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IN OTHER NEWS

Letter to the Editor

“As a Plumbing merchant. We thought we would have got better support from you, than just getting Mitre 10 on board with you, as this is Plumbers Gas fitters and Drainlayers Federation.

Mitre 10 support the builders, why are we getting involved with the builders they have their own Federation.”

ED:

Hi Plumbers Merchant. Thanks for taking the time to write to us.

We find your comment about us supporting you intriguing and reminds us why the Federation has kept its distance from corporate sponsorship - where organisations can become behold to merchants and suppliers.

I think it would be fair to say practitioners spend their money with the merchants and the merchants make money off them.

The merchants entice loyalty from the practitioners by way of giveaways and customer

Productivity



When the Federation met with Hon Nick Smith, Minister of Building and Construction part of the discussion was about the industry and productivity.

The Federation has always believed practitioners have the right to operate in a fair, efficient, economical manner, with no undue costs to the consumer, or barriers to employing staff. We believe the current regulations impose excessive undue costs on

practitioners, restrict the innovation in businesses and INCREASES costs to the consumer.

This is what the Federation told the Government in 2010 during the Regulations Review Committee hearing:

- **Fact: Average cost to a business per tradesman for Licensing and CPD is \$5,035.87**
- **Fact: The cost to Business is \$119.00 per week for each licensed worker for licensing and CPD** A worker is generally productive for 42 weeks a year, taking into account training, leave, statutory holidays etc, which results in it costing \$119.90 per productive week for a dual licence holder to licence.
- **Fact: The Industry will pay \$1,370,000.00 for licences** Across the industry licensing payments to the Board will be will \$1,370,000.00
- **Fact: The Industry will pay \$1,966,006.00 for discipline levies.** Across the industry discipline payments will be \$1,966,006.00
- **Fact: 227,273.25 hours will be spent on CDP training.** Based on 7391 tradespeople 227,273.25 hours will be spent of CPD training. 30.75 Per person on average.
- **Fact CPD will cost \$37,219,449.98 across the industry annually** Across the industry if all training is conducted in working hours based on 7391 trades people and an average of \$5,035.78 the industry will incur a cost of \$37,219,449.98 on licensing related

service, all of which are designed to keep the practitioners spending with the merchant.

This week we have had a merchant say to us “we provide CPD courses for the industry isn’t that enough?”

We note the attempt to help the practitioners get points - but is it helping the industry supporting a Board initiated activity which most practitioners despise?

We would also say that it is often the SUPPLIERS providing the upskilling and the merchants organising the venue. We would further note that this sort of CPD involves an element of marketing or selling a product – which benefits the merchant as much as it benefits the practitioner getting the “points”.

Mitre 10 MEGA, Upper Hutt have decided to lift the game and do something which will have a POSITIVE affect by protecting consumers from themselves and at the same time are helping the industry mitigate its liability to prosecute non registered people.

From the Media

Customer Service

There are signs businesses are struggling to cope, when customers go on Facebook to name, shame and blame about bad experiences. (we do it in the Fellow Practitioner).

A survey by Impact PR has found one in three of us are unhappy with the way they're dealing with

costs.

• **Fact: Individual cost if all CPD is after hours \$1,349.91** If an individual was to pay for licensing and course costs the average per person would be \$1,349.91 annually and 30.75 hours away from family. \$25.95 per week out of their pay. This does not take into account the incidentals such a travel etc. Where is the work lifestyle balance?

These figures have altered since 2010, but what hasn’t altered is the productivity, which is theoretically what the Government wants to see an increase in from the Construction industry.

The regulation by way of Gazette Notices, and the terms and conditions, have a direct correlation to the activities which the Board performs and as such affect the Registration and Licensing fees imposed by the Board. For example when these figures were calculated - 2.5 full time people were employed to administer 500 registrations and 1066 exams annually. That’s 525 productive work days, just fewer than three activities per day.

The Federation believes the entire fees schedule is riddled with excessive charges.

We are led to believe there will be a fees review conducted at the end of this year which is normal timing for the Board, as it leaves insufficient time for meaningful consultation or objection prior to the licensing period. It catches the industry at a time when traditionally they are all on holiday and trying hard to leave work behind. A very old and very tired political ploy.

Unwarranted expenditure imposes barriers to entry or retention in the industry as practitioners and employers are paying excessive costs to enable them to work. They will be very cautious about employing apprentices and tradesmen due to the ongoing costs.

How can productivity increase when the government pays to train apprentices but gets provided with assessments?

So is the manner in which regulation is imposed on the industry stifling productivity, creativity and innovation? We believe it is. The industry is busy fighting for equality and fairness in the regulation and paying for enforcement which does not leave time or resources for increasing productivity or for innovation.

We are busy proving competence to qualify, proving competence to licence, and proving competence if someone lays a complaint no matter how frivolous.

We operate in a forced compliance environment that provides little, if any benefit to the industry. We have a \$4 Million Dollar Board and \$30 Million CPD costs annually which is money that could be better directed towards innovation and productivity, and we would actually have something new to teach the industry.

