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IN OTHER NEWS

From the News this week

Maurice Williamson isn't answering his phone, following fresh revelations about calls he's made to the police.

It's emerged a second senior officer had a call from the National MP about an investigation last year.

The detective told his bosses the MP called on behalf of a complainant, who wasn't happy police weren't laying charges in a fraud case.

Mr Williamson resigned as a Minister last month after admitting he'd phoned Counties Manukau's top cop to help out a man facing domestic violence charges.

The man later made financial contributions to the National Party.

Our Parliamentarians are being encouraged to take a deep breath and step back from personal politics.

That's the advice of the Prime Minister following a

A Week of Laughs

Did you hear the one about the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board who pursued a Landlord for employing a home handyman to install a new toilet seat?

Yes a tenant complained to the Board that she had asked for the handyman's card and he didn't have one, so she complained to the Board who dutifully sent out a please explain letter to the Landlord because, as we all know, a toilet seat is an accessory to a toilet and as such, falls under the definition of sanitary plumbing.

After three or four letters back and forward to the landlord - (to quote the landlord "I estimate a day's work for someone employed by the Board"), the Board sent a letter reminding them it was an offence but they wouldn't be taking any action.

We can only presume that had it gone further the handyman would be prosecuted for doing sanitary plumbing when not authorised, the landlord would have been prosecuted for employing an unauthorised person to do sanitary plumbing and we would hope they would have gone after the supplier of the toilet seat as a party to the offence in that they supplied an accessory to a sanitary fixture which was to be installed by an unauthorised person.

Or what about the Board refusing to issue a license because the supervisor won't supply his date of birth over the telephone to a person claiming to be from the Board when they already have the supervisor's details.

The next laugh of the week is the follow up report from the Office of the Auditor General.

Follow up report from the Office of the Auditor General



serious issues - but it would appear we were wrong.

The long awaited follow up report from the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) was tabled in Parliament this week - and what can we say - we thought it was going to be a serious report written by credible people about

You can read the full report at:

www.oag.govt.nz/2014/plumbers/docs/plumbers-follow-up.pdf

frenetic few months where allegations of corruption, comparisons to child abusers, and a few ill tempered tweets have all inflamed political passions.

John Key says there's been a bit of a nasty streak running through Parliament and political parties need to think about it a little bit.

"Parliamentary privilege is there for a very good reason and that's to ensure that proper events can be brought into the public, displayed if you like.

"But I don't know where some of this stuff is going."

ED:

Perhaps they should note that their attitudes and lack of standards is filtering down the chain to government departments and statutory boards.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

I've been reading in the paper about ACC Levies. Surely the ACC levy is nothing more than a tax on us?

You may not have noticed it was reported that at the moment the accounts are 130% funded which means the government is taking 30% more than required to do the job (in much the same way as the Board does with us).

The government claimed a growing economy but in reality we are getting taxed to

In the latest issue of the Info Brief the Chairman of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board, Mr Peter Jackson said:

The report records how the Board has moved from being the poor performing organisation it was in 2010 to an organisation that is now performing well. The following extract from the report sums it up. "In 2013, we found a significantly changed and improved organisation, which had largely delivered a challenging programme of work to remedy the problems that we had found during our original inquiry."

And that's fair comment as the Board couldn't really have gotten any worse. Mr Jackson went on to say:

"This report provides a reliable commentary on how the current Board is performing that can be considered objective and accurate"

We'll let you be the judge on this comment but it seems to us another organisation has put its credibility on the line for the Board. Here are a few of the comments made in the report with brief comments from us.

The number of complaints about the Board by tradespeople since our last review was small, and few were about recent matters. Consultation with the industry had become more robust. Staff reported a healthier organisational culture.

It looks like the OAG equates success to the number of complaints received. Perhaps complaints are down because people believe it is a waste of time making them. Perhaps it's because the industry is turning its back on the regulation and simply don't care about the Board and what it does. It's very much negative reporting like the Board's view on consultation where no response is a yes for the Board's way of thinking, and in this case no complaint is a yes for the Board.

It is entirely funded by tradespeople, and it has a unique role in prosecuting unregistered and unlicensed people carrying out unlawful work. The result is that costs to plumbers, gasfitters, and drainlayers are higher than the costs for some other tradespeople.

This is great isn't it? All the way through the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act Amendment Bill we were compared to other industries and now it comes to light that the Board is entirely funded by tradespeople and has a unique role in prosecuting unregistered and unlicensed people carrying out unlawful work. Have a look at the fees chart in the report where it shows we are the ONLY industry paying a prosecution levy. Is this fair? Is this equitable? Is this just? NO, NO and NO!

MBIE, the Skills Organisation, and Master Plumbers report improved relationships and a willingness by the Board to be involved in discussions about the industry. This is a marked improvement from when the Board had become increasingly isolated.

Relationships with Master Plumbers are formal and business-like. Master Plumbers are happy with the consultation opportunities they get from the Board. They broadly agree with the Board about most

get them into surplus.
What are your thoughts?

ED:

Well it was the way in the mediaeval days where the Sheriffs and tax collectors would simply go around and tax the people to keep the lords and royalty in the manner in which they had become accustomed to.

In the mean time the people starved. The Lords got together and colluded to hold their wealth and only a few stood up for the people.

