

Cowboys and Idiots.....A Cover Up of a near fatal explosion.

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A man nearly died in an explosion, an explosion that was the totally avoidable and still no one, to this day, has been held accountable for this, whilst ignoring a huge body of evidence.

I spent the previous 6 years, before the explosion, warning about the flippant and dangerous attitude shown by my boss (John Darnley) towards installing LPG in people's homes and the incomplete, manipulated, dodgy gas safety certificates covering that work.

I made these warnings even though fixing and repairing these dangerous jobs were both lucrative and were helping to establish my reputation as a gasfitter who knew what he was doing. I lost everything. Nothing short of a character assassination, done with un-truths, to protect the guilty.

The explosion happened and my family suffered me being made the scapegoat. I had evidence withheld and mis-represented, massive conflicts of interest ignored with nine people of interest still ignored right up until this very day and (the lowest point) my wife was terrorised with child sexual abuse case notes.

I proved my self innocent for the charge laid for the explosion. My boss faced the same charge. The same boss I had made numerous concerns known to the PGDB, MPs and master plumbers amongst many others. My bosses charge for the explosion disappeared before his hearing, most if not all evidence points to him.

The Dept of Labour report, not known to me until many years later, the sole basis for the witch-hunt levelled against me...actually exonerated me and pointed toward my old boss.

I understand that the plumbing and gasfitting industry is considered by most as neither glamorous nor all that interesting and it isn't ranked as "professional" by the so-called professionals like lawyers, psychologists and engineers. These professionals by the way are usually the people who govern our trade and who from my experience show a total disregard and utter disrespect towards us.

Like most essential everyday things that are integral to our lives plumbing, gas and drainlaying is hidden, nondescript and plain. It happens behind walls, under houses and in the ground.

The Gas industry is working under a gas certificate system during a housing shortage of 60,000 houses that is not only susceptible to cause accidents and empower cowboys but I believe it is actually prone to it.

At one time we had independent of the trade, an inspected gas safety system; with inspectors that were financed by the gas supply companies. It was in the company's interest to get it right because the liability lay with those selling the gas, reinvesting their profits in the common good and safety of the public.

In the early 90's the rampant ideology and dogma of deregulation came along, putting profit before safety. Doing away with inspectors and putting those making a profit from installing gas in control of quality and safety, whilst weighing this up against their profit margin.

Most are honest and are observing the proper procedures and standards, but apparently there are those that do not. I am told some of the worst that aren't observing are the ones with "connections", acting with impunity because they can and have in the past and will until they are prevented from getting away with it.

Within the gasfitting industry this deregulation introduced a safety “self-certifying” certificate system (with copies in triplicate provided by a carbon copy), with certificates sold by batches of ten, identified by a unique cert number sold only to a specific licence holder. The PGDB made such a job of this \$600K system, that it’s been moved to MBIE for administration (not long after my fiasco).

These unique certs had a triple carbon copy of the original handwritten top copy; this top copy was then held by the PGDB. With the subsequent carbon copy then held by the gas supplier, the gasfitter and the customer.

These four independent document depositories were an effective honesty mechanism with a handwritten checkable way of filling the cert in, with a real signature done by hand. This has all gone now.

The onus was moved to the fitter, you might say “as it should”. But now we have the problem of those making a financial gain from the installation of gas, inspecting their own work, with random audits by the PGDB. But even these audits and this more robust self cert system has since proved to be untenable and has ceased.

This system made the installer liable for the install, freeing the gas companies to sell a volatile flammable gas with a very much reduced liability.

GANZ represents the suppliers of gas. GANZ (via the so called “impartial” inspector for my case, Tony Hammond) lobbied for this deregulation decades before. Impartial he was not. GANZ was also the group that the chair of my hearing was a member (Stephen Parker). These two people represented GANZ for many years as a double act at seminars and trade shows. Both NZIGE members as was Darnley, part of IPENZ.

I give you this background to give you an idea of the conflicts of interest involved in my case.

The cover up started with an explosion, which resulted in two family’s lives being wrecked (mine and the owner of the exploding chip shop, Ron Clarke) with this poor blast victim laying in a drug induced coma for weeks in a burns unit.

The cover up started while Ron Clarke lay in this coma, covered up by the PGDB, and arguably before. Phil Routhan, the CEO of the PGDB at the time of the explosion, has a controversial exit from the PGDB months after the explosion. claiming that he had 1000’s of dodgy certs and paperwork. My investigation lasted 2 years.

