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IN OTHER NEWS

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor

I see licensing is down 11% so what's going to happen when the experience has gone, especially now that there is no training?

Ed: That's a very good question. Yes the 11% not licensing is a big issue as it is mostly the people with the experience that remember we used to have a proud, productive industry and have got sick of the bureaucracy being chucked at them.

Eventually, when the government and PGDF grow up and wear big boy's pants, they will have to implement training courses as part of an apprenticeship as there will be limited tradespeople on the tools.

The shortage has started already where in the Hutt Valley there are 6 companies

Who has the Power?



Registrar, Mr Max Pederson, of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board with his Charity Board behind him, well at least that's the perception (of course Maurice Williamson doesn't want to go un-noticed, but does he realise the Board and Registrar make him look like a fool?).

A couple of weeks ago the Federation made a request under the Official Information Act regarding the delegated authorities given to the Registrar and was shocked with the result - we now wonder who actually has the power?

Delegated authorities are functions the Board (the ten appointed members), is legislated to perform, but they can hand on the responsibilities and decision making authority to the Registrar. So where it says "the Board" in the Act, with the delegation of authority, it may actually mean "the Registrar". Here are some of the delegations under the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006:

- **Section 14, Board may issue limited certificates for purposes of section 13:** The Registrar (Mr Pederson) has the power to issue limited certificates to persons who are in training agreements with a registered training provider and who receive supervision from a certifying practitioner.
- **Sections 19, 21 and 25, Exemptions under supervision:** Authority to determine the adequacy of supervision for the purpose of issuing an identification card. Mr Pederson is authorised to do this.
- **Section 20, Board may authorise person to carry out or supervise gasfitting:** The Board may authorise persons to carry out or supervise gasfitting. Now Mr Pederson can.
- **Section 24, Exemption for fixing of hot water heaters by gasfitters:** Mr Pederson has the power to authorise gasfitters to fix water heaters.
- **Section 40, Board to consider Application:** The Board must consider each application for registration. In this case Mr Pederson can but must report the registrations approved to the Board.
- **Section 46, Board to consider application:** The Board must

advertising for experienced tradespeople but none are available.

This situation is going to get worse come next licensing period.

The drop in experienced numbers puts the public at risk and so does the drop in total numbers as the longer people have to wait for a tradesperson to attend to their job, the more impatient they get and do the job themselves or they go for someone in the black market.

To sum it up we will be, and are, in the shit.

Dear Editor

Are we in the trade or the fear factor? I speak with a lot of practitioners and they all seem to live in fear of prosecution and their livelihoods.

Ed: We know exactly what your mean. We speak with people on a daily basis who say they don't know why they hang around in this industry. Most wonder what happened to trust, honesty and integrity.

Dear Editor

I just want to say thanks to the Federation and the Industry Board for their work.

I was one of the people who have been sitting back watching but no more. If the Federation wasn't established to go to bat for us we would be right up the creek without a paddle.

I've enclosed a cheque for the Federation and am prepared to help in any way I can.

Thank you all from my family who rely on me to bring home the bacon.

Dear Editor

Regarding your piece on

consider each application for a practicing license..... Not the Board – just Mr Pederson.

• **Section 47, Board to issue practicing license or decline**

application: Nope not the Board, just Mr Pederson again.

• **Section 50, Applications for renewal of practicing license:** Yes it's Mr Pederson's responsibility and he has the authority.

• **Section 51, Renewal of Practicing license:** Mr Pederson will make the decision if this happens or not.

• **Section 52, Review of registered person's competence:** The Board may, at any time, review the competence of a registered person.... Not the Board just Mr Pederson.

• **Overseas Assessments:** The power to receive and assess documentary evidence, and interview candidates for registration with overseas qualifications to determine their suitability to sit the approved registration examination and practical test of workmanship is now given to Mr Pederson.

• **Section 53, Review of registered person's competence:** Have no fear Mr Pederson is here to look at your competence. The Board will be off having a rest.

• **Section 55, Competence programmes:** To evaluate and approve courses for inclusion in the CPD programme, Mr Pederson will make sure they are relevant, necessary and affordable. Yeah Right!

• **Section 137, Examinations:** Mr Pederson is given the power to make arrangements for the examinations of persons practicing or intending to practice in the sanitary plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying trades.

• **Section 137(p), Prosecutions:** The function to institute prosecutions against persons for the breach of any Act or regulation is bestowed upon Mr Pederson.

So for all you practitioners who thought you were getting a fair and balanced decision, dealt with by the Board (including tradespeople on the Board) you may have to rethink your view as it looks like the Board have made Mr Pederson the only show in town, and he's been the man making the decisions.

We can see now why the Registrar has employed a gaggle of lawyers - as his protection. They ensure everything is tied up legally so he can't be held accountable and it seems to be working.

It appears the Board don't want to hold the Registrar accountable as they appointed him and it would make the Board look bad - and the Minister doesn't want to hold the Board accountable as he appointed them and it would make him look bad, so at the end of the day the Registrar has free reign, holds the power and the others follow him like sheep.

We have been deep in thought over these delegations – and we wonder why then we have a Board at all. Why not suck in the PGDB under MOBIE and just have an ancillary administration team dealing with licensing, and a disciplinary committee dealing with discipline. After all we are paying handsomely for this Board to meet, including travel costs, accommodation costs where necessary and catering costs – and it appears they do very little but sign off on the Registrar. What is the point of them at all?

