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IN OTHER NEWS

We got it wrong

In this month's issue of the Info Brief the Chairman of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board, Peter Jackson stated:

"A recent industry newsletter contained the claim that the Board's current disciplinary levy and offences fee are unlawful. This claim is absolutely wrong and I can assure you that all of the Board's current fees and levy are completely lawful. I must say that it is disappointing to have to respond to this sort of misinformation"

We had another look at this issue and Mr Jackson is right it is not unlawful (now) as this was one of the unlawful issues that the retrospective legislation covered and remains in place until the Board changes it which they intend to do this licensing review.

So we can understand Mr Jacksons

In the Board We Trust?



As the licensing period is upon us in four days time a lot of people will be looking at their cost of relicensing and the progression, or lack of progression, of the industry. It is also timely that we look at the standard

of the regulation of the industry.

For nearly five years the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Federation has been pushing for change and holding the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board and Government to account for their regulation of the industry. The Federation has put in thousands of hours on behalf of its members and the wider industry. There have been wins and losses and but still forced compliance reigns.

We thought having a new Minister may mean things may have changed but it is still the same, if not worse. The industry gets from licensing period to licensing period wondering when the regulation of the industry will get better. Forced compliance is claimed as a victory by the Board for example:

"There is now a more proactive uptake of the CPD scheme by tradespeople, meaning that there are far fewer people having to scramble to complete this upskilling at the last minute. There are many excellent CPD courses available for those who have still not quite completed it. Details are on the Board's website"

We believe the majority of tradespeople have simply "bought points" by attending worthless courses which do very little to increase their competency. None of the courses seem to be from identified training needs or from Board monitoring, they simply appear to be a means for the tradespeople to gain the points. No points no licensing - so is it an uptake due to enthusiasm or successful forced compliance?

We are in the middle of consultation for the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act and the Fees and Levy review but there are long overdue issues that should be addressed. We are talking about the credibility of the Board and Senior Management and the relationship between the Board, Senior Management and the industry.

The Federation as an organisation knows we have gone full circle and are starting to cover and report on issues that we have already covered. These issues have never been addressed and the Board, Senior Management and Government's way of dealing with them is

disappointment but is he two Million Dollars disappointed like the industry?

It's hard to keep up with all the dodgy dealings and cover arse tactics used and this is one that we forgot about so yes we got it wrong.

The Board stated this in the Review of Fess and Levy:

"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"

This has a huge impact on the accounting of Discipline and Offences. Currently there are two Memorandum accounts covering Discipline and Offences. Last Annual Report Discipline had a positive balance and Offences had a negative balance.

It is obvious the combining of the two of levies will leave it so as an industry we won't know what is being spent on discipline and what is being spent on offences. An easy way for money to be wasted.

Good Luck

Colleen Upton who has served on the Federations Executive Committee since the Federation was started starts on the Plumbers Gasfitters and

to ignore them. What they all expect from the industry is questionable. It's as if they believe the industry should operate on the principle of "In the Board We Trust".

That is far from the case. Where is the honesty, the integrity, the credibility and mostly what do they do for the industry? As the Board have stated they are established for the protection of the public and their property and are not there to support the industry - then as an industry we believe that entitles us to question closely the collection and spending of the money we provide for the protection of the public. If there is no gain for us then it is not reasonable for the Board to expect us to chuck money at them without question.

So leading up to responding to the consultation of the Act and the Fees and Levy review we need to start thinking about what we are getting for our money and is it value for money, and, is it even our responsibility?

Over the next couple of weeks we will be giving you our ideas and those that members have sent in to us so you can build on them for your own submissions. It is important that you make submissions or at least support one of the industry groups making submissions.

It appears the Board are lost in their own self importance. The chairman of the Board had this to say in the Info Brief:

"Another success story is the "Ask for the Card" campaign, with more and more tradespeople and organisations getting involved. If tradespeople start to routinely show their licences to customers, this will have a big impact in driving out the illegal operators who of course do not have a card to show"

If Mr Jackson believes this is a success story he must have very low expectations and standards. What he should be asking himself is that after five years and hundreds of thousands of dollars why isn't everyone in the industry supporting this campaign? Why isn't everyone in the industry supportive of Board initiatives? The answer is simple - a large section of the industry do not trust the Board, they believe the Board have no credibility, the Board are devious, they have two sets of rules - one for them and one for everyone else, they are about position and how other social climbers see them. This was the case when the Office of the Auditor General investigated the Board and reported on it.

Nothing has been done to improve on the relationship between the Board and the industry and if anything, the Board and senior management have but up more barriers over the last four years. Using the "ask for the card campaign" as an example - it is not a bad idea but most people look at the current situation in the industry and ask themselves why they should participate in anything the Board does to help achieve the protection of the Public - don't we do enough now? Isn't simply funding the Board and its campaigns without going the extra distance to make their life even easier more than enough.

The industry ignoring this campaign is one of the stages of turning its back on the regulation of the industry, the lack of support for the

Drainlayers Board next month after being appointed by the Minister last year.

Colleen has no allusions the task ahead of her is a tough one but she is not afraid of stepping up to be counted and to put her views forward.

She has the full support of the Federation committee and we ask you all to support her in her efforts.

We also ask the Board to take the opportunity of listening to different views and to help effect change in the industry.

The Board should remember it doesn't have to be a continual fight with the industry but it is an environment they have created.

existing e CPD scheme is another, the continual lack of support and complaining about the Board are also examples of people who have had enough.

For a lot in the Federation this will be the last licensing period we will participate in unless there is rapid change. It is time to look after ourselves as an industry and forget about the Board and its regulation. We will be having our say in the current consultation and then setting in place plans to turn our back and walk away from the current regulation before the end of March 2016.

Communication is the answer and if the Government and Board won't communicate then let them pay price starting March 2016. The clock is ticking.

Would change at the top make a difference?

The Board should read section 161 of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 Schedule One where it states a member who holds the office of chairperson may at any time be removed from the office of chairperson by the Board.

So the Board does have it in its power to make change. Think about no change- no industry.

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