



Fellow Practitioner Issue 392 Dated 14 March 2020

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THE GOVERNMENT WANTS POSITIVE PEOPLE (CONTINUED)

Being positive is more than words. The Federation has stayed positive in its purpose and believe we live in an environment where the people have elected a government to represent and govern based on the people's wishes and needs but the bureaucrats get so full of their own self importance that the people end up taking a back seat to what is best. We see the same in the Board and secretariat.

We seem to go from the positive aims of the government to a dictatorship in the regulation of our industry.

We see missed opportunities everywhere but one of the biggest we have seen is with regard to industry governance which is simply a set of rules, controls, policies and resolutions that outline industry behaviour. To

A DECADE IN SUMMARY

Believe It or Not!

A decade has passed since the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Federation starting campaigning to ensure the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industries get treated in a fair and equitable manner.

One of the worst aspects of campaigning is not knowing what, or who to believe. We hate not knowing what to believe and not knowing what is real, but something that is even worse is seeing the manipulation of poor legislation to meet the goals of organisations, both government and public.

When the Federation was first established we were told by a lot in the industry that we were wasting our time as nothing would ever change, but the Federation lived in hope that we could effect change. What we did not realise was how deep seated the influences and manipulation were that were causing damage to the industry.

Those that don't want change or want the change to benefit them and not the industry will say the Federation are negative and that we should be more positive about the future. A lot of people come into the industry do damage and then go. We're talking about Ministers, Board members, Chief Executives, lawyers and others whose ideas are not in the best interests of the entire industry.

When reading this edition of the Fellow Practitioner we know there will be the distracters who say it's all in the past - but is it? As you are reading ponder on the thought that if the behaviours are still occurring then is it in the past or is it still the present? If it is still the present then nothing has really changed and possibly the landscape has even gotten worse. It's really up to you to believe it or not – to accept it as we outline it or make up your own mind.

We look back to that time when we formed the Federation and how the regulation of the industry and the Plumbers Gasfitters and

achieve that we need industry representation and we honestly believe that Master Plumbers missed the opportunity to take on this role.

It seems they have opted to side with the Board and Government to achieve little incremental changes that benefit a few rather than take the bureaucrats head on to achieve great things for the entire industry.

Master Plumbers have the skills, the structure and had the reputation but unfortunately they have opted to take the passive route and as the last decade shows nothing has changed by being passive. This is a great pity for them and the industry.

An industry board of directors needs to be the group that influences industry governance. They should be voted on by the industry and how they behave would be crucial to the quality of governance and the progression of the industry.

You need to note an industry governance board is totally different to the regulation board (the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board) in that they will fight for the industry not against it.

The Plumbers Gasfitters and Drain layers Board do nothing for the industry except regulate it. Progression and development of the industry takes a back seat to what the legislation states and no one looks at the welfare of the

Drainlayers Board were a joke. Not the funny kind of joke, but that sick, heart wrenching sort of joke - it was a deplorable state of affairs that numerous people and organisations reported on. Now a decade later there are still many aspects that are a joke – as an organisation we have endured all types of behaviours and tactics that have hindered progression in the industry but now it's got so bad that you have to laugh at how stupid the bureaucrats are and how they believe their own bullshit.

The industry has endured three Ministers of Building and Construction who may as well not have been there. They have had no idea about leadership or progression and to them being positive is agreeing with their lame ideas.

They seem to have forgotten what accountability is, and have let the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board do as they please and have backed them to the hilt to save face, as they are the ones making the appointments to the Board. This has even included implementing retrospective legislation to make legal that which was illegal.

In our years of experience we know that legislation that is not easily understood or can be manipulated is poor legislation, and perhaps this is why the review of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 is taking so long – no one wants to accept liability for its many failures.

We have seen time and time again the Board hiding behind the poor legislation, allowing them to do as they please without accountability and this in turn undermines their credibility. Many practitioners still don't trust the Board and have a genuine dislike for them despite what the Board claims about engagement.

A decade ago most people were heading in the same direction and wanted the same thing and that was a well resourced, well trained industry that protects the safety and health of the consumers and their property. After all this is what was legislated for and what the regulation of the industry was for. There is an element of cowboyism in the industry. We see registered people running their own businesses and certifiers simply "signing them off", we see a distinct lack of supervision with apprentices and exemption holders.

