

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [Misguided Greater Good](#)
- [Add this to the Stupid Legislation List](#)

## IN OTHER NEWS

### Letters to the Editor



### Dear Editor

We are hearing rumours around the smoko table about training in our industry and that having The Skills Organisation as our ITO may have been a huge failure.

Someone mentioned something about a centre of excellence whatever that is.

We also hear the Federation has been causing strife by slowing the process down. What's going on?

**ED:** Where to start? For a lot of the year you would have read the Federation's view on training and qualifications which haven't changed since the review of the NZQA qualifications started a few years ago.

There is a continual fight to get proper, good quality, affordable training implemented in our industry

## Misguided Greater Good



Have you ever thrown your hands in the air and said, "bugger it I'm going to do the same as everyone else" referring to doing unlawful activities?

Is the manner in which the Government is treating our industry, all in the name of the greater good, forcing people to do things they normally wouldn't do?

For a long time the industry has been asking the Government the same questions and have never got satisfactory, if any answers. We've been asking questions like:

- Why is the regulation of the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industry the ONLY industry in New Zealand that is 100% funded by the industry itself?
- Why is the plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying industry the ONLY industry in New Zealand that pays 100% to police the actions of the public with regard to plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying?
- Why do the plans of bureaucrats such as the Gas Certificate regime get implemented AGAINST the advice and will of the industry?
- Where is the Government leadership for the industry?
- Why does the industry not receive any assistance from the Minister of building and housing?
- Why is there no constructive communication from the Government and its departments and agencies?

We know when asking someone if they're telling the truth an honest person will be offended by the lack of trust and a dishonest person will lie to you, but for the Government to not answer at all shows signs of a total disregard and lack of respect.

Have we as an industry been so consumed with the fight for fairness and equality that we have been blinded to the truth? Perhaps the simple answer is the Government is getting what it wants. It has:

and it is really no more than value for money.

We remember a time when there was consistent training provided at the polytechnics - and it was training not just assessments. That all changed because someone in Government decided it was better to hand the responsibility for all the training on to the practitioners and we ended up with the crock we have now.

Training is left up to the practitioners and there is no consistency and a lot of apprentices are training themselves.

You mention the ITO which we believe is a misleading title as all we have seen so far is people concentrating on pre-trades and Level 4 (we are not going to say level for training) assessments for apprentices.

Since the change to Skills as the ITO prices have more than doubled, training has become basically nonexistent and there is a general dissatisfaction with the system and its performance.

The Federation has been throwing the idea around of having a centre of excellence. This is basically an institution which concentrates of the skills and knowledge of our trades of plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying.

Two of the states in Australia have created them and have been very successful. This isn't a matter of following the Australians - it's a matter of getting a learning institution that is teaching the skills and knowledge or industry needs

- The trust of the public that the industry is regulated for their protection.
- An industry, which is self-funding.
- A Board it can blame if something goes wrong.
- Tradespeople it can blame and demonize as malcontents.
- An industry with no teeth or resources to fight back.

There are bound to be other reasons but perhaps the suppression of the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industry and other regulated construction industries ultimately meet Government plans. Is there a Government conspiracy?

A conspiracy theory was a term first used by President Nixon in the United States to demonize those who questioned his actions. Eventually he was found to have been involved in an actual conspiracy. Here's a conspiracy theory given to the Federation this week.

**Is it possible the Government doesn't do anything for our industry because it is getting what it wants with regard to keeping house prices down?**

So what would happen if everyone in the plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying industry were all legitimate and charged out at an appropriate rate of \$120.00 - \$180.00 an hour? We would say the labour costs of plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying in a house would nearly double.

Look at other professions where there isn't a black market - lawyers, dentists, doctors, accountants, engineers, architects - none have issues with charging hundreds of dollars an hour and for services no more technical or useful than our industry.

In our industry, the prices are held down by people being prepared to take the risk and do cashies or work at other cheap rates. So why would the consumer pay a real cost of \$120.00 plus an hour when they can pay cash and get the work done for \$40-\$60 an hour? The Government know this and does nothing for the trades, perhaps simply so they can hold the price of construction down.

