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IN OTHER NEWS

Anger or Frustration?

You may have noticed a change in tone in the news letter lately; the anger seems to be building out of sheer frustration about the lack of action and accountability to help the industry progress.

We seem to be talking until we are blue in the face, seriously if we were any bluer we would be Smurfs! What we need is action not more talk.

You may have seen recently that the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board put out the Annual Report and by all accounts it's a good report - but that's from a regulatory point of view.

Registration numbers up, licensing numbers up and the number of people sitting exams are up, but in reality what is it all equating to for the industry?

Here are a few of the numbers for you to ponder on.

It's No Laughing Matter

Welcome to Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying



Where no one gives a damn about you, you clean up others mess, and everything is your fault.

The election is only a week away, and have you noticed how lots of the promises being made by some of the political parties are directed at individuals, such as tax decreases, and all the real data as to their affordability is hidden in huge budgets which the average person just doesn't understand.

The reason for this is that people will vote for the party which will give them the best immediate deal as an individual regardless of the long term consequences. This is human nature so it complements the "ambulance at the bottom of the cliff" environment successive governments have created.

The Federation has always had a view to the future as we are pretty sure there is no way we were born just to pay bills and die. Our big problem is we are reliant on others, and when we say we are reliant we mean we must ask permission to do the things that are right for our industry. Bureaucrats regulate and control our every move, believing they know best because we are "only tradespeople".

These people who believe they know best and who claim to be looking at the big picture are doing a huge amount of harm to our industry with the pitiful advice they are supplying the Government. The Government in turn are failing to provide informed leadership to help our industry progress.

There has been a lot of talk about lifting children out of poverty and getting affordable housing for people but yet again it's been targeted at individuals. We can look at the campaigning this time around and ask what are the political parties offering to our industry? What are they offering to make it more profitable for everyone in the industry?

The Minister of Building and Construction has had his blinkers on for some time and has simply ignored our industry for the latter if not the majority of the last term in government. You would think with him also being the Minister for the Environment that he would be looking at ways our industry could help the country with the issues around polluted water ways, the use of environmental techniques to dispose of grey water etc. Where has been his push for GREEN plumbing?

Exemption numbers have gone from 689 in 2014 up to 2,320 in 2017. That's a 336% increase. This means we now have 2,320 people working in the industry that do not meet the standard for obtaining Registration, that are not subject to disciplinary processes and are not being trained in any formal capacity. This number does not include apprentices. It is something for our industry to be ashamed of.

Last year there were 1,220 new registrations but this only equated to an increase in licensing of 558. So did 662 people leave the industry or did people not progress on to licence after they registered.

Some other real disturbing figures were at the Tradesman level where 444 new plumbing registrations equated to an increase in licensing of 92. For gasfitting 206 new registrations equated to an increase of 38 in licensing. Drainlaying was a little bit better with 192 new registrations equating to an increase of 82 in licensing.

With regard to exams what we noticed was that was that in 2014, 83% of people who sat the Certifiers exams passed. In 2015, 77% passed and in 2016, 70% passed. This isn't a good trend and in our opinion is a reflection of the lack of training at polytechs and the obsession with assessment. Employers too much step up and take some blame for this as well – given that essentially Government are

There is so much more our industry could do to help New Zealand with regard to drains, waterways, water supplies, disposal and treatment and the list goes on but the Government is too busy concentrating on how they can regulate what is already ours, OUR QUALIFICATIONS.

We are a huge resource that is absolutely committed to the betterment of the health of the public at large and, given a more user friendly government; we could have been a huge asset to them in protecting the health of the public at large. We only need to look over the ditch to see how our industries have worked with the Government to utilise grey water and come up with some pretty amazing ideas and worked together for the advantage of both.

Our government are too busy with enforcement at the bottom of the cliff rather than training at the top to have the best plumbers gasfitters and drainlayers in the world.

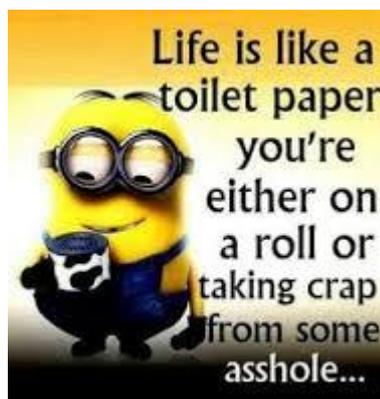
Over the last three years the Minister has wasted time looking at how he can regulate designers, engineers and architects and has attempted to drag us, along with the sparkies and builders into the same regulatory regime and what has been achieved over that time, NOTHING! His plan or lack of one has held up the review of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006.

Our industry has endured nine years of inaction by two ministers who we can simply say failed our industry. Are we as an industry prepared to endure more of the same? Why sit back and be an option for the uninformed when we can be a solution to the visionaries.

The Federation is not going to advocate any one political party as it is everyone's right to support whom they feel meets their needs, but we are going to say we are not going to put up with any more of what we have had over the last nine years even if the incumbent Government gets back in.

THERE MUST BE CHANGE!!

Why is it so?



Dear Editor: Why is it that our industry is in such strife?

Sure everyone is happy at the moment because there is a lot of work around but what of the future, what of our training, what of our reputations.

We seem to take a lot of crap from people who should be supporting us. If we had a union

we would strike to get action. What are your thoughts?

ED: Well writer it seems the industry is on a roll work wise but is

expecting them to do ALL the training.

The Board stated there was an increase of 89% in those sitting Tradesman exams. This is good but what we noticed was 76% of the 907 people who sat the exams passed. So nearly a quarter of the apprentices failed their registration exam.

What happens to that 24% now? Experience would tell us they are abandoned by the ITO and have to fend for themselves until they pass their exam, which some never do.