We are paying top dollar for discipline and prosecution but there simply aren't enough investigators to keep on top of the illegal actions within the industry. The move from training and assessing to just assessing at polytec has simply added to this. Times are good and so people are making the most of this – but they are not working within the legislation.

If we went to the one tier of licensing then these people could be held directly accountable, they could employ apprentices and we may see improvements in the quality and legitimacy of their work.

We look back and laugh at the actions that people have gotten away with. How about a Barrister that investigated the actions of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board and criticised the Board

practitioners.

The government recognises practitioners don't have any real representation and that is why they ignore the industry and treat it with contempt. This means practitioners have to take what is dished out to them by the government and the Board.

If a large portion of the industry don't have a voice and the regulators or industry training organisations pick and choose like minded people to engage with then it's very much a dictatorship and the majority of practitioners will be treated with contempt.

In the light of that the government expects us to stay positive and help with their aims. The cost of which always seems to fall back on the practitioners. Not just in money but in time and in holding the trades stagnant.

The Federation is positive that the system is failing and it is not going to change unless there is a change in attitude by the regulators and government.

Are we going to be stuck with positive attitudes like this:

Apprentice's finish a four year apprenticeship pass their exams but are not deemed competent but that's alright we can supervise them and take responsibility for their work indefinitely.

or will the positive attitude be:

for acting outside their statutory authority? By the time her report was released the Chairman of the Board had stood down and had been appointed by the Responsible minister into the position of Registrar.

Then the Board that the newly appointed Registrar had been the Chairperson of ALL got fired and he remained employed. But wait there's more – the Barrister is later appointed to the Board and becomes the Chairperson. It could be a Hollywood Blockbuster!

A huge legal battle ensues and the Registrar, who now has a dual role of Chief Executive/Registrar, is suspended on full pay while being investigated for potentially serious misconduct. It was reported he had documents that highlighted several problems within the Board, including apparent systemic gasfitting certification failures and substantial failures by board employees.

Here is part of what was reported at that time:

A former chief executive who used "guerrilla tactics" to "go to war" against his employer has failed in his bid to be reinstated.

Philip Routhan was sacked from his role with the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board last year after he took more than 4000 documents from the office that he alleged proved his claim of serious irregularities about gas certification.

But the board said the documents also included personal staff files and said Mr Routhan had been abusive to other employees.

At an Employment Relations Authority hearing last month, Mr Routhan said there were potentially hundreds of faulty gas installations in New Zealand that could explode and kill someone.

He said he was asked to lie to Building and Construction Minister Maurice Williamson about safety problems at the request of board chairwoman Hazel Armstrong, a claim she denied.

Whilst on the subject of Hazel Armstrong this was reported in 2006:

The Government is moving to increase the number of qualified and registered plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers following an independent review, the minister for Tertiary Education Michael Cullen announced in July.

The article went on to say:

The report found that training and registration systems in the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industry were not well aligned. As a result, trainees have not been provided with appropriate support, and this has not served the interests of the industry and consumers.

Importantly, however, the report noted that there was no evidence of a current problem with the quality of workmanship or significant

My apprentice has finished their five year apprenticeship passed their exams and is deemed competent so now I can take on another apprentice or maybe even two.

Can we go from:

My apprentices goes on these one week assessments and comes back saying it was a waste of time but that's okay as they go on another one in three months time.

to

My apprentice has just come back from course and told me what they were taught. They have the skill and just need the practice now.

How about going from:

My apprenticeship training is stop start. I go on an assessment and do a couple of assignments but then it stops until my next assessment but that's okay I've got a good book I can read.

to

I do correspondence to get ready for my next course which is good because I can go along well prepared and concentrate on learning new skills to enhance my employment.

With regard to industry representation we could go from:

We have concerns that one membership body is being given preferential treatment but that's okay as we are

health and safety issues arising from the work of qualified persons.

The training and registration systems still aren't aligned and even after the report stated there were no issues with the work of qualified people we still had to fight for appropriate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) after it become a money generating scheme that was a burden on the industry. Hon Maurice Williamson said this in a letter to a plumber:

"With regard to continuing professional development, Parliament has agreed that there are significant health and safety risks associated with plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying. It is the government's role, through the Board, to ensure plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers meet nationally accepted standards and remain competent throughout the lifetime of their practice".

