

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **Trust doesn't come with a refill!**
- **Change Ahead?**

IN OTHER NEWS

Are the Psychiatrist's paying?

Waikato Hospital is trying to track down 25 patients who were seen by a man employed as a psychiatrist for six months but who is now accused of identity fraud.

The man appeared in Hamilton District Court on Saturday charged with fraud after the hospital became suspicious of his ability and qualifications and it called in police.

Here's another profession that doesn't have to pay to prosecute non registered people. Looks like the tax payers (us included) pay for it.

We wonder if the hospital gets prosecuted like a plumbing firm for employing a non authorised person or if that rule only applies to our industry like a lot of other rules?

PGD Board Structure

We have been asked a number of times what staffing levels Licensed practitioners are funding at the Plumbers

Trust doesn't come with a refill!



Unlike coffee, trust doesn't come with a refill so once it's gone you probably won't get it back (at least not easily), and if you do it probably won't be the same. You can't expect those that you have isolated or pushed away to still be there when you are ready. We fear this is the predicament the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board finds itself in.

For those of us who entrusted the Board and the Government with our future - don't feel stupid for trusting them as we didn't do anything wrong - they were just untrustworthy. This

isn't directed at any individual in particular but is a generalisation as the industry has endured two decades of misguided regulation.

It's now seven years since the Office of the Auditor General started its investigation into the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board. In September 2008, the then Minister for Building and Construction asked the then Auditor-General to consider carrying out the inquiry. The request was prompted by concerns about the number and nature of complaints received by the Minister and the Department of Building and Housing, many of which suggested that the Board was not carrying out its core functions adequately.

Earlier in 2008, the Minister had replaced most of the appointed members of the Board. The new Board members took office with a clear understanding that their role was to address the problems confronting the Board. Two years later the Office of the Auditor General completed its investigation and reported on its findings which were that there were issues in most functions of the Board.

The Auditor General stated:

"We also talked to many individuals and organisations working in the building and construction sector about their interactions with the Board. We encountered a sector that was characterised by suspicion and discontent. Many plumbers and gasfitters we spoke to were unhappy with the work of the Board at many levels. They often did not understand why the Board made certain decisions, could not see the reasons for some

Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board.

As at 30 June 2015 the Board structure was:

Chief Executive/

Registrar. This position has six direct reports.

1. Accountant

2. General Counsel. This position has a senior solicitor (vacant), three solicitors and a legal administration officer reporting to it.

3. Communications Advisor

4. Team leader Support

Services. This position has an administration officer (reception and finance) reporting to it.

5. Technical Services

6. Team Leader Registration

and Licensing. This position has three Registration and Licensing Officers, one Records Administration Officer and two Temporary Registration and Licensing staff.

When all positions are full there are 17 full time staff and two temporary staff.

The Board reported via an Official Information Act Request that Board's Staff turnover figures for the period 25 June 2013 to 25 June 2015 were 11 permanent staff and three temporary staff. That's nearly a 65% turnover for permanent staff and 150% turnover for temporary staff - not a low turnover.

From the Media

requirements, and were unhappy with the cost. They also felt that they were unable to get clear answers to their questions. Given that they fund the Board through their fees, many plumbers and gasfitters were becoming increasingly disaffected. Some openly refused to participate in the Board's regulatory processes. Many challenged the fees they are required to pay. Others told us that their frustration was such that they were considering leaving New Zealand to work elsewhere."

So when you take a deep breath and think about the issues, the industry has endured years of poor regulation imposed by the Board to such an extent the Minister got sick of getting complaints and ordered an investigation which took two years to complete. Another four years was given to correct issues and then there was the follow up report. But has anything REALLY CHANGED?

Sure there have been governance and administrative changes but in reality it has been the Federation that has held the Board accountable both legally and morally. This has come at a cost though - because the Federation didn't trust and follow the Board's lead there continues to be an environment of mistrust. Five years of exclusion and forced compliance.

In the follow up report by the Auditor General it was stated the number of complaints about the Board was small. We don't think this is due to tradespeople being more satisfied, but is more as a result of them not being listened to and not trusting the regulation of the industry any longer. They are generally fatigued with the constant battling and the refusal of the Board to even apologise for the wrongs that were done. We believe the majority of tradespeople are so sick of the failures and forced compliance that they now do the bare minimum to survive the regulation of the industry. The follow up report stated:

"As the Board struggles to balance carrying out its responsibilities at a cost that is acceptable to the trades, its relationship with some tradespeople remains strained and less than productive"

So at least seven years since the problems were identified and not much change and here we are again bundled into the problems of other industries with more reviews, more consultations, more high level desk top reviews by bureaucrats who don't have any idea of what the industry needs to protect the public and don't really care.

Don't forget Hazel Armstrong identified a lot of the issues as early as 2006 when she reported to Hon Michael Cullen. So it's a decade of reports and reviews and no improvement. Before that there was a close to a decade of destruction of the industry and the regulation of the industry by the Board and Industry Training Organisation.

Two decades of issues and no improvement leaves a situation where some question why the industry keeps funding the poor regulation? The Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board obviously believe they are doing a good job as nothing has changed and they keep on pushing through with limited support from the industry.

Did you see this comment on the internet regarding Justice taking over Mt Eden Prison this week.

"It's day one for us, and I hope everyone gives us a little bit of time to get our feet under the table and work out what's really going on and how we can fix it."

Everyone in the Government and their departments wants a fresh start and time.

