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## IN OTHER NEWS

### MBIE's LATEST AND MORE

This is what MBIE posted on their Website yesterday:

#### ***Deciding whether a service is essential***

*To decide whether the service you are planning to provide, or need to have carried out is essential, you should apply the essential business definition.*

*The responsibility is on the person carrying out the building or construction work to ensure that the work they are completing meets the essential business definition.*

*If you supply products or materials, you need to take steps to ensure they are being used for an essential service or activity. For more information see: Retailer and supplier information*

#### ***Questions to ask yourself***

*To help you identify work*

## WHAT TO BELIEVE IN THESE CRITICAL TIMES?



There is no doubt we are in troubled times and as tradespeople we are right in the thick of it. Not only are we required to stay in lockdown but we are also required to continue on and protect the health and safety of the public and their property.

As an industry we are sure most are doing the right thing - as is the case most of the time. Every day when we step out the door in normal times we put ourselves at risk to all types of bugs, viruses, infections, explosions and the list goes on, but we are professionals and we are trained to look after ourselves and others. We are the ones that protect the public and a lot of the time we are protecting them from themselves.

Since the Covid-19 emergency started we have been flooded with information, some of which is contradictory and some that is written in such a way that it is just plain confusing. As always the media are looking for that headline catching story and are willing to warp and distort any information to make their story look sensational.

Our industry has been left in the position of making decisions and making the final call of what services in our realm are essential, while at the same time protecting ourselves, our staff if applicable, and the public whom we interact with.

We noted on 2 April 2020 an article that claimed 10 or 15% of plumbers were breaking the lockdown rules and that Master Plumbers is calling on the government to act.

It was claimed some essential jobs had to be put off already due to lack of PPE and that Master Plumbers last Friday asked the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) to intervene, by closing down some plumbing merchants it said were supplying products for non-essential work. It was claimed Master Plumbers also asked the Ministry to force all plumbers, gasfitters, and drainlayers to keep a record of all work done during lockdown so the records could be spot audited at a later date, including reviewing invoices to ensure that only essential work was done.



*that meets the essential business definition, ask yourself the following questions:*

*1a) Is the work required immediately to ensure the continuation of an essential service, or prevent the failure of an essential service or,*

*1b) Is the work required immediately to ensure health, safety and wellbeing of people, or avoid significant environmental harm?*

*2) Is the work you are performing the bare minimum required to meet the criteria above?*

*If you answered yes to both of these questions, your work may be considered essential, however it is important to assess your specific situation and satisfy yourself that the criteria in the Government definition of essential business has been met.*

*You will note a subtle change to the wording but one of the most important changes is the addition of “**wellbeing of people**”.*

*A search for a definition revealed it is general health and happiness. This is emotional, physical and psychological well-being.*

***Wellbeing [ noun ] – the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy. This is what the Oxford English Dictionary defines as wellbeing, but***

On 4 April 2020 TV One aired a section of a similar nature but now claimed leaders in the plumbing industry are calling for a national register to be established to log all work that's undertaken by tradespeople during the lockdown. During this piece it was estimated up to 30% of work currently being undertaken is non-essential and is risking the safety of everyone.

It was claimed a register should be set up to log all jobs that are carried out during the lockdown and that this would stamp out non-essential work and make it less likely suppliers might sell to DIYers.

Apparently the Government knows of cases where rules have been ignored. The piece went on to claim plumbers doing it by the book are hoping more enforcement is in the pipeline.

We would love to see the statistical data behind these percentages because having a 15% increase in tradespeople breaking the lockdown rules in less than two days is simply astonishing.

We fail to see what a register will actually achieve as those that are going to flout the rules aren't going to abide by the rules just because a register is implemented, in fact it would probably make them harder to trace as they will just do cashies with no records. This just seems like more bureaucracy to hold the honest people to account.

An audit in the future - what's that going to achieve? Does it mean they are going to try prosecute tradespeople - we wonder what law this would be under? It seems to us that there may be a bit of protectionism going on here.

The articles made mention about suppliers selling non essential gear to the public and DIYers, but this shouldn't be a surprise because that happens every day of the week even under normal circumstances. The Federation has long said that the suppliers should STOP selling anything to do with sanitary plumbing, gasfitting or drainlaying to the public and even ran an experiment with Mega Mitre 10 store. In some parts of Australia they successfully do it but the rights of the DIYer in NZ take precedent over everyone's safety.

On the lighter side, Master Plumbers have claimed in the past that they represent 70% of the industry so perhaps they should get the people they represent to tow the line and follow the rules, or are they implying that their 70% is doing it right and the other 30% (not being their members) are flouting the rules.

Look we know their hearts may be in the right place but there are other ways to get people to abide by the rules rather than just blunt enforcement.

A Federation member (yes we do have members) wrote to the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) to seek clarification regarding some scenarios members had faced with



*what does that actually mean? ... Each aspect of being comfortable, healthy and happy also has many different facets that can be taken subjectively.*

In a nut shell its applying common sense. In the case of the elderly their emotional and psychological well-being has a huge impact on their physical well being.

We fully support everyone sticking to the rules and hope everyone will voluntarily make the right decisions taking into account the advice from MBIE.

It doesn't really matter what others are doing as we believe that you as a credible tradesperson have been given the scope to make the decision about what is right or wrong and have to make that decision by yourself.

For those that don't follow the rules then they are solely responsible for the outcome.

As tradespeople we are reliant on what we get told by the customer and not every job is going to be black and white.

In the absence of black and white rules we advise you make the decision and as long as you are comfortable after applying the criteria stated above then in our opinion you have met the responsibilities imposed

regard to essential services. This is what they said:

### ***Deciding whether your business or activity is essential***

*MBIE does not approve individual essential building and construction services, neither can we change or widen the definition of an essential business or service. To decide whether your business or service is essential, people should apply the criteria provided by Government to make a responsible decision.*

*To aid your decision making, we encourage you to answer the following questions:*

*1. is the work required immediately to ensure the continuation of an essential service, or prevent the failure of an essential service or,*

*is the work required to ensure immediate sanitation, health and safety or avoid significant environmental harm?*

*2. Is the work you are performing the bare minimum required to meet the criteria above?*

*If you answered yes to both of these questions, your work may be considered essential, however it is important to assess your specific situation and satisfy yourself that the criteria in the Government definition of essential services has been met.*

This is what was sent to MBIE:

*We are plumbers gasfitters and drainlayers and I'm seeking clarification regarding the scope of work. For example I have had a 90 year old who lives alone contact me regarding a running toilet which is stressing him as it keeps him awake and a second one with a roof tank overflowing which is a worry to her in case it floods her house. Does mental stress fall into the scope of work that needs to be dome immediately?*

*Also we have had a couple of calls regarding leaking roofs. Now these could have a bucket put under them but will continue to cause property damage and may cause health issues if they continue. Not Immediate but extremely important.*

*Can you provide any clarification or is it left up to my judgement?*

We note MBIE has taken on board the intent of the letter and this shows in the changes to their notifications to the industry. The latest from their website is in the side column.



on you.

We believe it is not the tradespeople that need educating but the public as there is only so much information you can get over the telephone regarding the nature of the work.

Our final bit of advice is to do your best and apply common sense even if others aren't. If you lose customers that don't want to play by the rules then what does it really matter? If they risk their health then it's their responsibility.

It's really no different to what we go through in the non emergency state where we endure the black market undercutting the honest tradespeople.

**STAY SAFE AND WELL**

**REMEMBER TO KEEP CALM AND FOLLOW THE PRIME  
DIRECTIVES FROM THE GOVERNMENT.**

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