

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **SIMPLY NO CAPACITY**
- **A VOICE FOR APPRENTICES**

IN OTHER NEWS

EXPLOITED

What do you do when you feel like you are being exploited?

Well first you need to understand what being exploited is. One definition is "make use of (a situation) in a way considered unfair or underhand"

That is to benefit unfairly from the work of someone or a group of people.

Broken down it's to take advantage of, make use of, abuse, impose on, prey on, play on and the list goes on.

Other related words are subjugated, broken, browbeaten, demoralized and here's our favourite oppressed.

But enough of the English lesson. It was bought to our attention that the Federation seems to be negative and that what the Government wanted was people with a positive attitude.

We don't think we are negative, no we're full of sunshine and flower farts. The problem is we don't have

SIMPLY NO CAPACITY



Just as we predicted the Covid-19 pandemic is being used as an excuse for previous failures. Here is an email sent to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Building and Construction. We have included their "Buck Passing" responses.

Hello to both of you.

Just to let you know the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying apprenticeship scheme is turning into a real joke.

I have one of my apprentices who has had two of this year's courses deferred until sometime next year and the other course for this year delayed for 3 months.

The reason given was there was no capacity to run the courses. It was also stated that the apprentice has another three years to catch up.

In the next breath the person from Skills asked If I was ready to sign up the new apprentice I had been looking at. I asked about the capacity to train new apprentices and was informed they would get OSH training in the first 6 months and they didn't know about the other trade training.

This all seems to be going against everything your party is trying to achieve.

The stress in employing apprentices now far outweighs the benefits.

Pretty simple and to the point. Huge delays out into next year because the organisations don't have the capacity to provide the courses required.

For what they are worth the responses from the Ministers were received in a timely manner. We have to congratulate them for that.

confidence in what's happening to the industry so we voice our opinion.

If our voice is not heard how do we affect change? Silent protest doesn't work because no one hears our views and if our views are ignored then that has the same effect.

We are being exploited or oppressed if you prefer.

The Government seems to think seeking diversity on the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board will make the changes needed but how many appointments have been made over the decades and nothing has changed.

Simply changing Board members for cultural, gender or sexual orientation or any other targeted diversity simply doesn't work and doesn't mean change will happen.

One of the problems is that the oppressor is making the rules and that doesn't work.

Meeting aggression with aggression doesn't work and doing the same thing over and over again for decades doesn't work.

The Government wanting people with a positive attitude is one thing but getting people that have a passion for the industry and know what is needed by practitioners and the industry is another.

Having people with participative leadership abilities who can openly discuss and debate issues would help to affect change rather than the existing dictatorship where decisions are made in collusion with the selected few the Board communicate with.

When there is no

Here are the responses.

On behalf of Hon Jenny Salesa, Minister for Building and Construction, thank you for your email yesterday.

It certainly sounds frustrating for you as an employer, employing apprentices and for the apprentices themselves. I am unsure how COVID-19 has added to the issues Skills are having with their capacity to run courses. Regardless I encourage you to keep in close contact with Lois Moran who I believe organises the block courses with the relevant polytechnics.

As I understand it PGD training is currently being reviewed as part of the RoVE (Reform of Vocational Education) work which is currently underway. Similarly The Construction Skills Action Plan (CSAP) which is a three year programme of six government initiatives, is specifically targeting (among other things) boosting skills, growing construction careers, supporting apprentices and expanding skills for industry.

Although the above is little help for your immediate problem, please be assured your comments have been noted, and work is underway. I have copied MBIE's Senior Plumbing Advisor in on this email to help inform their work as well.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

The response from the Minister of Education was received after the above response and certainly has us confused as we are sure the Minister of Education is conducting the ROVE (Reform of Vocational Education), well the Minister of Building and Construction thinks so. We are also sure the review is looking at the capacity of the Polytechnics and Industry Training Organisations. Here's the response:

On behalf of Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education, thank you for your email of 10 June 2020.

Please be assured that your correspondence has been noted.

The subject matter you raised falls within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister of Building and Construction. Your correspondence will therefore be transferred to the office of Hon Jenny Salesa for her information.

This is what the Minister of Education had to say recently:

Trades and Apprenticeships Training Package

"As we emerge from this health crisis it is important that we now invest in training and education for people who might have lost their jobs, or who want to move into a different sector where prospects are better," Education Minister Chris Hipkins said.

"Our \$1.6 billion Trades and Apprenticeships Training Package will provide opportunities for New Zealanders of all ages to receive trades training. It will continue to be added to as part of our ongoing work to rebuild the economy."

accountability of the oppressor then nothing will change and the situation will get worse and the stage the Board has reached at the moment is proof of that.

