



Fellow Practitioner Issue 221 Dated 29 August 2014

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Dear Editor

Can you please inform us about what's going on with PGD Board appointments?

It has been six months since Bickers has gone with no replacement so isn't this a bit of a slap in the face to the old Chairman as it shows that his position wasn't really necessary?

Are there going to be new appointments made or do we have to suffer the same retreads?

Ed:

Late last week the Minister Hon Dr Nick Smith announced there

Continued Professional Development (CPD)

Last week we identified issues with the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board (the Board) Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme. This week we want to explain additional issues and briefly outline what our solution to the issue is.

The existing scheme is nothing more than a “purchase point’s scenario”, allowing the Board to tick a box saying they are ensuring practitioners are competent. All practitioners have to do is prove they have the points and they are deemed competent according to the Board. Are they really competent? Does “purchasing points” simply mean they “attended” something, rather than actually learned something? In our view it does.

We all know that the quality of “testing” at the end of each course varies, but by far the majority are tick and flick – and often done as a group – no one fails – and it makes a mockery of the entire thing.

Competence Based Licensing

The purposes of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 (the Act) are—

(a) to protect the health and safety of members of the public by **ensuring the competency** of persons engaged in the provision of sanitary plumbing, gasfitting, and drainlaying services; and

(b) to **regulate** persons who carry out sanitary plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying.

When looking at competence in the Act it is about reviewing and monitoring competence. Practitioners have already proven their competence to become licensed, and the Act puts in place legislation for the removal of the right to practice in the industry by the Board proving incompetence.

Continuing Professional Development does not appear in the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006, but the Board have chosen to link the purchasing of points, which is the current measure of competence, to Licensing. There does not appear to be any review or measuring of competence, only a review and measurement of points obtained.

If for example there were no changes to legislation and no new technology, practitioners are still required to purchase points to enable them to relicense - (one day you don't have points and are

were two new appointments and five reappointments to the Board.

It would seem the Minister has opted for more of the same until March next year when we are pleased to announce the appointment of Colleen Upton to the Board.

Colleen has worked tirelessly on the Federation Executive Committee for four years and is a valued member who is not afraid of speaking her mind.

She is risking her reputation by joining a Board that is lacking in credibility and honesty. We only hope those existing members of the Board finally speak up and support Colleen instead of following blindly behind a few outspoken individuals.

The Federation will be giving her whatever support she needs to help change the current environment in, and reputation of, the Board.

The second new member of the Board is Richard Merrifield who operates his own building business and has over 40 years' experience in the building and construction sector.

He has also been involved with a number of industry related board and working group appointments and has been a member of the Building Practitioners Board since 2012.

All other positions are filled by current Board members so no

deemed incompetent and the next day you purchase points and are deemed to be competent). This is not competence based licensing – it is nothing but a waste of both money and resources.

We reiterate the Federation is NOT against skills maintenance or upskilling. The following is our solution to the issue in brief.

Our proposed competence program is split into three key areas of importance:

- Mandatory Competence Programmes
- Disciplinary Competence Programmes
- General Skills Maintenance Programmes

Mandatory Competence Programmes

The Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 allows for the implementation of a competence programme subject to sections within that Act. This system allows the Board to introduce a compulsory competence programme where there is a demonstrated need i.e. something is vital to know or is by definition “necessary”.

An example would be the recent changes to the Gas Certification process and changes to the regulations. This was an issue that every gasfitter needed to know about and should have been mandatory. We even suggested at a meeting we had with the PGDB that they should be insisting every gasfitting attended an in person, or on line course on the new regulations before renewing their licence. We felt it was important that the public had confidence in their gasfitters knowing the new requirements and new certifying regime.

Likewise, the Board or the industry might discover a potentially major problem. An urgent warning would be sent to all affected persons involved within the industry and a consultation of a competence and up skilling program would be implemented to ensure no one falls between the cracks and misses out on the information being distributed by the Board.

A compulsory competence programme not arising out of a disciplinary matter would be accepted by the industry as it is lawful and shows a clear and demonstrated need.

Any compulsory competence programme must then be considered by the Board and industry whether or not the program is included into the competencies and/or integration to the unit standard system that is taught to apprentices.

Disciplinary Competence Programmes

Practitioners that appear before the Board on a disciplinary related issue should be given an opportunity to correct his/her error and competence deficiency by undertaking a competence study programme or course of studies to bring that practitioner's

difference there.

The CEO and legal advisor positions remain the same at the moment.

Dear Editor

We are seeing in the news about all the dodgy dealings that have gone on in Parliament. Do you think there have been any such goings on that has affected us?

Ed:

There sure has been. How can three members of Parliament serving on the Regulations Review Committee make a recommendation to the House from the Regulations Review Committee after an extensive inquiry and then walk into the House and vote against their own recommendations?

