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IN OTHER NEWS

Letter to the Editor



Dear Editor

I agree with your comments last week about user pays.

I've been in the industry a long time and we have always been treated as though we are stupid and in many ways, we have been.

We have never stood up for ourselves and some in the industry have taken advantage of that and have sided with the Government agencies controlling our direction.

The young people coming through now don't know half of what has happened and what the industry has lost.

They don't understand what it is like to be proud of your industry and what you do for society.

I admire you and the Federation for saying the

Is There a Chance?



Four years ago the Federation voiced its concerns to the then Industry Training Organisation (ITO) about the manner in which the review of the Plumbing

Gasfitting and Drainlaying industry qualifications was being conducted.

The Federation was so resolute in its belief that it later withdrew from the process and was accused of being out of step with changes that appeared to be happening with training. It later re-engaged in the process after being guaranteed it would be a "Greenfields" process. In many disciplines, a "Greenfield" project is one that lacks constraints imposed by prior work.

On 11/08/2012, at 7:37 AM, "Wal Gordon" wrote to the ITO and contracted facilitator:

I believe there has been insufficient discussion about the needs of the industry. It appears we are heading off developing qualifications without having the base need identified. Already we see people are using the term "journeyman" which seems to have become a done deal. We don't appear to be coming up with options but rather a one track line of thought that others are clipping on to like Lego blocks.

We need to look at the needs of the industry and what people can do upon qualification. We touched on the issue of one qualification and people stated we needed an "out" at various levels. Is that really what the industry needs or wants - more partially trained people who are a danger to the industry but more importantly to the public.

We seem to be going down the track of catering for the non commitment of the young and allowing them to waste time and opt out where we should be developing a qualification that is held in high regard by the industry and the public that needs commitment to gain the qualifications. I would sooner have one well trained person with commitment that can do something than 100 partially trained people who can do bits and pieces.

I ask this question; Why have opt out levels? If a person opts out, do we want them to come back two years later and carry on.

Remember people claim our industry is changing at a rapid pace and people aren't keeping up with techniques and technology. To me an opt out level is a failure, in our industry, in that they can't do

things that need to be said.

Ed:

Thanks very much writer.

Yes, too much inaction in previous years has contributed to our industry becoming a dumping ground for poor policy and procedures and for Government cronies wanting to move to bigger and better things.

When was the last time we actually had a Minister who was prepared to put in the effort for change? They just continually pass the buck and blame the industry.

If they had a gram of common sense, they would put in the effort and communicate with the industry to resolve the problems.

It has to be better for all to get the issues resolved rather to fob them off, and have them continue for decades as has happened.

All it would take is for one Minister to actually care about New Zealanders and our industry and take action.

Dear Editor

I attended the CPD training this week and feel it was a great success.

From a personal point of view, I can get on with the rest of my year doing the things that really matter like running my business and spending time with my family.

anything without supervision. What happens when we run out of supervisors?

No disrespect to anyone in the workgroup but I feel the representation of practicing trades people is insufficient in this workgroup and that we are catering for the wants of organisations rather than the future of the industry. I ask each of you to look long and hard at the direction we are currently taking and recommend we come up with more than one option.

The ITO responded on 13 August 2012 9:48 a.m.

Your comments should be addressed to governance. I'll pass them to XXXX

The Federation responded:

I disagree. I believe the workgroups job is to come up with solutions and options for the Governance group to consider. It should be a bottom up process hence having industry involvement. It seems the process is turning into a top down situation where we are being told to come up with solutions to fit a line of thought which may not be what is required by industry but based on personal opinion.

There also seems to be some issues getting lost in translation from one group to the other.

This is the industries one chance to get things right for a number of years to come and I will continue to voice my concerns if appropriate.

Remember the object of the exercise as stated by Tim Fowler is that there are far too many qualifications that do not meet community or industry needs and the qualifications need to be reduced in numbers particularly in levels 1-6. The qualifications should reflect what a person know, be and do as a consequence. So far we have increased the number of qualifications and people still cannot do anything upon qualification.

My impression is Educationalists are running this review and the industry needs are taking second place.

Two months later the after it become apparent the process wasn't changing the Federation submitted this:

The Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Federation wishes to advise it is suspending its participation in the NZQA Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying Review.

This decision has not been made lightly as we want nothing more than a system that provides to the individual, the industry and the public. We feel options have not been properly explored and we believe the path being followed is nothing more than a re-packaging of the current failing system designed by the same people.

Tim Fowler stated there were far too many qualifications and a lot

Some just don't realise the weight taken off you when you get something like CPD out of the way.

Thanks to the Federation and others who fought hard to get this changed and I suppose the current Board for voting the process through.

