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IN OTHER NEWS

Letter to the Editor

**Hi Editor.**

A question for your readers. Is Rinnai now in competition with us the tradespeople?

They now have their own directly employed service people operating in Wellington and Auckland.

Tradespeople are the reason this company is so successful in NZ.

They charge for training and then employ the people we have trained.

Is this fair, should we be supporting them?

Please note, it is not just warranty work they are carrying out.

**ED:**

Thank you for your submission writer.

This is the first we have heard of this happening and if true, it is in our opinion a shocking tactic by Rinnai.

**Presentation by the Federation # 2.**



As stated in the last edition, the Federation was invited by the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board to give a presentation at the Board's Strategic Planning Day two weeks ago. The Federation gave its presentation by exploring a number of questions.

We said over the next couple of issues of the Fellow Practitioner we will share those questions with you - so here are more of the questions explored. Remember it's our opinion and the Board is not obliged in any way to take action on the questions, but it is all food for thought and no telling what may happen.

Some of the opinions put forward may be controversial within the industry, but getting views and conversations going is part of the process of getting industry movement forward.

Don't forget to give us your feedback so we can represent you in the best way we can.

**What Benefit is there to Practitioners Operating in a Regulated Industry?**

It was stated at Select Committee that practitioners benefit in a regulated industry as they have their work and incomes protected from illegal operators', but in reality this is not the case.

At the moment the legislation and operation of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board is geared up to police the licensed operators who make mistakes and the few instances where

As a reputable supplier it would be interesting to know what their thinking was behind this move.

In some ways it is not surprising as suppliers have been riding on the coat tails of the practitioners in the industry for a long time and the options open to the practitioners have been limited.

It would be frightening to think a person could be employed full time in the likes of Wellington doing only warranty work. If that was the case we would be looking seriously at the product and if it is fit for purpose.

It would seem to us that the person would need to do other work in the industry such as servicing which does take away work from the practitioners who have paid to do servicing courses now to have the supplier of the product and course go into competition with them.

We would like to hear the logic behind this move from Rinnai so we invite them to make a brief submission on the alleged move.

Careful selection of product and services is vital now for survival in the industry and practitioners need to make careful their choices.

The submitter asks some very relevant questions which we would love to hear your views.

Obviously the service people must have come from somewhere and no doubt someone has paid a lot of

complaints are vindictive.

The Federation believes the quality of work produced in New Zealand is mostly to a good standard but there are some occurrences of poor workmanship, however the greatest problem is illegal operators and weekend work that is not accounted for.

As a starting point to deal with illegal operators the licensed operators need to have confidence in the Board that mistakes are dealt with as exactly that. We feel that infringement notices and warnings would go a long way towards getting the confidence of the practitioners.

The second possibility would be first line responders. Currently plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers very seldom report incidents to the Board. There is nothing to stop the Board from training people in the industry to be first line responders who practitioners can contact and feed information to.

The first line responders would be an extension of the intelligence systems already in place. They could follow up on the information in their local area and then provide it to the Board as required.

Thirdly investigation team policing using the first line responders and others as applicable; training practitioners to aid investigators in large scale policing such as Auckland and Queenstown sites could be considered.

As it stands the illegal operators are doing the damage to the industry financially and reputation wise. In the future when there are issues then it will be the licensed practitioners that will get the blame as they did in the leaky building saga when in fact it was design and materials that caused the problems.

### **What Value is put on an Exam Point?**

People are declined registration on a regular basis because of one point and it's been argued that it's not so much the one point it's the other 40 points of things they don't know.

The Federation believes careful consideration should be given to these cases by the entire Board so all Board members can take into account that case.

For example the tradespeople on the Board would be able to pick out the areas of the paper that were marked as wrong and identify the deficiencies. They could identify a way forward for the individual rather than a delegated authority simply saying "Not enough points."

A way forward might simply be getting questioned by a tradesperson on the deficiencies and then the individual could be

money for their training and now, if true, the supplier of that training is employing them in direct competition with the original employer.

Initial enquiries by the Federation would indicate practitioners are worried about the loss of work and staff to suppliers whom they have given their loyal support to.

It also raises the question that this section of the industry is severely undermanned. The number of gas appliance servicepeople is woeful and something that suppliers and merchants alike should be concerned about. There are fewer and fewer properly trained gas appliance servicepeople in New Zealand.

We also need to be mindful of the fact that MBIE have raised the question of electricians being given a limited gas ticket as part of the review of the 2006 PGD Act. This potentially would be a very dangerous state of affairs.

It looks like principles are going to play a big part in the outcome of this saga.

Send us your feedback.

awarded the qualification.

The question must be asked: how can the Board give away 100 points to each of the 2500 exemption holders every year and not be able to give away one or two points to an individual who has taken the time to do an apprenticeship and sit the exams?

An individual who has proven 59% of their knowledge must be safer for the public than an individual who hasn't proved anything (exemption holder).

### **Do Exemptions Help or Hinder the Industry?**

Exemption holders can be categorised as 2,500 people who are not subject to discipline from the Board, who are not required to up skill and if prosecuted for an offence can only be held accountable for 5 years where a licensed person can be held accountable for ever and a day and their supervisor is left to take the rap.

The positions being taken by exemption holders could be taken by trained and qualified people. The current application of exemptions is being used as a qualification without training and this is of the Board's doing.

The current system also allows scope for supervisors and exemption holders to abuse the system where the supervisors sits back and doesn't in fact supervise knowing the chances of getting caught are slim.

The Federation believes exemptions should be for a fixed term only i.e. a specific task where a person's skills are needed.

Is there any way exemption holders can be trained to retain them in the industry?

Let us know your view and thoughts.

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