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IN OTHER NEWS

LEAVING A LEGACY

Things have certainly taken a bad turn this week and it really makes us wonder if there are evil forces working behind the scenes to direct the industry in their predetermined direction.

The Federation being “expelled” from the Stakeholders Liaison Group is probably a welcome result for the Master Plumbers, Skills Organisation and Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board Chief Executive cartel.

The Board obviously don’t recognise the Federation and so have excluded us in the same manner as they have excluded the New Zealand Plumbers, Drainlayers & Gasfitters Association in Auckland.

Two industry organisations now excluded from the Board’s Stakeholder list. It’s starting to appear that to be a stakeholder you need to be a Skills Organisation supporter, a member of Master

CRY A RIVER OF TEARS



The Federation has been kicked out of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Stakeholders Liaison Group.

It was with great surprise that the Federation received a letter from the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board dated 12

August 2019 regarding the Federation’s removal from the Stakeholder Liaison Group. The surprise is not the removal of the Federation, but the **REASON** given for the removal of the Federation.

The Board was conducting a review of the Stakeholders Liaison Group membership and this involved considering whether the Federation (and we can only assume Master Plumbers as well), should continue to have the right to each appoint 2 members to the Stakeholder Liaison group.

The letter stated “*In circumstances where it has no members, the Board considers that it is no longer appropriate that the Federation has that appointment right and has resolved to remove it*”. Then comes the cover your arse part of the letter “*Of course you, or others associated with the Federation, may put your name forward for industry positions on the SLG..*”

On one hand they say we don’t have membership and on the other hand we have people associated with the Federation. There seems to be more to this than meets the eye as the circumstances of the Federation haven’t changed for a number of years now.

We are not sure where they got the information that the Federation has no members. We can only presume the Board Chief Executive has put forward the recommendation for approval. When we contacted the Chief Executive about this he stated the information come from a transcript from the Regulation Review Committee hearing but then said it may have come from some hand written notes.

What is very interesting is the Regulation Review Committee don’t

Plumbers or be a crony that does not oppose the Board and the Chief Executive.

It's appears to us that the cartel want to exclude anyone who doesn't agree with their line of thought - so is this action taken now, after all this time, in preparation to alleviate opposition to scheduled projects?

Is it so the Craftsman Registration Level 5 can be pushed through un-opposed?

Is it so the pre-trade renamed as an Accelerated Apprenticeship can be pushed through un-opposed?

Is it so when the new tertiary training scheme is implemented Skills can have their own way to get the best deal for them without opposition?

Or perhaps the Board has some more overseas travel on fact finding missions organised and they don't want any opposition, whoops sorry we forgot there are three of them going to Australia in September.

So what we end up with at the end of all of this is a Board that is dominated by Master Plumbers members and now a Stakeholder Liaison Group which is dominated by Master Plumber members as well.

The rest of the group are handpicked by the Chief Executive and the Board and obviously the Board won't pick people who are going to oppose them so there isn't much hope of getting industry wide

do transcripts of the hearing any more so we wait with bated breath to see exactly where the mis- information came from or if comments have been misconstrued.

At no stage has anyone from the Board or the Secretariat of the Board approached the Federation to ask about member numbers. Surely before making such bold statements the Board should have the correct facts in front of it – or have we returned to the old ways of the Board when the disharmony was such that interactions between Board and practitioners were fractious and a huge level of mistrust existed?

We have supporters as we like to refer to them as – or members (it's all semantics really) – not in the same formal sense as say Master Plumbers where there is a yearly fee and membership contract. This does not make our supporters or their opinions any less valuable than others groups or individuals.

Is it possible this action is some sort of retaliatory move after the Federation lodged a complaint with the Regulation Review Committee?

The Federation gave feedback to the Board that we thought the group should involve more participation by members rather than be a group that got talked "at". This was partly why the Board were conducting the review.

We felt the Stakeholders Liaison Group was a chance for a group of practitioners and representatives from around the country to form opinions on the state of the industry and what could be done to move it forward. The last meeting made some headway on this and there was general agreement that the Stakeholders Liaison Group could form opinions and go public on them if everyone agreed, albeit it that it would be made clear this was separate to the PGDB.