That is simply a lack of moral standards and is misleading the public as to their worth on the Committee. Did the public get value for money from the Regulations Review Committee? NO it simply got a con job from the Government.

We are of the opinion Maurice Williamson mislead the House regarding the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Amendment Bill and that a lot of other members of the House knew what the truth was but still supported him.

We feel the treatment the Government is getting at the moment is well deserved. You can't stab an industry in the back and then tell them

competence back to a level that satisfies the Board.

Programmes that target the core competencies and or unit standards are already part of the apprentice training programme and could be used to retrain practitioners deficient in key competence areas.

Punishments issued by the Board should not include programmes where an individual must have a course written specifically for them to meet the Board punishment as was the case with Mr Paul Gee. If it is a punishment to do with competence then training in the competency should already exist.

A competence programme by an approved training provider could be completed by the practitioner extramurally (distance learning) through the open polytechnic or similar. A competence programme through an approved training provider for a practical and/or theory assessment would be beneficial as the Board will be using the infrastructure already in place that trains apprentices. Practitioners would of course be liable for any cost associated by lifting their competence level back to an acceptable standard that the Board deems fit. As this is necessary because a clear demonstrated need has been established then it is not an undue cost.

The Board may also choose to explore another option that allows for Certifying Practitioners to supervise on behalf of the Board, a practitioner that has been made the subject of a peer review, for a period of time the Board thinks fit. Strict guidelines would have to be in place to ensure that an accurate review is conducted by the supervisors. (On site assessments carried out by practitioners).

If a practitioner appears before the Board on another occasion where the offence is related to the initial requirement of a disciplinary competence programme being imposed by the Board, then the Board should take punitive action against that practitioner. Further disciplinary competence programmes would need to be made a condition of a license renewal and a full audit should be carried out to prevent future offending.

General Skills Maintenance Programme

This part of the overall competence programme is the "engine room" and our proposal would operate like this:

Practitioners will be able to access all current standards, codes and regulations applicable to the qualifications and licenses held. This information will be available to practitioners on a designated training hub website through a log in page specific to that practitioner's license number. Hard copies should also be made available. Cost will be saved on a bulk purchase scheme.

Regular updates to standards, codes and regulations that affect each license class will be made available to practitioners via an automated alert service as the Board receives it. This could be via an email with an automated response that shows the practitioner has received it, or a text message. Practitioners will now be able to go to

not to feel pain or bleed.

Likewise with the Plumbers Gasfitter and Drainlayers Board. They have ignored the industry and treated us like garbage, hence the reason they have the reputation as being the most dysfunctional regulatory board in the entire country.

Dear Editor

Please keep up the great work, as a retired PGD since 1956 I have sadly witnessed the decline in training standards, work practices and honesty in the industry.

For the last eleven years of my work I was engaged as a polytechnic tutor, and I still have bad dreams as to where our industry is and where it is heading unless there is major change.

Ed:

Yes it's a nightmare isn't it? We now have a system in place where the Government pays a huge amount of money for the training of apprentices and all we get is assessments.

The onus is left on the practitioners in the industry to do everything and this is where some of the problem lies in that they don't have the time or the resources to give effective training to the apprentices.

If you were to take the \$7,000 a year paid for by the government and the \$3,000 a year paid for by the apprentice or employer and gave it to a polytechnic to run hands on training we would get

the website that has all the information readily at hand removing frustration of purchasing standards and sifting through other websites or books to gain the up to date information that governs them.

The website shall then record the duration and frequency of that practitioner's site visits over a period of time in accessing the information supplied. This system allows for the Board and industry to promote relevant information to the practitioner that is vital to fulfilling the Board's and individual's obligation to ensure that the public's health and safety is safe guarded.

In essence, practitioners will be able to log on to their own area specific to them on the website and access to information specific to their license requirements. The Board has a record of what information was sent, when information was sent, and to whom it was sent to, and receives confirmation that practitioners have received information sent to them. The Board automatically advises license holders of changes to important codes, standards and regulations.

Endorsements are part of the skills maintenance programme. These Endorsements are recognition of achievement over and above a standard license. An example would be if a practitioner was an I.Q.P. in backflow prevention. In this case that individual can test and maintain backflow prevention devices. Solar heating may be another endorsement, as would fire sprinkler systems.

Non mandatory courses are the courses that are "nice to do", but are not necessary to support a competence course like those currently listed on the Board's website. These courses have a limited value to the industry as most are product drives and advertising campaigns run by suppliers touting their products for sale to a captive audience for a disputable fee.

Keeping up to date with technology changes to product in the industry is important and allowing suppliers the ability to ensure their specific product is being installed as per the manufactures instructions is very relevant but should not be linked to licensing.

