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IN OTHER NEWS

Waiver or Refund of a Fee or Disciplinary Levy Policy

We note the Board has reviewed and altered its Waiver or Refund of a Fee or Disciplinary Levy Policy.

The old one page policy that was used to refuse a large number of people last licensing period has gone and has been replaced with a new policy but has the Board done it again and extended its powers beyond what the Act allows?

Time will tell.

From the Media

Helicopter Monitoring

Did you notice one of the local councils was using helicopters to monitor waste discharge from dairy sheds but farmers asked for the flights to be canned because it was proving stressful

Do they need a set of these?

Ears of Experience



Four years of arguing, four years of proving the Board wrong, four years of taking the blame, four years of funding the arguments for both sides and the list goes on. Last week we asked the question: *“if the Federation*

numbers were around 5,000 members would the industry get treated in the way that it does by the Government and the Board?” Would they impose “on” us or work “with” us?

Here are a few of the responses we received.

- *There’s no way those w@!*kers would treat us the way they do. They know they can get away with it so they do whatever they want to support their own agendas.*
- *Bullies operate in numbers i.e. the Government and the Board. Get numbers and go against them and they will back off. We are only a small industry in numbers but those numbers can cause a lot of problems in New Zealand.*
- *The Government doesn’t give a shit because they don’t fund the regulation of the industry. It is just numbers and votes to them so we need to change and get enough numbers to oppose what we don’t agree with.*
- *Those fools and I am referring to the Board and the Government here are simply trying to reach government targets at our expense. I say tell them to buggor off. If they want to implement stupid regulations then let them pay for it. Why should we pay over and over for their incompetence and inability to listen?*

So there are some thoughts from readers of the Fellow Practitioner and “numbers” seem to be the order of the day. One frustrating issue is that due to other people’s incompetence or inability to listen, work is created for us as an industry to correct the situation, or to fight for a fair deal.

It is certainly been a time of turmoil in the industry and it is gradually getting worse, not better. It seems that some of the organisations have forgotten that they were created out of similar turmoil years ago, and yet now they are creating the same problems where practitioners aren’t happy with what’s getting dished out to them. Perhaps there is truth in the saying “History Repeats”.

It seems to us that in our industry it is the survival of the fittest and strongest and bully tactics are a way of life. No one seems to want to take on the role of the Federation and fight for “Fairness and Equality” for everyone in the industry, so in appears “numbers” do matter although

for them.

Rural suicide statistics and "fear" of the flights were raised in argument against them.

We feel for them living in constant fear of the regulators because we do every day of the year.

Every day we are under constant threat of the Board taking away our right to work by deeming us to be incompetent.

Perhaps the Russians have it right ...

A legislator from the ruling United Russia party, Elena Mizulina, has put forward so many controversial ideas that Russians have launched an online petition calling for her sanity to be checked.

"It is no secret that Elena Mizulina, chairperson of the State Duma's family issues committee is coming forward with increasingly absurd bills," said the petition signed by more than 100,000 people.

"We request that the health ministry allocate its best experts to have Elena Mizulina's mental health examined," it said.

"Mentally ill people have no place in the State Duma."

We're sure it would be able to come up with

they shouldn't. We believe the industry would be treated differently if it was united in large numbers.

It brings to mind that a lot of times people only sit up and listen when it is too late, so now is the time we need to unite as an industry before it is indeed too late.

Meeting with the Minister



The Hon Dr Nick Smith is the new Minister of Building and Construction and this week two members of the Federation Executive met with him and a delegation of his advisors at the Beehive. This was very much a meet and greet meeting with the opportunity being given to the Federation to express its views and to listen to the Minister's initial views.

This wasn't an easy meeting for the Minister to accept as he was meeting with people who had endured poor regulation for 14 years, and who had been actively campaigning against that poor regulation for the last four years.

We were impressed with the Minister's enthusiasm and willingness to move forward and it was refreshing to see his advisors showing their knowledge of the regulation of the construction industry including plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying.

The only disappointing aspect of the meeting was the standard comment of the Minister not meeting with negative people who do nothing but moan. (This must be in the "Ministers' Manual for meeting with advocacy groups"), and the questioning, yet again, about the Federation's numbers and manner in which it operates. The Minister did make a few suggestions in this area which were taken on board.

He gave feedback that the Federation was "negative" – and have caused a cost to industry – we refuted this – as those administering the law need to abide by it. If they were abiding by it then the Federation would have no challenge to make.

Once over the initial shock and horror tactics, the meeting moved on to a more productive hearts and minds campaign with the Minister asking for our main issues of concern.

The Minister explained his view of the conflict and suggested a truce where the Federation would consider stopping complaining to the Regulations Review Committee, the Ombudsman and others. When asked "if the Board won't listen then who do we as a Federation go to" he said go to him. Given the past history of the Board this is a very brave commitment.

The Minister showed his eagerness to forget the past and move into the future and that past includes the last four years. He asked the Federation delegation to have a think about a truce so that issues can get dealt with.

The Minister recorded some main issues to review and we look forward to action in the areas of fee and levy reduction, meaningful continued

an equal amount of signatures to get a few of our politicians checked out.



Hi Editor.

Can you give us an update on the licensing figures so far this year as we see the Board making claims about the numbers increasing?

