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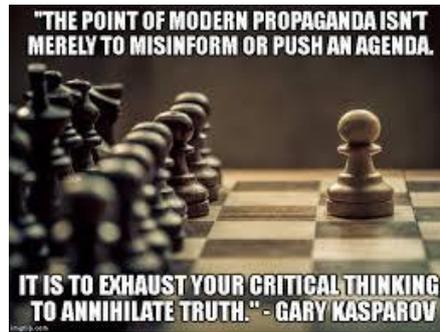
Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor: You mentioned in the last news letter that the Federation had told the Minister of Building and Construction that you were preparing to go to the Regulation Review Committee again. What has happened this time?

In May 2011 the then CEO of Master Plumbers had this to say in the Plumbers Journal.

Another significant issue facing all practitioners this year will be the outcome of the recommendations made recently by Parliament's Regulation Review Committee. As Most Journal readers will be aware, two tradesmen appeared before the Committee in mid – 2010 to complain about gazette notices issued by the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board (PGDB) regarding CPD and the disciplinary levy.

The Truth of the Matter



In July 2011 NZ Master Plumbers held their Annual General Meeting at the Waipuna Hotel and Convention Centre. Under General Business the then National President Ray Gault talked about a number of issues, but one passage of the minutes

really stood out to us and that was:

'He then spoke about the distractive factions among the industry that are causing problems to our future well-being and how important it is for us to think that if we don't have the PGD Board where do we stand? He informed the members that without the PGD Board we will come under the Licensed Building Practitioners. This will be more rigorous on us as we will not be under one umbrella like now. MPGD has an influence today, but would not have that if we were under the DBH (Department of Building and Housing).'

It was presumed the Federation was one of the “distractive factions” because at that time we were calling for changes to the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board (the Board) and we were on the attack. We disputed the need for the Board based on its performance at that time.

Ray Gault asked a very important question - about where we would be if we didn't have a PGD Board, and that question is still very relevant today. We have a Board that is performing better than it was, considering that in 2006 the then Board was used as a scapegoat by the Government when the entire Board was fired.

After a period of rebuilding, the regulation of the industry is better and fairer, in most instances, but is the industry in a “good” place? The Federation believes we are in a better place but not necessarily in a place that is as good as it could be, or a good as we deserve.

Now this isn't the Boards fault as they are bound by legislation as to what they can and can't do, they regulate. It's the Governments function to provide leadership and if they aren't prepared to provide the leadership, or can't, then they need to put in place legislation that will allow the industry to do it.

Master Plumbers is extremely concerned that the Committee's resulting recommendations - essentially to disallow the gazette notices that authorise the PGDB to collect the levy and require upskilling - are based on the comments of just two complainants. This is hardly representative of the sector and, in our opinion, does not reflect the position taken by most practitioners.

Does the Federation believe it has the support of Master Plumbers this time around?

Keep up the good work.

Ed: Yes we remember that article well. The Federation didn't respond to it at the time as we didn't want to get in a slanging match with Master Plumbers and still don't as they are only doing what they feel is best for their members, however it may not be best for the entire industry.

We would comment that it doesn't matter whether there were one, two or a hundred complainants - right is right and wrong is wrong. In the 2010 case, we were right and this was upheld by the Regulation Review Committee.

In answer to your questions the Federation believes the gazette notices that form the Tradesman and Certifying Registrations and qualifications are wrong, and breach Parliamentary Standing Orders and as far as support from Master Plumbers goes we will have to wait and see if

The review of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 is due out in March 2019 - so can we look forward to appropriate change that will help the industry, or will we end up with more of the same with different packaging and a different coloured bow? The review may go as far as tightening the regulation of the legal industry but what of the illegal operators and members of the public?

Think of this; the 2018 population of New Zealand is 4.75 million people and as of August 2018, there are 330 police stations around the country with nearly 12,000 staff. That's a ratio of one responder to every 396 people. The Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board have two investigators to police the same population. That's a ratio of one responder to every 2.37 million people. The Police are tax payer funded, the Board is not.

It was suggested we may have ended up under the Licensed Building Practitioners and Ray was right, that would have been disastrous. So that brings us back to where we are now, one of the most important industries in New Zealand, self funding and without an overarching governance entity.

So in reality nothing has changed for the progression of the industry in decades. We have membership organisations, some with influence and some without. We have a regulatory board which is nearly at the stage of reinventing the wheel. We have industry training and apprenticeships that have spent the last decade in stop start mode. We have a government department advising the Minister of Building and Construction whose advice is based on what other organisations do - they are not innovative. They may understand regulation but do they understand progression?

We know in the last few months we have been going on about governance, but as an industry we need to take action, as does the Government. We want your feedback on these options:

1. We just leave things as they are and take what we are given with membership organisations picking their fights for their members.
2. The Government take over funding the Board for regulation and the Industry deal with establishing a Governance organisation (this would include membership organisations and the Federation, and people who belong to nothing). The problem here would be membership as a lot of the industry sit back and let things happen without input.
3. The industry continues to fund the Board, and one of the membership organisations steps up and alters their rules to govern the industry on a voluntary membership basis. This would require all membership organisations having input and representation on the governance board. This would require the funding of two organisations.
4. The Government supports and partially funds the PGD Board and a Governance Board operating in conjunction with the PGD Board. A sharing of administrative support and CEO arrangement would be

they want change or not.

