



Fellow Practitioner Issue 209 Dated 6 June 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [The Partly Complete, Concerns, However Report](#)
- [The House of Horrors](#)
- [Who do we believe?](#)

IN OTHER NEWS

What now?

It's getting like "Ground Hog Day" - after the Board unlawfully took money from the industry and the Government shafted us by legalising all the Board's collection and expenditure we asked "What Now?"

We never got a response from either and again we ask "what now?" seeing that the Board are doing such a stellar job - according to the Office of the Auditor General.

One amusing aspect of all of this is that the Federation has been made out to be the bad guys, the malcontents, and whingers.

Some of the founding members have been singled out for special attention and mention.

The Board and Government seem to be implying that a group of us woke up one morning and said *"shit we've got nothing to do for the next four years why don't I make up stories and complain about the actions of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board"*

Nothing has changed from day one, and that is, all we are seeking is

The Partly Complete, Concerns, However Report

A week after the Office of the Auditor General report was tabled in Parliament some people are still in shock. The perception amongst many of our members is that it was a whitewash report to get the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board off the Auditor General's work list.

Was it a glowing report – we don't believe so. Did you notice "partly complete" appeared twice, that "concerns" appeared 19 times, but the word "however" which is generally the precursor to other not so good news, appeared 27 times. Here's some examples:

- However, my Office continues to receive complaints.....
- However, the policy on exemptions under Sections 12-25 raises further matters.
- However, we have some concerns about the Supervision Policy.
- However, I consider legality is an aspect that the Board needs to keep focusing on.....,
- However, satisfaction with the way the Board communicates its final decisions fell to 54% in the 2014.
- However, the Federation has raised many queries, and we acknowledge that the Board faces difficulties trying to respond.
- However, the Provisional Licences Policy, one of the 16, was ambiguous in one aspect.
- However, after looking at the agendas and minutes of Board meetings over an 18-month period, we concluded that the Board did not routinely discuss the effect of its policies, fees, and charges on tradespeople.
- However, it is questionable whether such changes will bring big enough savings.
- However, it has a number of exclusions, some of which are not easy to understand. • However, in relation to exemptions under supervision, the problems remained.....
- However, they must be supervised by someone who is appropriately qualified.
- However, we consider that this remains open to challenge.
- However, the percentage of plumbers who succeed at certifying

fairness and equality in plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying regulations and legislation.

The OAG Report shows the Board have now reached a minimum level they should have been at four years ago.

We find it hard to comprehend how a group seeking change for the industry, doing everything in a legal manner, can be permitted to be dismissed by the Government. A group that has bigger numbers than any other representative group operating in our industries – a group that represents apprentices through to certifiers, business owners to employees. A group truly representative of the vertical strands of our industry.

Perhaps those who have chosen to operate illegally are the smart ones.

Perhaps those in the Federation who are fighting for change in a legal manner but are getting ignored because we do seek change should stop wasting thousands of hours and dollars a year and let the Board go about its role unopposed and not held to account.

If the Federation steps back there is no doubt the industry will return to the point it was four years ago when the self proclaimed “Voice of the Industry” spoke for everyone – four years ago where the Board were making so many woeful decisions that it has just taken them four years to correct most of

level is lower than gasfitters and drainlayers.

- However, when the new arrangements are put in place, they should help to ensure that teaching, learning, and assessment in the polytechnics and the Board’s examinations are more aligned.
- However, we encourage the Board to systematically consider the combined effect of its fees and charges on tradespeople. Fees and charges are high compared to other boards that regulate tradespeople.

Try doing a search for “excellent” or “very good” and you will find they don’t appear.

It looks like the Board Chairman, Mr Jackson must agree with us as he stated this in the Info Brief:

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

The disturbing issue in this comment is that Mr Jackson states “the current Board”. It seems to be that everyone forgets it is a perpetual Board. That means it is continuous and uninterrupted so any new Board picks up from where the previous Board left off and also inherits any unresolved issues and problems, the same as they inherit any good done. Everyone seems to accept that new people means a new start, a zeroing of the speedo for the next trip so to speak.

The report reinforces a number of points that have been debated in the last four years, especially around the costs incurred by the industry. We remember one comment made by the Government during the Amendment Bill debate and that was along the lines of “why should the Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying Industry be any different to other industries?”

They were implying that we should pay the fees and levies because everyone else does, but here we have a report that says we are unique, we 100% fund the Board and we pay to prosecute unregistered and unlicensed people and not only that, we pay more than other industries! Are YOU happy about that? And if you aren’t – WHAT are you prepared to do about it? Are you willing to join the Federation’s executive? Are you willing to start a Chapter in your area?

It seems the government and Board accept the report as a great achievement, but we suggest you read **“The House of Horrors.”**

The House of Horrors



Here is our story of the house of horrors. For years we paid for modest accommodation and slowly built up our house as required. Our finances were good, there were no problems. Life just kept on

them.

Sometimes when we lose motivation we ask ourselves where the industry would be if the Federation hadn't been established.

Remember at one of the Master Plumbers Annual Conferences where Maurice Williamson said the industry must take responsibility for itself, well the Federation has worked tirelessly for improvement and to protect what we have all worked hard for, but have been stonewalled and excluded.