The Federation has never been against CPD, only the quantity and quality first imposed, the cost and the nature of what was required. If it was necessary then we agreed - if it was for generating money for others then we disagreed. You may not be aware one industry organisation even registered a company called "Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying CPD Limited".

For years the Board weren't the only organisation to be reported on. The following was reported about the Industry Training Organisation (ITO):

Plumbing and gasfitting apprentices were given qualifications for training they apparently never did, an investigation has found.

The Weekend Herald understands the Plumbing, Gasfitting, Drainlaying and Roofing Industry Training Organisation awarded its trainees hundreds of unit standards which cannot be accounted for.

The claim is made in a Qualifications Authority draft report, which also says the ITO also did not provide assessment schedules, which could have proved the results were based on legitimate work.

The ITO rejected the draft findings as "probably 60 per cent wrong" and said it would provide more evidence to clear its name.

So do we look at the allegations as being 60% wrong or 40% right? The ITO has changed to the Skills Organisation but now we have an ITO that doesn't engage with the industry. Oh sorry they engage with those whom they believe are the industry, the rest of us are just numbers that people claim to represent.

The Federation has been accused of being against a regulated industry but this was more a ploy to discredit the Federation as people were afraid of what the Federation was saying and that someday someone may believe them.

We have never been against the regulation of the industry but more about accountability and the way the industry is regulated or semi regulated as it is now. How about this from a previous Board

sure they will do their best for the practitioners who aren't their members.

to

The industry has fair representation that is putting forward the views of the industry and that has to enhance the productivity of the industry.

There are so many ways to look at being positive and having a positive attitude.

In our case being positive generally comes from wanting to participate in the regulation of the industry and seeing it achieve positive results rather than seeing a merry-go-round of people making the same mistakes.

It's not all about business, money and membership, the human factor needs to be taken into account as they are our industries main resource. Without people there is nothing.

Bring us trust, security, training and qualifications not lies, deceit and false regulation. We are positive about change that will enhance the industry and its people.

One thing the Board has improved on is their investigations and there's a possibility that the persecution that Paul Gee endured won't happen again as professional investigators know what they are doing.

However the regulation of the industry is still geared to capture the registered practitioners who make

Registrar to Hon Ruth Dyson:

The Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Federation (the Federation) consistently publicly promotes the view that the Board is dysfunctional, corrupt, incompetent, and that its members have conflicts of interest. This view is not the reality and in my opinion disguises what is simply opposition from the leadership of that organisation to being regulated generally, and specifically opposition to the requirement that licensed plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers must undertake continuing professional development.

That Registrar is gone now. He threw the mud and left.

The Federation was accused of being destructive in the MPGD News from the CEOS Desk:

At a meeting in Napier this September Building and Construction Minister Maurice Williamson made it clear to the audience that he no longer saw any value in listening to abusive comments from those who seemed intent on taking a destructive approach within the industry.

If our memory serves us correct this is when the Minister threatened to leave after the Board were called a bunch of clowns (not funny clowns).

All types of claims have been made to make things look green and lush in the industry and we must have missed our invitation to this one:

In a positive move the whole industry, the chairs and chief executives of the major bodies are working together to implement an action plan that addresses the major issues for the industry, which includes robust policy development, training and qualifications.

We wonder what happened to that action plan or perhaps it was just more septic tank politics where its green and lush on top for the public to see but it's still full of shit underneath.

It must have been a busy time as the same edition of the Plumbers Journal had the Board claiming:

We are now entering a period of strategic rebuilding of our direction and are moving to strengthen the capacity, capability and credibility of the organisation.

PGDB is committed to improving our relationship with tradespeople and other key stakeholders. Our first communications strategy was adopted in June this year which, over the course of the next three years, will guide our communication activities. With the strategy in place, work is moving apace on reviewing the website, providing informative and engaging monthly e-newsletters and raising public awareness.....

That was the claim in 2011 and here we are in 2020 and déjà vie

mistakes not the unregistered people who are doing the real damage and endangering the public.

A very simple action that the Government could take is to prevent the sale of plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying products to the public that allows them to do their own restricted work but we all know that's about corporate money. So rather than take a simple action the industry pays the price to police the public.

Perhaps if the money being spent to prosecute those who make mistakes was spent on holding to account those that are purposely breaching legislation the industry might move ahead. It's a prime example of the honest being persecuted.