The Government have demonized the trades including plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers. The leaking buildings saga is a prime example where the tradespeople were blamed and resulted in allegations of incompetence and brought in tighter regulation and continuing professional development, which was imposed on us to an extreme.

Where was the backlash against some pretty shitty architectural designed houses, where was the backlash against some pretty shitty materials produced and used in these buildings, where was the backlash against the Councils who signed them off?

Plumbers got the sharp end of the stick because of the use of the

so we can progress.

At the moment we have all the Government funding spread between SKILLS and the many polytechnics around NZ that deliver plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying. If this resource was centred in one place and concentrated on delivering plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying – then we believe it could really be a Centre of Excellence for our industry.

There are polytechnics around the country that have capacity – what if we worked with ONE of them to be the national deliverer of training – or what if somewhere completely blue skies like the old CIT in Heretaunga Upper Hutt was used. It has workshops, it has accommodation and it has classrooms – and many are empty. Who should lead this? Well we believe industry should lead this – and when should they do it – well we believe about NOW is a good time to start putting something together to see if it is feasible. What do you think?

You comment: *“We also hear the Federation has been causing strife by slowing the process down”* Is it so wrong for the Federation to question what is happening and put forward solutions to problems?

The Federation is never going to agree to processes, procedures and qualifications that are going to do damage to the industry.

We want things right and we want them right quickly. Sure, everyone has their opinions on what is right but what is being done now with

word “leaky” we think, when in fact those that should have been at the front of the blame queue were architects, manufacturers and builders.

Plumbers were NOT to blame for leaky homes. For over a decade, the Government has done nothing for the industry except create upheaval and mistrust. We’ve learnt that you can’t appeal to the Government’s sense of reason as they just turn it off. How can the industry have respect and trust with what is implemented by the Government.

The Government turned on the industry when the Board unlawfully took money from practitioners. Politicians even stooped so low that they made recommendations in the Regulations Review Committee and then walked a wee way down the corridor into the House of Representatives and voted against their own recommendations. (I don’t think there is a person among us who understood this type of weasely, duplicitous behaviour).

Now they are reviewing the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 and you could nearly bet they will claim its good legislation with very little change, but the review of occupational regulation within the building and construction sector will be a different story.

Speaking of the Review of the PDG Act 2006 – when will Government actually ask those at the coal face if they have any ideas on this Act, an Act they work with day in and day out?

They have wasted so much time and resources on doing the review they will have to do what they did with the Gas Certificate scheme where change was made to save face even though the changes created a worse scheme than what was already in place.

The regime where the Gas Certification sits under ESS has been a failure. Some years out and still gasfitters are not clear about the different types of risk classifications – let alone the customers they serve who have absolutely NO idea about them.

ESS are not doing audits as far as we know, the system is NOT transparent for people to check on gas work done on their properties or potential property purchases. The old scheme under the PGD Board was far more user friendly, far more useful and was easily available to EVERYONE.

The lack of cost of the ESS scheme (much promoted by the ideas people behind the changing of the scheme) has NOT gas certificates any cheaper – in fact with the doubled up work now required it has probably meant gasfitters are charging more than ever before.

What concerns us is that the person leading the PGD Act 2006 Review was the person that led the change in the Gas Certification system. We would love to see the PGD Board take this responsibility back over – even if it meant paying the \$25 to lodge the certificate. At least we did the job once only, and knew where to look for it. They did a much better job of looking after it all as well.

Combining all construction trades into one occupational regulation scheme would be costly and create an uncontrollable beast where

qualifications and training has been failing for over a decade so why continue on down the same track?

As we said in the main column, it is easy for people to demonize the industry to deflect attention away from what they are doing, but from the Federation's point of view, people can say what they want about us we will not sign off on something we disagree with.

#### Dear Editor

Have you heard of any businesses charging an OSH fee on their invoices? Please advice.

**ED:** Yes, we have heard of some businesses doing that as a cost recovery for the time and expense of adhering to Occupation Health and Safety legislation. OSH seems to have got out of hand and we are now having to implement documented proof of using common sense and obviously, that comes at a cost.

Yet more legislation that adds to the cost of construction. It seems that the Government and its departments and agencies expect more accountability from practitioners but also expect the extra accountability and risk to come from our existing incomes.

