



Fellow Practitioner Issue 396

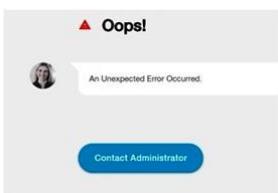
Dated 29 May 2020

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IN OTHER NEWS

HAVE YOU HAD PROBLEMS?



Remember when you could refer to your knees as right and left instead of good and bad. Ah good times eh!

The Federation, being its vigilant self, has noticed cracks appearing in the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board new computer system which the industry i.e. all of us, paid mega bucks for.

On the face it all looks good but when you dig into it there seems to be some functionality that is letting it down.

For example when you try to connect to the Supervision Policy from My Supervision it comes up with "*The resource you are looking for has been removed, had its name changed, or is temporarily unavailable*"

When searching for registered people in certain classes of registration we get

IT'S A NEW WORLD



Covid-19 has affected us all and the world as we know it has been turned upside down. We could look at this as a problem, stress, bitch and moan or look at it as an opportunity to dump the old and introduce the new. The problem will be convincing others to do it.

There have been claims that New Zealand is changing the world with the leadership that has been provided and in the media world this may look good but in the real world if you ignore the cogs that make the world go around the engine will seize.

The plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying industry was ignored before the Covid-19 crisis, so we can only imagine what it's going to be in the future. What we can say is our industry has been ignored and some methods of exclusion and fear are used to keep practitioners in line.

The Federation believes it's not fear we need its CARE. The bureaucrats rely on fear to regulate the industry and don't care as they have no skin in the game – they simply use poor legislation to dictate. They dress to impress and think that because they wear corporate attire that they are better than those who are actually keeping the wheels on industry going.

The levels of the Covid-19 lockdown have proven the worth of the essential services such as the plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying industry and if it weren't for the practitioners out there doing their bit to provide the essentials of life to the public of New Zealand would all have been in the shit, literally in some instances. We know

the error “Oops! An unexpected error occurred. Contact Administration”

We have noted that there is very little if no historical data on the site now. We are referring to Annual Reports, meeting minutes etc.

It would appear we have to request the historical data as an Official Information Act request. Maybe that's the Board's way of pre-empting action by knowing who is getting what information.

Hiding the past or making it time consuming to get isn't really being open and transparent and won't make the historical issues go away.

The rolling count of visits to the site indicate that perhaps more emphasis has been put into meeting targets of visits to the site rather than useful content for practitioners.

The site does look good for members of the public that visit and there is useful information on it but that has come at a loss of useful for practitioners.

It seems the industry has paid out mega bucks for very little if any gain.

Being unable to access old gas certificates is one real loss too.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Are we getting value for money from the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board or are they just meeting government targets with regard to legislation and regulation?

it wasn't bureaucrats that were taking the risks attending to people's essential needs as they were "working from home". Practitioners really did put their lives on the line to protect the health of the nation – and for this you should be thanked and saluted.

The practitioners were the ones risking the health of themselves and their families to keep the country going during lockdown. The practitioners were the ones who produced the services for the public's health and safety and the Federation believes it's time the Government and others put the effort into caring about practitioners and the industry.

They need to get off their polished backsides and work to resolve issues in a speedy manner. Get the regulation of the industry sorted so it is respected. Get training issues resolved so training makes people workplace competent. Get a trusted apprenticeship scheme so employers will want to take on apprentices. Get a trusted and respected qualification regime.

All these things were issues before Covid-19 and we fear that the Covid-19 crisis will be used as an excuse for further delays.

So what can we do about it? Well we know no one listens unless it matches their line of thought. We also know that there's an environment of exclusion within the industry so we need to change that without putting pressure or stress on ourselves. So who is being excluded you may ask? Well we believe the opinions of apprentices and wage earning plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers are not being represented around the table at both a government or PGDB level.

There is representation from business owners i.e. Master Plumbers, and while this group do employ, their employees have no voting rights for who represents them. Apprentices have no voice at all unless you look at the group training schemes – who are often more motivated by making a profit than by the wellbeing of the apprentices under their employ. What do we do- we turn the frown upside down and look after our own health and wellbeing.

Now is the time to ignore all the bullshit and do what is best for the industry and practitioners – all practitioners from the ones who own businesses, to those that work for them and those in training. The only thing we need to do is stay legal. If there are unreasonable costs involved in that process then those costs need to be handed on to the consumer and the public can hold the bureaucrats to account.

The regulation of the industry not being respected is not an industry problem it's the Minister of Building and Construction and the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board's problem.

Getting training issues resolved so training makes people workplace competent is not an industry problem it's the problem of the Board and the Skills Organisation.

Having a trusted apprenticeship scheme so employers will want to take on apprentices is not an industry problem but a problem of the Minister, the Board and Skills.

We know the Board doesn't represent the industry but they do have their responsibilities to regulate the industry.

