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IN OTHER NEWS

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

Every month I receive an email from MBIE giving me statistics about Employment Advertisements but is it good news or bad news?

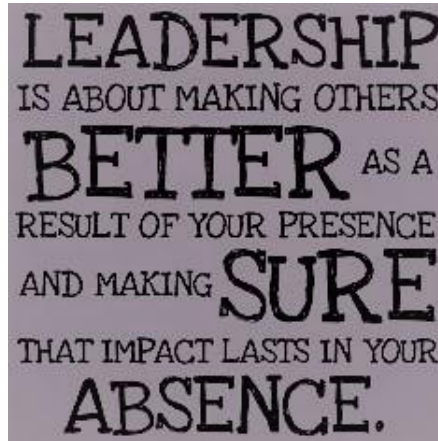
Job ads up 1.2 per cent in February

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment today released its February 2017 Jobs Online report.

Findings from the latest report show:

- *The All Vacancies Index increased by 1.2 per cent in February 2017.*
- *Vacancies increased in six out of eight industry groups. The biggest contributors were construction and engineering (up 2.6 per cent) and education and training (up 1.3 per cent).*
- *Vacancies increased in all occupation groups. The largest increases were for machinery drivers and operators (up 1.6 per cent) and managers (up 1.5 per cent).*
- *Vacancies increased in all skill levels. The largest increases were in*

Classes of Registration and NZQA Qualifications



Round and round in circles we go, doing the same things that have failed before and fighting the same fights that we have been fought before. It's time for change and the Federation is pushing for it. This week we sent the following letter to the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board who responded immediately by

extending an invitation to speak at the next Board meeting.

Classes of Registration

Dear Mr Jackson

The development and future of the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industries is dependent on having classes of registration that are fit for purpose for the industry, and meet the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board's purpose of protecting the health and safety of members of the public by ensuring the competency of all people engaged in the provision of sanitary plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying services.

A key part of fulfilling the Board's health and safety function lies in setting the standards required for the licensing and registration of plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers.

The Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Federation believe problems are being created within the industry by the classes of registration currently in place - particularly in the area of supervision. This has been ignored during consultation by The Skills Organisation into NZQA qualifications for the industry.

Supervision in the industry is an issue that is getting a great deal of attention, as is the level and standard of training. The Federation believes the current system creates problems in the areas of accountability, responsibility and supervision. This in turn affects the health and safety of the public.

In November 2013 the Federation wrote to the then Chairman of the Board, Mr Alan Bickers and asked for a review of the classes of registration. This request coincided with the review of qualifications that was under way by The Skills Organisation. The Federation

highly skilled (up 1.7 per cent), and skilled (up 1.2 per cent) occupations.

• Vacancies increased in eight out of ten regions. The biggest increase was in the Nelson/Tasman/Marlborough/West Coast (up 1.9 per cent) region.

Jobs Online measures changes in online job advertisements from three internet job boards – SEEK, Trade Me Jobs and the Education Gazette. The trend series is used as the primary indicator as it reduces the month-to-month volatility.

Ed:

Thanks for sharing this news with us. We like your question and we guess it's depends on if you are an employer, a job seeker or a politician.

If you are an employer then its bad news and would indicate it's hard to get people and you have to advertise to get good employees, and even then you might not get any respondents.

If you are a job seeker its good news in that there are more jobs to get or to avoid as the case may be.

If you are a politician then it's all good news in that you could spin it that the economic stimulus is working and there are more jobs available to help with all the work being generated.

Speaking of the economic stimulus this was sent to us explaining how it will work:

Three contractors are bidding to fix a broken toilet block at the Beehive.

One is from Auckland, the other two are from Wellington & Tauranga respectively.

All three go with a Beehive official

believed it was a prime opportunity to move the industry into the future and away from the systems that don't provide what the industry needs. The response was that it was not on the Board's work programme at that time.

In 2015 the Board did a limited review of Registration and Licensing. Issue 4 of that Review asked the question "Should there be one or two classes of registration for qualified tradespeople?" A Summary of Submissions received in relation Issue 4 to the first round of consultation dated 20 May – 15 July 2015 is attached to this letter. 108 submitters responded to Issue 4 where 51% supported one qualification and 49% supported 2 qualifications. The Federation and its membership supported one qualification and Master Plumbers didn't really answer the question and supported a number classes.

The Board opted not to progress consultation on changing Registration Classes to further consultation even though it was a narrow margin. The Skills Organisation is basing the proposed NZQA Qualifications on a two tier system - effectively a re-packaging of the current failing system. The Federation is opposed to the system and feel it has been a waste of three years whereby the two tier system does not take the industry into the future but follows a path of self interest and financial gain.

The situation exists where the plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying industry is the only industry where upon completion of an apprenticeship and passing of National Certificate and the Board's Registration exam, a newly registered tradesperson can't do ANY of their chosen trade unless supervised.