Practitioners in our industry don't have the luxury of getting it wrong. We are expected to go through our entire time as a tradesperson and not make any "human" mistakes and if we do we get hammered, called incompetent, prosecuted and then have it publicised on the Board website for another three years after prosecution.

We just don't get it as Boards (PGD Board included) and management make "mistakes" and nothing happens - no accountability at all but as a tradesperson a mistake costs us financially and in reputation and sometimes even a persons livelihood.

It seems to be those who make the rules don't have to abide by any rules themselves.

It's decision time

This edition has been dedicated to past events, to history of our industry over a period where the industry had not stood up for its self - a period where it followed blindly until people got pissed off and formed the Federation.

So what do we as an industry do now? Do we let history

Not everyone is pleased with decisions made and the motivations behind them or even the support for them. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a prime example where it went from a trend the Government wanted - to a money making venture for organisations and individuals and ended up as a points buying scheme that achieves very little but to give tradespeople points so they can license. The constant mantra that what is being achieved in true upskilling is more about buying points while we see the introduction of things like a new certification regime where people were begging for some sort of guidance, where we have a disciplinary process that does not appear to have a feedback loop into training (at licensed or apprentice level), where codes, regulation and legislation are changing but there are not mandatory courses to ensure all tradespeople know what is happening. It isn't rocket science, it isn't about points, but it is about common sense and consumer and practitioner safety.

How many restarts have there been over the last 20 years and all to no advantage to the industry or the public for that matter. Where are the measures of success?

There appears to be too much following going on and not enough leadership. Perhaps if the Board was to join with the industry and was to show signs of advancement then we might all move forward. The Federation has put its line in the sand for April next year so we can only hope for improvement - but in reality 20 years of negligent regulation will be hard to change, as will the attitudes of those in positions of authority.

Change Ahead?



The Board Registrar/Chief Executive Martin Sawyers has hit the ground running and has implemented changes already which have been approved by the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board.

Here are some of the key focus areas:

Streamlining complaints and discipline - Mr Sawyers believes the current cost of dealing with the lower level complaints is disproportionate to the risks associated with those complaints and he is right. The process can be long and stressful for those involved where significant health and safety issues do not arise. He has explored ways of dealing with those lower level complaints without them needing to automatically go through an investigation process. At the July meeting, the Board approved a significant change with the introduction of compliance advice and dispute resolution as a way of resolving many lower level complaints.

What does this mean? When a complaint does not give rise to

repeat for another decade or do we band together and stand up for ourselves.

To date there have been pockets of resistance to the poor regulation of the industry, not the regulation, but the poor regulation. It's not about being regulated it's about the manner in which we are regulated.

Do we fight for fairness and equality or do we put up with what we have now or worse?

Now is the time to push for what the industry needs but we must do it as a united industry.

Give us your thoughts.

Change for the Sake of Change?

We picked up in the media this week about changes to the way the New Zealand does things.

For example changing the flag, the immediate cost of which would finance the PGD Board for about 8 years or pay the prosecution function for around 60 years, or wanting to change the National Anthem.

Is money being spent just for the sake of change? When you look at legislative changes are they really needed or are they just done to support some bureaucrats bright idea?

Have a good think about the changes we are facing, ACC, Health and Safety, regulation of the industry, trade competency and the list goes on but what are actually necessary and what are just

significant health and safety issues; there is no significant history of non-compliance; the behaviour isn't of a type identified by the Board as a priority; and no wider public interest issues arise, staff will work with both the complainant and the practitioner to see if it can be resolved. This will be achieved by sending a reminder letter to the practitioner of their obligations (a compliance advice letter), or by way of agreement.

This initiative is designed to reduce both the cost and stress associate with complaints. To help make this initiative a success, the Board seeks the cooperation and assistance of practitioners. If you get a call about matters that have been assessed as being suitable for resolution in this way, please work with them for resolution.

The Federation believes this process is long overdue and is fully supportive of it. What it takes now is for the process to gain industry trust and that can't be achieved unless it is given a go, but it is certainly better than going through a stressful and very costly discipline process.

Industry engagement - Mr Sawyers says it is important that he continue to take the opportunities to meet with as many tradespeople and other stakeholders as possible. The Federation gets the impression Mr Sawyer genuinely wants to understand the concerns of our industry and how things can be improved.

Continuing Professional Development - Mr Sawyers has some ideas on how CPD can be improved and will be working on those ideas as part of the review. Here's hoping common sense will prevail along with the proper application of Section 32 as intended by the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act.

Supervision - Mr Sawyers believes there is confusion about supervision. He believes the upcoming review is the opportunity for the industry to clarify what the appropriate level of supervision is that would deal with the risks associated to the different categories of work.

Unauthorised people - Continued work in mitigating the risk to public health and safety from unauthorised people is also in Mr Sawyers focus. He wants to develop further strategies that help deal with illegal operators within the industry.

Mr Sawyers stated he is open to direct contact if there are any questions or concerns about the Board and how they operate. He feels it is far better to hear it "straight from the horse's mouth", than to speculate or listen to information that may not be entirely accurate.

It is the Federation's hope that Martin Sawyers open approach and a change in attitude by the Board may set everyone on a converging course to a better final product - being fairness and equality in plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying regulations and legislation. We

supporting someone's "good idea".

are still mindful that the clock is ticking and are hopeful change is ahead but everyone can be forewarned that if it is not then our resolve will be even greater as we approach next year's licensing period.

So are the changes a threat or an opportunity - only time will tell.

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