A more positive way to regulate the industry would be to get the industry to support its regulation and show the benefits of being in a regulated industry. We are sure there are some but only if the entire industry is regulated.

The exemption holders are a prime example of people working legally in the industry that are not regulated.

The current focus is on forced compliance which means forced training and mistrust in the system and poor standards or standards only achievable by those who can afford it such as those that were targeted by the now defunct accelerated apprenticeship scheme.

Very simple solutions are

has set in with another few million spent on the website to hopefully achieve the same objectives.

Engaging with the industry is a real laugh as in the Board's claims the introduction by the CEO/Register before CPD sessions is stakeholder engagement. It's really engaging when people are forced to be there and are seated waiting to get their CPD out of the way. To engage at the meetings earns wrath of other participants who simply want to get their training done and get back to what they do best - and that's working.

When it comes to engaging with people one sentence we have seen a lot of from the Board over the years and even as recent as February this year is in part:

'... the Board advises it will not enter into any further correspondence with you about this matter'

That's real engagement isn't it!

We have seen a lot of people come and go from the Board in the last decade –there's been four chairpersons, two acting CEO/Registrars, two full time CEO/Registrars, a few lawyers and countless Board Members. The Federation also outlasted a few CEO's of Master Plumbers as well. It's starting to sound like a game of Survivor isn't it – Outwit, Outplay, Outlast but it's not a game its real life for most of us but for the regulators and those with whom they choose to engage its - Manoeuvring, Manipulation and Money and then they are gone.

This was from a parting CEO of Master Plumbers:

To the small minority who when they can't win on an issue do little more than personalise the attack, please consider the damage you are doing. It is costing us all in terms of time and resources – let's focus on moving forward together and look for solutions. And then she was GONE.

Heeding the advice we attempted to help the Board. For example the Board had a major privacy breach when they put the Board minutes of a meeting on their website but failed to redact 86 names from the minutes. This included 50 fees waiver applicants and most of the remainder were exemption applications.

Doing the right thing we notified the Board of this huge breach of privacy and this is what they stated in a letter to Wal Gordon the following day:

An investigation into this matter has been conducted and it has been revealed that the copy of the minutes originally placed on the website may have been able to be altered to reveal personal information that had been redacted. The Board will ensure that no future copies of its meeting minutes published on the website can be manipulated in this way.

being obstructed by the regulation.

Getting fairness is being controlled by the government bodies such as the Regulation Review Committee, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Auditor General.

They appear to report partial truths and trust the Board, allowing time for them to change. The last decade, since the OAG report, is a prime example of all the best intentions and statements but that just isn't enough as there is no accountability.

Every action has a reaction. For example the ramifications of the Board's excluding the Federation means there will now be closer scrutiny of everything they do. This is good for the industry as perhaps there will be more thought about expenditure and regulation.

Heavy handed regulation will mean practitioners will walk away creating an even greater skill shortage.

The Federation is more than happy to discuss issues with whomever, and we want to be part of the solution but not at any cost. Sitting down with the current Board would be sickening but we would do it if it meant change.

It's unfortunate that the entire Board is tarred with the same brush, as there are a couple of good people on there, but they have put themselves in this situation by not accepting liability for mistakes or purposeful acts

So Wal Gordon reported a failure of the Board and they turn around and imply he altered the document to reveal personal information and manipulated the document. Well done the Board, don't accept liability just cover it up and blame someone else.

This brings back the nightmare that Paul Gee lived when he stepped forward after a gas explosion and found himself the victim of a vindictive campaign by the Board which resulted in 42 out of 44 charges not being proved. We say not being proved as the Board did not report that Paul was not guilty they simply left it all in a gray area of not proved. To date the real offenders have never been identified or even sought by the Board. Paul is still waiting for an apology and compensation that will never come.

Getting back to the privacy breach the Board didn't admit any wrong doing and stated:

As the person that identified this possible privacy breach, I would remind you that you are now legally responsible for any personal information you have obtained from the minutes.

A "possible" privacy breach, perhaps the Board should have stuck to getting things right instead of giving advice to others that actually knew what they were doing. And then the writer of that letter was GONE.

Chair people on the Board have never been shy of having a go at the Federation:

During my time as Chair of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board we have had to deal with a legacy of over-zealous regulation and poor legal compliance which impacted adversely on the Board's reputation. This was compounded by problems with the introduction of the 2006 Act (a complex piece of legislation) and an employment dispute involving the previous registrar. These issues are now behind us and the Board is now in very good shape. Not perfect, but well on the way to being efficient, effective and fair regulator that the industry deserves.

