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IN OTHER NEWS

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Dear Editor

I have been provided with information about three people from the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board going to Queensland, Australia to attend the Master Plumbers Conference.

I also see that the Queensland location is listed on our options for CPD training.

Firstly, why is our money being wasted sending three people to a conference in Australia just because Master Plumbers choose to have their conference in Australia?

Secondly, why are the Plumbers Gasfitters and

SKILLS RESTART AGAIN!!



Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse it does!! The Skills Organisation ('Skills') is seeking Expressions of Interest ('EOI') from people wishing to be a part of Skills

PGD Consultation Group. They claim the role of the group is to provide subject and technical expertise and advice, on the following Plumbing, Drainlaying and Gasfitting projects:

- **Accelerated Apprenticeship** PGDB, Master Plumbers and Skills have been working together to identify an accelerated pathway for apprentices. We see that this accelerated apprenticeship concept will be attractive to both apprentices and employers and will go a long way to meeting the skill shortages as well as ensuring long term sustainability of the sector.

- **Monitoring and review of the New Zealand Apprenticeship programmes** The new apprenticeship programmes commenced during 2018 and as part of the ongoing delivery of these programmes, Skills will conduct monitoring and review in order to implement ongoing improvements. The Consultation Group will provide input into these decisions by providing advice, gaining feedback where required, and then supporting the communication of outcomes to their networks.

- **Pathways into an apprenticeship** Skills has been exploring how we can better leverage pathways from secondary-tertiary programmes into trades apprenticeships. We are looking to work with Trade Academies, increase uptake into Gateway and Workchoice programmes as well as increasing the promotion of trades as a career choice.

What amazes us is that in **2014** Skills established the Plumbing, Gasfitting, Drainlaying Industry Leadership Forum. They stated within the Purpose of the Group blurb, that it was important that industry (who use and benefit from the qualifications that Skills develops and the training that it manages) are involved to inform the process.

It was in this context that Skills established the Plumbing, Gasfitting, Drainlaying Industry Leadership Forum to provide strategic advice in connection with the execution of Skill's statutory mandate.

That Leadership Forum was disbanded and many who were members of the Forum felt the main reason **why** Skills disbanded

Drainlayers Board running CPD overseas when we can't even get sessions run in the rural locations in New Zealand?

There seems to be a hell of a lot of money being spent on overseas travel which is not necessary.

Wouldn't our money be better spent in New Zealand?

ED:

Good questions writer. Yes there does seem to have been a lot of overseas travel by the Board in the last twelve months or so.

The 10th May edition of the Fellow Practitioner outlined travel which we were aware of and yes a lot of it is, in our opinion, questionable - as is this case of travel for three people.

We would presume and hope that the sponsors of the CPD training would be paying the costs for the training to be conducted Australia. Hopefully this would include the travel costs etc. for presenters to go to Australia.

The way airfares are now it is probably cheaper to fly from Wellington to Australia than from Wellington, to say Auckland.

It does seem odd that in tight economic times Master Plumbers would chose to spend their money offshore, but that's their decision and we can only presume their members are happy with it, but you are right in asking **why industry money** should be spent to support their conference offshore.

the group was that the group was **too effective** in expressing industry's views - which incidentally didn't match Skills views.

We believe Skills weren't happy about not getting their own way, and some of the home truths they were given were unpalatable - so they disbanded the group. They then had a brainwave and tried to get feedback and consult "on line" and it appears that was an abject failure. This was followed by a period in the wilderness where NO consultation took place and now we are back to a new forum - all of this at a cost to the industry by an organisation that is meant to be a Not For Profit, but that is showing in excess of \$10 million dollars profit as far as we can make out.

Speaking of costs, if you put forward an expression of interest for the new PGD Consultation Group and Skills select you, (yes you read right they will pick who they want), you are expected to pay your own costs such a travel, accommodation etc. This effectively excludes a lot of people who could contribute but can't afford to take the time off work as well as pay costs to get to and from the meetings, and accommodation if coming from a long way out of town. Skills can afford to send their people around the world, but when it comes to the industry we are expected to pay to help them achieve their goals.

This offer just gets better and better doesn't it? Not only do you get to contribute to an organisation that probably won't listen, and have used up all their credibility, but you also get to pay for the privilege of doing so.

So what is it all about? Remember we mentioned about Skills statutory mandate when discussing the Leadership Group above, well this is what Skills said with regard to that group:

SKILLS is the Industry Training Organisation for the Plumbing, Gasfitting, Drainlaying Industry as gazetted by the Minister for Tertiary Education pursuant to the Industry Training Act 1992.

SKILLS has a statutory mandate to:

- *provide leadership to the Plumbing, Gasfitting, Drainlaying Industry on matters relating to skill and training needs;*
- *design national standards, qualifications, and a logical qualifications pathway for the industry that meet the needs of employers, advisers, regulators and consumers; and*
- *design, manage and quality assure the national training and assessment system for the industry.*

It is very possible that this new group may just be so that Skills can tick the box with regard to their statutory obligations. The cynics amongst us also think it could have something to do with the recent VET Review.

Recently the Federation put in an Official Information Act request to the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board regarding a Memorandum of Understanding they had entered into with Skills

You may want to consider asking that question direct to the Board.

Let us know if you do and what the response is.

Dear Editor

Why are you being so combative at the moment? I thought things were okay with others in the industry or was I mistaken?

