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IN OTHER NEWS

Letters to the Editor

User Pays

I have been reading now for a few years and little has been heard by both the Board or the Government.

Our costs have sky rocketed, our private time eroded and community standing diminished to a blue collar worker with a cell phone, Ute and a dog.

Yet according to the World Health Organisation we are the most important health workers in the world. So bearing all this in mind and having to look after the health and safety of the public - why is the public not paying for this first class service and care?

Perhaps we should be doubling the charge rates more in line with other leading countries, this way the public would jump up and down which may led to the government having to listen.

But unfortunately you are not allowed to price fix.

Ed: Well stated writer. Yes there is a lot that needs looking at but unfortunately the tradespeople in the industry as a whole don't have any representation.

Who is reliant on who?



Mahatma Gandhi once said "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."

As time goes by the people of New Zealand have become more reliant on the Government and less reliant on themselves, so the Government have responded by taking away the rights of those they

need to help them and have imposed their will by way of legislation. The plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industry is a prime example.

The Government seems to forget that tradespeople working in the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industry are citizens of New Zealand as well and are practitioners in a profession with direct relevance to the health and safety of the New Zealanders.

As a profession the Government and Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board seem to be taking us backwards - where there are less tradespeople per head population than there was ten years ago. It seems to be the people who can make the difference are being kicked in the teeth.

Look at India where as high as 7.5 percent of deaths in are attributed to water and sanitation related causes. Worldwide, 88 percent of diarrhoea cases are due to unsafe water and inadequate sanitation and hygiene. The World Health Organisation has acknowledged that the SARS virus that caused havoc in the Asian countries a few years back, causing hundreds of deaths and billions of dollars in expenditure, was spread through inadequate plumbing - so why does the industry in New Zealand get hammered by regulation that isn't helping?

In what world do they really think forced compliance will get what they are trying to achieve? This is not just happening in our industry. Is forcing tradespeople to pay for consumer protection going to work better than providing proper training at apprentice level and educating the public? We think not.

Competence based licensing is the Government's way of topping up the training as a result of the failings of the Industry Training Organisations and the apprenticeship schemes. We have to admit this places the likes of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers

Yes we have the Master Plumbers and the Federation but what is needed is that combined voice and unified numbers to be able to show we are not going to be mucked around.

It seems as tradespeople we are expected to keep on absorbing the costs imposed on us but it is time for that to stop.

You mention about price fixing and you are quite right that's illegal, but did you ever notice when the fuel companies want to keep their profit margins up they all put their prices up about the same amount at the same time?

It looks like price fixing, it has the same effect as price fixing but they call it price following which is legal so there is some food for thought.

Dear Editor

This is my idea Wal, send a newsletter out to every Federated plumber and tell them we are not paying our fees until we have change, or numbers sitting on the Board .ATT Nick Smith.

Ed: Well writer once upon a time we thought it would never come to such action but as time goes by it is looking more and more likely that is exactly what will happen. Here's hoping it doesn't come to that.

Dear Editor

Did you see this on Yahoo?

Call to crack down on 'chuggers' There's a call for charities to stop putting people out on the street to collect money.

Wellington city councillor Iona Pannett says "chuggers" profit from a form of mild

Board in the middle - they are trying to top up failed training with continuing professional development (CPD which is also failing) but this is the hand they have been dealt by the Government so they have to work with it.

The Minister of Building and Housing could do something about it but he appears to be like all those who have gone before and believes legislation and time is on their side. How mistaken we think he is.

The Federation believes the future is in training and education rather than the current forced regulation. People aren't going to appear like magic and the tradespeople who have the skills that are needed to be handed on are being forced from the industry. We are losing some very capable people who have good skills to pass on. The compressing of the apprenticeship system and some of the "lame" credits (like earning credits for turning up 20 days consecutively to work) are shameful.

We have an "ask for the card campaign" that has been in place for nearly half a decade and it simply targets unauthorised people who try to work in the industry. What has happened to the education of the public? The message about the risks of bad plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying needs to get out there as the public don't understand it.

The number of homeowners who have done things themselves is unreal. Is any thought ever given to cross connections etc? They think they're saving themselves a few bucks, but they're putting themselves and everybody else in their neighbourhood at risk. In New Zealand there's usually a plumber, gasfitter or drainlayer around to fix things before anybody faces the consequences. But what happens when there isn't?

When was the last time you heard of a member of the public being prosecuted for doing their own work, or for employing an unauthorised person to do the work for them – it doesn't happen often enough because it's easier to put the responsibility or blame on the tradespeople. There is a big difference in protecting the health and safety of the public and portraying that you protect them.

It's important to keep in mind that quality plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying installation practices often go unnoticed by the public and are therefore assumed as routine. Often, poor practices are not perceived as a serious health or safety risk and, therefore, their importance is minimized. But we know different.

There are those who see plumbing, gas fitting and drainlaying regulations as an obstruction to their objectives – do the job as cheaply as possible with unskilled labour and few restrictions. It is essential that those of us who share the concerns and objectives of the plumbing, gas fitting and drainlaying trade maintain its standards.

We believe that our industry is critical to the health and safety of the public but we also believe there are better ways to regulate the industry to control and monitor the competence and licensing and

harassment.

She says there are ways of encourage fundraising without making people feel uncomfortable.

"I do just worry a bit when it's about money, and the mechanism for accessing it when there is no consent implied."

"There's a bit of pressure that goes on to support the organisation, and it could be seen as a form of mild harassment even if it is done politely and with good intentions"

I wonder if the PGD Board fall into this category as after all they are a registered charity.

Ed: Well spotted reader. Remember the Board as a Registered Charity is one of the few charities who have been empowered by the Government to tax (levy) people so they don't need to pressure us they can just take it.

give the tradespeople fairness and equality.

So who is reliant on who? The way the industry is getting treated would indicate the Government and Board have the perception the tradespeople in the industry are reliant on them. We know the public are reliant on the Government and the Board as well as on the tradespeople to protect them and their property.

The Federation believes tradespeople are gradually losing their reliance on the Board and Government. The plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industry is not new and has been around in New Zealand for over a hundred years. Tradespeople who have qualified are getting sick of continually having to prove their competence to bureaucrats.

The Federation looks at it this way:

- If tradespeople leave the industry the Government and Board **FAIL**
- If tradespeople operate illegally the Government and Board **FAIL**
- If tradespeople are not competent the Government and Board **FAIL**
- If tradespeople turn their back on the regulation of the industry the Government and Board **FAIL**
- If the public do their own work the Government and Board **FAIL**

All of these things are happening so why aren't the **FAILURES** stopping? Let us know why you think this is happening.

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