Albert Einstein stated: "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough."

Well here's some simple facts for you to digest prior to attending any of the meetings:

- In 2002 the Board employed 11 people, that included 3 Gas auditors **available** to Tradesmen for advice and guidance (up skilling if you like) - but in 2012 the Board employs 19 people which includes 3 lawyers **not available** to Tradesmen for advice on the 2006 Act. It does not include the contracted investigators and auditors. (So an increase of 8 staff since 2002 PLUS contractors).
- In 2002 the cost to Tradesmen for a combined PG&D license was \$75 and in 2012 the cost to Tradesmen for a combined PG&D license \$306.66 plus \$175 discipline levy and \$90.00 offences fee which must be paid before a license is issued – a total of \$571.66. This excludes the cost of purchasing points to meet CPD requirements for licensing. (So an increase of \$496.66



then they can befuddle us more by saying the model is so sophisticated we won't really understand it.

Where is the talk of cost cutting, savings, wages freezes, pay cuts, redundancy – all the things we in the businesses that pay for them have had to do? I don't see the pain anywhere.

I think the splitting is very "tidy" – and I don't believe a word of it. Perhaps requests should be made under the Official Information Act.

Ed: The Federation did ask for the information under the Official Information Act and all that was supplied was a summary spread sheet with no supporting information.

Even if the information was to suddenly appear now it would be questionable as to its authenticity.

Hi Editor (CPD Points)

Thought you might want to put this in your next news letter.

I was trying to figure out how many credits I had for licensing in March and when you log in now it doesn't tell you how many credits you have anymore.

Very confusing from your record to tell how many you have left after the previous year.

I thought I had to acquire a lot more but after a phone call from José, at the Board, he informed me I had enough. If I hadn't checked with the board I would have continued to go on unnecessary courses.

If everybody emailed the board requesting there current credits maybe they would change the website

between 2002 and now – with proposed increases for 2013).

- In 2003 the Board processed, managed and issued 4002 Craftsman Plumber licences and 1092 Registered Plumbers licences – a total of 5,094 for this section of the industry. In 2012 the Board issued 3292 Certifying Plumbers licences and 1,589 Licensed Plumbers licences – a total of 4,881 licences. (So Craftsman/Certifying and Registered licence numbers have decreased by 213 from the number issues in 2003).

- In 2003 the Board processed, managed and issued 1341 Craftsman Gasfitter licences and 788 registered Gasfitters licences – a total of 2,129 for this section of the industry. In 2012 the Board issued 1,110 Certifying Gasfitters licences and 603 Licensed Gasfitters licences – a total of 1,713 licences. (Again a decrease of 416 licences).

- In 2003 the Board processed, managed and issued 4258 Registered Drainlayers licenses – a total of 4258 for this section of the industry. In 2012 the Board issued 3,434 Certifying Drainlayer licences and 228 Licensed Drainlayer licences – a total of 3,662 licences. (Another decrease of 596 licences)

- In 2002 the Boards income was \$1,146,404.00 and in 2012 it was \$4,490,238.00. (Income up \$3,343,834.00)

- In 2002 the Boards expenditure was \$1,086,004.00 and in 2012 it was \$3,749,282.00. (Expenditure increased by \$2,663,278.00)

Trade numbers are reducing indicating a dissatisfied industry, and we haven't seen any improvements in what the Board claims they exist for. Where are the improvements in the safety of the public and their property?

The problems the Board deal with haven't been created by the tradespeople, but by the Board and those working "constructively" with them.

Look at the figures above, it is costing us more for less. You don't need to be a KPMG accountant to be able to work out we are getting a bad deal!

We are very confident that when the Government debated the 2006 Act and the Department of Building and Housing submitted the economic impact statement that they didn't take into account that the industry was going to be hit with over **571%** increases in less than a ten year period and quite simply this shit has to stop.

Is it going to come to this?



Is it going to come to this? Well who knows and we certainly hope it doesn't, but we need to be aware that it could happen.

Nearly two years ago the Federation was formed due to the discontent created by the Board, ITO and the Minister, and if anything, their in-actions have caused the discontent to grow – certainly our membership numbers tell us that.

They still seem to following along the same old beaten path, ignoring other views and ideas. We sometimes wonder where we would be now if the Federation hadn't started to hold the Board accountable.

to make it more user friendly.

Take action now or forever hold your peace

Its time for action. Don't sit back and do nothing.

Get out and go to the Board's so called consultation meetings and have your say.

Don't take "we are not here to talk about that" as an answer. Push your points; as how many opportunities do you get to be face to face with the Board.

Don't show your disgust of the Board by doing nothing.

We need to fight for what is right so let everyone know about the issues the industry faces. – tell your customers, your local MP, the corner shop owner, tell anyone that will listen.

We have to get the message out to others and get their support for change.

The Board claims to be a charity but that doesn't mean we have to give away our hard earned money.

Consultation Meetings

If you have been to one of the consultation meetings then we would like to hear from you.

Send us your comments good or bad as we want to get a feeling from members regarding the proposals and process.

Thanks in anticipation of your feedback.

Those in power seem to display a belittling attitude that we are only tradespeople and we couldn't possibly understand the complex and sophisticated issues the Board and Minister deal with. Do the Board members not realise they are the scapegoats for the Minister?

Remember successive governments have appointed these people and told them what they want. How can the Ministers allow fees to increase by 571% in less than ten years? Shame on him.

The Federation has reached a point where we are not prepared to take this shit any more and we are very confident the public would rather the Government and Board be held accountable than to face huge increases in the amount they pay for a LEGAL tradesperson.

Why should we take reductions in our incomes to follow systems we do not agree with or support? More importantly these systems simply CANNOT be justified legally or morally.

Are your fees a donation to a registered Charity? Should you be able to claim them in your tax return? What is "charitable" about the Board? Where is the proof of "actual costs" arising out of disciplinary action and how is the Board getting such a surplus from our fees and levies? Why is the surplus from disciplinary matters not ring fenced and put in a separate account and offset in future years? Why were memorandum accounts not started much sooner when they have been brought to the Board's attention many times?

Where is the information about Competency Audits? Where is the consistency about policing businesses for supervision – how can one person who is in hospital having surgery get told by the Board that as he is the only Certifier in his business it cannot operate while he is in hospital, yet other businesses are left alone when their only certifier goes overseas for several weeks on holiday? These are just the tip of the iceberg questions – none of which have been satisfactorily answered by the Board or the Minister.

The Board and Minister are effectively putting their hand in your wallet, grabbing a fist full of dollars and walking away saying "aren't we doing a good job protecting the public?" Well the question is – ARE they? Where are the facts and figures to back this up – to show that the huge percentage increases in fees that we have had to pay have had the parallel increase in "safety" for the public?

Unlikely we say – because there has never been a huge risk to the public, and it hasn't suddenly gotten any worse. This Board has been heard to say they have taken over a legacy from previous Board's, but what have they done to change the legacy? NOTHING. We still face fees increases, we still face a system of "buying points to say you are competent" CPD scheme, they still carry on doing as they please or what the government wants, and they are still creating their little regulating empire where their increases are built into what we have to pay annually. Rob from the industry to support legislation and policy, they write.

Everyone out there needs to look deep into their conscience and ask themselves if they are happy with what's happening, happy with being robbed and - if you are not happy then what are you going to do **MAKE THIS SHIT STOP?**