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IN OTHER NEWS

Lead by example or defend a stance?



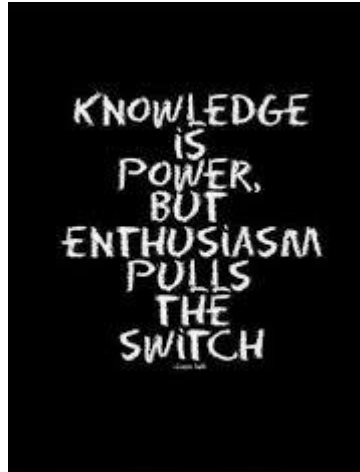
All the time we see Bureaucrats implementing poor decisions that impose on our general rights of being productive and successful. Bureaucratical bullshit that costs us, the productive people in society.

For over a decade our industry has been forced to go in directions that it didn't want to go and to do things it didn't want to do.

The last two Ministers have failed us, and the Ministers before them didn't do anything of substance as we can't even remember who they were.

We only remember the last two as they have been the most non responsive of all time. We remember Maurice Williamson for being in the seat where the industry was forced to do everything by the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board, including accept illegal fees capture

Knowledge is power but!!



The term "knowledge is power" could well be true, but when you start digging into issues and see what goes on behind closed doors decent people are forced to make decisions.

What should decent people with morals and ethics do with the information they find - do they sink to the levels of the people and organisations the information pertains to and use such information or do they keep it to themselves and get on with the job at hand?

Over the years the Federation has amassed a huge amount of information and not all of it has been shared with supporters. Sure we have slung a bit of mud to get people's attention but we have always been able to back up what we have been saying.

A passion for the industry and enthusiasm has kept a lot of the Federation's Executive Committee going and now we ask practitioners to show an interest and get enthusiastic about the industry and its future.

Each edition of the Fellow Practitioner is loaded on to the Plumbers Forum www.plumbers.co.nz and we thank Plumbers NZ for providing this service to the industry.

The forum gives everyone the opportunity to make comment and share ideas, and when we say "everyone" we do mean "everyone" from a first year apprentice to a seasoned tradesperson, and all those in between.

The last edition of the Fellow Practitioner, Issue 330, has had over 1,200 views on the forum and here is what has been said about regulation and qualifications.

• *I agree that once a person has completed their apprenticeship, gained their national certificate and passed the PGDB registration exam then they are capable of doing their own work and be responsible for it. However where does this put people that have gone on to pass their Certifying exam and gain advanced trade? Why would you bother if it is no longer required?*

I also have some reservation that just because you pass the exam, are you capable of producing an acceptable standard of work? And what checks will be put in place if any, rather than just being able to hold someone responsible and then hang them out to dry. Just wondering....

• *I think the Federation is on the right track and the term I heard kicked around was **work place competent**. From what I understand this is what*

until it was retrospectively legalised by Mr Williamson's government. A time when there was no communication with the industry.

It was a real "boys club" mentality with strategically placed people that made decisions to appease the Minister. This eventually failed when practitioners, backed by the Federation, stepped up and said enough is enough.

The next Minister in the seat, Dr Nick Smith started off with a similar approach and has slowly slipped into obscurity through non involvement.

The Federation's ability to put to one side the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board's previous history has paved the way for a workable relationship. This coupled with a change in staff and attitude at the Board have allowed improvements to be made.

The Minister and the Government cannot claim any credit for the improvements as they have not played any part in the changes.

Long may this continue - we hope that they keep out of the way and let the industry and Board get on and do what needs to be done.

The way they assist in this is by allowing the changes needed for the Board to become a real Industry Board. A real voice for our industry that is representative of us all and our views.

A failure by the Government to do this will result in despondency in the industry. There is no shame in it for them to make the change - the shame would be in doing nothing.

You cannot show leadership if you are absent and if you

the Tertiary Education Council expects an apprentice to be when they complete their apprenticeship. So going by that they not only have to pass the exams but also need to be skills competent.

