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IN OTHER NEWS

Letter to the editor

Dear Editor

It's comical

I was sitting with my kids the other day and we were watching a super heroes cartoon on television.

There were all types of names for the heroes and also for the villains and that got me thinking.

We went from having our villain Maurice Williamson (Flip Flop) with his side kick Allan Bickers (the Clown) who was ably assisted by his Board (the bunch of Clowns).

What do we have now? We still have the same Bunch of Clowns lead by one of their own clowns and what of Flip Flop's replacement - well I think it should be BLANK SPACE because he seems to be looking out into blank space and doing nothing.
LOL

ED

Well what can we say?. Yes the

One Wreck After Another



When you stop and look at the issues in the industry it doesn't take long to realise the issues are the ones where the Board have failed to get industry support, or have delayed implementation and have lost impact.

The "Ask for the Card" campaign was started in 2010 and still hasn't got momentum. If this was an advertising campaign for a corporate it would have been dumped in the first 12 months! It didn't have industry support from the start, then when the Board continued to take over \$200,000 in fees every year for the campaign, it lost its credibility and when those fees got absorbed into a new fees structure and disappeared, it become money that was being wasted by the Board. It simply lost its impact.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) didn't have industry support in its current form. Only Master Plumbers supported it in the hope of making money from it and I think even they would agree that it has been a failed venture. CPD has now become a "points gathering" exercise and has lost its credibility. It is a complete joke. Industry opinion on this is gathering momentum and the Board need to sit up and take notice.

The Fees have been an issue for nearly a decade and the costs have continued to increase. It is at the stage where fixed costs outweigh the performance of set functions! For example discipline - where **direct expenditure is \$345,063** and the **fixed costs are \$644,909**. Offences is another where **direct expenditure is \$162,101** and **fixed costs are \$442,701**. The Board have unlawfully taken money from the industry and the Government has retrospectively changed the law to cover for them. Will they do the same with the latest issue where the Board have taken **two levies** from the industry where the Act states one? The fees and levies system had also lost credibility.

Registration and licensing has lost credibility and support due to the cost, and terms and conditions imposed on tradespeople. Barriers to registration and licensing have been put into place.

Supervision is another issue that is causing confusion in the industry and is what the Board imposing on the industry even legal?

Our point is that we shouldn't be asking why the Board and Government keep doing these things to the industry. **We should ask why we keep letting them? Every person in the industry needs to make a stand.**

Minister does have a lot to answer for. Ignoring a situation is not a solution and saying the reviews are taking place is also not a solution as the fees review takes twelve months and the review of the Act will take about three years.

The Government doesn't need to hurry as they aren't funding anything and the issues don't affect them YET.

The industry is expected to put up with the actions and incompetence of the Minister and Board and follow their regulation of the industry.

We believe the regulation and training of the industry is in the worse state it has ever been in. The lack of co-operation between the Board and industry must also be at an all time low.

Having a "Blank Space" and using industrial exclusion is not going to work. Forced compliance is placing barriers to remaining or entering the industry. If you have a look this goes against the intent of the Act.

Dear Editor

It's been over eighteen months since I laid a complaint to the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board. My complaint was in regards to eight 45kg LPG cylinders installed illegally, by a plumber (not a gasfitter!!).

I have completely lost what little faith I had in the Board and am appalled that the PGDB have still not made a prosecution, after giving them evidence such as photos of natural gas appliances running on LPG gas and falsified gas certificates.

After some close investigation I

Giving away Qualifications



Some time back we reported the Board had issued at least three Certifying Gasfitter qualifications to individuals who had not done apprenticeships or sat any of the qualification exams. It appeared the

packages for the individuals had been personalised and were full of surprises for the rest of us.

Surprises like - the three individuals were all Institute of Professional Engineers of New Zealand members. So should IPENZ be investigating how these three gained their qualifications? It places into question the credibility of the rest of the Institute when people who have not earned their qualifications are permitted to be members. It also raises questions about how these Certifying Gasfitter qualifications can be bestowed upon those who appear not to have done anything to earn them. Where is the assurance in this process that should these people use the qualifications they have been given, they are safe and competent? Where were the checks and balances?

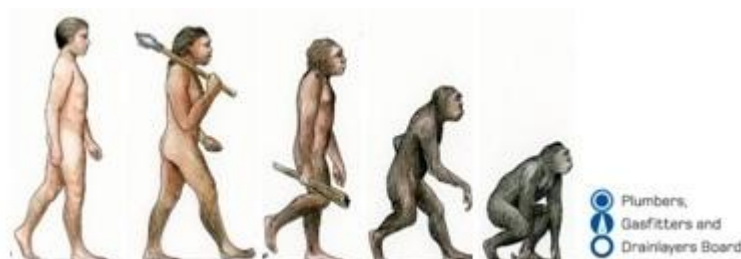
One of the individuals was a Gas Inspector under the old qualifications and was contracted to the Board as an investigator which is probably why the Board handed him the qualification, whereas the rest of the industry had to gain theirs.

Just because you can enforce an Act - does that mean you can do the job? It's like telling a building inspector he can build a house or a CAA investigator that he can fly aeroplanes.

A lucky dip is something you would expect at a circus or a birthday party, so we are VERY surprised that the Board is reaching into the box and pulling out qualifications for people. Surprised and disappointed that the regulator who is meant to be the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff is dropping the standards we expect to be set to ensure adequately trained and competent people only have these qualifications. Perhaps the Board are following on from the Government where "Sort of Qualified" is like "Pretty Legal"?