I began working for a gas company called Allgas in February 2003, situated in Nelson.

Nelson being the long-term electorate of Nick Smith, serving as Building and Housing Minister, with the PGDB under his portfolio. He had other portfolios at the start of this fiasco and moved into this role after the explosion.

I left employment at Allgas after only approx 9 months after seeing a total disregard for the safety of their customers and left because of these safety concerns.

The day after I told my old boss to shove his job where the sun doesn’t shine, four books of gas safety certificates (certs) were ordered in my name without my knowledge. I found out after the explosion that also a letter was written, again acting in my name without my knowledge to alter a cert months after I had left their employ.

Literally as soon as I left Allgas I started work for another gas supplier (as a self-employed gas fitter) and instantly became aware of dodgy certs in my name, covering dangerous and altered work.

I began complaining to the PGDB from this time, in late 2003. I also made my concerns known to industry groups (I was the Nelson Master Plumber President and brought it up at meetings) and MPs (Nick Smith included).

Nothing, other than flannel, was done. The explosion happened 9th April 2009.

At one point in 2006 Nick Smith wrote a letter on my behalf airing my concerns to the PGDB, he even backed me calling for a public inquiry in his other letters after the explosion, even right up to my hearing in May 2011.

But the month following my hearing (after placing his “very good friend” on the PGDB), Nick totally changed his tact to a “nothing to see here” attitude, even when he now had the portfolio under which all this fiasco comes.

Nicks “very good friend” did not see out his tenure as PGDB Chairman (Alan Bickers IPENZ) and resigned for personal reasons later on, resigning after my hearing and after he slated me in my local newspaper, using quotes from me that I did not say and there is no proof of. He did this despite that I was found totally innocent of 42 charges out of 44, including the “explosion” charge.

My old boss was installing gas in homes and businesses in Nelson for well over 10 years very probably nearer 20 years, he was totally clueless and I think any and every MP owes it to their electorate to look into this fiasco, to ensure those that vote them in are kept safe.

The people of Nelson thought they were dealing with a fully qualified craftsman gas fitter who was a member of the gas engineers’ group NZIGE (a part of IPENZ), when in reality he had never sat an apprenticeship and was totally inept. He resigned from NZIGE in May 2009 just weeks after the April explosion.

My old boss’s attitude to safety can be summed up in the comment that added to my leaving Allgas in disgust. He told me to “just use a poker face and make out you know what you’re was doing”.

He said this when I asked for an appliance specification data sheet. I asked for this specification as I saw him installing central heating in a house where the tepid stagnant radiator water comes out of the hot water taps/shower when the TRV’s open for winter after being stored in the said rads for a whole hot Nelson summer, and as far as I am aware it still does. Legionnaires disease a huge concern.

The chip shop exploded on 9th April 2009, at 09:40 approx in the morning, either side of this time the chipshop and adjoining dairy would have been surrounded by kids on the way to school or full of people buying smoko. It had a “butcher’s shop” type, full-length plate-glass windows as a shop front. The blast shot this plate glass out like shrapnel from a grenade. The thought of what could have happened still gives me nightmares.

As the blast victim lay in a coma in intensive care, the telling of ridiculous untruths began and a scapegoat was sort after.

The report from DOL (only discovered by me years later) actually exonerates me and names the person who I had spent the previous 6 years trying to warn about as being responsible for installing the reason for the explosion, i.e. two gas deep fat fryers, supplied by flexible hoses (please remember these **two** flexible hoses, this is why the chip shop exploded, very nearly killing a man, a **third** hose was sold to the chip shop).

The PGDB told the blast victim's lawyer that the original top copy of the certificate for the last work done at the site of the explosion (totally in the name of my old boss and issued years after I left Allgas) could not be produced as this cert was never received by the PGDB.

Here is but one example of how badly the PGDB ran their \$600k cert system, regardless of price, as with all systems...if you put rubbish in, you'll only get rubbish out. This is by their own admission, but it gets worse...

This claim of "non registration" is very hard to believe as this "non-registered" cert appears on the PGDB cert system website and the PGDB even have a date of entry for this cert from their \$600k fox-pro data system, this as per the CEO of the time (Max Pederson) comments in a 33page report on my concerns (I can forwards this report on request, it is beyond ridiculous), as I said this system cost 600k and is now defunct. This cert is 345138, look it up online, or I can send a copy on request.

