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IN OTHER NEWS

Joke of the week from the Media

Super-ministry staff to go on strike

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Staff at the controversy-plagued Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment are going on strike over a so-called "culture of mistrust" within the super-ministry.

More than 1000 workers have voted to take industrial action on November 5 and November 23, with two-hour stop-work strikes planned.

Their union, the Public Service Association, says MBIE is refusing to offer any pay increases and management continue to contribute to poor workplace culture.

"These people help keep to set the standard for all New Zealand workers, but face unfair bosses who won't take them seriously in their own workplace," national secretary Erin Polaczuk said.

Union members did not

Is the Tail Trying to Wag the Dog?



"The tail wagging the dog" is a saying from way back, but what does it actually mean. We did some digging around like a dog looking for a bone and found this definition:

"The tail wagging the dog: This means that the least important part of a situation has too much influence over the most important part."

The Federation believes this is happening on a couple of fronts at the moment and not surprisingly both have to do with training. We believe Continual Professional Development (CPD) is being influenced by a supplier of CPD, and the NZQA qualifications in Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying are being influenced by Skills NZ, in particular the apprenticeship training.

Some of the people riding on the coat tails of the registered people in the industry seem to be trying to control the situations. We have people who leverage the strength of their personality against the weakness of others in order to get the others to meet what we consider to be their selfish agenda.

This week photographs of practitioners attending CPD in Whanganui were posted on Facebook with the following caption.

"Stephen in action in Wanganui. 50 plumbers and nobody is aware of the Boards plan to change CPD. Every single person in the room is against the change."

Here is some of the script on the same Facebook item.

"Great work getting this many plumbers together Aqualine - I'm interested in what the reasons were for them ALL being against the proposal on CPD - I wonder how many had read the actual document?"

Aqualine Products *"It was a great night with a great bunch of guys. To answer your question, I doubt anyone read the document because nobody was aware of the changes. 100% of tradesmen were against changing to the new scheme. But to be fair, I presented the new proposal. I do not agree with the PGDF proposal for a 4-6 hour compulsory course. My explanation would not have been neutral as I feel strongly about this. I have invited the Board to attend my course and listen to what the industry are saying and explain the changes. They are always welcome. Give me another 2 weeks and I will give you 1000 signatures against the change,*

take lightly the decision to strike but did so "overwhelmingly", she said.

Labour's economic development spokesman David Clark says it's "humiliating" for the ministry that handles labour relations to be accused of having a poor workplace culture.

"It is also rank hypocrisy that a ministry which last year gifted huge salary increases to senior management now refuses any pay rise for rank and file staff," he said.

MBIE was in the firing line earlier this year over a number of questionable spending decisions.

It spent \$140,000 on an information screen for the reception area of its Wellington headquarters and \$70,000 for a sign outside the building.

The ministry was also criticised for installing hair straighteners in changing rooms.

ED:

Doesn't it make you sick to the stomach that this organisation has such an influence over our everyday life?

No wonder we can't get any headway with getting fairness and equality in our industry when they don't even give a shit about their own employees.

This all seems to be about attitudes. How can we trust an organisation whose staff don't even trust it?

but I only have until Friday. The positive about this is that it encourages the trade to have a say on the direction of their industry. I only hope the Board take a breath on this and listen to the industry. There is no hurry"

Here is a supplier gloating that he has basically duped the registered tradespeople attending CPD. He has openly admitted he has given them only his view and has enticed them to submit against the proposed CPD scheme. He has used the CPD training and "beers and BBQ" to promote his view and his product.

Obviously this supplier does not believe enough in his product that if practitioners were given a "choice" to attend "with no points" he wouldn't get the numbers, and is reliant on a captive audience that is forced to do CPD training to obtain their annual authority to practice from the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board.

Do plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers out there really believe suppliers are providing them with CPD training for FREE?? Anything they spend on tradespeople is recovered in the cost of their product, it's simply marketing. So you may not have to pay on the night, but you are definitely paying somewhere along the line.

It is obvious the tradespeople in Whanganui believed the supplier that attending their repetitive training for three hours was worth the other 17 hours of CPD training they need to do. The course attended may have been "nice to know" but was it really necessary? What percentage of the course was competency training and what part was "sales" driven. We see in the photos displays for backflow prevention devices, so is Whanganui going to be the best protected region for backflow or was this supplier pushing how good their new product is?

Suppliers have a job to do and that is selling their product. Some do it well and support the industry and others use the captive audience i.e. tradespeople being forced to obtain CPD points, as a marketing tool. They use the lure that their course is free to get you to listen as they push their product and they throw in a bit of legislation information. Think of these things when you are really weighing up what is best for this industry when it comes to CPD:

- who pays for the accreditation of the suppliers courses to the Board - you the tradespeople do,
- who pays for the reaccreditation of the courses every two years - you the tradespeople do,
- who pays for the administration of CPD courses - you the tradespeople do,
- who pays for the review of points at licensing time - you the tradespeople do,
- who pays for the hours you waste obtaining the CPD points - you the tradespeople do, and
- who pays for the 270,000 hours wasted doing CPD in its current form - our families do, and



Dear Editor,

Went to another useless CPD night put on by Marley this week. (Marley did a good job).

