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IN OTHER NEWS

Letters to the Editor

Good morning Editor

Yesterday I was having a yarn separately to two plumbers, one nearing retirement age another about 50 years young.

I mentioned to both about the CPD points & the meetings coming up.

The older one says to me "if I had plenty of doe I would take the bastards to court because when I got my ticket it was for life."

The 50 year old says to me "it will be a circus , the three of us are based in South Auckland , our meetings are in Mt Wellington."

That's not too bad see Auckland traffic??

The 50 year old says to me "that's going to be a lot of plumbers not working on those days..... another good point."

Do They Really Know What Is Needed?



We hate to say we told you so, but the Federation has been saying for years that the industry is rapidly approaching a skills shortage, and it was totally ignored by the "powers that be", and now everyone proclaiming to be industry experts are jumping on the band wagon saying there's a shortage.

It really does make you wonder about people's motivations and the qualifications they have to comment. During the last recession we saw many firms that usually took one, two or three apprentices a year – take none – so it was only a matter of time before the shortfall showed itself. These figures would have been available to the ITO and therefore TEC and government surely?

In reality does a qualification put you in a position of authority to make decisions that affect those who have the practical knowledge and skills that keep New Zealanders safe and contribute extensively to the economy? Yes we have the knowledge and skills, and yes it's the likes of us that keep the country running and yet we appear to have very little say in the direction of our own industry.

It's almost as if there is education and class discrimination going on. Currently under the New Zealand Qualification framework there are framework levels and basically levels 1-4 are deemed to train people in knowledge and skills. This is the area that includes trades such as ours.

Level 5 and above are deemed to be trained in analysis and includes lawyers, architects, accountants, business analysts and so the list goes on. These are mostly the people who eventually make the laws and legislation. These analytical people are the people who are making the practical decisions with regard to regulation imposed on us.

When you look at it from a practical perspective - do these people actually know what they are doing? It seems we have reached a situation where those with the knowledge and skills are getting dictated to by those who have analysed the thoughts of their bosses, who are sometimes so full of themselves they don't have to ask for advice - they simply say what their opinion is and the

I said the tech is running the courses, the 50 year old says that'll be another reason why it will be a balls up.

I asked what will they teach us? The three of us do totally different aspects of the trade, I said what about the drainlayers, gasfitters, sitting next to us at these meetings

So it will be interesting to see how we all get on or how long this type of CPD lasts .

These are just our thoughts & what we think of things, a few plumbers still not real happy.

Fingers crossed it goes ok.

Your thoughts Editor.

ED:

Hello writer.

Thanks very much for your thoughts, feedback and support.

A couple of the Federation Executive committee members have attended the CPD Training and were quite impressed.

The big thing to remember is that the training is to ensure the passage of relevant information that has been identified as being necessary for practitioners.

Obviously those who are moving on in years have seen and done a lot and may not think it

analysts fit the information available to justify the opinion.

Don't get us wrong these people do have a role, but why does it take so long to get anything done? We're not talking about weeks or months we are talking about YEARS, and by the time anything has been decided the entire situation has changed.

Those of us trained at Level Four quite often look at what is imposed on us and ask "what fool thought of this?" (read quite often for that!) The gas certification scheme is an absolute pearler of an example where a system that was working extremely well was replaced with another more time consuming scheme that is not as effective and has reduced the protection to the public and insurance companies.

We seem to be going through a similar scenario now with the review of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 and the review of occupational regulation in the construction industry. Information is being collected, desktop research is being done and it's all being collated into a report to be submitted to the Minister of Building and Housing who has already voiced his opinion on where he wants occupational regulation to go.

Perhaps the analysts should be asking those with knowledge and skills what is needed to make things work and work even better. It is obviously better to have people support what is happening rather than have them opposing it. You would think that that people who claim to be so smart would have the sense to get advice from those who know.

Looking back over the last five years at what has happened and how those with knowledge and skills have been right, and have been "proved" right in the eyes of Tribunals, the Regulation's Review Committee, Select Committees, the Auditor General's Office and the Office of the Ombudsman, even the Prime Minister said the industry knows what is best for it - so **WHEN ARE THEY GOING TO LISTEN????**

There seems to be a fear by the powers that be of letting others suggest what should be done. There are thousands of tradespeople out there who are multi skilled, some are running successful businesses, most have multiple trades, some have university qualifications and most have excellent problem solving skills backed by common sense, so why not tap into this wealth of knowledge?

