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IN OTHER NEWS

From the Plumbers Forum as a result of the last edition of the Fellow Practitioner

• Watchdog you bring up a very important point. Our best trained plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers are getting older, and inching towards retirement. Following them are those that did a much shorter apprenticeship and have not gone on to certifying status. The numbers in industry that train apprentices is woefully low and so this shortage could have been predicted some years ago. Those of us that take on apprentices cut the numbers down during the recession as we did not have sufficient work and now we are seeing the results. The thing that annoys me the most is those that don't take on apprentices and then swoop on third years with very lucrative wage offers - they haven't had to pay any of the costs to get them to this stage and then just reap the benefits of our hard work. There should be an expensive transfer fee. The merchants has just become a feeding ground for unscrupulous employers pinching staff that they aren't prepared to train themselves. I don't blame the guys taking the bait, but I wish

The Fight goes on



What happens if you don't fight for your rights and for what is fair and equitable? Well it seems you get what you are given based on others opinions and their needs. In our industry it gets even worse in that we

have to PAY for our rights, PAY for enforcement, and PAY for regulation to protect others. What we don't get is any say in HOW these things are done. We don't have a lot of say in our training, in who sits on the Board that spend the money we have to pay out, nor do we get widely or properly consulted by the Government in regards to such things as the 2006 Act review, or the occupational licensing review.

We pay to get qualified and then we pay to retain our qualification. It is a lifelong qualification but it's not a lifetime authority to work. Who benefits the most from our industry being regulated? You would have to say the Government.

The Government saves millions of dollars every year through the work of people in the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industry. We are the front line in the protection of the health and safety of the public, yet what help does the industry get from the Government? The last two Ministers with overall control over the regulation of the industry have been very dismissive of those in the industry trying to effect change and progress the industry.

Maurice Williamson referred to them as a bunch of malcontents who moan at every meeting and at one stage refused to meet with the Federation until it "got along" with the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board. This was about the time the then CEO cut off communication with the Federation. At one of the meetings Mr Williamson dismissed the fact three people had been given Gasfitting Certifying status without doing exams or apprenticeships. This was on the say so of the then Chairman of the Board at that time.

The one and only meeting with Dr Nick Smith resulted in advice to play nice with the Board and one attendee at the meeting was told he would never be appointed to the Board as he would DESTROY IT.

It is quite evident the industry is not a priority for the Government

these guys would consider training their own.

• Speaking of skilled and experienced tradesmen coming into retirement age and the widening skills shortage. It's worth taking a look at a video clip of Mike Rowe addressing the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee in New York.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3h_pp8CHEQ0

There are many video clips addressing this situation and it has been known for years that there will be an upcoming skill shortage across all sectors. The possible exceptions are perhaps the hot air blowing, latte swilling experts and do nothing and produce nothing for years review committees and their ilk of which we seem to have an over abundance here in Godzone. Just remember that when you do retire what sort of Muppet's will be making the decisions that will affect your life?

• Yes we see it coming but what is the solution? Those that train aren't going to increase the number of apprentices in lean times - they simply can't afford it - so the bust boom cycle will continue unless perhaps Government looks at some sort of subsidy for employers taking on apprentices, or what do people think about a training levy on all plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers to fund training new apprentices? I'm in two minds on this myself - and I'm still not sure which side I come down on, I feel differently about it on different days. Interested to hear others opinions.

• Good point's jaxcat, in my

and that the Government is quite happy for their Ministers to be disconnected from the plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying industry. This leaves a situation of forced compliance with no benefit for the industry.

It would seem the Government has never seriously considered voluntary compliance. The Federation believes voluntary compliance would be easy to achieve, probably easier than forced compliance. All that is required is governance and a change in attitudes.

Governance can be achieved by the formation of an "industry board" with an even balance of interested supportive board members. Herein lies the problem. As an industry we already fund a board to meet the Government's needs and to provide protection for the public. Very few in the industry would want to fund a second board.

How do the needs of the industry get met? Simple, have one board which meets everyone needs. Regulation for the Government, protection of the public health and property and for the industry there is recognition, training, discipline and representation.

The plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying industry is compiled of a couple of employers groups, thousands of individuals and the Federation. All groups and individuals have different needs and the only way to get a balance for the industry is through governance.

A proper industry board would allow for balanced representation with regard to training as well. Currently only those in a position of affordability attend meetings pertaining to training and this doesn't provide balanced representation.

The function of a real industry board would include accountability. They would be accountable to the government by way of a performance agreement but they would also have the role of holding others accountable such as the Skills Organisation for the training provided to the industry and also hold tradespeople accountable for their actions via discipline.

What isn't fair? Well it isn't fair fighting for qualifications, training, regulation, fairness and equality, but that's what we continually do just to survive as an industry. The Government can continue to be disconnected from the Industry or they could work with us before it is too late.

In reality the Government cannot provide the public with the protection they deserve without the industry and the more disconnected they become the greater the void and the greater the risk.

Someone needs to make the first move and that needs to be those that have the most to lose, the Government. As it stands the experience in the industry is aging and so are those who employ apprentices and when they lose motivation or respect for the industry the Government loses out.

opinion two things can solve this but both are unlikely to happen.

1. government has to help employers in the way of funding to take on apprentices

2. the apprentice has to be able to certify his own work unsupervised when he completes his time just like every other trade in nz

Great to see some interesting debate amongst tradespeople around NZ.

This was from the Plumbers Forum as a result of the last edition of the Fellow Practitioner:

The Government have left the run too late to train people which is a long term goal. They have cocked up the apprenticeship training scheme and the only option open to them now is to impose regulation on trades people as that can be done at the click of a finger. Look at the retrospective legislation they imposed on the industry to cover their arse.

Think of it this way. Money given to the ITO for training is wasted and it would take time and effort for the Government to fix the issues. Regulation of our industry is paid for by us the trades people hence the reason the Government has opted to regulate rather than educate - it doesn't cost them a cent. Their short-sightedness will cost them big time in 5 years time when a lot of the industry experience retire.

The Government is at risk of losing and entire industry if they don't take action now. They must engage with the industry and set in place actions for the industry to retain experience and knowledge. They need to win back the confidence of the industry and give the industry control of its destiny.

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