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IN OTHER NEWS

**A Governance Board**

**Last edition we discussed the establishment of a Governance Board and received some very good feedback which we hope will generate more discussion in the future - but even better it would be great if it generated action.**

**As an industry do we wait for it to happen when it suits others or do we take positive action now?**

**We need involvement from people who have common sense and are willing to put industry needs in front of individual or organisational needs.**

**The industry is not blameless for the current situation as we haven't stood up for ourselves and have relied on others to be our voice.**

**The current Government and Minister of Building and Construction don't appear to give a shit about our industry. Those of us that do care about the industry need**

**Apprenticeships.**



Last edition we discussed the establishment of a Governance Board to help progress the industry, and this week we are looking at what keeps the industry alive - APPRENTICESHIPS.

The Federation wants to generate discussion about apprenticeships and how they affect the industry. Fifty years ago there was an apprenticeship scheme in place that produced well trained plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers that were held in high regard in most places throughout the world.

There was an Apprenticeship Board who administered the apprentices and ensured they were trained to a very high standard, and ensured those that were wanting apprentices were suitable to have them. As time progressed we believe that standard was undervalued by the education system and the public as there was a push for tertiary education. A push for more people to attend university and the education snobbery began.

We believe the education system started the policy of directing those who they felt were not capable of achieving results at university towards trades. This created the division between knowledge and skills, and analytical jobs. Knowledge and skills being required in the trades (level 4) and analytical (level 5) traits being required for lawyers, accountants, engineers and such like.

As time passed those who had been bought up with the university degree superiority complex had reached positions of influence over the education system and the downhill slide for the trades commenced.

Government financing of apprenticeships came into question and changes we implemented by way of Industry Training Organisations (ITO's). This, we feel, was the hydro side to destruction of the apprenticeship training in the plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying industry. Financial gain and distribution took over from quality training and the maintenance of a respected industry.

The day of the "Grant Writing Apprentice" was upon us where ITO's continued to claim Government grants and fees even after apprentices had left the industries and in some cases even died. Our industry was not immune to this and had to pay money back to the Government which had been unlawfully claimed. The Government seemed happy just to get their money back.

**to remember the Government and the Minister work for us as tax payers and if they don't perform, which they aren't, then we need to get the situation corrected.**

**We have said it before that the Government has nothing that we need. We have the knowledge and skills that they need to protect the health and safety of the public.**

**We have the knowledge and skills to create a more productive industry and we also have the power to walk away from the Government's bureaucracy.**

**The Government needs to either help us or get the hell out of the way as eventually there will be no one left in the industry that actually cares.**

**Even now people don't have time to get involved, but there is no use waiting until bad times are upon again and then trying to correct the situation. We need to make time now and act on making improvements.**

**What the industry needs to understand is that the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board is not legislated to get involved in a lot of issues that affect the industry such as training. They have a clear legal framework that they must operate within – and so cannot provide the sort of governance we are**

Industry Training Organisations that were supposed to be providing leadership and guidance were lining their pockets at the expense of the industries. The Government had instituted a level of people management and not much else. Anyone who wanted an apprentice was given one whether they were able to train them or not i.e. there appeared to be little or no vetting of potential employers, this meant that some apprentices were placed in inappropriate environments and with people who just wanted to use them as cheap labour rather than train them properly.

It would seem all training provided was based on profits for the training organisations and the cost to apprentices or employers increased from nothing to the current level of \$12,000 plus the Government contribution.

ITO's played with industry models, different versions of delivery and administration which plummeted us to where we are now, where practical hands on skills are attempted to be taught in a theoretical manner. Where assessments are performed in preference to training. Where training roles have been reversed and now rather than having half a dozen training facilities providing consistency and teaching the same skills and assessing them, we have numerous facilities assessing the same theoretical aspects of the industry and no skills are taught.

We have very little accountability being demonstrated – exactly how bad do these organisations have to be for Skills to deem them unsuitable to sending apprentices to. It has reached the stage where apprentices don't want to attend the week long assessments as they feel it can be a waste of time. The onus has been placed on the employers to be the full time trainers and mentors and what is worse they have to pay for the privilege to do it.

Training institutions are simply working on numbers achieving level 4 and you need to remember at the current level 4 the apprentices are not deemed workplace competent. Some training institutions are creating level 3 qualifications that simply give trainees enough information to be dangerous and allow them to illegally go into competition with legitimate tradespeople. What's worse is sometimes these Level 3 courses are run concurrently with Level 4 classes and we have trainees lining up to use equipment – wasting precious, expensive hours.

