



## Fellow Practitioner Issue 267 Dated 14 August 2015

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [The Wrong Direction](#)
- [Communication does work.](#)
- [Has the PGD Board been Abandoned?](#)

### IN OTHER NEWS

#### Fees and Levy Consultation

Can we believe the figures we are being given?

We believe the new Registrar/Chief Executive will be doing his best to ensure we are, but he won't have a grasp of all the tactics that were used before his appointment.

We as an industry are being asked to believe everything possible has been done to keep costs, in particular overheads, to a minimum.

The Federation believes the information contained in the Annual Report would be useful but no doubt we won't see that prior to the consultation meetings.

Last year's Annual

### The Wrong Direction



In the latest Quarterly Review the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board kept the Government and industry stakeholders updated by giving them the following information:

*The amount of authorisations issued during the 2014/15 licensing year was 8% higher than the year prior.*

*The annual number of authorisations issued has returned to the levels existing pre-introduction of CPD for plumbers and drainlayers.*

*From 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015, the Board received applications for, and granted, 15,448 authorisations to 945 people and one company*

We made mention a few issues ago when the Board said they had corrected the public register, that it would be interesting to see what figures the Board produced in the Annual Report, and this Quarterly Review it would seem, is based on that Annual Report.

Before going any further you may want to look again at the information passed on to the Government and industry stakeholders - **15,448 authorisations issued to 945 people and one company**. That's an amazing **16.32** authorisations each!!!!

Obviously a "**MISTAKE**" but remember as tradespeople we don't have the luxury of making mistakes - we simply get told we are incompetent and are held accountable.

So the professionals paid to regulate our industry are not above making mistakes either, but they don't seem to be held to account.

Now the 8% increase in authorisations is very interesting, as is the claim of authorisations getting back to the levels of pre-introduction of CPD for plumbers and drainlayers. Does that mean the Board is admitting CPD affected the number of authorisations issued? It seems to be.

We went back to the 2010-2011 licensing year when there were 10,285 authorisations issued to registered people that year. The rest of the 15,703 authorisations issued were exemptions, limited certificates, provisional licences etc - that's 5,418 authorisations issued to partially qualified/trained people.

We looked at the figures for authorisations issued to registered people as at 8 August 2015 which is well past the reporting period, and there were 9,369

Report showed it cost more for overheads than what it did to perform the Board's functions so where do we draw the line for cost benefit?

Board minutes would indicate the Annual Report was adopted on 7 July 2015 and the Chairman and Deputy Chairman were authorised to sign it.

Now it is a matter of waiting for it to be tabled in Parliament by the Minister of Building and Housing.

#### Letter to the Editor



*As a Registered Plumber, Gasfitter, and Drainlayer since 1957 and still licensed, I make the following comments.*

*Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers are a special breed of person. They are prepared to serve 4 years on relatively low wages to serve an apprenticeship to become qualified and go on to further study to be able to call themselves Certifiers.*

*All of the above means that we become controlled by the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Board, a body which is now, because of legislation much more than a*

authorisations issued.

That's 916 less authorisations issued to registered people - so if the authorisations are reaching similar levels that they were pre-introduction CPD, then doesn't that mean the number of exemption holders, provisional licenses holders etc have increased substantially? And remember this - they mostly don't have to do CPD.

We are very confident that an increase in exemptions holders etc is not the direction the industry should be heading, so perhaps the Board should start reporting on the figures that matter and look at the issues rather than figures that attempt to make them look successful.

Authorisations don't equate to progression or what is best for the public or the industry.

If things aren't looking good we would prefer honesty so solutions could be found rather than playing with figures to make a bad situation look good.

We firmly believe that as a whole industry what we should be striving for are totally trained, and completely qualified individuals – this will ensure quality for customers and quality for our industry. We stand for longer, more thorough apprenticeships, and fully qualified tradespeople who can sign off their own work.

#### Communication does work.



It's been a long time since the Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying industry has been listened to, and the appointment of Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying Board members for short periods of time would indicate the Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying industry future is already mapped out as far as the government is concerned.

We know there is consultation going on at the moment, but will the views of the industry be taken into account or is it "sham" consultation? Will it be consultation like there was for the gas certification where the country ends up with a scheme that leads to the situation we have now, where industry knows the public has less protection than they ever had and it comes at a greater cost, plus it is less transparent. In fact we had a laugh when we read the latest ESS news bulletin that claims the certification story as a success. This had robust debate between lots of the suit wearers, but the consultation meetings had very few practitioners.

We suspect that there is still a real lack of understanding amongst gasfitters on high, medium and low risk. If you don't register a certificate – who knows that you did it? Some gasfitters who are unlicensed could easily be flying under the radar with this scheme. After all there are no barriers to downloading the blank certificate. Hell anyone could be downloading them, filling them in and giving one to the customer and then screwing up the original and chucking it away – no one would be any the wiser UNTIL something goes wrong.