Apparently according to this 33page report of nonsense, the only evidence that this cert was received (bare in mind it was still denied as being received) ...was that it had a time and date for entry to the system, I kid you not.

This cert is also mentioned by number in the Dept. of Labour complaint with all available carbon copies showing the lack of any recording of a pressure test for leaks, the test for leaks field is empty on all carbon copies, the original top copy can't be found (which is convenient for the PGDB).

My old boss is the person totally responsible for this cert for the last gas work at the site of the explosion. Even by the PGDB's own reckoning. he fails to register this incomplete cert with the PGDB, but issues the carbon copies to their respective places. At the site of an explosion.

This non registration, if it were true, is enough to lay charges and pursue my old boss. And as I had spent the previous 6 years warning specifically about my old boss and his dodgy dealings with certs to the PGDB, they should not have targeted me, also remember the DOL report naming my old boss and exonerating me.

The same guy (my old boss) who is responsible for the "non registered" and incomplete cert nearly burnt down a house just over a year before the explosion and anonymously appears in the government accident book. Here are the comments, below in blue.

Date: 27/12/2007

Location: Nelson

Equipment: Water heater

Accident type: Fire

Losses: A house was rendered uninhabitable due to fire and smoke damage. A water heater was destroyed.

Summary of events: Pipework in a gas installation had been pressure tested but appliances had not been commissioned. The owner received permission from the installer to turn on the gas and use it (the installer was to commission the next day). Due to a leaking fitting, fire ignited in an external instantaneous water heater mounted in a recess box. Heat from the gas fire ignited the soffit above and the fire spread into the ceiling space.

Suspected causes and significant factors: The appliance had not been commissioned and gas leaked from a loose fitting. Gas built up in the recess box and was ignited, probably from use of

the water heater.

My old boss actually did face a charge for the explosion, but it conveniently disappeared before his hearing (remember the DOL report naming him and confirmation of the disappearance of the dodgy cert can be found in the 33pg ridiculous PGDB CEO's report to my concerns, it is laughable).

I believe this doubling up of the explosion charge (same charge as mine for the explosion) was done because if the PGDB ensured we both faced a charge for the same explosion, we would have to have separate hearings (they actually made this statement), this prevented us from cross examining my old boss at a common hearing. Then the charge disappears for him, again see the PGDB's CEO 33pg report for confirmation of this disappearance.

I was chosen for the role of scapegoat in a witch-hunt that saw my young family terrorised and we were financially forced to sell our recently renovated home, losing our business and reputation.

This forced my wife to live in a caravan for a whole winter collecting drinking water and emptying a chemical toilet at the local i-site, while I worked away in the North Island for that winter, the first of many. Before the explosion we had very little debt, only what we owed at the plumber's merchants. We were mortgage free and owned all our vehicles and tools.

One of the worst things that happened to us was the sending of the vile case notes on probabilities in a law court, sent in an unmarked wrapper of its vile content. The three cases chosen were all sexually deviant but the worst were the child sexual abuse case notes. I came home to find my wife hysterical; she had read them and not long after this she had to live in the caravan while I worked away.

I have either worked away from home within my trade or worked locally out of my trade since, my reputation being ruined (nothing short of assassinated) and all my money was tied up in an almost derelict shack of a house which I couldn't sell, but we had to live in. I have since worked very hard to make this shack a home.

My old boss, the person I was complaining about for about 6 years before the explosion was gifted his full license by the PGDB (after just one oral exam, basically a chat with Tony Hammond, who became the PGDB investigator FOR THE EXPLOSION). This saw Darnley rise from a guy working under an exemption license to a full certifying craftsman license. This enabled him to sign off any gas work. He had served no apprenticeship whatsoever and was only a gas salesman, not even a plumber, which ran a gas supply company, i.e. Allgas. He was willing (and this is also known to the PGDB) to sign off anyone, even the untrained and unqualified.

The PGDB appointed as investigator to investigate the explosion... the very same person who held that one oral exam and gifted the full certifying craftsman gas license to my old boss, Tony Hammond, same guy who lobbied for deregulation under the GANZ banner and appears inside the cover of the gas regulations. Does he sound "impartial" to you?

The investigator then audited me, and when I explained away his initial audit and answered all his concerns, questions and potential charges, he re-audited me a second time. I have actually got a PGDB letter that the PGDB audited three full years of my work, but the PGDB publically claim to have only done a sample of 10% of my work.