Let’s go back to when things made sense.

customer complaints.

Managing director Fleur Revell says brands could be damaged, when staff allow a complaint to escalate.

"What was really loud and clear for us was that it was a real wake-up call for New Zealand businesses - and their owners and staff.

The survey shows men, Cantabrians, and people from big cities have the most gripes about bad service from local firms.

But Ms Revell says the complaints are coming from across the board, with about one third of us unhappy with how we're being treated.

She says many New Zealanders feel like they're not being listened to, and they're not receiving the level of customer service they expect.

How familiar does that scenario sound? We are not alone.

Loopy rules

Local Government Minister Paula Bennett today announced the establishment of a new Taskforce to rid New Zealand of loopy rules and regulations.

"The Rules Reduction Taskforce in partnership with local government will work closely with the public to weed out pedantic and unnecessary rules that frustrate property owners and councils alike.

"We've seen rules and regulations brought in

Its secret squirrel stuff



Last week we told you about the breach of Privacy by the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board. There have been a number of letters sent out to the affected people but there is nothing about WHO is being held accountable. The perception is that this is another "whoops got it wrong" issue by the Board where NO ONE gets held accountable.

We asked the Board for information and got very little back.

The Privacy Officer takes their job so seriously the Board won't release their name to the Federation. This is the "open and transparent" organisation we expected to respect and listen to. After a request for the name of the privacy officer we were told "The Privacy Officer is a senior solicitor and an experienced privacy officer and I am confident that a proper and appropriate investigation has been carried out"

A "summary of investigation into privacy breach" was sent out - but more secrecy. For example it is not dated, it is not signed, it doesn't name WHO was at fault and it places into question the sequence of events.

The Investigation was concluded on 14 July 2014 and recommended the Privacy Commission be informed. Funny that as on the 10th July we were informed the Privacy Commission had **BEEN** informed.

We attempted to get information from the Privacy Commissioner's Office regarding when they were informed by the Board and in what way they were informed and were told:

Thank you for your request. However, we are not able to provide you with this information.

Any privacy breach notification system is entirely voluntary in New Zealand at the moment. The Board had no legal obligation to notify us of the breach. We strongly encourage agencies to let us know when there is a problem (and we can confirm that the Board wrote to us letting us know about the breach), but there is no law forcing them to do so.

We need to be careful to make sure that agencies feel free to notify us freely and frankly. If we were to release information that agencies provide (or give details about times and dates etc that could be used in disputes between individuals and the agency) they would be deterred from talking to us, and we would then not be in a position to give advice that could make people safer. As a result, there is a strong public interest in maintaining confidentiality.

over decades that were well intentioned but end up being confusing, onerous and costly while failing to deliver any real benefit for the property owner or the wider public," says Mrs Bennett.

The Taskforce will be up and running in October. As well as central and local government experts, it will include specialists from the building and trades sector.

"Anyone doing building work knows just how frustrating and costly the bureaucracy can get. We want to hear from property owners, builders, tradespeople and businesses on rules and regulations that are crying out for sensible change.

"While there's always a degree of rationale behind these rules, the Taskforce will be charged with identifying what should stay and what should go so people can get on with the job of building, renovating or event planning without have to wade through a morass of unnecessary rules," says Mrs Bennett.

About time we say.

We therefore decline your request under section 18(c) (i) of the Official Information Act. Section 116 of the Privacy Act requires us to maintain secrecy of communications unless the Privacy Commissioner decides that the public interest requires release of the information.

However, if you are unable to resolve matters with the Board and you wish to make a complaint, we would deal with that in the normal way.

If you disagree with this response and you would like to make a complaint to the Ombudsman, please feel free to contact them.

Not much help there apart from generating more work for the Ombudsman's office.

Where is the accountability? This entire affair reeks of "There was a possible breach of the Privacy but we are not going to tell you who it was, no action will be taken against them because they are senior staff, we are not going to tell you who the privacy officer is and there is nothing you can do about it."

Can we put in a general complaint - well no because the Board's general complaints policy doesn't accept general complaints.

Complaints can be made to the Privacy Commissioners office but at best the Board would get a slap with a wet bus ticket.

We can't seek compensation unless we take the Board to court and prove it was an act of bad faith or they didn't take reasonable care.

So it looks like the best we can hope for is that next time a person is charged by the Board for making a mistake that the Board will find them not guilty because no one was affected by the incident and action has been taken so the incident can't happen again. Well done the Board **"Lead by example"**.

One reader who was affected by the breach wrote to us saying – "The Board's processes have proven to be incompetent. They have shown little regard for my rights and do not even seem sorry that they have acted in such a cavalier way. Bottom line for me is the responsibility for this sits squarely with the CEO and the Board. Duck and dive all you like – the CEO is responsible for what happens in their organisation, and if they haven't got the checks and balances in place then they should be censured or disciplined for their lack of management. 60 people's privacy was breached – not a small incident. Someone needs to be held responsible."

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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