Dear Editor

I've had dealings with a young guy by the name of Pedersen at the Boards office. Is it Max Pedersen's son?

ED:

When there was nepotism going on in the Board a couple of years ago we asked questions and were told that because of the Privacy Act the Board could not confirm family relationships in the organisation but it is nothing new if that is the case.

We would have to ask who will deal with any complaints made about the young guy if any were made?

The Board should note:

of its proposals, with a few exceptions. They are usually content with the way that the Board deals with their comments and representations.

And why shouldn't they all get along due to the representation of Master Plumbers on the Board. We haven't seen too much feedback from Master Plumbers as an organisation in respect of the Board lately – in the consultation stakes or otherwise. Note that the three organisations mentioned have a financial interest in what the Board does.

Relations with the Federation are still difficult. Two founding members of the Federation have been right in two representations that they made on aspects of the Board's operations, and the Board could have listened better.

How much did their industrial exclusion and closed ears cost the industry? What damage has it done to their credibility? It appears the Board and Registrar use conflict to justify their existence. We see the Board gets a pat on the back for introducing memorandum accounts but in reality this was bought to the Registrar's attention nearly four years ago by the Federation. Without the Federation's spotlight turned on into the murky areas of the Board's administration we doubt this ever would have happened. Relations with the Federation will remain difficult because we will not agree with that which we perceive is illegal or unjust.

However, the Federation has raised many queries, and we acknowledge that the Board faces difficulties trying to respond.

If the issues are credible and lawful then there shouldn't be any problem responding. The Board finds it difficult as nearly every issue raised is met with them attempting to make it legally difficult through interpretation. In fact, over the years the Federation has done a lot of the Board's work for them – highlighting areas of weakness and illegality – and all for free!

Although we acknowledge that this has been a challenging matter, the Board needs to try better to work with the Federation. Board members acknowledge that this is important, and spoke of wanting to improve communication with the Federation.

Pick us up off the floor – wasn't it the Registrar who broke off communication with the Federation because we disagreed with him and the Board – didn't it just take the Federation seven months to get a meeting with the Board? It just shows that the Board is willing to say the right things to the right people to look good, but in reality there is no substance and very little truth in this statement. Walk the talk PGDB – don't talk the talk. We doubt very much whether there is one single Board member who wants to improve communication with the Federation – and if there is then where are they? Absolutely NOTHING that the Board has done to date has shown they want to engage with the 1100 plus members we represent.

In December 2011, the Board published a Gazette notice to prescribe a disciplinary levy and an offences fee. The Board then charged tradespeople these fees. A number of tradespeople objected and

A turkey was chatting with a bull. 'I would love to be able to get to the top of that tree' sighed the turkey, 'but I haven't got the energy.'

'Well, why don't you nibble on some of my droppings?' replied the bull. It's full of nutrients.'

The turkey pecked at a lump of dung, and found it actually gave him enough strength to reach the lowest branch of the tree.

The next day, after eating some more dung, he reached the second branch...

Finally after a fourth night; the turkey was proudly perched at the top of the tree.

He was promptly spotted by a farmer, who shot him out of the tree.

**Moral of the story:
Bullshit might get you to the top, but it won't keep you there...**

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challenged the legal basis for the fees. The arguments in the matter are long, and have been looked at by the Office of the Ombudsman and the Regulations Review Committee (RRC) RRC acknowledged that the drafting of the Act had led to an untenable position for the Board. The fees, and therefore the Board's decision, were validated in retrospective legislation in 2013. The Act was also amended to fix the problem for the future.

Looks like the OAG forgot to report on the Board acting in bad faith by implementing one gazette notice after they knew what they were doing was unlawful purely to get another years fees from the industry. Shame!

The General Complaints Resolution Policy is short and to the point. This means that it is relatively easy to read. However, it has a number of exclusions, some of which are not easy to understand.

We found the wording of the policy to be confusing in one aspect. It is a policy on general complaints, but it says that the Board does not accept complaints of a general nature.

Welcome to our world of confusion OAG. This is a prime example of using policy to do what they want to do, and reject what they don't want to or can't deal with. As the Board struggles to balance carrying out its responsibilities at a cost that is acceptable to the trades, its relationship with some tradespeople remains strained and less than productive. It is typical where money is virtually given on a silver platter and not earned, and where the payee has no say whatsoever in what their money is being spent on.

Well there you have some of our initial thoughts. We believe the OAG report does the OAG and the industry a disservice and whitewashes the issues. We believe the purposeful narrow focus of the review has succeeded in sweeping unresolved issues under the mat but has done nothing but put the credibility of the OAG on the line. For example we note there is no mention of the accounting for cross subsidisation funds, no mention of the Board using its powers to give qualifications to members of IPENZ who the Chairman at the time just happened to be a member – no mention of the Auditor General's Office signing off on the Board's annual financial reports when some of it was not audited.

The report seemed to be a follow on whitewash job similar to the report on how Kaipara District Council managed the Mangawhai community wastewater scheme Kaipara. It is quite obvious trustworthiness, honesty and credibility are not subjects the OAG report on or take into account.

Thomas Jefferson said it best when he said "when injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty."

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Plumbers Gasfitters and
Drainlayers Federation 3 Jupiter
Grove Trentham Upper Hutt
5018 Ph (04) 5277977 Mob
0276564811 Fax (04) 5277978
information@pgdf.co.nz