



Fellow Practitioner Issue 214 Dated 11 July 2014

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IN OTHER NEWS

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

I read this on the Plumbers Forum

“As I'm aware you do not have to have a licence/qualification to work on / install water mains even though it is a potable water supply, if designed by an engineer.

I was to get involved with a department of health funded town water supply upgrade, 150mm PVC pumped from a well in the river bed to supply tanks that then gravity fed to the town with a ring main for fire hydrants.

I arrived on site to find the project manager had laid 500 meters of pipe and covered it.

No testing, no compaction, poor bedding material and of insufficient amount, had not torqued the gibault fittings and no knowledge of this even though the fittings come with a tag attached with instructions, little attempt at thrust blocks,

The damage has been done and it will be hard to fix.

As we have seen over the last 14 years a lot of damage has been done to the industry by the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board and the Industry Training Organisations.

The big question now is how do we correct the damage?

We went from having a helpful, transparent Board with a holistic industry focus to what we have now - a regulatory Board hell-bent on smacking heads with industry.

There may have been a lot of contributing factors like personal agendas, organisational agendas and a change in focus of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act, but the practitioners are the ones who have suffered and continue to suffer.

The benefits of the changes are very hard to find and we would say the protection afforded to the public is no different, and certainly no better. We know certain aspects of the industry are worse - such as training.

One thing is certain and that is the Board are sticking to their guns and ignoring the needs of the industry. They have their sole focus on regulation. The Federation has been asked to calm down and back off but that's like shooting someone and then telling them not to bleed.

So let's imagine we forget about the Board and say they don't exist and their function is taken over by a licensing authority or such like. What difference will it make to us as an industry?

We say it won't make much difference at all; in fact it will probably benefit us with regard to registration and licensing. The fees and levies should drop because of economies of scale and there should be equity with other trades.

We remember a few years ago when the need for a Board was discussed, and a Master Plumbers representative at the time said “if there was no Board Master Plumbers would lose its influence” or words to that affect.

No matter what happens there is going to be no silver bullet to save us – it is going to be left to the industry to come up with the solutions to problems created by others and at the same time we need to be vigilant that more problems are not created.

So much time has been wasted with this Board and the Bureaucracy. When the Federation submitted its petition to the Social Services

poor traffic management, the list goes on.

I left when there was almost an argument with the engineer about fitting the pumps with a mac union or some means of decoupling for future maintenance and wrapping the galvanised pipe that was to be buried with Denso tape or some protection. I was quite shocked that even assets and management had no worries about it at all.

I was quite angry given the crap we have to put up with just to ply our trade and here is a monkey doing a 750k job with no ticket, licence or experience.

I doubt he will have any liability either; my parting comment was I thought he had big balls and no brain.

To be honest it made me think about other avenues of work. Unfortunately for me plumbing is a disease not a career.

What are your thoughts on this issue?

Ed.

Yes it does make you wonder if the left hand knows what the right hand is doing.

There could be a touch of qualification snobbery that goes on. For example the type of work you are describing comes under the supervision of the engineer not a mere plumber as some have referred to us.

This is another one of those situations where you would have to ask

Committee it specified that the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Federation was born out of discontent amongst tradespeople who were suffering because the Board's actions had lost credibility, created stress, and cost some their jobs and livelihoods. The Petition called for an inquiry "to set the path for a better and productive future for the industry."

It's quite ironic that we now get labelled as negative because we have been calling for accountability. It is quite obvious the Government want us as an industry to go it alone, meanwhile still registering and licensing. We can't afford to fund both functions 100% so some concessions need to be made and we understand the new Minister has this in hand.

Your thoughts and suggestions on what needs to be done are welcomed, but in the mean time we are starting with positive action to mitigate our risk and costs. Read an *Initiative for the Safety of All* below.

An Initiative for the Safety of All



Have you tried buying anaesthetic and medical supplies to perform an operation on yourself lately?

Have you tried buying weapons or ammunition without a firearms licence?

What about a few explosives to make your own fireworks?

We know very few of you have done those things and we bet nearly all of you have wondered why consumers can walk in off the street and buy plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying fittings that can cause explosions, that can cause floods and landslips and that can cause cross connections and the outbreak of disease.

The Federation wondered the same and started searching for answers but couldn't find any reasons why it was so. Why were retailers selling products for doing sanitary plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying to non registered people, in particular the public? Why were tools generally required by registered practitioners being loaned to consumers? Why did a lot of builders have their own plumbing tools?

The biggest question of all was - Who would have to pay if something went wrong? The answer was US, the industry - we are the ones who would have to pay to prosecute non registered

what is supervision and who is responsible.

Is the council, the engineer or the workers on the ground responsible for the safety of the public?

Social Services Committee

Back in late 2011 the Federation collected 1227 signatures on a petition calling for the Government to establish a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the regulation and governance of the Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying industry.

