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## IN OTHER NEWS

### Letters to the Editor

#### Dear Editor

I agree with what you say about the Board and the Government taking their time about dealing with issues regarding our industry.

It seems everything drags on for years and nothing improves. In the mean time we keep on paying for those clowns.

And yes I do refer to them as clowns as did Allan Day (Jnr) at the Napier Meeting a couple of years ago. I remember it so well how the then Chair of the Board Alan Bickers said he wouldn't be spoken to like that and was backed up by Flip Flop Williamson who basically said the meeting would be called off if that type of behaviour continued.

We can only presume the type of behaviour he was referring to was people telling the truth.

I remember at the same meeting Alan Bickers said that if the Minister lost faith in him he would resign. Well he's gone and so has Flip

## From the Plumbers Forum This Week



The Federation does a lot of research, and part of that is viewing comments made on the Plumbers Forum [www.plumbers.co.nz/forum/](http://www.plumbers.co.nz/forum/)

These comments were made by two people with regard to Fellow Practitioner Issue 238 Dated 23 January 2015.

*"hi guys, as Wal has pointed out (There was the option open to us of going to the courts but the Government sewed this up with the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Amendment Bill)any traction that we might have had has been lost so the fight is over. The only way left is to withhold the funding of the board by not re-licencing, cheers"*

*"Or robbo mass protest if we follow what the truckies did a few years ago over the rise in road users and cause mass commuter problems morning and night with slow moving protests at peak times the harm to the gross domestic product in lost work time and wages will force them to take notice and engage with us. It would only take 15/20 plumbers vans in Auckland, Wellington & Christchurch to achieve this and at a guess 1 day to get a response from the government once it actually happened ( I think we would have to do one just to prove to the politicians we actually mean it) Worth a thought"*

As can be seen, there is mounting feelings out there for protest action to demonstrate just how the industry feels about the injustices being done to it, but history has shown this Government doesn't care at all about the actions of our industry as they know we all have to keep our livelihoods.

A further string of comments with reference to the Paul Gee case has had a **STAGGERING** 2807 views!!

[www.plumbers.co.nz/forum/fellow-practitioners-update/41/fellow-practitioner-issue-236-dated-12-december-2014/1810/](http://www.plumbers.co.nz/forum/fellow-practitioners-update/41/fellow-practitioner-issue-236-dated-12-december-2014/1810/)

This is worth a read to get an individual's view of the manner in which he was treated by the Board and the tactics used by them. You need to keep in mind this was a tradesman going about his everyday routine the same as most in the industry and then the Board decided they would have a go at him. Also bear in mind that this same individual warned his local MP some time before the s\*\*t

Flop.

Bring on the new ringmaster and clowns and nothing has changed.

**Ed:**

Yes it's very frustrating isn't it?

It seems when they want from something from us like fees, levies and CPD points etc we get set dates or we get penalised and yet with them it's "you'll get it when we are good and ready".

Look at when they unlawfully took millions of dollars from industry and they were going to change the law in seven days.

In the end it was drawn out to months but it still had the same result.

We feel there is a great deal of abuse of power that goes on and there is no accountability - yet we get held accountable for not putting a strap on a hot water cylinder.

There are double standards in this country – and the biggest hypocrites are the Government and the Board.

**Dear Editor**

I have a question regarding cost recovery.

I see that there is no charge for getting a course accredited to the Board's failing Continuing Professional Development scheme and that it is the industry that is paying on behalf of the course providers to have them assessed and loaded up on the Board's website.

hit the fan that things were amiss in regards to Gas Certificates being issued.

The scary/sobering thing is that it could have been any one of us. In our view the level of investigating in this case was poor, so poor that you could have driven a truck through it. We can't help but wonder if this is the quality of investigating that is used generally, or whether it was particularly bad in this case. One section of this string refers to the use of case law with sexual content to help try and prove the Board's case. It was explicit and disgusting and had no reference what so ever to the case of an explosion at a fish and chip shop. One can't help but agree with Paul Gee – and ask "Why?" Why use this reference to show probability?

Paul Gee had this to say:

*"I thought it was enough to tell the truth.....everything I have said was true and have been borne out to be true, most of the BS against me was not the truth, it was a predetermined persecution that ignored several REAL concerns, ignored at a risk to the public of NZ"*

We welcome any feedback on this issue, alternatively feel free to make your own comments on the Plumbers Forum.