Good training is what is needed. I think the Federation is right in what they say about sticking to our primary business of producing competent plumbers gasfitters and drainlayers. After that is where the specialist type subjects come into it.

Look at Medical. They produce Competent Doctors and Nurses and then they specialise from there. In our case advanced trade subjects could be developed and that way if you don't want to progress to advanced trade subjects you don't have to but you can still work legally at the primary without supervision.

- *Hi - this is a very interesting subject - my understanding is that the Federation are asking for a longer apprenticeship - 10 000 hours I think, so a bit of turning the clock back. Couple this with training at block courses instead of full on assessment, a registration exam and then we should be able to produce people that are workplace competent.*

I understand Enn may be feeling a little aggrieved if he has passed his Craftsman/Certifying exam and picked up that licence, but really is that a good reason to stop progress.

What we have to watch is that in our efforts to patch protect what we may or may not have done we can end up stopping progress in the industry as a whole. A bunch of certifiers may say bugger it, these guys shouldn't just get it given to them, but that's not what is happening.

The initial craftsman tickets were grandfathered when it came in, and the drainlaying certifiers ticket was also grandfathered for those that had registered status.

We need to stop and consider some blue sky thinking that will take the WHOLE industry forward to a better place. Electricians can get registered and work unsupervised at the completion of their apprenticeship and passing their exam - that's all the Federation is asking for - something similar with a slightly longer apprenticeship in order to gain experience.

I think it is well worth considering.

- *Hi guys fully agree Jax, guys who have done all the present system requirements have done very well but in my opinion the extra years/exams should not be necessary if we went back to the proven apprenticeship course of the past that produced excellent tradesmen (look to the past to see the future).*

I believe that after a fully served apprenticeship, a now fully qualified person needs a couple of year's full employment with a medium to large company working on medium to large major contracts to be exposed to many different types of installations and also the huge amount of experience of older work mates, this is where the 'hands on' knowledge is really learned and the taught knowledge becomes real.

I would be a fan of after a fully served apprenticeship, a now qualified trade's person should stay with the company or join any other competent company for another two years before given the right to be self employed, I

force the situation it will eventually blow up in your face.

Our industry was on the brink of being destroyed by the Government and their appointees and if it weren't for the few in the industry that were prepared to stand up for what is right we would have been past the point of no return.

We have now started on the return part and we need everything to be bigger and better than before. We need to grapple back what is ours and regain our strength as an industry.

We all need to provide the leadership in our own areas of responsibility so those who are training in the industry not only learn the craft but also have pride in themselves and the industry as a whole.

We need to instil a sense of belonging and we need to show those outside the industry that we are united in our cause.

It doesn't take loads of money to succeed but it does take commitment, enthusiasm, organisation and communication. The Federation is proof of that.

For over six years it has kept up the pressure and kept you informed at an annual cost of what is equivalent to the cost of running the Board for a day. Imagine what could be achieved if the same commitment, enthusiasm, organisation and communication was to spread to an industry Board.

The current Board has made moves in the right direction but what is needed is Government approval to take it further. Good ideas and people are being subdued by Bureaucrats and their foolish

know this may stir a few guys up but from my own experience I found it extremely beneficial to work with trades people who had many more years in the trades than I and who passed on their skills and knowledge freely. I worked on sites with companies that employed such trades people for about nine years and felt really confident/competent to carry out my chosen trades tasks without worries.

Just to finish my view, I believe that the present setup has been completely fragmented with present and future trade's persons in our trades not knowing which way to turn for the best, cheers

- I think the Certifying qualification should be kept as a separate exam. The reason being that over the years I have worked with guys who have stayed in their comfort zone their whole careers. I know a plumber who only done new housing his whole apprenticeship then carried on working there, when he moved on he had never worked on low pressure hot water or even seen the old school style feltonmix shower.*

Going by the 6 years and you get to be certifying he would have qualified before he moved on. At least by having the separate exam you have to upskill yourself. If I wanted to work for myself I would be willing to put in the effort and study to gain the Certifying tickets.