In 2012 the Social Services Committee reported the petition to the House, noting that the petition raised matters also addressed by the Report from the Controller and Auditor-General Inquiry into the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Board.

The Committee declared their intention to "monitor the outcome of the review" so since then we have been waiting and at last the "Follow Up" report from the Auditor General has been discussed by the committee.

The Social Services Committee conclusion was:

The Board has taken the Auditor-General's inquiry seriously and has made significant progress on implementing the recommendations for improvement. We are satisfied with the finding of the review, particularly that the Board now appears to be on a more stable administrative and

persons when the government and PGD Board sit back and takes NO action to protect the non registered from themselves. But not only that, the public are putting themselves at risk along with others, and how long would it be before a retailer was held responsible for selling items to a non registered person where something has gone wrong?

Think of a firearms dealer who sells weapons and ammunition to a non-licensed person and gets caught – there certainly would be action against them.

A series of events and questions have now started a POSITIVE proactive initiative in conjunction with Mitre 10 MEGA Upper Hutt, where they are going to restrict the sale of sanitary plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying items. ONLY registered tradespeople will be able to purchase these items on production of proof of qualification.

The area holding these fittings will be restricted and the sale of items to non registered people will only be permitted by the store manager if there is proof the items are not being used for sanitary plumbing gasfitting or drainlaying as defined in the Act.

This is a HUGE proactive commitment by Mitre 10 MEGA Upper Hutt and they are expanding their service and stock to meet the needs of trade plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers.

Wal Gordon the Chairman of the Federation and the owner of a plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying business in Upper Hutt committed his business to the project and had this to say:

"The decision to change suppliers was based on two main factors being what was best for my business and what could I do to assist the industry.

Firstly from a business perspective we have access for longer hours, seven days a week to the specialist fittings we need, pricing is competitive, invoicing is immediate and statements are out in the first couple of days of the month allowing for cash flow planning.

Secondly the industry is being held responsible by the Government and Board for the prosecution of non registered people so what better way to lessen our risk and costs than to take away temptation from non registered people and at the same time generate more work for the practitioners operating legally in the industry.

It seems to me that all the responsibility is placed on the industry to police and maintain the standards so we need to do whatever we can as prevention is better than cure. Mitre 10 Mega Upper Hutt has thrown their efforts behind the project because, like us, they can see the dangers to everyone by non registered people doing their own restricted work.

We know there will be suppliers jumping up and down but in reality they could have taken the same action to support the practitioners but didn't.

The Government through its regulatory boards and government

legal footing. We support the call for the Board to continue to make improvements, focus on legality, and to work constructively with the Federation.

Given the report's findings we did not feel it was necessary to ask the Board to come before us. We have no further matters to bring to the attention of the house.

What amazes us with all this reporting is that not one of the organisations has stated that the Board have only just reached where they should have been over four years ago.

Twelve million dollars of industry funding to still be behind the 8 ball.

It is very difficult to see the industry becoming prosperous when we continually pay for other incompetence.

It will be very interesting to see how the government measures any increase in productivity for the industry when numbers of experienced people are dropping and the industry isn't satisfied with the Board imposed regulation.

departments force industries to comply with regulations and legislation to protect the consumer but have never taken any action to protect the consumer from themselves with regard to plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying.

Get behind this initiative as it is a win, win situation for practitioners because no one else has stepped up to take this action. As an industry we keep our costs down, we help the public protect themselves, we help the retailer protect themselves and we protect the reputation of our industry whilst ensuring work is performed by qualified practitioners.

The more we support the regulation of sales to the public the greater effect we can have throughout the country."

We have sat back and watched the "Ask for the Card" campaign flounder and target us the practitioners. This initiative is a huge boost for the Boards "Ask for the Card" campaign and will raise public awareness exponentially. It will be great exposure for targeting the right people, the consumers.

Mitre 10 MEGA Upper Hutt as a responsible retailer has recognised the dangers involved in plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying and the risk the public face if it is done wrong. They believe it is their corporate duty to aid the industry in protecting the public by restricting the sale of certain items.

The Upper Hutt store has increased its volume and range of plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying items to meet the demand of authorisation card holders. They believe they are now performing a function that no other retailer in this market doing.

If this initiative is successful and gets the support from the industry it has the potential to be run out to other branches of Mitre 10 throughout the country. We will be keeping you informed of a start date and progress but in the mean time if you believe it is something you are interested in then touch base with your local branch of Mitre 10 and discuss the options for you. Showing interest in your area may make a huge difference to the industry.

This is positive action from the industry for the industry!! Well done to all those involved in bringing it to fruition.

Follow this link for a reminder of why we need to take action

www.maoritelevision.com/news/national/native-affairs-lesleys-legacy

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