The Federation hasn't simply sat back and observed it has said what needed to be said which at times hasn't been in step with Master Plumbers and/or Skills, and vice versa, but isn't this the very reason for the group? To get diverse opinions and debate them? It seems clearly not – and the shame is that the Board has removed the one group that represents ordinary practitioners, apprentices and administration people in our industry – the people at the core of our industries.

The Federation never claimed, like Master Plumbers do, to represent 60 or 70% of industry (although we do challenge this claim by them as they represent employers – NOT necessarily their staff, yet claim the staff numbers as their own).

We do claim to represent our supporters of which apprentices and tradespeople are some. We are the only organisation that give apprentices opinions the same weight as Certifiers, the only organisation that provides them with a platform to have an opinion – and the shame is that the Board have dismissed this apparently on a whim.

We have asked for a copy of the submission made to the Board and

feedback. So much for the Board meeting its objectives under “stakeholder liaison”.

We ask two questions:

Is this fair?

Is this healthy?

This expulsion has undermined the credibility of the Stakeholder Liaison Group because how can the Group now be taken seriously when realistically they don't represent all stakeholders, just Master Plumbers and a handpicked few.

This doesn't seem to be a very good legacy for the outgoing Chair of the Board to be leaving the incoming Chair whoever it may be.

We remember seeing Wal Gordon on the TV a few years ago talking about the Paul Gee case and he said the faces on the Board change but not the attitudes. That stuck with us and as the years go by we think he was right.

The industry is getting decimated by lack of leadership and the total exclusion of large parts of the industry by those in positions of authority.

All that has been happening is that those in positions of authority have kept the wheels greased and the dollars rolling in for organisations that they support.

We see in the annual report that the Boards reserves have grown yet again to \$4,618,042 but not to worry they are

a copy of the meeting minutes to see what was submitted as justification for their action.

It would seem in the Board's eyes the Federation does not exist so for those of you who have:

- Supported the Federations views in consultation to the Board - YOU DON'T EXIST
- Made weekly donations to the Federation - YOU DON'T EXIST
- Receiving the Fellow Practitioner - YOU DON'T EXIST
- Making submissions, visits and calls and letters to the editor - YOU DON'T EXIST

We have to congratulate Wal Gordon and the Federation Committee because if YOU DON'T EXIST then you have just pulled off the greatest ruse in Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying history.

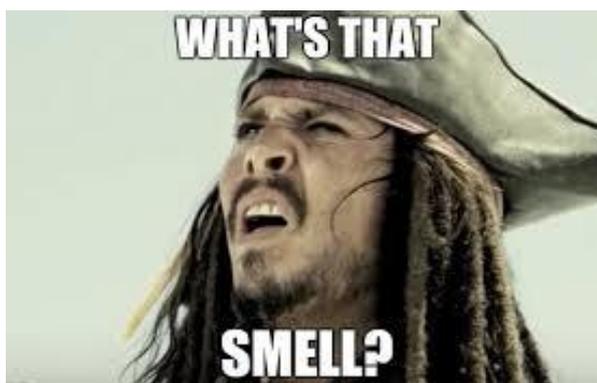
Are the Board implying that Wal Gordon has used deception to mislead them of the existence of supporters? We think this is a direct attack on his credibility by the Board and shouldn't be tolerated.

This incident really does reek and raises a lot of questions about the abilities of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board. We hope that some of the Board opposed this resolution – those that have seen the submissions the Federation have made over the years, those that are aware of the work the Federation have done, and despite perhaps being at times in disagreement, would at least realise that the Federation have always been passionate and true to their cause with the best interests of the Industry always at its heart.

Perhaps this action is a smoke screen to take our minds off the issues identified in the Board's Annual report released last week. There will be more on this soon.

Looking at the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board General Complaints Policy the Federation has six months to lodge a complaint about the Actions of the Board, but what would be the point when they have already made the decision. That would be like asking a criminal to pass judgement on themselves.

