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**IN OTHER NEWS**



**Dear Editor**

**Two Sets of Rules**

Last week I received a reply to an Official Information Act request I submitted to the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board.

Now you might think there nothing odd about that, but the issue is it was submitted to the Board 90 days ago and there hasn't been any Board instigated communication.

I've telephoned them twice with no response and now that I've got their response they haven't even answered the questions. I'll be taking this issue to the Ombudsman.

Keep up the good work.

**Ed:**

Yes writer they either ignore people or try to baffle them with bullshit.

It may not seem much but at least you can look people in the eye and say you are honest and

**Another year has passed!**



It's been another challenging year with the Federation clawing its way along an arduous road. Where does that road lead to – well we hope to fairness and equality in plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying regulations and legislation,

but for some reason we seem to be striking opposition from the Government and the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board.

A number of times we have heard the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board state they have been dealing with a legacy of historical issues, but now a stage has been reached where this Board is creating its own legacy of historical issues to be dealt with such as - Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Fees and Levies (after the acts of bad faith displayed) and allocation of qualifications to three members of the Institute of Professional Engineers of New Zealand (IPENZ) when none of the individuals had completed apprenticeships in our industry or sat relevant qualification exams.

It should be noted Mr Bickers, the previous Board Chairman, was a member of IPENZ and it looks like he has passed the mantel to the Minister of Building and Housing, Dr Nick Smith who it is believed is also a member of IPENZ - so the chances of getting action on this front are limited. Remembering also, the investigator that botched the Paul Gee case and was never held accountable was also a member of IPENZ.

It appears we are entering in to another cycle of dealing with a system designed for bureaucracy. Designed for the Board and the Minister with little or no regard for the industry. A system where the Board can apply double standards and get away with it. A system where if you have legal backing you can do what you want, hence the reason the Board has a legal division and unlimited resources supplied by the industry.

We have seen Ministers and Board members come and go and have not seen any improvement. How they can claim success when their only measurement is if reports are out on time is beyond us!

Even after a change in Minister we appear to be no better off. Our impression is we, as an industry, are being punished because of failing Government and Board systems. It appears those in positions that can make change are to gutless to say "enough is enough". There needs to be change because what the Board and Government have attempted to do for the past decade have failed.

truthful and have adhered to the rules.

Don't forget to write to the Minister as he said he wants to know about any issues. Don't hold your breath for a quick resolution.

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## Dear Editor

Whatever happened to the complaint about Board members being Master Plumbers Members voting on issues to do with training in breach of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006?

The reason I ask is I saw this article on the internet and I feel the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board could take heed of what it says.

**Don't be complacent on corruption:** *Labour NZ Newswire December 4, 2014, 4:02 am*

*We might be seen as one of the least corrupt countries, but it's important not to become complacent, Labour's justice spokeswoman Jacinda Ardern says.*

*Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index released on Wednesday ranked New Zealand second for least perceived corruption in the public sector, beaten out only by Denmark.*

*It's the first time since 2006 New Zealand's been knocked off its first-place post which it shared last year with Denmark. Ms Ardern says in a year of reports into unsavoury political and public activity, the drop in placings should give everyone pause to think.*

*"Today's report shows we cannot*

The might of the mega Ministry MoBIE advising the Minister could only be termed as comical. We as an industry pay tax for these fools and then have to pay for their incompetence by supporting an ill informed Minister and a Board reacting to his direction. In the legal system this is called double jeopardy where you are punished twice for the same thing but in our system we get punished simply because of our chosen profession.

We can shoulder some of the blame because as an industry we haven't taken a collective stand against the Board and its regulation. A number of the industry have sat back and done nothing, simply taking what is dished out to them for fear the Board will persecute them and stop them from earning a living.

Having an industry that is fearful of the regulator is not regulation but an oppressive bureaucracy. The Minister and Board don't like meeting with the Federation because we are holding them accountable. They inform others we are only a couple of plumbers, a disgruntled few, a group of malcontents and that we are destructive.

The Federation refutes any allegations that it is destructive or trying to dumb down the industry. This is a ploy by those with self interest in aspects of the industry to try and win support for their interests. We have said it a number of times before that the Federation is about ensuring the industry gets treated in a fair and equitable manner. Others have sat on the side line criticising our tactics but what have they achieved and who are they supporting?

Is our industry treated the same as other industries or professions – NO. Yet the Minister and the Board say we are and compare us to other regulated trades and professions. The Federation has been fighting for equality and is always very conscious about the economic impact of opposing the Board and the economic impact of what the Board imposes on the industry.

Comments made in the latest Info Brief by Richard Merrifield are very interesting:

*The main challenges that Richard sees for licensed practitioners moving forward is the lack of regulatory knowledge.*

*"I feel that CPD is the way to up skill the sector in this area. Technology developments have to be monitored closely as these will affect the way we build in the future, and will change our trade practises at an ever increasing speed."*

*Richard also believes it is a privilege to hold a license in the construction industry.*

*"To be asked to pay a few hundred dollars a year to enable us to work in the trade we enjoy, gives peace of mind to competent qualified, licensed practitioners."*

The Federation agrees whole-heartedly with up skilling being needed to maintain high standards but what we have now, by way of CPD, is not up skilling, its revision at best. If technology and trade practices change and they are necessary then they are identified training needs, and yes the industry should know about them and

*take anything for granted if we want to maintain our hard fought for reputation.*

*"Good governance, transparency and vigilance in the face of a changing globalised environment are all key if we are to maintain a well-functioning democracy."*

*The scores were compiled in July, before what Prime Minister John Key's termed an "ugly campaign" that included Kim Dotcom's Moment of Truth and the August release of Nicky Hager's Dirty Politics.*

*Justice Minister Amy Adams said New Zealand's public sector is internationally renowned for low levels of corruption and noted a number of anti-corruption initiatives had been passed by the government this year.*

**Ed**

Firstly writer it is a very interesting article which does pose some questions about what corruption actually covers.