Ed:

The claims made by the Board are just a manipulation of the figures and dates. The figures we use are the number of licensed people at the end of last licensing period compared with the number that have licensed in the year to date.

- Certifying Plumber 210 less
- Licensed Plumber 207 less
- Certifying Gasfitter 75 less
- Licensed Gasfitter 61 Less
- Certifying Drainlayer 315 Less
- Licensed Drainlayer 4 Less.

With regard to new registrations the figures are as follows:

- Certifying Plumber up 75
- Licensed Plumber up 125
- Certifying Gasfitter up 47
- Licensed Gasfitter up 56
- Certifying Drainlayer up 14
- Licensed Drainlayer up 48

This indicates that the number of new registrations, with the exception of the licensed drainlayers, is failing to keep up with those not licensing.

Dear Editor

I was speaking with a local Master Plumber the other day and he was having a go at me about the Federation defending non practitioners and practitioners who do wrong.

Can you clarify what the Federations stance on offending

professional development (CPD), lost productivity in the industry due to CPD and commonality amongst regulated trades – licensing etc.

Did the Federation delegation walk away seeing a light at the end of the tunnel, that wasn't a train hurtling towards it – well no it was more of a flickering candle but that is better than we had before with the previous Minister.

Yet again the industry is being asked for the opportunity for a “fresh start” so your views on a truce are welcomed.

If the Federation does compromise and go into a “truce mode with the Minister ” it will use the time to consolidate the information and legal battles already under way and to recruit, to give everyone in the industry the opportunity to be heard.

Our initial views are that if a fresh start is granted then we need assurances they will be accountability. Fresh starts are all very well but as an industry we have had more than our fair share. There needs to be consequences for not getting it right. Our work is expected to be right first time - every time so that's what we expect of those regulating us.

We will be sending a letter to the Minister thanking him for the meeting and inviting him to write to the “Fellow Practitioner” so you have his views first hand. We believe there is a general will to make things better but on one thing we have absolute agreement with the Minister, and that is that that things HAVE to change.

In the meantime we want your feedback on a truce and also about the Federation undergoing change to meet the needs of the industry. Do we need to formalise our membership etc and change our set up?

Do you want to see the Federation morph into something different remembering the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Federation was established to ensure our industry gets treated in a fair and equitable manner by:

- Making the Board and Government Accountable
- Increasing Industry Participation
- Tackling Excessive Expenditure
- Ensuring Better Decisions
- Ensuring Past Issues Are Addressed
- Strengthening the Industry
- Ensuring Relevance in Training
- Making Your Opinion Count

Remember at the moment you have a Regulatory Board backing the consumer, Master Plumbers who are an employer organisation and the Federation.

Let us know your views.

Recruiting

The Federation has put a lot of time and effort into advocating for fairness and equality for our membership and the wider industry. We have been tackling issues on an individual basis with great success but there is no sooner success in one area and the Board make another stupid decision or

is?

Ed:

Our stance is simple and that is if you do the crime you do the time and to add to that we also say get legal or get out.

But what we will emphasise is that we will help anyone guilty or not to ensure they get treated in a fair and legal manner as everyone is entitled to that.

As far as defending non practitioners goes that is simply laughable. Some people like to spread rumours to make themselves look better.

With the registered practitioners, we are not the standards police as that is the practitioner's responsibility hence the reason we push for everyone to be qualified and responsible for their own work.

Positive Action

The Minister has accused the Federation of being negative. Obviously we don't agree with that opinion – we see ourselves as being the “plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers watchdog”.

Next week watch for an exciting announcement regarding an initiative to assist in the protection of the health and safety of the consumer, whilst also helping practitioners.

try to push another stupid idea.

Sure those individual issues will continue to be addressed but we need to step to the next level. Throughout the last four years the Federation had the belief that common sense would prevail and the Board and industry groups would get around a table and negotiate its way through the industry issues but industry exclusion has been applied and the Federation is seen as the “malcontents, or a couple of disgruntled plumbers”.

At the moment you have two industry bodies – one that represents employers i.e. Master Plumbers and one that represents all practitioners whether they are employers or employees, certifiers, licensed, apprentices or others who work within the industry – all have a voice through the Federation.

We don't put up barriers to entry – if you have an interest in the industry and are concerned about the direction of it – we invite you to belong to the Federation. We aren't funded by anyone but our members and so there are no hidden agendas. We don't have funding from anyone who can pull our strings or who may have hidden agendas of their own. What you see is what you get.

To be able to affect change we need the industry to show a united front or have at least an industry organisation that has sufficient numbers to force change. If the change isn't forthcoming we need to have sufficient numbers because being strong doesn't always mean you have to fight the battle. True strength is being able to walk away from the nonsense with your head held high.

Recruitment forms can be found at

www.pgdf.co.nz/joining-the-federation/application-form

or you can join on line at www.pgdf.co.nz/sign-up

Remember the Federation isn't negative as it doesn't make the news it only reports it.

Board Minutes

In an unannounced event the Board have finally placed an edited copy of the minutes pertaining to the Board Meeting held on 6 May 2014 on their website for all to read.

The Federation has been requesting the minutes of meetings to make the Boards activities more open and transparent. Now we hope the Board continues on with this practice.

www.pgdb.co.nz/publications/corporate.html

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