INSIDE THE TENT STINKS



For ten years the Federation has been fighting to advocate the positions and viewpoints of our members to ensure fairness and equality in

going to spend \$2.2M on an information and technology upgrade.

Isn't it ironic that this is about the amount the Board unlawfully took from the industry and then claimed if they had to pay it back to the industry they would be bankrupt!

Apparently it will significantly improve the process for registration, licensing and database engagement for practitioners.

Now you may well ask what that's going to do to help meet the Board's purpose of protecting the health and safety of the public - well it probably falls under sections (s) and (t) of the functions of the Board

(s) to do any other things as may, in the Board's opinion, be necessary for the effective administration of this Act:

(t) to carry out any functions that are incidental and related to, or consequential on, its functions stated in this section.

The information and technology upgrade could be made to fit in either of those sections so bye bye ill-gotten money.

In the Board's Annual Report it was reported that over 22,290 authorisations were issued last year. This was a 12% increase on the last reporting period.

We note that just over 13% (2977) of the authorisations issued were

regulations and legislation imposed by the Government on Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers.

We have attempted to help influence regulatory and legislative outcomes and educate our members (yes we know you exist), on developments regarding affirmative action and related regulatory changes.

Now that the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board have deemed the Federation doesn't have any membership it reminds us that we went through the type of exclusion with the last Chief Executive and Board.

It's not surprising that the Board have done this, as with a lot of decisions they make, it is based on the information supplied to them by the Chief Executive and the Secretariat.

This behaviour seems to go against what the Board's Chief Executive is always saying about getting people "inside the tent" but we will accept their ruling (mostly because we have NO choice), and it can be on their conscience that the Board members made a resolution based on dubious information without consulting those concerned.

When we started we were told we wouldn't achieve anything from "outside the tent" so we worked on relationships, bit our tongues and attempted to get inside the tent. We eventually got traction and got inside the tent but of late we have had to revert back to holding the Board accountable for their actions and it would seem they don't like it.

So probably all we can say about the resolution to remove the Federation from the Stakeholder Liaison Group is that it STINKS inside the tent and getting outside in some fresh non-corrupted air is a blessing. It will be great to be free from simply helping others achieve the "tick the box" exercise i.e. the need to liaise with the industry.

Ten years in "opposition" is a long time and when you see the same behaviours resurfacing that you initially fought it really does make you wonder about the worth of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board.

We believe the recent actions by the Board and Secretariat put into question how the industry can trust them. Having an industry that does not trust in the regulation or is fearful of the regulation will achieve nothing except drive good people away from the industry. Perhaps this is why over 50% of Certifying and Tradesman registrations don't seek authorisations to work in the industry.

We thought a change in Government and our third Minister in a decade may have made a difference but we appear to be no better off - or maybe even worse off than before. Our impression is we, as an industry, are being punished because of failing Government and Board systems and it appears those in positions that can make change are too gutless to say "enough is enough".

Plumbers gasfitters and drainlayers have no representation on the

to exemption holders.

But more interesting is the fact that over **61% of the 22,290 authorisations issued require supervision.**

This was one of the points of our complaint to the RRC. One level of registration would see huge changes in this area.

Even more interesting is the fact that as an industry we have more qualifications not being used by people than are actually working in the industry, so the issuing of 22,290 authorisations to us is a failure.

The number of authorisations could be hugely increased with people who are already qualified but for that to happen the industry would need to be an attractive option to get people to return to the trade.

We don't know how long it's going to take before someone realises that repacking failures to look different doesn't change anything.

Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board so perhaps it should be called the Sanitary Plumbing, Gasfitting and Drainlaying Regulation Board and let the government fund it because we get no benefit from it at all.

For those of you that support the Federation and oppose bad regulation and legislation you have no guilt about the demise of the industry. The guilt lies with those who have failed to recognise the wrong doing and who failed to take corrective action for the future.

We look at the numbers of qualified plumbers gasfitters and drainlayers working outside the industry and know why they aren't authorised or want to work in the industry, simply because of an oppressive bureaucracy.



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