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IN OTHER NEWS

FROM THE MEDIA

We picked up on this over the weekend regarding tradespeople's responsibilities.

A gasfitter has been sentenced to four months of community detention after incorrectly installing a gas fireplace that later caught fire and wrote off the house.

The gasfitter appeared at the Tauranga District Court yesterday and was also made to pay reparation costs of \$20,000.

He has also been sentenced to 150 hours of community service.

Two months after the gasfitter installed a gas fireplace in 2017, there was a fire that left the house uninhabitable.

A Worksafe investigation found that it was only the quick thinking of residents exiting as soon as they smelt smoke that avoided any injury.

Worksafe also found the installation of the fireplace did not comply with the

THE ZERO INVESTMENT EFFECT



Some people say the greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist. The Federation says the greatest trick the Government ever pulled was the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006 with their zero investment.

You may well ask what the "zero investment effect" is – well put simply it is when you don't invest in the project but the project goes ahead and there is no accountability for any wrong doings along the way that fall on you.

With the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006, the Government has given itself great powers with zero responsibility, zero accountability, and zero transparency. They in turn handed on the powers to the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board who have responsibilities but very little, if any, accountability or transparency.

In a recent edition of the Fellow Practitioner we mentioned the need for the industry to keep its eyes open. A couple of items came to light where the Federation thought there needed to be accountability and requests were made under the Official Information Act.

One issue was the recruitment process for the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board, (the Board), undertaken by the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE). As it stands the Board have been two Board members short since September 2018. In January this year MBIE advertised the vacant positions.

We understand short lists for interviews were established but we don't know if a short list of candidates was forwarded to the Minister of Building and Construction (the Minister). We are waiting for confirmation from MBIE regarding the number of candidates whose names were put forward to the Minister.

We do know that there were 10 plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers who applied, of whom 5 were shortlisted for interviews. One of these withdrew their application before being interviewed. There were 13 lay people who applied and 4 were shortlisted for interviews. We don't know how many, if any, candidates were

manufacturer's instructions.

The fireplace was not listed on the Worksafe database as being suitable for use with LPG and there was not any separation from combustible material, starting the fire.

Worksafe Energy Safety said the gasfitter should have known better.

"The installation manual he should have followed clearly stated the risk of fire, injury or property damage if the fireplace was not installed correctly."

Please take care and make sure you do things right. Mistakes and accidents do happen so let's make sure we do what we can to minimise or eliminate them.

Nick Smith Suspended from Parliament



Our old friend Nick Smith was suspended from Parliament last week. The suspension went to a party vote, which was passed 63-56.

Unfortunately he was only suspended for 24 hours. Apparently it's one of the strongest punishments the Speaker can hand out.

You may remember that Nick Smith was the Minister of Building and Construction that was hot on plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers being held to account.

His reign was after that of

nominated to the Minister and this question has been asked. We note that there hasn't been an announcement of any appointments yet. The only upside to this is that we will be saving some money on Board payments!

Those that didn't get an interview received notification which included:

"We received a large amount of applications and it was difficult for the selection panel to decide amongst the many candidates who applied. At the moment, I regret to inform your application was not shortlisted"

This implies the standards were very high as it was *"difficult for the selection panel"*. We know of one applicant who is a certifying plumber and drainlayer and a tradesman gasfitter, who has 7.5 years experience in competition law enforcement, 10 years of investigative experience and holds a university degree in administrative leadership and this person didn't make it to the interview short list so the calibre of those that did make it to the short list must be extremely high - or is it something else?

We do know that a member of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board was on the selection panel so are there other forces at play here? It does question the fairness of a Board member being on the panel as there is a conflict of interest as we are a small industry and the possibility of the Board member knowing an applicant is very high, especially if that applicant is vocal in the industry.

Is there a possibility that good applicants are excluded because they don't fit a certain mould and their experience and qualifications don't mean anything? Perhaps this is why things never change as the recruitment process doesn't allow people that will challenge the system.