Ministers, the Government, Ministries, the PGD Board and the industry all going in different directions won't get anywhere, and productivity will fall even further as will skill levels. It's time for leadership – it's time for someone to step up and get the best out of all affected parties. Use their skills and strengths to get the best for the industry.

John F Kennedy wisely said ***"There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long range risks of comfortable inaction."*** It's time for everyone to put aside differences and pre-conceived ideas and start setting a productive future as there is no doubt everyone wants a secure future - so let's work together to get there.

is necessary for them, but there are a lot in the industry who don't have the benefit of that experience or the common sense that older people seem to have.

We would hope those of us who are getting on in years take the opportunity to encourage others and pass on our knowledge.

Dear Editor

I've been hearing all these advertisements on the radio trying to encourage people to take on trades.

I know for a fact that it's easy to get a suitable apprentice but where is the encouragement for us to do that?

It seems to me that everyone wants us to provide everything for the apprentice.

As an employer we are providing time, wages, fees, skills training and knowledge where the ITO and Government are providing bugger all.

Where is the incentive for me to spend my money and time to train someone?.

ED:

Yes writer there is a huge amount that needs to be done and it makes us wonder why as an industry we let it get so far down this road to self-destruction.

A once proud industry seems to have fallen by

Our Qualifications



Whilst talking of qualifications, for quite some time now, and some would say for far too long, there has been a review of the qualifications for plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers. The review sets the stage for what is

required from apprentices and trainees for at least the next couple of decades. There have been meetings, (several), and some consultation but the review has been in progress for so long that times have changed and the Federation believes the requirements of the industry aren't being met.

The process has been concentrating on a Level Four qualification to get apprentices qualified at the current Licensing Plumber, Gasfitter and Drainlayer level. The Federation believes this qualification doesn't meet the needs of the industry, the public or the legislation imposed by the Government.

There has been a push to get the qualifications completed but the Federation believes all the registration classes and qualifications need to be addressed to meet current and future needs. We feel that if it is not done right now then the industry will be stuck with a qualification that creates problems in the industry for at least the next one to two decades.

Some in the industry want to proceed, giving in to pressure from outside influences, but the Federation believes it is best to stop, re-think and get it right. The Government won't let the situation occur where systems aren't in place to train apprentice plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers and they aren't that stupid that they won't work with the industry to get a system that meets everyone needs. (At least we hope they aren't!)

There are also those who want to retain a level five qualification, which as we explained above is a level of analysis. Remember up to level four is knowledge and skills. We say forget about the higher the number the higher the qualification and look at it this way, if you qualify as a tradesperson at level four you are at the top of your chosen profession but someone qualifying at university at level five or above are still at the bottom of their heap. Just little fish in a big ocean.

The Federation is firmly advocating that when an apprentice finishes their apprenticeship they are competent, fully qualified, responsible for their own work and do not require supervision. We don't see the worth in partial qualifications which create supervision issues in the industry. Sure, this may mean the apprenticeship is extended by 12 months or so, but the outcome is a fully competent, qualified tradesperson able to do the work, sign off the work, and be responsible for the work.

the way side and has accepted everything chucked at it by those who have claimed they knew best.

The industry has put up with all the garbage for the last 20 or so years and now we are at the stage where those who actually cared and remember what the industry was like are getting on in years and quite frankly don't have the energy to fight the fight that is needed.

Perhaps what is needed is one last push by those who care to change the processes and procedures to get what the industry needs.

What people don't realise is that once the skills and knowledge are gone it's a long road to get them back or to even get trainees to a competent stage.

One issue that has occurred over the years is that the costs of having an apprentice have increased, but so also have the requirements on the business owners. The training being supplied by the Industry Training Organisation has decreased and the onus on the business owners has increased. This has created a situation where business owners are providing the majority of the training and paying for the privilege of having an apprentice. It's no wonder the number of people taking on apprentices is limited.

The Federation supports the development of courses where training is actually provided - not assessments. We want to see a return to an environment where an apprentice will return from a course and say "hey boss I can do this now let me have a go". Where they are invigorated when they return from block course and are raring to go – we don't see this so much with the one week block course assessments. We are sure those who want to be in the trade want to be fully qualified and want to be productive so let's give them the opportunity.

We are also sure more people would take on apprentices if it was cost effective and beneficial to the industry.

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