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IT'S ABOUT
ACCOUNTABILITY
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If there is no accountability why should the industry tolerate the regulation of the industry?

As it stands the industry has no say as to its future and asks the question if the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board is really needed.

We looked at the accountability agreement between the Minister for Building and Construction and the Board which can be found on the Board's website.

We found the agreement was signed in March 2018 by Jenny Salesa and the Board's Chairman of the time Peter Jackson.

That's Two Ministers for Building and Construction and three or four Chairpersons ago.

If the accountability agreement is four years old does that mean, there has been no change in what is required of the Board?

IT'S A PERPETUAL PUNISHMENT



Peter Drucker once said, "the greatest danger in times of turbulence, is not the turbulence, it's acting with yesterday logic" and as an industry we have endured decades of exactly that. We have been continually punished because of our chosen trades.

Over the years the Federation has attempted to apply common sense in all its actions but has been stonewalled in most instances by the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board and eventually excluded by them from participating in the Industry Liaison Group based on false information, which brings to mind a quote from George Bernard Shaw "Beware of false knowledge; it is more dangerous than ignorance".

You would think common sense would be a good thing to have but, in our case, it's been a punishment because we have had to deal with those that don't have it.

The Covid 19 pandemic has been used as an excuse for non-action in a lot of areas but in reality, it was an ideal opportunity for organisations to step up and implement change, however the times of turbulence were used as a rest period for a lot of organisations while those at the coal face had to battle on and still adhere to wanting legislation, regulations and diminishing training.

The Federation has been quiet of late wondering why people we have been wasting our time arguing with those who don't care about truth or reality, but only the victory of their beliefs and those who support them. Those whom they pick for their committees, groups etc. We have endured discussions that make no sense and with

We are very confident when the Office of the Auditor General reported on the requirement for an accountability agreement that it was for more than just the routine legislative requirements.

When we read through the agreement it's about holding the Board accountable for doing the job they get paid to do. The things they are required to do by legislation.

There is nothing over and above the requirements so it's just a bureaucratic tick in the box and perhaps that's why the Ministers have not put in place their own ideas or changed from any of the "Party lines."

When looking at the performance measures in the accountability agreement there are some that relate to the Nek Minnit moments mentioned in the main column.

Here's a few of them:

- Board actively engages with tradespeople and industry to ensure competent and safe working practices.
- The Board maintains and follows policies and procedures in relation to the registration and licensing system.
- Ensure complaints regarding plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying are resolved fairly and efficiently.
- Provide MBIE with the Board's view on membership and succession.

people who do not have the will or ability to understand. There have also those that been blinded by ego and resentment and have only wanted to be right even if they weren't.

We have seen alliances formed that could be termed as cartels. A selected few who claim to speak for the industry but only speak for a very low percentage of the industry. These groups appear to dominate or manipulate the industry for their own advantage.

The Federation has always pushed for industry representation but when you get excluded for voicing opinions you don't stand much of a chance.

The plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industry has ended up with a situation of no affordable justice. People pleading guilty because it is the cheapest option. Those who fight for their rights end up with huge fines and costs simply for fighting for justice.

The current Executive committee has been at the coal face for a decade and are in dire need of a rest so it's time for change and we need young people to step up and fight the fight particularly with regard to training, apprenticeships, and qualifications.

Trainees ultimately can only operate and prepare themselves in ways where they try to follow the regulations but if the training and qualifications don't support the regulations then the entire system becomes a circus. Now you can't blame a clown for acting like a clown, you need to ask yourself why you keep going to the circus.

ITS ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY



You may recognise the venue of this peaceful protest, (yes, it's the Beehive nearly a decade ago), and it took our hardy Federation member only three days to achieve what it took thousands to achieve recently - and that was to be ignored by the Government of the time.

Some of you may remember the term "nek minnit (next minute)" made famous by skateboarder Levi Hawken. He made the term popular when he appeared in a viral video which shows

a scooter, apparently destroyed outside a diary. The term has become a popular slang term and is a line used for describing a dramatic turn of events. It is often used in a way that leaves the end of the story open.

For the Federation if an issue is left open then it generally hasn't been dealt with appropriately or there has been no accountability. Regulators hold practitioners accountable but who holds them accountable? So, our question is "what's happening to accountability in the regulation of the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industry?"

It would appear the industry is not worthy of being listened to and the Board have already displayed this attitude when they excluded the Federation from participation.

As for MBIE (Ministry of Bureaucrats Incompetence & Egos), they can't even retain their own staff let alone provide relevant advice to the Minister on plumbing gasfitting and drainlaying issues.

"May 2020 figures released to RNZ show the unplanned turnover rate among permanent Building System Performance (BSP) staff was 45.9 percent last year, four times the public sector average".