ED

Combative, now that's a good way of describing things.

Yes you could say we are being combative as we seem to have returned to a time a decade ago when the Federation started. The days when it was very difficult to trust anyone in the industry as everyone seemed to have their own agendas.

We started off being combative to get traction and when we had everyone's attention we tried to play nice with them and work with them as allies but alas it has fallen back to an era of backroom deals and survive if you can.

Yet again the industry is taking the hits from decisions made by people and organisations that think they know what is best for the industry.

None of the industry is in a position to stop these activities so all we can do is identify the issues and report them to the industry so individuals can make their own decisions.

It does mean that we have to

which pertained to the Accelerated Apprenticeship project which Skills claimed was industry led.

That Memorandum of Understanding was provided by the Board but the Annex to the report wasn't as it was claimed by the Board that it was confidential between them and Skills. It appears that the Annex was the scope of the Accelerated Apprenticeship project. The Federation has complained to the Ombudsman Office that the Annex should be released to the industry.

Secrecy shrouds the Accelerated Apprenticeship project which the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board, Master Plumbers and Skills have been working on. This was something this "Management Group" picked up on, during one of their many industry funded overseas trips.

Last time we looked the industry comprised of more than the Board, Master Plumbers and Skills. In fact the bulk of the industry don't belong to Master Plumbers and don't have apprentices. There seems to be a bit of a "Three Amigos" scenario going on here. But getting back to this Accelerated Apprenticeship project it, sounds very similar to the 12 month pre-trade that was run in the Auckland area. It's something industry should be concerned about.

Why you ask? Well essentially it is about fast tracking apprentices by bulk theory learning in a classroom – say 12 to 18 months of classroom tuition in legislation, codes and the theory of plumbing, then say another 18 months on the tools post classroom and BOOM – sit the exam and you are a plumber, gasfitter, drainlayer. Does industry really want this?

Most employers want their apprentices locked in for five years. It seems to us the ONLY people that might benefit from this is the Group Employment schemes of ATT and Masterlink that will undoubtedly get first pick of the fast track apprentices to sign up and charge out at a higher rate to plumbers and gasfitters. Industry has repeatedly said they want 4000 hour apprenticeship (this was prior to the five year apprenticeship being introduced), and we have seen NOTHING that leads us to believe that "industry" want it shortened. If there is evidence of this – we would be willing to listen and publish, but we doubt it.

We remember a meeting with NZQA, TEC, Polytechnics, the Board, Master Plumbers, the Federation and Skills where pre-trades were discussed and the idea was rejected by the industry groups (yes, you read it right, Master Plumbers and the Federation were in complete agreement), and pre-trades were restricted to about three months.

It seems like Master Plumbers, the Board and Skills have done a 360 degree turn on this and have renamed a pre-trade to an Accelerated Apprenticeship. We may find out more in the future if the Ombudsman finds in our favour, or it may just happen and when you wake up one morning it will already be implemented and someone will be making money at the industries risk.

The second project on the list for the new Consultation Group is the Monitoring and Review of the New Zealand Apprenticeship

go through the pain of watching the demise of the industry at others hands.

We make no apology for our stance or the sometimes sarcastic way we put issues to the industry.

HAVE WE GOT IT WRONG

We read this and immediately asked the question "have we got it all wrong"?

In 1987, a study of the Hiwi, aka the Guahibo people, who live in parts of Venezuela, Colombia and Brazil concluded that adults spent just three hours a day hunting and gathering food, and occupying themselves with other work such as building shelters.

Interestingly, the culture has no structured time sequences.

There are 16 points in a typical year that are loosely marked, from the start of the dry and wet seasons, to specific days when certain fruit ripens or insects emerge, and these time periods vary.

Assuming tribal members took time off on these special days, they probably worked around 1,047 hours a year.

Lucky buggers.

programmes. This would appear to be a review of the latest apprenticeship programme which the industry didn't really have much input into in the first instance.

Thirdly there is the Pathways to an Apprenticeship project which appear to us to be a wider issue than just our industry. Quite frankly most of the people we have spoken to have never had a problem finding an apprentice. The problem is not many people in the industry can be bothered with all the garbage that comes with taking on an apprentice now days. So the problem is actually finding EMPLOYERS who will take on apprentices. It seems the system has lost its credibility.

To the Federation it appears the formation of this new Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Consultation Group is a "tick the box exercise" to cover the Skills Organisation just in case someone asks if they consulted with the industry.

This is another example of an organisation not listening and then losing the trust and confidence of the industry. Good luck to anyone who joins the group.

HOPES GAMING WILL BE THE ANSWER TO TRADIE SHORTAGE



Apparently there's a new plan to encourage school students to get into trades, and it's called "gamification". It comes as the construction industry battles with a shortage of fifty thousand workers.

It seems the plan is designed for students not suited to traditional learning, and the media reported that it's not the usual way of learning in the classroom, but it's hoped 'gaming' will be the answer to the tradie shortage.

It's reported in the media that a computer game called 'Construction Tycoon' is going to be used to stimulate students. It seems students are taught financial and people management skills in construction companies.

That includes things like paying staff, ordering products, and complying with health and safety laws. Apparently research shows students can retain knowledge learnt through gaming.

The game has landed 150 thousand dollars of government funding?

We wonder if the plumbing version of this will be called Game of Thrones?

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