Basically, the investigator kept going until he felt he found something he could pin on me.

When I answered these second set of charges before the hearing, he amended 50% of these charges just before the hearing.

Hammond had laid several charges for each of the sites. This is how he managed to get 44 charges out of just seven sites. The charges were stepped down in severity and he tried to get the most severe charges to stick first, then worked his way down. I still (in a slanted kangaroo court) went innocent 42 out of 44 charges.

Well before the hearing the PGDB sent untrue letters to all the additional sites to the explosion that charges were laid. The letters told the untruth that I was issuing illegal certs in the North Island, in places I have never even visited. I am not allowed to call these untrue letters lies according to the High Court of appeal.

The PGDB agree in their later apology for these untrue letters, issued well after my ordeal, that these letters could have given the impression that I was willing to act illegally, basically in their own words prejudicing every site additional to the explosion, giving the impression that I was willing to act illegally when it came to issuing gas certs, to all the site of charges, do you think this fair?

One of the untrue letters, the one sent to the local high school, killed my business and reputation. I was abused on worksites by other tradesman, (when I could actually get work).

Interestingly, (totally unrelated and unknown to me) the reason and person responsible for these untrue PGDB letters being issued in the first place...was for selling 560 blank but signed certs. He sold them blank except for his signature so anyone could put anything.... someone involved in this has his case still before the PGDB, see the CEO 33-page report.

Sixteen of the sites of these blank certs were potentially lethal and 90% were non-compliant, as per the PDGB press release.

The guy responsible for these certs was still granted a license for some time afterwards (apparently while facing charges), until he retired.....then the PGDB granted his son a full certifying license.....in the same manner as my old boss, same gas group memberships and AFTER the explosion....the PGDB had learnt nothing.

I paid a lawyer to act for me, and despite pressure turned down name suppression; the lawyer took well in excess of \$10K off me..... then told me to plead guilty to everything. I have since discovered that my lawyer's wife was Nick Smiths PA. After my lawyer had a QC "mate" of his to review my case, told me to plead guilty. I asked him where the fairness and justice was in pleading guilty to things I had not done...his reply was I was in the wrong country and industry to expect either.

After ceasing the use of this lawyer's services, I met Wal Gordon of the Plumber's Federation he has been a huge help to not just me but to the industry as a whole.

We requested an impartiality hearing before the actual hearing because there were blatant conflicts of interest. The PGDB then went on to decide that they themselves were impartial, which is impossible. This date was set aside for my actual hearing, so my hearing had to be postponed. This delay means that Darnley's hearing had to go ahead before my hearing, the charge for the explosion disappeared before his hearing.

The so-called impartial investigator went on to present his "findings" at a hearing which was chaired and over seen by his very long-term colleague of at least 16 years. This very well-known colleague then shut down the hearing as we were cross examining the investigator about the details of the last charge and I was about to go 100% innocent. I answered 42 out of 44 trumped up charges, the only charge to stick was, to be frank, total BS. But they slated me in the local paper anyway. Bickers, another long term IPENZ member quoted me saying I had referred to myself as a "mere plumber", but couldn't show me where I had said it.

Of note: Some time later, about 18 months after my hearing the PGDB ignored the complaints of an elderly couple for the very same issue but in a much worse situation. They actually complained about fumes entering their home (my customer was happy with my installation and had never smelt fumes). The PGDB told them to close the window when they use their califont.

Also, my hearing showed a certificate manipulation perhaps a fraud on the West Coast unconnected to Allgas and Nelson, this still goes unaddressed. See Wal's report on the 9 people of interest ignored by the PGDB right up until this day, basically if I was found not guilty of a charge then who did it? I can show the PGDB who these people are, they have a copy of Wal's report

No one has been held responsible for the explosion, nor any of the sites of the other charges, nor the potential fraud on the West Coast, all of which I was found innocent of and nothing has been rectified.

So, apart from the explosion, you got to ask how dangerous was it all? Apparently, it was dangerous enough to ruin me over, but not so dangerous as to allow them to ignore it if the PGDB couldn't pin it on me. And, for the only charge I was found "guilty of", ignore a much worse situation when someone actually complaints

The hearing was a sham with the investigator not divulging over 100 photos, withholding them for two years. Photos that proved what I had said from day one, that the pipe was lowered and altered from my original installation, not by me. This is also reflected in the DOL report that started this hell for me and my family.