- Hi guys, good point Macmole but the extra work to gain certified would not involve learning the old low pressure systems or Feltonmix shower valves, that should have been learned from other more experienced trades persons whilst doing maintenance when apprenticed to a company who covered a broad range of work.*

It's unfortunate for apprentices if they get stuck with a company who specialise in housing only, from my own experience it was normal to work with a range of tradesmen doing all types of work from maintenance to major contracts, cheers

- Ok an interesting discussion developing here. We all know there is a widening skills gap with increasing demand for skilled and experienced trades people. We also know that we have an ageing workforce (I believe the average age of plumbers is around the 55+ mark here in NZ) We have legislation that dictates who can and what licence is required for different types of work.*

To put it in a nutshell, we need more people at the face, meeting the increasing demand and at the same time satisfying the legislation, insurance, local government, and governing body requirements. A lot of box ticking!

I know my experience with trades training was mostly great from what the tutors were trying to do in a sausage factory situation & I was fortunate enough to work with and be taught by some very experienced tradesmen. There is not a day that goes by where I am not learning something new.

I also realise that "work place competent" trades training has no resemblance to the ITO experience that I & others went through at that time. As for having to gain certifying status to work off my own bat was just one of the hoops required to be jumped through.

I can add to this but will do so when I'm not so tired and capable of more (competent) rational thought....

ideas.

The Federation believes we need to take action now and become strong as an industry. We need to provide our own leadership and lead by example.

It is better for other industries to look up to us and follow our example rather than to go down the same path of battles and mistakes that we have been taken by the Bureaucrats.

We ask you encourage fellow practitioners to become involved and step up to help those who have been leading the push for change.

The more people that show an interest and the need for change the easier it will be to make it happen.

We continually get asked about membership numbers and fees. Firstly we don't care about numbers but know the Government does so they can gauge representation.

Why don't we charge fees? The Executive Committee believed the service provided by the Federation should be about what is right, fair and equitable and come from devotion and morals.

Values should lead the way not position, money or what discounts we get as an organisation.

All we ask is for you to generate discussion about our industry with fellow practitioners and get involved as we WILL be calling on numbers to effect change.

• *Some good thoughts everyone. One of the big issues is that the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 defines what Sanitary Plumbing, Gasfitting and Drainlaying is. That's Our primary business and is what we should be teaching all apprentices. This is if they are city or country based.*

Training is the key and everyone should be taught the same. The industry drifted away on an unlawful path and had business management as a requirement to become a plumber, gasfitter or drainlayer. This has been corrected but now other subjects are creeping in.

Don't get me wrong a lot of subjects are nice to have and benefit a lot of individuals but the majority of the country is in the business of being plumbers gasfitters or drainlayers. Let's get that right first and get people workplace competent then move on to the advanced subjects if they want. Protect the public by being competent plumbers gasfitters and drainlayers.

So there you have it, some people who are prepared to say what they think and share their views. You can do the same either through the Plumbers Forum or through the Fellow Practitioner.

Get into gear



The Federation realises we are an aging industry but it's not too late to leave a legacy. Now is the time for us to all step up and make the improvements needed for the survival of our craft and industry.

Don't put an out of order sticker on your head and shut down – step up and be counted. Don't let the Government and its Ministries push you around or dictate how we operate.

The Federation wishes to continue with its fight for fairness and equality. The last six years haven't been easy for any of the Federation Executive Committee, they have worked, attended meetings and fought the good fight for change. They have made a difference and are now calling on you to help consolidate the industry and promote the good we do. See the side column for more information.

On another note can we wish you all a Happy Easter – we hope you get some time out with your families and loved ones to recharge the batteries ready for what will undoubtedly be a busy winter season!

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