The industry needs to be realistic about what's happening. It seems that we as an industry have been tasked to do what the government wants - at our expense.

So if they won't listen to those wanting improvement then there are two options for those people:

1. Throw in the towel and do what hundreds of others have done and operate outside the regulatory environment or,

2. Put their hands in the air and say okay you've won we'll do as you say but it will come at a cost.

So what is the cost? We have already seen a decline in industry numbers and the supply and demand principle states that as supply decreases prices increase.

We have an aging "experienced" skill level, we ask - will those people even be bothered with taking on apprentices and seeking improvement from a

ticking over.

But in 2004 our horror story stated. The Government decided it would change the rules and as such our house was no longer compliant. So called qualified people were appointed to take on the task and the first thing they did was ask us for money so they could complete their tasks.

As time went on we had concerns they were not listening to our wishes. We noted that work was slow and we seemed to be continually giving them money but not much was being achieved.

About that time because of the leaking building saga, the Government got a bee in its bonnet and decided to scrutinise tradesmen more closely, so they started with the Gasfitters as this seemed the most dangerous work.

The work of the gasfitters was deemed not to be up to speed and they had to undergo extra training. Unfortunately for us we started to incur more costs which we didn't think was fair. In the meantime the plumbers and drainlayers went about their work.

Around 2006 the law changed and the so called qualified people came back to us and demanded more money to implement the changes required by law. We objected, but due to the terms and conditions of our contract we had to pay. The changes in the law changed nearly everything in the house that we had paid for before.

In 2008, four years after the project started, a check of the so called qualified people showed their work was substandard. They were replaced immediately and the project was back to square one with the illegal and unlawful work having to be replaced at our expense yet again.

Over a two year period we complained about the state of the house and the ballooning of the costs. Our complaints were ignored. No government department seemed to take responsibility or wanted to get involved.

In 2010 an independent review into the work on the house was conducted and a scathing report on the state of the house was issued. It was effectively a stop work order until corrections were made. The plumbers and drainlayers work was to be scrutinised as well. We were again forced to come up with additional funds to pay for alterations.

Over the next four years the so called qualified people worked to correct the issues of the past. During that time we endured further cost overruns and had to repeatedly pay out for the work to be done again.

We proved on a number of occasions that work had been done unlawfully and took the qualified people to task but tactics were used to cover their incompetence and slight alterations were conducted to make their work legally compliant.

It became so costly and highly stress related that some of our group walked away from the project in disgust, cutting their losses. This added additional cost to those of us that remained.

system that ignores them?

Will people in the industry report those working illegally knowing that it will only increase the cost to them by way of levies and fees?

Has the time come for the Federation to say to the Government "you do what you want as we are no longer going to be the standards police for you?"

Charge us what you want as we will just hand on the costs and when we can't get work because we are too expensive we will join the hundreds of others and operate illegally.

Do we tell the Government it's their responsibility to ensure there are enough tradespeople in the industry to service the public and let them figure out what skills need to be taught?

They seem to support starting again all the time, so in the future try starting an industry with no experience or skills but in saying that a Master Plumbers representative was heard to say at a recent meeting that he didn't care if people left the industry as it just left more work for him.

Industry Survey

Very soon the Federation will be sending out a survey asking the real questions about the industry. Take the chance to have your say or nothing will change.

In 2014, ten years after the start of the rebuild a further independent report was commissioned, but this time it reported there had been some improvement to some of the tasks and that many of the tasks were mostly or partly completed.

So now after 10 years we have a house that has cost us \$35 million and in practical terms nothing has changed except for the increase in maintenance costs.

We have no right or redress and no legal avenues to take. The so called qualified people have over capitalised our house and are now expecting us to pay to continually maintain and improve the house for no return.

Would the government expect a consumer to pay for all the remedial work, for all the mistakes and manipulation?

Do you think they would turn a blind eye and do you think the public of New Zealand would be accepting of the behaviour of the government and the qualified people and the increase in the prices associated in the building of the house?

You would like to say this scenario would never happen but it has to our industry.

Who do we believe?

Pay

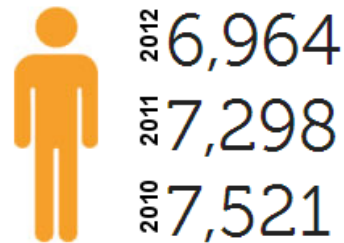
Plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers usually start out on about

\$35K-\$45K
PER YEAR

With three or more years experience, usually earn

\$50K-\$60K
PER YEAR

How many people are doing this job?



Source: Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, '2003-2012 Occupation Data' (prepared for Careers New Zealand), 2012.

There have been all types of claims over numbers in the industry. We, the Federation, claim they are decreasing and the Board are claiming they are increasing, so here is a bit of independent data from MBIE who advise the Minister on all things plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying.

There has been a 557 person decrease in the industry from 2010 until 2012. Remember these numbers include new people qualifying so it shows the industry isn't keeping up with demand. The next question is this – is the next annual report going to claim improvements made by "this Board" or is it going to be like the **"The partly complete, concerns, however report"** where they are simply getting to where they should have been in 2010?