## More on the Occupation Outlook



Last week we looked at the occupation outlook released by the Government. Part of that outlook was the average wage for plumbers which was \$52,300.00. We looked into this further and found figures from Statistics NZ show as of March 2013, the average hourly wage in New Zealand was \$27.48 or \$57,158.40 per year.

This places our industry \$4,858.40 behind the national average wage.

This is proof the Government's regulation of our industry isn't working for the industry at all. When the Government did the Regulatory Impact Statement for the implementation of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 they stated:

*"The average income within the industry is \$45,130 p.a. (\$990 less than the national average income)."*

So when the Impact Statement was done the average wage in the industry was **2.12%** less than the New Zealand average wage. Now the average wage in the industry is **9.3%** less than the average wage in New Zealand!

This figure does not take into account of the cost of being part of a regulated industry. This is estimated to be \$2,500.00 for an individual. Add the \$2,500.00 to the \$4,858.40 individuals are already behind the average wage and this increases the figure to \$7,358.40 (**14.1%**) behind the average wage in New Zealand.

Yet again we ask the question "What advantage is there in being in a

I'm sure I read somewhere that the Board operated on a cost recovery basis?

**ED:**

Well yes the Board **SHOULD** be operating on a cost recovery basis and in this case they are, but they are recovering the cost from the industry **NOT** the user.

The theory of user pays doesn't apply in this case as we are guessing that if the Board was to charge training providers they would have very few course providers apply.

As it stands the Board can claim to have hundreds of courses because in effect the course providers can take a standard off the shelf course and get it accredited to the Board free of charge so why wouldn't you?

It would be a different story if they had to weigh the cost of accreditation on the return they may get from people attending their courses.

Yet again the industry paying for others with no advantage or benefit to the industry.

**Karma**



A couple of weeks ago we supplied a list of Members of Parliament who we felt had done wrong by the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industry and we see this week Karma hit one of them:

*"National MP Mike Sabin has just resigned and will force a by-election in his Northland*

regulated industry?" We can see in real terms we are 14.1% behind the average wage in New Zealand and yet we are one of the most highly regulated industries in New Zealand and the **ONLY** industry in New Zealand that pays **100% of the costs** to protect the public of New Zealand.

What's happened to the 20% increase in productivity mooted by MBIE? An unhappy industry in a non productive industry.

It would appear the lack of leadership in the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board is exactly what the Government wants. Perhaps they are fearful that if the industry ever gets its act together and forms a real industry Board then the Government will lose control.

Remember these are the government figures not the Federation's.

## Let's Get Real

The Federation has been fighting long and hard against the Government and the Board for the good of the industry. The industry has been harmed by the regulation imposed on it and yet we still get comments like this from the Minister of Building and Housing Dr Nick Smith with regard to declining numbers in the industry:

*"It is not clear to me that the decline is necessarily a result of the actions of the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Board (the Board). The Board is established for the protection of the health and safety of the public. The Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 (the Act) does not allow the Board to consider the impact of its decisions on the supply of tradespeople. This is intentional as there is a conflict between public safety and supply of labour (the higher the standards the safer the public, but fewer tradespeople will meet them)"*

With Regard to Continuing Professional Development he went on to say:

*"The Board is not responsible for the training of tradespeople. The Act establishes the Board to set standards of practice for the protection of the health and safety of the public. These standards are then reflected in training developed by the industry training organisation (ITO).*

*While the nature of CPD requirements may differ, CPD is an established practice used across occupational regulation in New Zealand and internationally. For example, other occupational regulators in the building and construction sector, the health sector and education all have CPD requirements. CPD is an important tool available to regulators to ensure trades people continue to keep up with changes, for example changes to the building code and emerging technologies, such as solar hot water heating"*

With regard to the review of the Act he stated:

*"The review will not consider whether the purpose of the Act should change, nor will it consider the Board's role in training. It is my firm view that the purpose of occupational regulation is the protection of the health and safety of the public. The role of occupational*

seat.

*His resignation follows weeks of questions to the National Party, about media reports that he's the subject of a police investigation into an alleged assault.*

*In a statement, Mr Sabin said he had decided to resign due to personal issues that were best dealt with outside Parliament.*

*Just two days ago, John Key said he was happy for Mike Sabin to continue as chair of Parliament's law and order select committee - amid pressure for him to stand aside from that".*

We don't feel for him at all. People in Parliament have screwed with our lives for decades now and we continue to be punished so to see someone finally held accountable for their actions is good.

It would be even better if they were held accountable for the wrongs done to our industry but the Government looks after their own.

#### **From the News**

It looks like money is no problem when you don't have to earn it.