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE FEDERATION?

As you have read there are a lot of issues still outstanding, and we have only touched the surface.

The Federation has maintained it's attitude of not being beholding to anyone except the industry and its practitioners.

It has relied solely on donations and is not reliant on sponsorship where some form of return is expected.

The Federation Executive Committee have pushed the limits and are now a decade older. They have achieved what a lot of others haven't but now need the new blood to continue on with the Federation in its current format or in a new format.

Needless to say, transition is needed. It's

There are far too many Nek Minnit moments for us to list but here's a few so you'll get the idea.

The Federation submits a complaint with the Regulation Review Committee (RRC) and the committee upholds the complaint and orders the reversal of the regulations that had been complained about. *Nek Minnit most of the committee members go into the House of Representatives and vote against their own recommendations resulting in retrospective legislation being implemented to make legal that which was illegal.*

As a result of the above the Board claimed that they would be bankrupt if they had to repay the money unlawfully taken from the licensed practitioners. *Nek Minnit the Board spends millions of dollars of reserves on upgrading their website.*

The, so called, investigation into an explosion at a fish and chip shop in Nelson resulted in the laying of 44 Charges against a practitioner. It took over two years to investigate, ruined the practitioner's reputation, business, and cost over \$200,000.00 of practitioners money *Nek Minnit the practitioner was found not guilty of forty-two charges.*

During the discipline hearing into the gas explosion the prosecution produced a number of photos of the scene taken by an investigative scientist. During cross examination, the scientist who took the photos revealed the real number of photos taken of the scene. Only SOME had been supplied during the legal discovery process. *Nek Minnit undisclosed photos showed evidence supporting the gasfitter's explanation and his innocence.*

One of the Federation's Executive Committee received the following from the Board and CEO which stated in part; "Over the past few years you have made a massive contribution to the industry, and it is a credit to your tireless efforts that much of what you have forcefully advocated has come about. While there have often been differences with the Board in relation to some issues, the reality is that there have been more things on which we have been able to find common ground and work together. The industry needs the efforts of people such as yourself to help drive it forward...." *Nek Minnit the individual and the Federation are removed from Stakeholder Liaison Group.*

A complaint was laid regarding the inclusion of non-plumbing questions in exam papers. *Nek Minnit the Board was claiming in court that there is no right of appeal for exam questions and answers.*

During one of the recruitment drives for Board members some applicants got a letter from the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment stating that the applicant's application was unsuccessful due to the high calibre of applicants. *Nek Minnit one of the unsuccessful applicants is being asked if he knows of any people from the LGBT community that would be suitable for the Board.*

The Board did consultation, of sorts, for supervision of trainees but did not go ahead with their recommendations because there appeared to be lack of support for the industry. They received 221

not a job for the light-hearted and needs a good balance of mongrel and negotiation skills.

Standing up for what is right and for other practitioners is a huge part of the job. Looking to the future is a must as the bureaucrats don't appear capable of doing this.

If we want the industry to be practical, well qualified and skilled then action need to be taken because as it stands, we are treated like dog excrement on the bottom of someone's shoes.

The Federation's Executive Committee is prepared to assist with change and do a practical handover to those wanting to continue with the fight for the industry.

If you're interested in doing what's right send Wal Gordon an email at wal.gordon@xtra.co.nz

The option of doing nothing is to get bullied by those who only want to benefit themselves.

submissions. Very soon after they sent out their thoughts on increasing fees (they claimed it was consultation) There were only thirty-four submissions from the 35,363 people that viewed the email communications about the consultation. *Nek Minnit the Board announced they had set in place their recommendations regarding fees.*

The Chairman of the Board stated the Board had moved from a Regulator under scrutiny for underperforming - to one recognised as a true example of an effective modern Regulator. *Nek Minnit practitioners find they must attend instruction on loading a vehicle to enable them to license next year.*

As an aside the CPD training is in danger of becoming a joke. The whole idea was that it made up out of "matters arising from" i.e., the Board looked at the number of discipline cases it had over the past twelve months and saw if there were any common themes that industry needed training on. However, when upskilling becomes such a commercial enterprise (which is what has happened when you sell the branding rights to a large merchant) then you need to have content every year. Hence the padding that occurred in the last round of CPD with loading vans and backing trailers.

The chairperson made comment about the downward spiral in apprenticeship training *Nek Minnit nothing.*

By now you should be getting the idea that major events can't sit unresolved without consequence and the Nek Minnit events are undermining the credibility of the Minister for Building and Construction, the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board.

Four Ministers for Building and Construction and nothing has happened for the betterment of the industry, in particular the practitioners and apprentices. Where has the accountability of the Ministers, the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board, the Skills Organisation (ITO) and MBIE been?

Continued in the side column

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