Over the Covid-19 lockdown there was plenty of time to catch up on reading and to think carefully about the future of the industry and to think about mistakes of the past and there certainly have been a few.

We should acknowledge that the information on Covid 19 from the Board was fulsome and timely. Congratulations to them for that.

However, when we look at the role of the Board we must ask what advantage there is in having a Board that does not represent the industry or does nothing that is of advantage to the practitioners.

We know that a decade ago we questioned the need for the Board as a regulator but were assured the implementation of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drtainlayers Act 2006 would rectify the problems of the past.

Here we are a decade later and there hasn't really been any change and we seem to be back to square one.

You would think that with every new Chairperson and Board member there would be new ideas and change to make improvements in the way we are regulated.

When we look back over the last decade we can't really attribute any good change to anyone so we question

Having a trusted and respected qualification regime is not an industry problem but that of the Minister, the Board and Skills.

Accountability is not an industry problem but it is the problem of the Minister.

Certainly we can all have our views on these issues and could contribute but that's a problem in itself as the groups mentioned above are selective of who they involve in the issues.

If there are organisations, businesses or people who support the bureaucrats and it's doing harm to the goals of practitioners and the industry they we should stop supporting them.

New Zealanders have shown if we want to protect ourselves and change to meet the circumstances then we can (Covid-19). We should continue on with the changes and remember the truth to Bureaucrats is what they convince people to believe.

APPRENTICESHIPS

Budget 2020 announced some incredible money for apprenticeship training. The BCITO (Building Construction Industry Training Organisation) stated it is the biggest investment in trade training for over 40 years which confidentially is about the time training and qualifications in the plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying industry started its steady decline.

Well done to the Government for taking the first step by fronting up with the money BUT that only covers the bureaucracy side of things, the most important aspect hasn't been mentioned yet being is there the willpower in the industry or support from the industry to create the jobs by way of apprenticeships?

The Board and its supporters will have their views and will do what is best for them but will that be what the wider industry wants or needs? Is it what the average joe who works in our industry wants?

Will the industry support:

- the stop start 1 week long assessments camouflaged as courses
- poor workplace assessments processes
- half arsed on site verifications
- an apprenticeship where apprentices aren't deemed workplace competent at completion of the apprenticeship
- an apprenticeship that doesn't actually end until the individual passes their certifying exams after 7 years
- a system where the employer/trainer is committed to risk and supervision until the apprentice qualifies as a certifier after 7 years.
- a system where there is no assistance for partially qualified practitioners such as tradesman and journeyman
- a system where you can't question or appeal the exam system
- a partial qualification system where an apprentice qualifies at only certain aspects of the trade (Micro credentials)
- a return to pre-trade training

the leadership and direction.

There have been numerous changes in the Chair of the Board but in our opinion no real good change.

So will the next change in chairperson have an impact and change a decade on poor leadership.

Only time will tell.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

Licensing was good and bad this year.

The new system allowed me as an employer to log in and license my staff and pay for it all at once which was good but then after two months I found they hadn't been licensed because they hadn't updated the details.

One step forward – two steps back.

ED:

Yes writer I had the same problem.

To not license a person because they haven't updated their details in my opinion is a term and condition and as such should have been consulted on and promulgated in a gazette notice.

Section 32 of the Act should also have been applied.

Was this another Oops! Issue?

It will be very interesting to see what those inside the fence come up with, supported by the Board who incidentally are not meant to get involved in the supply of training at all (see the Armstrong Report), but simply comment if it appears not to be producing competent practitioners

A lot of the issues mentioned above benefitted some organisations such as the partial qualification system. This would benefit the ITO's and training providers as would pre-trade training. The partial qualification system would benefit employers who are doing certain projects but after that the employee would most likely be dumped.

These systems again put more responsibilities on supervisors and also on the regulators as there would need to be more auditing of the system to ensure the health and safety of the public. The more responsibilities and stress loaded onto fully qualified practitioners the fewer of them that will want to employ apprentices.

Some of these issues are short term fixes but eventually there will be very few practitioners who are fully qualified. A quick fix is not always the best fix and even with the qualification and training systems we have now the industry is struggling for numbers of fully qualified people.

No matter what money the Government pump into the scheme it will fail if it doesn't have industry support and we would like it known th cartel does not represent the Federation and a lot of others in the industry i.e. the wage and salary plumbers, gasftters and drainlayers and apprentices. This section of industry effectively have NO voice.

If the bureaucrats ignore the small and medium sized enterprises in the industry then the Government may as well put the money in a bucket, set fire to it and warm someone's house.

It will be interesting to see how the Board's exclusion tactics work at a time when the views of the ENTIRE industry are needed and the industry will be required to work together.

Isn't it a pity we don't have industry representation and leadership to work on what is good for New Zealand, the industry and practitioners.

Our industry has never pressed the reset button and that is why the industry has been stagnant for decades.

We ask the question why throw more money at a system that was failing before the Covis-19 crisis?