What do you think? Should someone be given their qualifications without having to complete an apprenticeship, or sit a qualifying examination? Where is the consistency and assurance in the lolly scramble way of handing out Certifying Gasfitter status? Doesn't this make a mockery of what the Board says it stands for? Who is the guardian of the public health and safety really?

Letter to the Editor



still have no answer how this guy could somehow gain certifying status in plumbing without undergoing an apprenticeship - I noted he has minimal plumbing history on record. He is definitely not a gasfitter, yet has signed a gas COC for this work.

I believe the public are at risk when the Board is issuing certifying licences to people who are putting people's lives at risk - not to mention failing to follow up or investigate complaints.

The Board must follow up this case and prosecute the offender.

I would like to ask Dr Nick Smith how is this protecting the health and safety of the public, do you think it is okay for the Board to have no communication with the plumbers, is it okay for the Board to allow people such as this to walk free and continue to put the public's lives at risk?

What is the point of paying our fees to a Board who clearly are not interested in protecting the health of the public, and also not interested in protecting the rights of reputable tradesman?

ED:

We understand what you are saying and your frustration with the system. We seem to be up against a Minister and a Board who only see things their way.

This may explain why the Board has so many lawyers because they are need to ensure the Minister's and Board's backs are covered.

This could possibly be another case where the Board have issued someone with a qualification and they have offended so the Board may have done nothing about it to save face.

Dear Editor

This appears to be the Board's version of evolution where we started with something advanced and have reverted to what we have now. Keep up the good work Federation!

ED:

Well done!! We think you have encapsulated the situation very well. What are your views on the "revolution" the Chairman of the Board mentioned?

Fees Review - Our first thoughts

We have had a preliminary look at the consultation and it is very much a "McDonalds scenario where you get asked if you want chips with your order. It seems very much like an up-sell scenario. The following from the review seems to capture the Board's attitude:

"What needs to be remembered is that the Board needs to collect a certain amount of money to be able to carry out its functions. This means that if you reduce one fee, you will most likely have to increase some other fee to make up for it"

That passage demonstrates a "take what we want from you no matter what" attitude and doesn't make it sound like they will be engaging in any cost cutting. The Board haven't supplied any year to date figures, no time allocation figures (because they don't have any credible data), no organisation structure to tell us who is doing what and the list goes on. We are simply expected to believe what they say because they are a specialist professional Boar, when we already have examples of how they have got things wrong in the past. Well we deal in facts not fantasy and this review so far seems to be a lot of fantasy. Informed opinions cannot be provided on the skinny amount of data given.

They talk a lot about fixed costs so it would be nice to know **real** numbers with regard to registration and licensing because the fewer numbers of people licensing and registering, the greater the cost on everyone else due to the Boards **FIXED COSTS**. An example is what impact the reduction of licensing is going to have. The Board's own annual report states a reduction in licensing of 6.47% from the previous year. That means 6.47% of that income needs to be covered by everyone else.

They say that: " At the 2012 review, approximately \$500,000 of surplus funds were allocated to the review." We are very confident this was a partial payment of some of the money they had unlawfully taken from the industry dressed up to make the Board look like they were doing us a great favour by allocating money they had accumulated. There must be another one and a half million dollars to go.

After reading this paragraph it looks like we are basing our decisions on indications:

***These figures (options 1-5) are based on the current financial model and this year's budgets and transaction numbers. They do not take into account any changes in budget or transaction numbers, or the use of surplus funds that might apply for the 2016 year. The figures should be*

What a lot of people tend to forget is that if the Board are giving out qualifications without people having done apprenticeships and exams then that becomes the new minimum standard.

It's the Board's responsibility to set the minimum standards for registration and licensing and that is what they have done but the industry is unable to see what the minimum standard is because it is all personal information.

The Board has it in its power to give qualifications to whomever they see fit and they can take away qualifications from whomever they see as being unfit and what can we as an industry do about it? Well nothing really as we have nowhere reputable to take a complaint to and we have a "blank Space" as a Minister as mentioned above.

regarded only as an indication of the effect of changing the fees structure"

This one is a kicker:

"One of the things that will change with this review is that the existing separate offences fee and disciplinary levy will be replaced by a single combined disciplinary and prosecution levy. This is a consequence of the 2013 changes to the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act"

Yes there is another change because it is as the Federation has stated, the Board **still don't have it right** and have been unlawfully taking money from us again. It wasn't because of the change to the Act, it was because of the Gazette Notice that was imposed by the Board was wrong.

The Act clearly states a **disciplinary and prosecution levy** written in the singular as is the title **143 Disciplinary and prosecution levy**. The Board have been collecting this from us in two levies.

Perhaps this is why the Auditor General wouldn't approve that section of the 2014 financials because they knew it was unlawful and didn't want the Board to look incompetent again after the Government having to retrospectively change the law to cover their arse, and then the Board continued to get it wrong. What you will probably see is a deficit in one and an excess in the other. The combining of the two will see money collected for discipline used to cover the loss of prosecuting non registered people. This makes separate memorandum accounts a joke and means the Board can rob Peter to pay Paul.

This reminds us that once before the Auditor General's Office would not sign off on the Board's books. Individuals of the Board racked up in Fringe benefit tax an amount of \$173,498. How was this resolved, well the Office of the Auditor General held back and gave time for the Board to become a Registered Charity and in doing so the Fringe Benefit Tax paid by was refunded including the GST paid. Who covered their ass with the delaying trick of the Auditor General's Office "not trades people" but those individual Board members and Staff who had had their faces at the trough.

How many years has it been since we had a stable reporting where the industry could compare apples with apples? Every year something changes.

More on the Fees and Levies review in the weeks to come.

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