I haven't had much to do with the Board but I don't hear as many people bitching and moaning about them.

I fully support you with your views on the training and qualifications that you have expressed over the last month or so.

Thanks for keeping us informed on issues that matter.

Ed:

Thanks writer. Some very good points there and yes it is a good feeling to have one of the "things to do" ticked off the list.

We think the Board have been keeping themselves busy with the CPD and investigations.

You probably don't hear as much about them because the focus appears to have changed. Investigations, for example, for years seemed to focus on tradespeople, but this year seems to be focused on the public or other unauthorised people.

The Federation has been saying for a long time that for the amount of work our practitioner's do, the complaints about workmanship are a very low

did not demonstrate community or industry needs. He wants to reduce the qualifications numbers particularly in levels 1-6. This review so far has increased the number of qualifications and we don't believe it meets the industry needs. However, it certainly meets the needs of the training providers by providing extra avenues of income.

The Federation's ethos is to work with people to make change and reach compromises but at the end of the day if we disagree we will not make the mistake other organisations have made in the past and continue working on a project we disagree with. We will withdraw when it becomes obvious change cannot be made and leave the responsibility on those who are pushing the path being taken. We will not be drawn into a situation where we are attesting to participating in something we disagree with.

You mention in your notes about an "overwhelming consensus" and "the group agreed" - these are fine words to make it look like it was a group decision but in effect the Federation voiced its concerns that not enough options had been explored and the Chair of the Governance Group gave his direction of what was going to happen.

The appointment of XXXXXXXX to the Governance Group without calling for nominations is an example of the Governance Group appointing people to support its position. With regard to XXXXXXXXX she was nominated for her skills and experience and to simply be replaced by another Master Plumber member, to be notified, is yet again an example of nepotism to support the avenue taken.

If the process has no respect how can the outcome be respected?

We believe a couple of basic questions have not been asked regarding the purpose of the qualifications namely why are they needed and what does the industry and public really need from the qualifications? The addition of the Level 3, when the current Level 3 is simply a money making avenue for polytechnics at huge cost to young people who have yet to gain an apprenticeship does not inspire us with confidence. The questions will arise again about a credit of hours for anyone gaining Level 3 prior to an apprenticeship - when industry have made it clear they want 8000 hour apprenticeships. The costs will also be debated at length in the future.

This was a chance to make a change - to improve the lot of apprentices and industry - but alas it has been lost.

We are of the opinion the process is following a single line of thought. With so many training providers it simply provides the views of one section of the industry and we feel practitioners views are being discarded. We have attempted to contact Paul Hollings, The Skills Organisation, to discuss these issues but he is not returning calls. It is quite obvious the wagons have been circled with regard to this issue.

So what has been achieved in the four years? We believe very little and there is only a minor chance the industry will get what it needs

percentage. Long may this continue - but it is up to the practitioners to keep the standards up and in fact raise them where possible.

It will be interesting to see what comes out in the next Annual Report and what in roads they have made to the goals of the Strategic Plan.

What are your thoughts?

When the industry was with the Ministry of Health, there were no issues, perhaps we should return to their control?

The Industry needs to return to one qualification to do away with so much supervision and public confusion.

We live in a world of user pays, so why doesn't the Government pay for the training of apprentices and pay for industry time attending Standards Meetings and other industry supported activities?

Send us your thoughts on these issues or any others you can think of.

if the process continues along the track driven by Skills New Zealand (ITO).

We realise there are political influences and policies directing training and qualifications but we are of the opinion one size DOES NOT fit all. Remember the purpose of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 is to protect the health and safety of members of the public by ensuring the competency of persons engaged in the provision of sanitary plumbing, gasfitting, and drainlaying services; and to regulate persons who carry out sanitary plumbing, gasfitting, and drainlaying.

If qualifications are created where people are not competent, then the qualification fails to support the purpose of the Act and is a total waste of time.

If practitioners fund the regulation of the industry for the protection of the public and do not support the qualifications because they create regulatory problems then the qualifications fail.

If the qualifications are developed as a competency qualification without appropriate experience, such as stipulated hours, then the public is at risk and the qualification fails.

If the industry has no confidence in the qualifications knowing they create problems in regulating the industry, then why would they support them and bring apprentices into that environment? If this is the case, the qualification fails.

The Federation wants what the industry needs, not what others believe we need. There is a chance, but it will take a lot of pressure from practitioners and a lot of support for the Federation's representatives who are on the front line.

We've asked you to step up before and we are asking you again – make your voice heard for the future of your industry! What do you think of the existing qualifications? Are you prepared to put your hand up and become involved? If so then contact us!

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