The main column is an good example where the industry has been complaining about training, qualifications and the apprenticeship scheme but concerns have always fallen on deaf ears and now it is all coming to a festering blister of distrust of the processes and procedures.

Yet again practitioners and the industry are being exploited to meet Government targets.

There is so much more that could be done if the industry, particularly small business and sole traders had faith and trust in the Board and the industry training organisation.

Playing second fiddle is no longer an option for the industry and a huge proportion of practitioner and businesses have already shut down to the bureaucracy.

Practitioners did not create the problems currently within the industry. They have been brought about by lack of leadership and nonexistent accountability starting right at the top.

ACCURATE INFORMATION

You would hope with a perpetual Board such as the Plumbing Gasfitting and Drainlaying Board that there would be continual improvement and accurate information but we seem to be lacking in both.

Minutes from Board meeting 327 dated 11 February 2020 show that a large number of poor souls, now deceased, have been removed from the Register of Plumbers

It includes:

- *\$334m funding for additional tertiary education enrolments*
- *\$320m targeted investment support for free trades training in critical industries*
- *\$412m support for employers to retain and keep training their apprentices*
- *\$276m funding for Workforce Development Councils and Regional Skills Leadership groups, to be established to give industry and regions a greater voice and help them respond to COVID-19*
- *\$141m to support high quality tertiary and trades education*
- *\$32m increased funding to meet demand in Trades Academies*
- *\$50m for a Māori Apprenticeships Fund*
- *\$19m for group training schemes to retain apprentices*
- *\$26m operating and capital for a new online careers advice system.*

That's all great stuff and we are supportive of it - but where is the capacity to conduct the training? If our current and new apprentices can't even get on their courses then perhaps the system is open to abuse where the training providers are taking the taxpayers money to develop and run new courses at the expense of the those that should already in place and have mostly been paid for. We don't see any benefit for the industry so far and yet again it is employers and practitioners who are being exploited to meet others needs.

We don't have any say in our future and there is no accountability of those who are oppressing the industry. (See more in the side column on this subject).

A VOICE FOR APPRENTICES

One of the main questions that needs to be asked on behalf of apprentices and employers alike is WHY no training was carried out over lockdown?

The theory type work that is undertaken for the first day or two of every block course is already computerised. Why could that not have been sent out to apprentices to complete while they were at home with time on their hands?

You would think that you could almost have done the theory component for four or five block courses on line and sent it out to be completed. This would have meant that when lockdown was over we could have also merged the onsite block courses – and probably completed the equivalent of two practical block courses into one week thereby assisting with the lag.

NOTHING came out from Skills during lockdown other than an insulting and ridiculous set of games with unit standards attached. At the time of writing we are unsure if these were a pilot of some sort or some feeble attempt to engage with apprentices.

Gasfitters and Drainlayers.

The disturbing issue is that these dated back as far as September 1992.

There were 146 people that were removed from the register. With the age of these people you would assume most were Certifiers in one or probably two trades and possibly even three trades.

Based on two trades it would be estimated to be 292 Certifying qualifications.

It's over two and a half decades of registration numbers that have been misreported!

It would seem the number of registered people reported in the Board's Annual reports may have been inaccurate.

This has a big effect on the ratio of Certifiers to Tradesman registered practitioners and apprentices.

Accurate and timely reporting would have been very nice and is no doubt what everyone thought they were getting but alas it would appear that is not the case.

Another 'back to ground zero' situation to be able to make accurate comparisons.

The apprentices we have spoken to who tried the games said the following –

- It was ridiculous.
- What does the number of slices of pizzas have to do with plumbing, gasfitting or drainlaying?
- It looked like a Lego man had escaped and was running rampant on a building site.
- A 7 year old could do this.
- One off calculations do not bed in knowledge.
- This is insulting – do they think we are thick?
- Are they serious – how much of my money went into developing these?

If your apprentices trialled these games then ask them to show you if you are an employer. We really encourage you to give feedback to Skills on what you think about these games providing unit standards.

It would appear Review of Vocational Education (ROVE) is moving but is about 2 years off being fully implemented. In the mean time we have apprentices who:

- Have had their apprenticeship lengthened through no fault of their own
- Polytechnics NOT stepping into the digital or tutoring space during lockdown in our industry, but other industries did get some on line training done e.g. electrical apprentices at Weltec
- Polytechnic CEO's not stepping up to the plate and ensuring their tutors are properly qualified and meeting the requirements of the Consent and Moderation Agreements between themselves, Skills and Industry as a whole
- Workshops that are below standard compared to our Australian neighbours
- Lack of tools at workshops to enable apprentices to carry out assessments in a timely manner
- Pre-trade being given equal importance in the workshop with trainees which means that there are long waits for assessments, sometimes up to half an hour

If you have had or are having bad experiences then let us know – apprentices deserve a voice in this space!

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