With regard to the complaint, the previous Minister and previous Chairman of the Board didn't do anything about it. As with a lot of other issues they just fobbed it off and call us malcontents that complain at every meeting.

This is a prime example where the Board uses their power and position of influence to ignore the Act.

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**Dear Editor**

As 2014 draws to a close I would like to personally thank Wal Gordon for the HUGE effort he makes in regards to the Federation. This man is a work horse – in the true sense of the word! He doesn't seek thanks or

get skilled in them. What we have now is nothing more than a method of purchasing points to meet terms and conditions of licensing. A total waste of time and money.

The implementation of the latest gas certification system is a prime example of issues that every gasfitter needed to know but it was never made mandatory by the Board and this is exactly the type of issue CPD should cover. This was a failure on the Board's part.

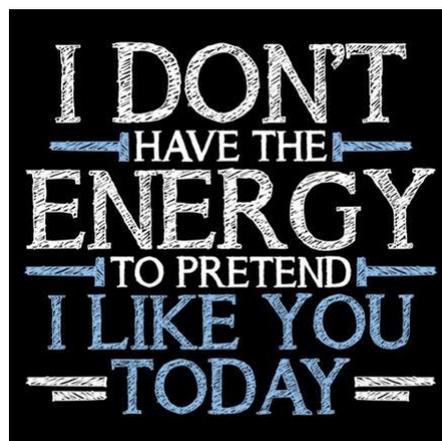
We read a lot from the Board about supervision but we never hear about the economic impact of supervision. What do their policies, procedures and terms and conditions of licensing cost the industry with regard to supervision? Is what they are imposing and regulating putting financial pressure on individuals? We believe it is.

Trades people should be proud of their qualifications but should not have to jump through un-necessary hoops to retain them – that is just nonsense.

It's good to see Mr Merrifield above agrees with the Federation that a few hundred dollars to work in the industry is fair, unlike the several hundred dollars we pay now, plus the cost of purchasing CPD points, plus the cost of lost opportunity which all combined run into the thousands of dollars. Hopefully he will be supporting massive fees and levy reductions and changes to the terms and conditions of licensing with regard to CPD.

We have only touched the tip of the iceberg with regard to issues but want to conclude by saying people now expect more from those in positions of authority and are prepared to fight for their rights and accountability. As time goes by anger escalates and creates untenable situations. You would think that with a PhD in landslides at the University of Canterbury that the Minister, Dr Smith would realise the regulation of the industry is slipping away from his appointed Board.

### Watch This Space...



We are keeping an eye on a developing situation regarding the funding that was left over from the previous ITO and put into SKILLS hands for safe keeping. This money was ring fenced to be used by the plumbing, gasfitting, drainlaying and roofing fraternity. A committee was formed to oversee the process of proposals etc –

the Federation was part of this committee.

A number of proposals were put forward by Master Plumbers to do with meaningful training – The Federation supported these proposals after some modifications were made and looked forward to seeing some real changes in ongoing training for our industries.

accolades from anyone – and he puts in a phenomenal number of hours working on our behalf.

He's far too modest to ever tell anyone what he has achieved, but he has led the committee of the Federation admirably. I hope he manages to take a break over the holiday period and come back refreshed for the good fight in 2015.

Wal, the industry is in better heart because of your efforts! Thank you seems such a small thing to say – but thank you nonetheless!

**ED:**

Wal thanks you and wants to add that the committee has done an outstanding job in a difficult situation.

Giving up family time to fight bureaucracy is a big ask for anyone and the committee have dedicated themselves to the tasks at hand.

Thanks to all the committee and all other supporters.

It appears that SKILLS have become quite attached to these funds and are not releasing the money to enable the projects to proceed and be ready for early implementation.

SKILLS – we put you on notice. This money is NOT yours; you are only holding it in trust. We believe the proposals had merit, and certainly they would be of benefit to wider industry, and we also saw correspondence that said you approved of these projects – so hand over the funds and let's see them implemented!

We will be keeping a close eye on this situation – it may require us asking for your support to contact the CEO of SKILLS to “encourage” him to keep moving forward. This seems to be yet another example of empire building – remember these funds are NOT SKILLS – they belong to the wider industry. It is about now we start to ask questions regarding the ongoing interest being earned by this million or so dollars, the residual funding that was left over after the proposals were approved – you see any money not expended will go into SKILLS coffers at the end of 2015.

Watch this space as we look into this a bit more. WHO at SKILLS is holding up the advancement? Do the right and left hands know what is going on? What is happening to the interest portion? What level of funding is left unallocated? And lastly, WHAT is causing the hold up?

Perhaps a boycott of Skills is needed?

## Final Issue for the Year



This is the final issue for the year and the Federation thanks its supporters for their efforts throughout the year.

A lot goes on behind the scene that never gets acknowledged so we want to say it is noted and is appreciated. There are individual battles going on out there and we wish everyone luck with those and hope our advice and support has been valuable.

Next year will see us back to continue on with the fight for fairness and equality and hopefully we will get support from more people in the industry and other industry organisations.

## Best wishes for the festive season

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