Doesn't it read well but only if it were true. The writer went on to say:

It is not unexpected that some tradesmen resent being part of a regulated industry and that is reflected in their attitude towards the Board and its policies.

Yes another dig about not wanting to be regulated that is totally baseless but not to worry the writer finished by saying:

It is high time for those who continually dredge up the problems of the past to move on as well. And then he was GONE.

There have been continual attacks the Federation's membership and support. This was from a letter sent by Master Plumbers to the

they were caught out with.

In the last decade we have seen combinations of chair people and CE/Registrars at the Board, There has been the Armstrong-Routhen regime, the Armstrong-O'Connor regime, the Bickers-Pederson regime, the Jackson-Pederson regime, the Jackson-Sawyer regime and now the O'Connor-Sawyer regime and change has been minimal.

There has been no innovation - just more ways of doing the same thing which has already shown that it doesn't work.

The risk to the public is increasing due to poor training systems and numbers restricted by regulation. Increase the standard of training, revert to one qualification and numbers will increase naturally.

We are staying positive so if the Board only recognises some in the industry and in particular those that they choose to participate with then it's missing an opportunity to hear what those in the industry that are not business owners think – the apprentices that have plenty to say about their training, and the large majority of waged tradespeople.

Is their opinion not as valuable as the employers they work for? This is the message that comes across when we were excluded and another group representing Auckland tradespeople was not welcome either. What

Government Administration Committee:

In his address to the committee, Mr Wal Gordon represented that the PGD Federation, reported a membership of 1000. He was not questioned about this, nor the Federation's structure, nor whether or not any of it's members sat on the PGD Board.

I note the above because it is our understanding that the PGD Federation's 'membership' is in fact an email address list: no membership fee is payable and no membership agreement is entered into. The names of my staff none of whom is a plumber gasfitter or drainlayer are included in that list.

I point this out because I do not believe Mr Gordon can rightly claim to represent anyone but at best a handful of people who have in some way agreed to support him.

Then they were GONE. Oh and we must remember this is the organisation that claims to represent 70% of the industry.

But it wouldn't be a good story without the Board getting involved because of late the Board kicked the Federation off the Strategic Leadership group by stating the Federation didn't have any membership and so the cycle starts again.

Even Maurice Williamson, in the House of Representatives, referred to the Federation as follows:

Since 2006 those fees that have been collected from those practitioners have been used illegally. We have found that out only when a handful of disgruntled people took it right through to the Regulations Review Committee and so on.

The politicians point the finger at 'a handful of disgruntled people' and yet they voted for retrospective legislation to make legal that which was illegal and to retain millions of dollars paid to the Board by thousands of practitioners. Of course how could we forget Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's foray into DIY when she installed her own new toilet.

The Board investigated and chief executive Martin Sawyers announced that Ms Ardern had apologised for her error and the case was closed.

Wow how many practitioners wish they could just apologise and not be prosecuted but alas that just doesn't happen and they just fall into the category of distractive factions which is what one of the National Presidents of Master Plumbers referred to people as. Here's what was reported:

The relationship between the ITO, PGD Board and MPPGD is closer now with all trying to work together for the industry. Government constraints on the industry, DBH with the building codes changing all the time are a constant challenge to our members and the industry. He emphasised the needs to create awareness about all this

this means is that have to deal direct with other government agencies and ministers.

If they ask why we don't bring the issues up with the Board we can simply say we only participate in the regulation of the industry to stay legal as far as the progression of the industry goes we deal with others.

There is a lot of unfinished business to move on with and as the Board have chosen to exclude the Federation the actions will be required to be made with other agencies and departments.

On a positive note we no longer have to put up with the frustrating actions of the Board and can move on to perhaps more professional people or maybe not but what we do know is that if we can't get change it won't be for the want of trying. It simply won't be our fault.

Being more demanding and watchful of other government agencies along with the Board is a good thing in that the tax payer will know there is another watchdog out there looking at how agencies and departments are operating. Close scrutiny is the price everyone will pay for the actions of the Board.

The non responsive Minister we currently have won't escape the scrutiny either as we can just ignore her the way she ignores our whole sector, and let the public decide at election time. This is good for the public as ineffective ministers can be

especially among our young members or it will make it harder for us to practice in the future.