This proposed system allows for these courses to stay but they will not be a term and condition of a practicing license. Practitioners can still attend these products advertising campaigns like has always happened in the past, and hopefully still be able to have a beer and a sausage while attending.

The Plumbers Journal is a fine example of relevant clear information being passed to practitioners.

An Information Forum should be integrated on the website where plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers can ask questions if they are unsure of some particular aspect of the codes and regulations. One forum already exists on the NZ Plumbers website (www.plumbers.co.nz). The purpose of the forum is to attract practitioners to the website to ensure that practitioners feel comfortable in discussing issues in an area where they have access to the information they require, before small issues turn into

better value for money than all that money being paid to an ITO.

Skills levels in the industry would rise, as would productivity. We believe the money being paid to the ITO's is simply being sucked into a huge vacuum of educationalists with not much, if any improvement for the industry.

The Government have introduced competence based licensing and Industry Training Organisations who are simply facilitators of assessments, both systems being costly failures that do nothing to improve productivity or skills enhancement in the industries.

Dear Editor

At this present time in Hamilton we have a representative from the P G D B going around to sites checking to see if the plumbers and drain layers are financial for the year.

This is a result of our plumbing and drainage and building inspectors who do not ask to see the licences to see if they are current - the reason, they are not REVENUE collectors for the Board.

Building control officer's jobs are only to see that the plumbing and drainlaying is completed to the code no more. You might like to challenge them next time they ask for your licence and tell them to take a leaf out of the inspectors' book from Hamilton.

Thank you and keep up

offences.

The License Review

This section of the programme is another important part of how the system as a whole works. This is how the system reviews and monitors competence. At licensing time or any time throughout the year, the Board reviews the information obtained throughout the year. They can check on an individual basis the effort put into skills maintenance. For example a retired individual doesn't really need to do any skills maintenance only the mandatory issues that everyone needs to know.

The skills maintenance required by a plumber doing maintenance will be different to that required by a pumping specialist doing hot water circulation. The goal is to put the onus on the individual to upskill in the areas relevant to them at the time as this improves productivity. Attending "points buying" events is not productive.

Lack of attendance to the log in page, not responding to amendment alerts, poor results in the license review, and poor results in a mandatory competence programme or disciplinary programmes will raise red flags and trigger a potential audit by the Board.

Summary

The following points can best summarise this proposed system:

- The Board has achieved its goal in having a truly competent industry by promoting, monitoring and reviewing information vital to the industry.
- The Board has access to an industry record data base that it can review at any time with accurate information on the state of the competence of each individual, company and industry.
- Practitioners have access and are receiving the same information related to their license and endorsements. (Everyone is singing from the same page).
- The system is continuously evolving as new information comes to hand it is distributed to its intended destination without the need for course providers re-applying for training information to be approved.
- The Board and the industry will be able to work closer together, improving the relationship between the two in a positive manner.
- The Board will be seen to be doing all it can in its role of improving the competence of those who work in the industry for the benefit of the public.
- A greater emphasis is placed on Certifying Practitioners to ensure that the staff they employ are up skilling as poor results from the system will directly impact on their record as a supervisor and could potentially trigger an audit.
- The system has the necessary checks and balances in place for the Board to measure competency.
- Practitioners have control over the training required to do the type of work they are involved in.

the good work.

Ed:

We feel the Board needs to look closely at why practitioners aren't licensing.

Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers are practical people who accept issues if legitimate and real reasons are given for their existence.

To simply impose without real reason or benefit will meet with resistance from practitioners and the more imposing the more resistance.

Dear Editor

In the Info Brief Peter Jackson said this regarding the reappointment of existing Board Members:

"These people have given excellent service to the industry and it is good news to have them back for their new terms"

It wasn't that long ago he was saying the Board wasn't there for the industry but were a Regulatory Board.

Ed:

Only the Board and the Government feel they should get a pat on the back.

- The performance outcomes of this competence program are measurable.
- The proposed system does not unnecessarily restrict practitioners from renewing a practicing licence.
- Allows practitioners the ability to identify and correct their own deficiencies.
- All information will relate to the core competencies.

That is a brief outline of our proposed scheme. An earlier version was supplied to Mr Bickers the previous Chairman of the Board and to Maurice Williamson the previous Minister of Building and Construction and went no further.

We do not know why the Board and Minister want to influence competence and productivity in the industry in such a negative manner. We want to move forward but buying points and measuring competence by the number of points practitioners have is nothing more than stupidity.

Let us know what you think of our proposal for competence and upskilling. The ideas contained in our programme have come from suggestions and thoughts of our 1200 members. It truly reflects the thoughts of a large chunk of the industry – and has been debated throughout the country by members over email and in person. We think it is a robust solution and we look forward to hearing what you think.

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