The current scheme is not providing any incentive to take on apprentices and this is left up to a few socially minded people who want to see the industry survive and obviously those who are making money out of having apprentices to on sell to business throughout New Zealand.

The lack of vision by the government and the lack enthusiasm from the industry has left a plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying industry that is lacking in fully qualified tradesperson capacity. Evidence of this is the current level of people operating in the industry under exemptions.

Around 2,000 people operating in the industry who are not deemed workplace competent to a standard to be granted New Zealand

seeking as an industry.

**They can certainly state what they need in order that qualifications can be granted and for practicing licences and registration etc but they are not legislated to undertake the leadership required for training.**

**Events of late have proven that if training is left to others we as an industry end up paying for a substandard product.**

**Leadership is required to direct the training and make sure it is kept as an affordable item that is meeting industry needs.**

**The industry needs its own Board to provide the leadership needed. Some organisations have tried to provide the leadership with some success but have fallen into the money making trap.**

**We believe the Federation is the only organisation that truly cares about industry needs without putting a dollar sign in front of its activities. If other organisations disagree then step up and prove us wrong.**

**You would think that after a hundred years in New Zealand the Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying industry would be progressing, but instead we are continually stopping and starting based on others ideas.**

**Common sense is so rare**

qualifications. 2,000 people who are not subject to the same discipline procedures as the rest of us. 2,000 people under supervision. 2,000 people who are not required to do continuing professional development. 2,000 people who are filling jobs that should have been filled by our own apprentices. The additional problem to this that should be a concern to every certifier is that there is insufficient supervision for these people. We forecast that there will be more and more disciplinary matters before the PGDB around supervision. Sitting remotely and signing someone off that should be eyesight and earshot supervised will end you up in hot water!

The apprenticeship scheme is not providing tradespeople who are deemed work place competent. The result is that continuing supervision is a requirement of the legislation after apprentices finish their apprenticeships. Another couple of thousand people requiring supervision.

What's industry getting out of doing the government's job for them – nothing but problems. The industry is enduring problems so others can profit. There is cost for the privilege of having an apprentice, there are supervision issues, there are training issues, there is the lack of capacity in the industry and this is the tip of the iceberg.

The problems endured by the industry far outweigh the benefits of the current scheme. The Federation's solution is very simple - extend the apprenticeship to five years where upon completion apprentices become fully qualified.

The current scheme is four years to complete the apprenticeship and apprentices qualify as a tradesperson but are not deemed to be workplace competent as they still require two years of supervision or continual supervision if they don't progress to Certifying status.

Being fully qualified upon completion of an apprenticeship alleviates the supervision issue which is starting to plague the industry. It also starts addressing the issues of lack of qualified tradespeople.

Along with the five year apprenticeship the Federation would like to see block courses where actual training occurs and everyone throughout the country is taught the same core skills. This takes some of the onus away from the employer as apprentices will be taught on course and practiced at the work place.

We want consistency in training so a tradesperson could work anywhere in New Zealand and know everyone in that area has been taught the same. As it stands with the employer being responsible for 90% of the training there is no consistency.

There have been so many versions of training and apprenticeships that it is hard to find two apprentices that have completed the same training. There have been enough band aids applied to the training and apprenticeship scheme that it is time common sense was used and the system should be rebuilt with the end product being the ultimate aim and that is a well trained, skilled and knowledgeable apprentice that upon completion of a 5 year apprenticeship is deemed to be workplace competent.

**these days it should be considered a super power but that's what we need to get us into the future.**

**We need an industry structure that is simple and controlled by the industry.**

**We need to have a bit of mongrel to take on those who want to push us around for their own advantage and that includes the Government.**

**It is rapidly approaching a stage where niceties need to be put by the wayside because that hasn't worked for decades.**

**If you are interested and keen to get involved at this early stage send an email to Wal Gordon.**

**wal.gordon@xtra.co.nz**

**The Federation has started the push for change and will follow through.**

It's time to stop having "Grant Writing Apprentices" who are making money for others and get apprentices that are going to develop and influence the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industry and meet the purpose of the Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying Act 2006.

Let's cut down the number of providers, give the fewer providers more money to deliver a quality product and hold them accountable for what they produce. Let's reduce the costs of an apprenticeship by cutting out the dead legs and overly expensive administration that Skills provide. Let's turn the clock back a little bit to when it all made sense.

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