He 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 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 the umbrella like now. MPGD has an influence today, but would not have that if we were under the DBH.

Then he was GONE but he was right and Master Plumbers continue to have that influence today but that influence isn't without cost to the reputation of Master Plumbers.

There seems to be a lot of influence by limited numbers and we note a cartel of types has been formed.

We remember a passage from the Hazel Armstrong report which we totally agreed with *"It is accepted that the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board must have the powers necessary to carry out its statutory functions, and in relation to training, its statutory functions are restricted to making recommendations. It is not empowered to be a facilitator of training."*

There have been numerous 'fact finding' missions overseas by the cartel and all are to do with training and apprenticeships so it looks like the lines between what the Board can and can't do are becoming blurred AGAIN.

Perhaps this boils down to personal opinions and you should note that nearly 90% of the Board's functions are delegated to the CEO/Registrar so a lot of actions are taken by them without the prior knowledge of the Board. This is fine for simple administration and day to day fodder but when it comes to individuals it seems personalities can get in the way.

For us a decade of hope has gone as we have seen two full time CEO/Registrars appointed and both have started off well with some good ideas but after a couple of years that all changes and the exclusion of people who do not agree with then commences and the influencers in the industry back them up.

It seems that each time a CEO/Registrar or a Chairperson leaves they make it harder for the next to fill the positions and recent events are proof of that where we believe the credibility of the Board has taken another hit when they sat in judgement of themselves regarding the expulsion of the Federation from the Strategic Leadership Group.

This decision based, on false information that the Federation didn't have any membership and the Board conveniently can't remember who bought the subject up at the Board meeting, but anyway they resolved to kick the Federation out based on no membership which was moved and seconded at a Board meeting.

weeded out.

So there are positive things at every turn.

We think we will look further into the use of regulations and legislation by the Board to support anti-competitive behaviour. This will be time consuming and will no doubt include input by the Commerce Commission but yet again it is good to bring these behaviours to light for the benefit of practitioners and the public.

A further look into the support given to past Chairman of the PGDB for attendance at the World Plumbing Council conferences and what continuing support the Board is providing is needed just so the industry can be sure everything is legitimate and our money is being used as it should.

We would hate to see the Board fall into the pool of government agencies and departments that have been the victims of misappropriation and such like so we will help keep a close eye on expenditure to make sure the rules are adhered to.

Working with other government agencies will allow the Federation to share its knowledge of actions within the industry by those who should be keeping accurate records.

We know the Board and the Skills Organisation are busy so we are going to sit to one side and check their numbers to make sure they are right and that their

The Federation's complained about the actions of the Board regarding the Federation's expulsion from the Stakeholder Liaison Group which failed. Why did we want to be part of this group – because we felt our membership needed to be represented – the apprentices and tradespeople who don't own their own business, who are wages workers deserve to have a place around that table so that there was not Board capture. The manner in which we were removed from the group was of great concern because false information was used to make the decision. .

The Board has responded saying:

The Federation's complaint does not come within the Board's general complaints jurisdiction as it is a complaint made by and organisation and not a registered person and does not relate to an action or decision of the Board made under the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006.

They later went on to say they declined the complaint and they don't accept there has been any wrong doing.

Then there was a lot of blurb. Then the final paragraph:

Having considered the complaint and confirmed its decision to remove the automatic right for the Federation to have two members represented on the Stakeholder Liaison Group, the Board advises it will not enter into any further correspondence with you about this matter.

So the first paragraph tells us only individuals can complain about the actions of the Board and that the issues does not relate to the action or decision made by the Board but yet in the final paragraph they have '**confirmed their decision**'.

So was it a decision or not? We know they must have discussed the issue, we know they made a decision, we know they resolved by way of vote on the decision and we also know it was recorded, sort of, in the Board minutes.

So was it an issue under the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006? Well if it was discussed at the Board meeting, was a Board sponsored activity, was resolved by the Board and is funded by the Board then it must meet one of the Board's functions as detailed in the Act. If it isn't then why is the Board funding the Strategic Liaison Group? Just another example of not accepting liability for wrongdoing and manipulating the legislation to meet their needs.