Dear Editor. Further to my letter about the World Plumbing Council meeting in America. The presentation was only 15 minutes. Are we getting value for money? I am aware that it was the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman and the CEO who went to America.

Ed: Based on the limited information we have it seems a bit extravagant and ask what it has to do with the regulation of the industry?

Dear Editor: I read with great interest the letter to the Editor regarding Rinnai employing service people direct, seemingly in competition with their customers i.e. gasfitters. It raises an interesting question for wider industry – when suppliers become competitors to their customers – just where are the lines drawn?

We saw Plumbing World some years ago with their Do It For Me promotion where they were indicating installation prices for various sanitary fixtures they were selling – and I asked myself at that time how a merchant selling product could dictate install prices for plumbers and still retain their custom.

I guess in the Rinnai case, gasfitters that are affected will need to ask themselves if they wish to support products sold by what is essentially their competitor. I would be interested in what Rinnai's thought process is in regards to employing

needed. No additional funding would be needed from the industry.

These are some options but we need your feedback so we know which direction to push. We welcome feedback from other membership organisations as well and will publish that feedback.

It seems that we get all the propaganda from the various government departments, from the ITO, from membership organisations, from the Board and yes you get the propaganda from the Federation the difference being we have nothing to gain but a better progressive industry.

It is time for change. Enough of the infighting. As an industry we need to be leaders in our own right.

PGD Board Consultation on Certifying Plumbers becoming Certifying Drainlayers

Consultation by the Board regarding Certifying Plumbers becoming Certifying Drainlayers ended on 20 November 2018. This is a difficult issue where some wish to protect what they have and others want to get more so it is a real confidence vote situation and the Federation didn't get much feedback on it.

The following was drafted based on the feedback obtained.

1. Do you support the proposed new transition pathway for a Certifying Plumber to become a Certifying Drainlayer?

Yes

2. Do you wish to comment further?

Should the proposal go ahead it will adversely affect some in the industry, namely the existing Certifying Drainlayers. The Federation understands their predicament as they stand to lose a proportion of their domestic market share.

As it stands infrastructure work is done under the supervision and licence of engineers and no drainlaying qualification is needed so that work isn't affected, however there is the private development work which may be affected, but the Federation believes this is a specialist area for plant and techniques as is the likes of dairy sheds. The average Certifying Drainlayer would know their limitations and not attempt this type of work.

This leaves the domestic work where there is no doubt in some areas existing drainlayers will lose work to other tradespeople but this same loss could occur under the existing system if a Certifying Plumber was to do the drainlaying apprenticeship to obtain their qualifications.

The Federation believes this is about proper protection being afforded to the public. As it stands there is a shortage of tradespeople and some work is done by unqualified people. Looking to the future the industry needs to have more qualified people to

direct in competition with their customers as it's a risky business decision.

ED: This is a very precarious situation and will be a personal choice for Gasfitters. Perhaps Rinnai see the end user as their customer base and the gasfitters are purely a step in the process.

We know some in the plumbing industry won't shop at certain suppliers as those suppliers sell to the public at cheaper rates than to the plumbers. This is mostly front of the wall items but never the less they are still items that if the plumber sold them a profit would be made by the plumber.

It appears in the Rinnai case that they are expecting the gasfitters to use their product and then cut the gasfitter out of the loop by taking away the follow up service. It would be good to hear from Rinnai as to what benefits there are to the industry supporting them and their actions.

Competition is good but comes with risk as in this case Rinnai may gain some customers for servicing but they may lose customers for new installs.

remain a fully regulated industry. Currently we operate in a partially regulated industry where only the licensed are policed to any affect and the public aren't policed to the extent to which they should be.

We need more qualified people and what better way that to utilise the skills already in the industry and increase the skills and qualifications of those already operating in the industry? The industry in now paying the price of having two levels of qualifications being Tradesman and Certifying.

The Board has agreed to the implementation of the apprenticeship scheme where all plumbing apprentices are drainlaying apprentices but now to afford the public the protection they should be afforded those apprentices need supervision by qualified people. The proposal alleviates that problem in that existing Certifying Plumbers will also be Certifying Drainlayers.

It is only in the last seven years that the training for apprentice drainlayers has become more onerous and the skills required to get to Tradesman level are equivalent or even higher than those previously required to get to Certifying Level. The Federation recommends that those who have qualified to Tradesman Drainlayer registration in the last seven years ALSO be included in some form of transition to Certifying level because they have covered in their training all that the Board proposes to be covered in the transition for Certifying Plumbers.

3. Do you support the proposed removal of the identified existing pathways?

Yes

4. Do you wish to comment further?

No

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