The Board has recognised the difficulties and legal standing of supervision. The ratio of supervisors to supervisees in the industry is very low with supervisors required to supervise tradesmen practitioners, journeymen practitioners, provisional licensees, trainees and exempt people (who are now in the thousands). The burden on supervisors is extremely high as a result of the poor level of skills being produced by the current training scheme. Anecdotally we also believe that many trainees, provisional licensees, journeymen practitioners and tradesman practitioners are in fact barely being supervised, and certainly not at the levels envisaged by the Board.

Supervisors are responsible for the majority of the training provided to apprentices as well as the supervision. The Federation believes this training method is a total failure. It does not allow for consistency in training throughout New Zealand in that Certifiers may have different methods, likes and dislikes. There is the added problem of not every plumbing/gasfitting or drainlaying firm doing all work that is required for an apprentice to qualify. There is no quality control on what is taught and the training method is reliant on a theoretical pass.

Currently apprentices, employers and the tax payer are paying for the right of an employer to employ and train and apprentice. At the end of the apprenticeship the registered tradesman pays for the right to do plumbing gas fitting and drainlaying but is not allowed to

to examine the toilet block.

The guy from Wellington takes out a tape measure and does some measuring, then works some figures with a pencil. "Well," he says, "I figure the job will run about \$2,900. \$2,400 for imported materials, \$400 for my crew, and \$100 profit for me."

The Tauranga guy also does some measuring and figuring, then says, "I can do this job for \$2,700. \$2,300 for imported materials, \$300 for my crew, and \$100 profit for me."

The Aucklander doesn't measure or figure, but leans over to the official and whispers, "\$6,700." The official, incredulous, says, "You didn't even measure like the other guys! How did you come up with such a high figure?"

The Auckland contractor whispers back, "\$2,000 for me, \$2,000 for you, and we hire the guy from Tauranga to fix the toilet block."

"Done!" replies the government official.

And that, my friends, is how the new economic stimulus plan will work!

What are you working for?

The above seems to sum it all up pretty well and more and more workers are questioning the honesty of those who control their work environments.

The work corruption gets thrown around lightly in New Zealand but why would New Zealand be any different to other parts of the world?

We may be at the lower end of the scale but is pushing and achieving self interest a type of corruption?

When you are benefiting from

unless supervised. They then have to pay for the right to gain experience in their chosen profession before they are deemed competent to work unsupervised.

The vision the Federation has is of a registration system and qualifications matrix that sees registered people being able to perform all duties, without supervision. We realise that this would require a longer training period and see apprenticeships lengthened to around 10,000 hours. It would also require the addition of formalised off site training. This can only strengthen the protection given to the public and raise the standards in the industry.

We feel the industry needs a system that is transparent and understood by industry and can be easily explained to the public.

The Federation believes the current registration classes and the qualifications being developed are focused more on individual and organisational needs and wants, rather than what is best for the future of the apprentices and tradespeople in the industry. As the industry has no governing body it is heavily reliant on the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board to provide leadership within the bounds of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006.

The Hazel Armstrong Report and the Auditor General's report were both adamant about the division of the Board's role and that of training by the ITO, however there is no debate that it is the Board's responsibility to set the standard required. The Tertiary Education Council (TEC) has stated "It is expected on completing New Zealand Apprenticeships, apprentices will be 'work competent' for the occupation in which they have been training, and their industries will determine the standard of competency to be met."

The Federation believes the current system does not meet the requirements of the TEC and the Board has deemed the apprentices are not 'work competent' upon registration hence the requirement for supervision when they are deemed to be a tradesperson not an apprentice.

The Industry and Board have been through a tumultuous two decades and the Federation believes there would be a return to this if change is not made. No one will benefit if sectors of the industry turns its back on the regulation of the industry or its training. The self interest of some business owners who oppose this idea because they are worried that by having one qualification their employees will all go out and work for themselves in competition with their previous employer is not a valid argument. It has nothing to do with competency or what is best for industry, and has more to do with a vision of personal/business self protection.

The Federation requests the Board explore the option of consultation regarding one class of registration before the acceptance of the new NZQA qualifications.

Yours sincerely

Wal Gordon

the suffering of others or the burden is passed on to others then the Federation believes it is a type of corruption.

Whatever happened to morals and integrity, to ethics and to doing what is just simply right?

Have people got so consumed with position and money that they forget the workers that got them to where they are or that they were once workers themselves?

People in positions of authority need to start respecting workers. This garbage of white collar controlling blue collar needs change. Everyone needs to be respected for the efforts they put in to keeping this country and our industry running.

Take the time today to thank your workers for their efforts or even your fellow workers and apprentices.

Chairman Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Federation

Lastly, for the Irish, or Irish at heart



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