At an apprenticeship cost of \$26,000 for training it equates to \$5,895,500.00 spent on training that has failed to get people to registration level. Remember this is only to Registration level not to workplace competent level as deemed by the current qualifications.

This poses the question of who pays to get our apprentices to a workplace competent level which is the gauge of most other trades for someone to finish their apprenticeship.

We noticed also that only two people took advantage of the new Journeyman Registration. We understand this number has changed considerably since the Annual Report was distributed and now sits at around 95 people.

Readers out there really need to look at the Journeyman Registration as it does have supervision ramifications over working

failing in all other areas as you have alluded to. One of the problems is the number of one man bands that we have in the industry where their main priority, and rightly so, is survival so they can support themselves and their families.

As you stated we are in strife but not due to the lack of work, more due to there not being enough qualified people in the industry to meet the needs of the consumer.

We have discussed about unions in previous issues of the Fellow Practitioner but in a nut shell when the Federation was established we explored the option of creating a union but the problem was that legislation does not allow employees and employers to be in a union together, hence we started the Federation where all could be represented.

Also at that time we were fighting the establishment not the employers and that fight still goes on, so as an industry we need to be united in our purpose and direction. If we want to achieve anything we need to be prepared to take on the bureaucracy and fight hard.

The performance of the bureaucracy over the last few years has been one of Industrial Exclusion where we, the industry, has been excluded from decisions which directly affect us. People seem to have lived in fear of the bureaucracy and the politicians but not the Federation as we believe they have nothing we need except a rubber stamp to say we can work and when the shit is flowing in the streets that rubber stamp is going to mean bugger all.

The Government talks about the standards of rental properties, leaking roofs, leaking pipes and taps, no heating, gas appliances not working and of course blocked drains so if they don't have us who will do those repairs? The standards are slipping and what is the one thing the Government and the Bureaucrats haven't tried – GETTING ON WITH THE INDUSTRY.

They have been too busy trying to big note that they have forgotten about the basics. Too busy being politicians and bureaucrats that they have forgotten why they have been elected and appointed to their positions. Are the people employed at MBIE earning hundreds of thousands of dollars actually adding any value to what our industry does? Is the Skills Organisation taking responsibility for their role as our ITO and are they adding value?

People poke the big stick at the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board and the Federation has been guilty of the same in early years, but what we need to remember is that they are simply a Regulatory Board. They could be called the Licensing Board and not even mention plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying and their role would be the same.

We need to step up as an industry and take control from the Bureaucrats and Politicians and no matter who forms the next Government they had better be prepared to work with us to effect change before the industry and its practitioners become an endangered species.

on an exemption.

The big thing to remember about results reported by the Board in their Annual report are that they have no control over the figures as it is individual and industry decisions that affect the numbers. The Board have done well to work with the industry to affect change but it is not their responsibility and the trends that are occurring are a result of the actions of the industry.

Poor training, lack of apprentices and retention of qualified people are all issue to do with Industry Governance not industry regulation.

As an industry we need to be careful as we are approaching a stage where a huge proportion of the industry is approaching retirement.

When we talk about retirement we include those of retirement age for national superannuation but more importantly we include those who have devoted most of their working life to the industry and now their bodies won't let them do the entire gambit of our trades.

The time in the industry does take its toll on tradespeople's bodies and there is no compensation for that and really there is nowhere for them to move on to. Job as council inspectors have gone as the councils want university graduates to put through a two week course to make them inspectors.

People say that will never happen but look at how many tradespeople we are short in the industry now and how many are needed over the next few years. Also have a look at the age of the supervisors in the industry and the qualifications and experience that will be lost in the next decade.

Going on strike as a union used to be a way of drawing attention to the plight of the workers well we don't have the luxury of doing that so we have to think smarter and get stronger as an industry.

On the surface it may look like we are not doing anything but in our heads it's extremely busy. Busy formulating what to do next, busy keeping an eye on the bureaucrats to ensure we are not shafted, busy trying to get a good deal for EVERYONE in the industry.

Our warning for the next Government is that they need to be prepared for an early visit from us because enough time has been wasted and we are sick and tired of waiting for Ministers and Bureaucrats to get off the arses to help our industry. They can mark our words that we have taken enough shit and it will be better to work with us than against us.

The Government doesn't even have to do anything except get off their arse pick up their rubber stamp and let the industry get on with what we do best.

THE INDUSTRY KNOWS WHAT IS BEST FOR IT SO LET US GET ON WITH IT.

Our vision for a better future:

Proper training at block courses

One qualification for industry by increasing the apprenticeship to five years and then becoming "registered" and licensed as a plumber, gasfitter or drainlayer – thus being able to work unsupervised within your competencies.

Having "advanced" qualifications in specialty areas such as backflow, limited

Polytec's no longer need plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying instructors as they seem now to be workshop supervisors and 90% of the training is on site.

Times have changed and because we don't have industry representation we have to take what we are given.

This week there was a programme on TV about housing in New Zealand and while watching it there were thoughts about the similarity with our industry.

With regard to housing Labour seem to be looking after the greater good i.e. the people and National are looking after those with money. In our industry the Federation is looking after the greater good, the people and Master Plumbers are looking after the money. It was so similar it was frightening.

electrical, solar, hydraulic design etc for those that work in these areas and who want to extend themselves.

A Centre of Excellence for training in our trades – let's reduce the number of polytechs delivering plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying and put more resources into one or two facilities and then offer top class training – it's the least we deserve.

Introducing a Governance Board for our industry – voted on by members of the industry - that would work alongside the PGDB - this could have representatives of various industry groups but also individuals voted on by their peers.

What do you think? Are you with us for a better future? We welcome ALL your feedback.

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