Your thoughts on these delegations are welcomed.

assessment vs training:

Two months back we employed an apprentice through the ATT. A young fellow who did his pre-trade course of six months last year, then worked for six months at Pak’N’Save to save the \$1000 bond to register with ATT. We had trained an adult apprentice a few years back who started as a labourer for us and showed a solid skill base for plumbing and gasfitting. We thought we were prepared and believed that a six month pre-trade would fully prepare a work-ready apprentice.

What we actually got was a very nice young man, eager, engaged, but with no practical skills at all. After two weeks, he diligently spent five excruciating long minutes trying to screw a nut onto a bolt the wrong way (no thought processes to try to screw it the other way after three seconds). After three weeks, still had no idea what the basic screw drivers were called. No spacial awareness, no sense of what was going on around him, and a major accident waiting to happen. He even had three vehicle incidents in one day.

He had absolutely no practical aptitude which is something that the trainers should have picked up very early on. Instead, it appears that they just took his money (and the governments), and just pushed him along the conveyor-belt. We felt just awful for him, but there was no way we could give him practical aptitude (that comes from birth, or years of tinkering in dads shed), let alone keep him safe (despite the piece of paper stating that he was ‘site-safe’).

Sadly we had to let him go, and are now very gun-shy about taking on another apprentice. Such a shame.

The lad was a plumbing & gasfitting pre-trade graduate. We don’t blame the ATT as such; we think they provide a

The Output Agreement



We mentioned last week about the new Output Agreement between the Minister of Building and Construction and the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board.

The “Objective” of the agreement is to establish expectations of performance for the outputs to be provided by the Board. The Agreement theoretically enables the Minister to monitor the Board, and hold it accountable for its performance.

The PGDB provide the outputs for the agreement hence the reason they are very weak in achieving anything - why make life hard for yourself? It’s our impression this is really a “cover your arse agreement” so the Minister and the Board can say they actually have an output agreement should anyone question the accountability of the Board.

Here are a few of the outputs:

- **Practitioner competence:** *To implement the new system developed by the Board to monitor and measure practitioner competence. The competence of at least 150 randomly selected certifying tradespeople will be reviewed each year once the system is operational.*

Monitor Compliance with the gas certification regime. The Board monitors compliance with the certification regime as part of its programme of gasfitter competence reviews and reports the results of monitoring to Energy Safety.

- **Communication** *Maintain effective communication with stakeholders around New Zealand. A minimum of 10 newsletters are published each year and a minimum of 10 stakeholder meetings are held throughout the country each year. The Board’s stakeholder survey demonstrates an improving trend in satisfaction with Board provided service. Ensure Board’s website is available 24/7 and includes current information only.*

- **Consumer Awareness** *To encourage a positive behaviour change among non-compliant plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers. Raise the profile of the registration and licensing regime through communication. Prosecute non-registered persons who undertake work in breach of the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act.*

- **Follow-up review by the Office of the Auditor General** *Ensure that all issues raised in the 2010 report of the Office of the Auditor General have been dealt with by the time of the follow-up review. The Board obtains a satisfactory report from the OAG, in the follow up review of the Board action taken to address the issues raised in the 2010 report.*

What are consequences of failure? Well recent history would indicate there are no consequences, or if failure is imminent then

great service to the industry. The problem is with the training at tech and what makes a person competent to the trade. The poor fellow had a crack at electrical but found the maths too hard, yet was competent in a pre-trade for gas???

Ed: It appears to us that at the moment it is all about numbers and money not about the industry needs. We believe it will remain this way until the majority rules not the minority.

Dear Editor

I read the column by the new CE of the Master Plumbers in the recent Plumbers Journal. What I think she has failed to realise, along with her Board, is that doing what they have always done will get them what they have always got – and to my way of thinking – that isn't much.

They have had several opportunities to fight hard for their members and go to bat with the PGDB and each time they have fallen at the hurdle. Being polite and kiss arsey might get you invited for tea in the Minister's office, but it ain't getting the industry a better deal.

Still I suppose it depends just what you are after – positions on Boards or a real deal for your members and for industry at large.

the Government will change the law.

Where does our Protection Come from?



We wear protective goggles, hearing protection, steel capped boots, we have edge protection and work with safety ropes at height, all enforced by bureaucrats but where does our justice come from - who is protecting our rights from the stench of the regulation imposed by the PGDB and the Government?

People are talking about working congenially with others, but what about our rights - why should we have to back down and compromise when we disagree with the issue and can see it is wrong for the industry? For over a decade people have worked congenially and what have we ended up with - an industry that is being controlled by a minority.

For those sitting on the fence out there waiting for something to happen - it's time to get off the fence and do something. If you continue to think someone else will do it, you will get what you have got for the last decade - a total load of bureaucratic garbage.

If people out there don't like the way the Federation communicates to get our point across, well tough shit we don't like what's happening to us. We don't dress it up so people don't understand us, we say it how we see it.

As an industry we don't have any protection from the government or their puppets. They believe they can walk all over us because we are tradespeople - well we have news for them - take notice, that isn't going to happen. They will be cleaning up their own shit and going without heat and water before we back down to them. They go on about providing protection for the public whilst taking away our protection and rights, what a bunch of hypocrites.

We say they can either step up or step out. What we need to progress is numbers, so when we do walk away or strike, it does have an impact. The actions of the Board and Government have caused the licensing to be down 11%. That's about 780 licenses, about 500 tradespeople. This is a huge problem for industry and for the nation.

The recently constituted Industry Board, formed from the industry for the industry, will be looking at what protection we can get for the industry and what actions we will take next licensing period. Peaceful protest is nearing an end.

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