Over the years we have been excluded, threatened and have had letters from some of Wellington's top lawyers regarding slander and defamation and this probably won't change because we are operating in a semi regulated industry where the regulators won't accept any liability . The only way to get fair regulation is through the courts where the Board spends industry money to defend itself against any complainant.

regulation and training are actually working.

We have started this by requesting the last ten years of annual reports which used to be on the Board's website but now only the current annual report is there.

An official information Act request had to be submitted which is probably a sign of things to come so perhaps a new job may be created to help the unemployment statistics for the government. So there really are positives in nearly all we do.

The idea of one qualification is still valid and we believe has much merit, it just has not found its time yet.

It would have an effect on supervision, on discipline and on the numbers of apprentices. It is a cause we will keep championing and hope that eventually others will see the merits in our arguments.

A bit over a decade ago apprentices attended courses where they were trained and did correspondence to learn skills related to the trades they were apprenticed for. Fees were around \$3,000.

A decade later apprentices don't do correspondence to the extent they used to and attend single week assessments and this cost has increased to around \$13,000.

This needs looking at for value for money as the tax payers are contributing as well, so a push for

We believe the regulation of the industry is causing all the problems. It's easy for bureaucrats to blame the industry for skill levels, apprentice numbers, continuing professional development, costs and such like but what control does the industry have over any of the issues – none at all.

The blame is with the Government, the Skills Organisation, the Board and their cartels. Change will never occur until they have a change in attitude.

The Auditor General reported in 2010 on issues to do with the Board. We believe that a decade later you could just change the dates on the report and it would still be applicable to the last decade. Certainly the people have changed but very little else apart from the manner in which the wrongdoings and manipulation of the legislation occur.

This is a reminder of part of that report:

If the Board members keep going with the improvements they have already initiated, and address the additional matters we have highlighted in this report, they will achieve a lot. However, they also need to pay explicit attention to the underlying problem that many in the trades have lost trust in the Board.

There is a great deal of writing on the importance of voluntary compliance in regulatory systems. In any regulatory context, it is too hard to achieve high levels of compliance through force or coercion – effective systems depend on people choosing to participate and follow the rules. For people to want to comply, they have to trust the system and see it as providing an overall benefit. The evidence this inquiry gathered showed that many tradespeople do not have this view of the Board at present.

If more people drop out of the regulatory system or choose to ignore it, the system will not be effective in protecting public safety.

In our view, the Board needs to maintain a clear overall focus on the need to build and maintain trust in the Board. To build trust, it needs to behave fairly and reasonably at all times, and make sure that this is apparent to all those interacting with it. It needs to build the values of openness, accountability, integrity, and fairness into all aspects of its work. It is important that the people the Board regulates, and who fund its work, are able to see and understand what it is doing and why.

We have only touched the tip of the iceberg in this article and a decade of no change for the better is a decade too long. We could write a book about everything that has happened over the last decade to our industry and would probably call it "Manoeuvring, Manipulation and Money".

On that thought we encourage you to read the side column but we ask you to think if we have reached the following stage:

accountability is a good thing.

It's reported small businesses make up 97% of New Zealand enterprises, employing 29% of workers and accounting for 26% of our economy, so implementing regulations and legislation to stifle their progression is stupidity.

To ignore their needs is stupidity. To not help increase productivity and employment is stupidity. To take away or not give small business a voice in major decisions that affect them is stupidity.

But on a positive note the Federation and its members will be here to push for the change needed at no cost to anyone.

"If more people drop out of the regulatory system or choose to ignore it, the system will not be effective in protecting public safety"

THE GOVERNMENT WANTS POSITIVE PEOPLE

The Federation is continually being criticised for being negative but we believe those people throw out those false accusations to cover their own insecurities that we have the guts to stand up to their incompetence.

Ask yourself what's negative about wanting a better industry that has fair regulation and appropriate legislation?

The Government seems to want positive people so is this the type of thing they expect:

"I fell down the stairs today, broke both arms and legs and incurred brain damage. Wow I really fell down those stairs fast"

Or how about:

"The regulation of the industry has been failing for decades and practitioners have been kicked in the guts on numerous occasions. We look forward to fresh stronger people being appointed to do the same"

The Federation believes being positive shouldn't come at a cost. You shouldn't be charged more, you shouldn't be excluded, you shouldn't be dictated to, and you shouldn't have barriers put in front of you simply because you are different or want to progress or make changes for the better.

Continued in the side column

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