These withheld photos only came to light after cross examining the police forensic expert **at my hearing**. He had taken the photos the day after the explosion and made them available to the investigator, but the investigator only requested a small number of the photos to support his investigators' report. Premeditated?

In these withheld photos you could see the original screw holes in the wall and the pipe was running down hill.

Add these withheld photos to the Allgas receipt for the **other THIRD** gas hose sold weeks after I left Allgas.

This is the hose that caused the explosion; the hose was replaced as it had split before, due to this lowering of the pipework. This is all known to the PGDB, MP's and the Ombudsman.

The investigator and the chair of my hearing and my old boss were all part of GANZ, (and NZIGE and other gas groups).

Remember that GANZ was the gas group that openly lobbied for deregulation and the self cert system, a system shown by the explosion to have failed. The investigator wrote papers about deregulation, lobbying for it, now add that to the investigator's issuing of a full certifying license to my old boss, he was not impartial.

As part of my "rehabilitation" after the hearing I was ordered by the PGDB to do a course of instruction to uplift my license, the course didn't exist so I was assessed. I was told by the assessor that I would be in the top 10% of gasfitters the assessor had EVER met. Remember, I had not been taught anything new, just assessed on my present knowledge.

Question,

How would the PGDB look if someone not time served and unqualified, who the PGDB had flippantly granted a full certifying gas license to and gifted credentials to, empowering him to sign off gas work, who then went on to issue a gas cert for the last work at the site of an explosion caused by a gas leak, with the top original copy (which was accepted by the PGDB) was lacking any recording of a test for gas leaks? After 6 years of warnings from me...

I think the PGDB would (and do) look pretty bad (and apparently so do the PGDB) ... the cover-up shows their attitude to the trade and the public's safety.... they are bound to continue this cover-up. In a recent letter to me admitting they have had to improve things immensely since my kangaroo court.

We now are left with the present gas "safety" cert system that has devolved even more to all new gas work being classed as low risk in a housing shortage. As all this new gas work is deemed low risk it is not required to be registered with the ESS nor any other government agency, it has no hand written signed copies back up with a carbon copy honesty mechanism.

The PGDB I am told are still handing out gasfitting licenses to those that are deemed "acceptable" to the PGDB, but are withholding licenses to people much more deserving.

I appealed my one last charge in the High Court, at a cost of about \$5k. I was told to allow three days, which made sense because I listed all the problems and corruption in my appeal application.

I was told by the Judge that I could not call the untrue letters (sent by the PGDB to all sites of charges) lies, I could not enter any evidence extra to my hearing (even though the regulation existed and only proved the "investigator" was ignorant of it). What was an expected 3 day over view of the corruption became a very brief few minutes where I was shut down. I later tried to request the transcript of this "appeal" and was told it didn't exist.

The Ombudsman being the office for Fairness for "All", up to and including the Chief Ombudsman is happy with all of this and the Ombudsman's "quick" response team took many years to tell me of this happiness. They made me wait for an answer for two years, only to be told they didn't deal with these sorts of things, an answer that they could have told me instantly, if it were true.

I am told to get on with my life, after 15 years of struggle I am yet to be able to get on with life, remember Bickers...well I had managed to get a job locally, allowing me to live at home...I was there a few years, quite happy...out of the blue I bumped into Bickers on an "asset tour" for Trustpower. I worked for Trustpower and he was on the board. Not long after I was made redundant.

Since my character assassination I have had about a job a year. If I do tell any potential employer what has happened ...I inevitably don't get the job... and if I don't tell them, then land the job...it inevitably comes out and makes me look dishonest.

In another twist of pain for me, the jobs I want most are the ones where I am most candid, it doesn't work.

Megan Woods MP even got a psych nurse to ring me, and since ignored me...please see the you tube clip on this link below in blue-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7hoUnTWRwA&t=34s>

I have publicly made these claims on an NZ Plumbing Forum, again known to the PGDB... please see these posts on this link below in blue-

<https://www.plumbers.nz/fellow-practitioners-update/41/fellow-practitioner-issue-236-dated-12-december-2014/1810/msg13311#msg13311>

This link has over 225,000 reads, the PGDB knows.

There is so much more to this but believe it or not I am trying to keep it brief. I have a lot of evidence to prove my claims.

Honesty, Integrity and credibility should be first and foremost when leading...remember the Byzantine half of the Roman Empire lasted a millennium more...because it was based on what you could do... and not who you knew.