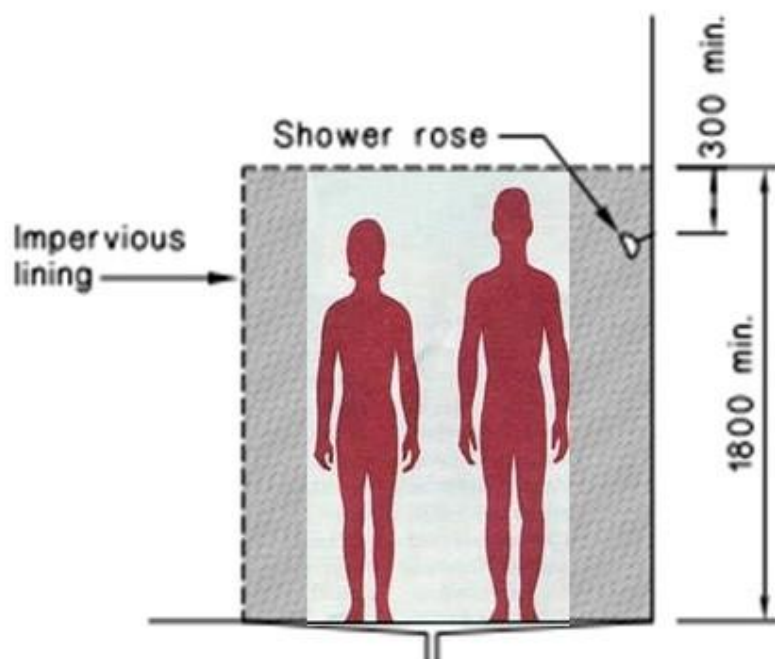
It's time for all in the industry to pass on the costs of regulation to the consumer. Why should practitioners take an income decrease every time a bureaucrat has a rush of shit to the brain and decide they need to hold the practitioners accountable.

getting fairness and equality would be near impossible.

Don't be surprised if some bureaucrat dreams up a scheme of some form of hit squad to persecute and regulate the industry and we end up with more threats of discipline and prosecution hanging over our heads. It's no wonder people in the industry don't want to take on apprentices and the numbers of experienced tradespeople are dropping.

You may well be thinking that it's a farfetched conspiracy theory - but is it? Can a Government be that incompetent that it doesn't do anything to improve productivity or retention in an industry or support its governance in any way – or is it a smart Government that is manipulating circumstances and legislation to support its policies of affordable housing?

#### Add this to the Stupid Legislation List



There are probably a lot of practitioners out there that didn't know that New Zealand Building Code Clause E3 Internal Moisture clause 3.3.3 states with regard to showers:

*When enclosures, such as walls, screens, doors or curtains are used they shall be continuous from floor level or top of upstand to 1800 mm minimum above floor level and not less than 300 mm above the shower rose.*

This means the impervious wall i.e. the shower liner must be 300mm above the shower rose. Looking at most off the shelf showers the liners they are only 1800mm high. This places the shower rose at a height of 1500mm unless the liner is extended higher or some other form of impervious surface is used above the shower liner. Apparently, this is because of POSSIBLE splash from the shower rose.

It must have been a hobbit that wrote this piece of legislation because they didn't take into account a few other factors such as the average height of adults Males are on average are 1760mm tall so

We believe a charge for Health and Safety and PPE gear used for specific jobs is justified, but you do have to do something for it. We've heard of members who have individual checklists for houses and use 15 minutes at the start of the job to fill it in while wandering around the property – fully justified and fully claimable against the customer. The upside is you are also building a picture of a property for future visits.

they would incur a neck injury if they slipped and hit the fixed shower rose at 1500mm (enter Worksafe stage left.....)

It is far worse for females who on average are 1640mm tall. They would cop the full impact in the face from a fixed shower rose.

Slide shower roses have a 1.5m hose and a shower rose of about 200mm long plus a 75mm elbow so means most slide shower roses would be hitting the tray if dropped. If left lying in the tray there is potential for back siphon from a flooded tray.

What about the slide shower hose being at such a height children could get it tangled around their neck?

All these physical hazards for the sake of potentially avoiding some splash.

Another bit of legislation that increases the price to the consumer without serving any real purpose. No doubt, the practitioners will get the blame for this as well.

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