*"The environment minister's redirected what's expected to be thousands of dollars from Pike River mine plans to a chartered helicopter for TV crews.*

*Nick Smith met with the Pike River families in Greymouth today about their proposal to extend a nearby national park to incorporate the mine land.*

*He put on a helicopter flight*

*regulators includes setting standards for safe practise, but not to be responsible for developing or delivering training"*

It is becoming quite evident that the industry has been abandoned by the Government. They have developed a system where they have a Government appointed Board and Government controlled ITO system. The Board is simply a "consumer protection board" funded by the industry, with absolutely no advantage to the industry. The ITO system has morphed into an apprentice assessment organisation. Relevant Continued Professional Development or up skilling is nonexistent.

We have no industry wide governance or representation. We are expected to fund the consumer protection board and rely on the ITO for training. We are expected to accept the professionalism of the Board without question and at the same time watch experienced tradepeople leave the industry while the average wages drop compared to the rest of New Zealand.

In all reality what is needed is a real industry wide representative board that governs the industry, represents it from apprentice to certifier, from employee to business owner, and facilitates real training that is "identified and necessary". People who are appointed by the industry and a Board that is not influenced by the government.

Yes this is a duplication of Board and services but the difference is one is a government appointed consumer protection board, and the other is a real industry Board. Funding and formation of the new Board is an issue, but we are lucky that over the last four years the Federation has learned a lot from the Government. Similar funding as the existing Board would be required for an effective industry Board.

How would it work? Very simply actually. The new Board would take the structure of a Registered Charity - as the main focus of the new Board would be meeting the provisions required by the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board such as CPD training etc.

Nominations would be called for positions on the Board and members would be voted on by the industry (i.e. every apprentice, and registered person would have a vote). That Board would be responsible for the formation of the new organisation and appointments of staff.

Funding is also a simple issue. As it stands the average industry wage is 9.3% behind the average New Zealand Wage. If we add the funding required to meet CPD and licensing requirements we are 14.1% behind the average wage in New Zealand. The Federation and New Board will recommend an increase of at least 14.1% on existing charge out rates across the industry. Corporates do it all the time by announcing increases in prices to meet costs so why we should be any different?

A media campaign will be run to announce the increase to the public and the reasons for it. There really is no choice than increased prices as the cost of regulation in the industry is pushing our incomes to below the national average. We know some people will be concerned about losing business but a day will be picked where



*to fly two TV crews over the site.*

*Dr Smith's office says the flight will be paid for from a government fund, intended for the mine's decommission - but the final cost isn't yet known.*

*Nick Smith last year spent more than \$6000 in Department of Conservation funds on a helicopter flight for TV crews to film fallen West Coast trees"*

Hey Minister – how about putting on some helicopter flights for TV crews and journo's to visit some plumbers, gasfitters and Drainlayers and report on how we are being screwed over. No? Perhaps you could use those surpluses that the Board are accumulating at our expense, and will continue to do so in 2015 because the results of the "consultation" on fees and levies won't be completed and out by then.

*What this country needs are more unemployed politicians.  
-- Edward Langley, Artist  
1928-1995*

everyone in the county changes their prices on that day.

We are aware there will be some who choose to work in the black market but that is not our problem, it is the problem of the existing consumer protection board and if they put up enforcement costs we as an industry put up our costs to match. No way should we be funding to protect the public for no advantage to the industry. We live in a world of user pays now. If we were simply funding to discipline our "own" i.e. other registered plumbers, gasfitters and Drainlayers – then we could accept that, but why should we fund the prosecution of Joe Blogs who illegally does plumbing – when the sparkies don't fund this type of prosecution from their own pockets? We are being treated unfairly!

The Federation has been pushing for fairness and equality for four years and it is evident the Board and Government are not interested so it is up to the industry to escalate the situation and pay the Board and government what they want to protect the public - but we also need to pass on those costs. If we don't the average wage in the industry will slip even further behind the National Average. It is the Board and Government who are forcing this issue so as an industry we have no option.

A **14.1%** increase is the figure required for us to take back our industry. Are you prepared to be taken for granted for another year or are we going to stand as a united industry?

We want to hear from you!

Do you have a story about your interaction with the Board? Do you have copies of correspondence with them? Do you think you've been treated unfairly? We want to hear your stories, we want to publish them. **SUNLIGHT IS THE BEST DISINFECTANT.**

We would remind you, that extremism in the defence of liberty is no vice. And... moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue. - Barry Goldwater

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