



Hon Dr Nick Smith

Member of Parliament for Nelson

16 April 2011

- 1 My name is Dr Nick Smith and I am the MP for Nelson, Minister of ACC, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Climate Change Issues. My home address is 544 Waimea Road, Annesbrook, Nelson.
- 2 I have come to know Mr Paul Gee through my work as a constituency MP and have found him to be an honest, hard-working and responsible man who has become increasingly aggrieved at the actions of the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board.
- 3 In mid – 2006, Mr Gee met with me to discuss problems with the PG and D Board. He is one of a number of constituents who has raised with me serious concerns about its performance. Mr Gee's concern at that time was the failure to respond to emails, the falsification of gasfitting certificates and that numerous installations did not meet the required standards.
- 4 I wrote to the Board on 6 June 2006 raising these concerns and a received a response on 15 June 2006. The Chair apologised for the failure to respond to emails but dismissed concerns about the safety and gas certification issues raised, saying these had been adequately addressed. The investigation I sought was ignored.
- 5 In 2009 Nelson suffered a serious gas explosion at the Milton Street Takeaway. The proprietor was seriously injured and it was only by good fortune that many people were not killed or hurt, given the number of people who were often outside and around this business. The incident was consistent with what Mr Gee has warned me of earlier with the certificate being false and the gas work being very unsatisfactory.
- 6 I wrote again on 18 June 2009, but this time to the Minister, seeking a formal investigation, and for there to be checks in Nelson of other gas installations done by the firm. I also discussed with the Minister personally, the matters about the Board's performance that had been raised with me. I believe the accident at the Milton Street Takeaway could have been averted if Mr Gee's and my concerns in 2006 had been heeded.
- 7 I was shocked and surprised to find out soon after that Mr Gee was being investigated and later prosecuted. It appeared as though he was being pursued because he had raised issues with me and the Minister and because serious issues were being raised about the Board's competency. I wrote to the Associated Minister of Energy, Pansy Wong, on 7 September 2009 expressing concerns.

- 8 I have little to no confidence in the PG and D Board. The Auditor-General's report is damning. The change in Chief Executive which led to court action, changes in the Board and repeated attempts to try and address its dysfunctionality have yet to deliver an effective organisation. I continue to receive representations from constituents who are unhappy with the Board's performance, the most recent being 7 April 2011.
- 9 I remain concerned that the Board's prosecution of Mr Gee has been ill-motivated and targeted towards a member who was properly raising concerns about the Board's own performance that have subsequently been proved to be correct.



Nick Smith
MP NELSON