Probably about 30 plumbers there. I only managed to speak to 2 or 3 and none were aware of the consultation or of the intended change to CPD and the costs involved.

Seems to me that the pitiful efforts of the Board are not respected so the communication needs to be improved.

It also shows what an apathetic bunch most plumbers are. Could you possibly urge your readers to pass on your newsletter to at least one colleague every week. When they do so have them copy you in so you have their details and then open up more communication!

I think everyone just gets busy and busy means money in the pocket and beer in the belly. Most other things get attended to only when absolutely necessary after that. It's probably always been like that. Only the hierarchy give a dam after that, and then most likely only a small percentage of them, all driven by their own agendas.

So it's an uphill battle.

I don't think it's much use relying on the Government for anything. It's down to

• who stands to benefit from having a captive audience compelled to attend CPD training - the suppliers do.

The Federation does not see how tradespeople can be happy placing their licensing in the hands of a supplier. Remember if a supplier was to refuse to issue your points or notify the Board, you can't relicence and don't say it won't happen because it has already. Do you really feel comfortable putting your license in the hands of a sales person who could have been selling fish, chips and coca-cola yesterday and now they judge your competence? Is this their role?

Don't get us wrong there are some good suppliers out there and there are also some good courses, all of which people would attend even if they weren't linked to our licensing. If a supplier is that insecure about their product and marketing that they need people to be forced to attend then we don't want anything to do with them or their product. If suppliers want to help the industry, then stop selling products to unlicensed/unqualified people.

Moving on to the second issue and that is a supplier affecting apprenticeship training? In this case we are talking about a Government sanctioned Industry Training Organisation, The Skills Organisation.

This Registered Charity which posted a \$1.3M profit last year operates on \$31M of income being made up of \$5.3M industry contribution and \$25M of Government grants and the rest is other income. This is for all the trades it has under its operations.

They pay out \$310,000 in Directors fees and a whopping \$10.6M in employee benefits and superannuation expenses, just under \$11M in total. **So out of the income over 35% is spent on employee costs.** Just under \$1M is spent on lease and rental costs, \$6.2M is spent on administration costs, governance and depreciation. **It's starting to look like some of the overseas charities where only 10 cents on the dollar actually reaches those that the donation was made for,** and in our opinion that is not a good use of OUR money and the taxpayers money. We can look back six years at how much the apprentice contribution was, \$6,000, and now it is over \$12,000 and what extra do they get for this 100% increase?

We see a regime that is training apprentices to pass assessments not to actually do the job. There seems to be a theory that all apprenticeships are the same - but they are not. Compare a builder to a plumber. A building apprentice will spend months on the same site building a house where a plumbing apprentice would be lucky to spend 3 days in a row on a domestic site. This creates a huge difference in the training methods.

We think the question must be asked about the effectiveness of the ITO scheme as it appears a lot of money is being spent on bureaucracy and wages and there is no marked improvement in apprentice skills.

And if it is an "INDUSTRY" training organisation then why doesn't the training apply to all qualifications in the industry? Certifying is a prime example of practitioners being abandoned to find their own way through the qualification system. How many years has the Craftsman/Certifying qualification existed and where is the help for practitioners in achieving that status?

the trade to sort it out with the Board and mould something that everyone can be proud of (and deal to the ITO and the Polytechs). The conflict between industry groups has to be put aside and a big discussion about the rights and wrong.

Big task. Would be a good project for a couple of just retired plumbers that care, but they would need to be paid.

ED:

Writer you have summed it up very well. A lot of work needs to be done, fences to be mended and more to be kicked down. Numbers and help is what is needed.

If you have any ideas of how the Board can communicate better with the industry let us know.

The Federation believes assessments should be designed to assess the industry training rather than having to design the industry training to meet budget. There is plenty of money there, it's just the way it's being used and the places it's being directed.

There comes a time when everyone must make a stand for what they think is right and the Federation is a firm believer that if it affects practitioners then it's the practitioners' decision for what is best not that of the people riding on the coat tails of practitioners.

You have a voice so use it or you will have to sit back and get fish, chips and coca-cola feed to you for the rest of your time in the industry. For those who believe they can influence the industry for self gain we suggest you butt out and don't concern yourself with other people's issues.

For the Practitioners - stop the least important part of a situation having too much influence over the most important part - US - and remember this, there is a reason a dog wags its tail and that's because the dog is smarter than its tail.

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