

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [Maurice leaves with the final laugh](#)
- [What's the Board Doing?](#)
- [What is the cost?](#)
- [Taxes](#)

IN OTHER NEWS

From the Plumbers Forum

Question

When is the PGDB annual report due out so we can see how the costs stack up and what so many lawyers costs the industry?

Reply

The Annual Report has to be tabled in Parliament so you won't get to see it until after the general election.

The House sat for the last time in the 50th Parliament on 31 July and will not sit again until after the general election on 20 September.

After the election, information about members and parties will be progressively updated on the website as it becomes available and then we presume they get back into the real issues that affect our lives.

We don't know how this sits for the Board adhering to the Charities Act which states they

Maurice leaves with the final laugh



We note this year's output agreement has finally made it to the Board's website and we have to say Maurice Williamson has a sense of humour, very evident when you read the content of the output agreement.

This was probably one of the last documents signed by the Minister relating to our industry, prior to his departure. The agreement is ten pages of nothing, two of which are the output schedules which contain absolutely nothing of substance and are just a rehash of previous years.

We note the Chairman Peter Jackson didn't date the document, so who knows when it was actually signed – maybe it's been sitting around for a few months, not that it really matters.

Well done Maurice – we are laughing at it just as much as you!

What's the Board Doing?

We had a writer ask us this week what the Board was doing as not much seems to be happening. Well your guess is as good as ours. We do know they were working on the Annual Report so they can tell everyone how well they have done in regulating the industry.

We believe the secretariat will be looking at what is needed by way of funding to attempt to regulate the industry next year. From memory December 2014 is the deadline for the Board to have its proposal prepared regarding what their functions will cost us, the industry, ready for the great "Fees and Levy consultation" with the industry in the early new year.

Remember we are only SIX months away from the next round of licensing and the Board have scheduled a review of fees and levies before then. We don't know if there has been an increase in discipline or prosecutions as the annual report has still not being tabled in Parliament, therefore making it too soon to speculate if there will be increases, but remember discipline and prosecutions have been used before to cover increases in general overheads.

The Board has told us previously that over 50% of its costs are discipline and prosecutions related so it is easy for them to use those functions to cover their general increases.

It is also easy for them to use discipline and prosecutions as an excuse for increasing fees and levies. This puts a damper on

must have their annual return to the Charities Chief Executive 6 months after their balance date.

Needless to say we won't see it for a while yet.

Ed.

You would have thought a prudent, open and transparent organisation would have set its work programme to ensure the report was tabled before the election to enable the industry to review how our industry has been regulated and the performance of this government appointed Board and Registered Charity.

We need your help

We have had some disturbing reports of builders doing their own plumbing on Housing New Zealand jobs in Christchurch.

We are in the process of compiling a complaint regarding the incidents we have already received information about.

If you know of any cases of this occurring can you please contact us as we are sure the four occurrences we have been told about are only the tip of the iceberg.

Send any relevant information to wal.gordon@xtra.co.nz.

It's election week

At last its election week and we can get put out of our misery and stop getting bombarded with all the dirty politics stories.

There were a number of people who tried to help us out when Maurice Williamson tried to railroad

practitioners reporting offenders as all it does is increase our fees and levies.

What is the cost?



Is the industry being challenged to take on the government and its regulation of the industry or are they stalling for time? Are stall tactics being used and if so who is it costing? How is the safety of the public being measured to see if the regulation of the

industry is value for money? These are but a few questions that need answering.

The Government "big picture" strategy is what affects a lot that goes on in the industry and it costs us big time. Here's a very simple example – the government wanted to increase the number of people qualifying at level 4 so all the emphasis has been put on achieving that at the cost of our level 5 qualification.

In fact it has cost us in the level of skills in the industry as well. There hasn't been consultation on Registration Classifications to see if the Licensing qualification is even needed. Level 4 seems to have become a stop point. For years now level 5 candidates have been left floundering with no defined pathway, and no one has worried as they have been busy trying to reach the government's targets at level 4 and it even continues now with different qualification processes to achieve Licensing and Certifying status.

Sometimes you don't mind paying if you can see the worth but you need to see how improvement is measured. For example the Board's role is to protect the health and safety of the public and yet their performance is measured by their achievement of the Output Agreement with the Minister which is all about the strategic and business plan, the review of operational policies, registration exams, practitioner competence, annual reporting, communications, consumer awareness, review of the Act and the Auditor General's follow-up review.

Not once does it mention how anything the Board does for the health and safety of the public is measured. For example - are there less reported incidents? If there isn't then everything the Board is doing is failing. Are there any reported deaths? If there is they have failed.

Are people who register better skilled than years gone by? If they aren't the Board have failed. If experience is leaving the industry and is being replaced by less experienced, poorly trained practitioners then the Board have failed.

One thing has been very noticeable over the last few years and that is the time it takes to achieve anything, except the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Amendment Bill, which was rushed through because it was all about money.

the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Amendment Bill through.

One of Parliament's underdogs, Brendon Horan, spoke out every chance he got to help us in our plight for accountability and fairness.

He's gone on to form the New Zealand Independent Coalition Party and like the Federation, it fights for recognition.

A look at their website is worth a visit

www.nzindependent.org.nz

Thought of the week



Have you ever thought that the Beehive looks like a waste disposal unit and it appears it operates in the same manner?

Everything that gets placed into it generally has some goodness left but it gets minced up so all the goodness is extracted and it then gets sent out to waste.

Stop Press

The Boards 2014 Annual Report is now available at: www.pgdb.co.nz/publications

Stalling tactics are definitely being used. Look at how long it took for the Federation to get a face to face meeting with the Board to discuss registration classifications – 7 months!! By that stage the NZQA qualifications were already being pushed through even though it might not be what the industry needs, or in their best interests.

The Ombudsman's investigation and report into continuing professional development (CPD) and the Regulations Review Committee action into the same subject have both taken over 12 months and still aren't dealt with. We know the draft Ombudsman's report has been written but we have not yet received a copy. Perhaps they are waiting until after the election???

The cost to the industry is huge – falling numbers of experienced practitioners, money spent on un-necessary CPD, money spent on a non responsive Board and time spent keeping the Board accountable where the government is failing.

So if the industry is being challenged to take on the government and its regulation of the industry then we accept that challenge - but if they are stalling for time what are they waiting for? Tell us what's going on.

Taxes

We have heard a lot about taxes over the last few months but very little about the hidden taxes we get hit with that don't get a mention. The likes of ACC Levies, Discipline levies and of course everyone's favourite the Prosecutions Levy.

Just so you know a levy is a tax targeted at a specific group for a specific task and the plumbing, gasfitting and drainlaying industry remains the only industry in New Zealand that is charged a prosecution levy (tax) to prosecute non registered people! It is outrageous! The remainder of the country have the luxury of the service and payments being made by the government through general taxes.

It's amazing how we have been singled out for this treatment and no action has been taken to correct the situation. It can really only be termed as discrimination when one group gets treated so differently to others of a similar nature – for example electricians and builders.

The Prime Minister has said in the build up to the elections there will no new taxes but we wonder if the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board Registered Charity, whom the Government has given the power to levy (tax) the industry, increases the levies (taxes) on us within 6 months of the elections.

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