The gas certification scheme has to be one of the biggest mistakes the Government has made – the old system under the PGDB was transparent for both gasfitters AND consumers – there was NO need to change it – and there

*licensing body and intruding into the role of a quality control body.*

*The Board was for almost 100 years made up from competent trades people nominated by the Industry along with representatives of the Local Authorities ,the Unions and the Health Department their role being to maintain a register of people who satisfied the Board by examination that they were competent Trades people.*

*It is my opinion that this was the glue that produced a Board that the Industry had confidence and respect for.*

*At the present time all it takes is a very well compiled CV and self promotion to become a candidate for appointment to the Board. {what about having the support of the Industry}*

*The present situation is that the Board appears from the general Industry view as a group of people who have developed an attitude of we know better.*

*This I believe has transferred into total arrogance and is not helping the Industry that provides the funding for the Board.*

*I also believe this has removed the respect that the Industry*

certainly was NO NEED to change it to something INFERIOR to what we had.

It seems the bureaucrats look down on the tradespeople and feel our views are not of any value when in fact we know what is best for us to protect the health and safety of the public because we do it every day.

If you look at the actions taken by the Government over the years it has always been as the result of a complaint of some kind so it poses the question about proactive action by the Government.

Two Ministers have said the Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying portfolio is the worst they have had so why haven't they fixed it? Why don't they have proper dialog with the industry instead of fob off meetings?

The current Minister and Government need to listen to the industry as not all industries are the same - if they were plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers would be bitching and moaning the same as the farmers and importers as we are hurting in this economic environment as well.

Is another decade of poor regulation going to be worth an eternity of confrontation? Come on Dr Smith get your people to talk to ours and put a stop to all the confrontation. Show leadership – make changes the industry wants and needs.

## Has the PGD Board been Abandoned?



Probably not a comment most of you would expect from the Federation, but is it possible the Board has been abandoned by those who should be helping and advising it? Sure they are an independent statutory Board but everyone needs help.

The impression we have is that the likes of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and

Employment (MBIE) who advise the Minister of Building and Housing, are waiting for the PGD Board to self destruct so it makes their job of implementing bureaucratic ideas easier.

Why do some of the most highly paid people in New Zealand not have ideas to help the Board? When was the last time we saw anything productive or good for our industry from MBIE?

The Federation still stands by the idea that there needs to be a stakeholder and government conference to nut out what is needed and what is agreed upon. Imagine how much time and money would be saved by finding out the common ground.

The Government pushed for a competency based Act based on a concept saying other industries do it but yet what was imposed on plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers was different.

Now the Government is attempting to tidy up another of their failures by attempting to combine the regulation of a number of industries into one enforcement body. Once they get that bureaucratic monster into place even more bullshit will be imposed on the industries. It will be an enforcement and collection agency like the Inland Revenue. Their success will be gauged by the

*should have for this Board as they do not recognise that the employers of trainees, and also the training providers are capable of producing what is required by the total Industry.*

*If there were 200 employers in a room there would be 200 different opinions on what makes a skilled tradesman.*

*For the Board to say that we need to continually prove our competence is just a case of the attitude of we know better and puts down the efforts of the training providers, and also those people who gamble with their capital and provide employment.*

*If the Industry does not have the confidence required to make the Board relevant, not just a money grabbing Government approved body then it is time to start again.*

*A total review involving the industry is required urgently to restore the confidence of the Industry in our registration board*

number of unauthorised people they catch and the number of prosecutions.

Once this regulation bureaucratic monster is in place it will be left up to some form of industry board to tidy up the mess and help tradespeople comply to the new form of regulation. There will be no additional protection for the public and we believe the situation will get worse with regard to unauthorised people in the industries.

Where is the incentive for the industry to comply with forced regulation - even now with a Board that has **SOME** interest in the industry there is very little support for the manner in which it does things. Imagine what it will be like with a bureaucratic monster that doesn't care about anything but numbers.

Forced compliance only regulates honest people the same as tax only taxes honest people and we all know the main offenders get away with it.

Those who talk about economies of scale and how this might save us all some money when it comes to licensing – we say look at what has happened when our ITO joined SKILLS. We should have expected some savings in apprenticeship costs, and better service from this large ITO – but no, what has happened is the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industries have just been sucked into a bigger pile of dung – and their voice has become smaller. DON'T let this happen to our licensing and regulatory Board.

#### **Your Publication**

The Fellow Practitioner is your publication so don't be afraid to write in and tell us your issues.

Tell us about your concerns and give us your ideas. This is our industry and we are the ones who should be deciding it's direction.

If we don't step up others will dictate over us and we will become slaves to our own industry. Take ownership and have your say before it is too late.

Send your views to [wal.gordon@xtra.co.nz](mailto:wal.gordon@xtra.co.nz)

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