There will be more to come on this subject once MBIE answers the further Official Information Act request that was submitted.

In a previous edition of the Fellow Practitioner we mentioned keeping your eyes open regarding the actions of others and accountability. If you remember the Federation picked up on the "Sensitive Expenditure Policy" mentioned in the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board minutes from their meeting held in December 2018.

The Sensitive Expenditure Policy was mentioned in the minutes regarding overseas travel that was approved under the policy. The policy was so sensitive that it didn't appear with the other Policies on the Board's website.

The travel that was approved was for two people to travel to Germany. This didn't appear right so the Federation requested information under the Official Information Act regarding the trip.

It would appear the Board resolved and noted the passing of two electronic resolutions and directed they should be recorded in the

Maurice Williamson who made the infamous comment “that all you needed to be a tradesman was a dog, a Ute and a mobile phone.”

In our opinion they did nothing for the industry in their nearly ten year tenure and it seems we are heading down the same path now.

THIS EXPLAINS A LOT



We picked up on an article the other day that suggests the stale air in an office may make you dumber.

Yes apparently people who work in poorly-ventilated buildings are WORSE at their jobs. This is got us thinking about ventilation and changes of air in high occupancy buildings like offices and also about homes.

Those who remember the number of air changes required in a room to keep it comfortable will know the rooms need changes in air because pollutants and carbon dioxide (CO₂) build up in the air. Apparently there is enough build up in poorly ventilated rooms to impair brain function.

We know that humans can only survive in an environment where there is far more oxygen (which we inhale) than CO₂ (a by product of our breathing, which we exhale) in the atmosphere. The article

minutes. One of those was the proposed trip to ISH, Frankfurt, which included recommendations and actions sought which were that the Board receives and notes the contents of the report and decides whether to approve the proposed trip.

The result was the Board approved the Chairman and Chief Executive travelling in accordance with the Sensitive Expenditure Policy to ISH.

The report submitted to the Board stated the trip had three purposes:

- *Attendance at ISH from 11 March 2019-15 March 2019. ISH is the World's leading trade fair for the combined topic of water and energy. No other show is as sharply focused on forward looking subjects such as conservation of resources and the use of renewable energies. This is a link to the website for the event so Board members can see what the event is about and what is offered as part of the programme.*

- *Participation in World Plumbing Council events associated with ISH.*

- *Study of models of training in Germany, Sweden and Finland. Rounding out the study of the Australian, Canadian and UK models, the intention would be to visit sites in Germany, Sweden and Finland (all considered to be world leading models) to observe their methods. This may identify aspects of their model that might be transferrable to New Zealand.*

Also there was a fourth purpose of “If possible, and if time permits, engage with regulatory counterparts in Germany.”

There was an approximate estimate of the costs:

- *Airfares – Economy to and from Frankfurt (based on Air New Zealand site) \$6000 for two. Leave NZ on 7 March 2019. Arrive Frankfurt on 8 March 2019. Leaving Frankfurt on 17 March.*

- *Accommodation – In Frankfurt, \$500 per person per night. Total of 9 nights = \$9000 for two people.*

- *Meals, Taxis, Tickets to ISH, train travel etc: I have estimated this to be \$3000. This makes a total cost of approximately \$18,000.*

This was \$18,000 in incidentals however there is no mention of the estimated \$12,000 plus in wages. It was also noted the Skills Organisation may attend at their cost.

An estimated cost to the industry of \$30,000 and it appears, in the Federation's opinion, very little of it was to do with the functions of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board.

We want to emphasise that common sense did prevail and this trip did not go ahead even though the Board did approve the expenditure.

suggested that recent research has suggested that far lower levels of CO2 than it would take to suffocate our lungs may still be able to starve our brains of oxygen.

We have the sarcastic opinion that this may explain a lot with regard to creating a generation of dumb people.

Decades ago we had houses where you got a draft under the door or around a window and there was continually air entering the house giving you the air changes needed but you had to wrap up to keep warm or put another log on the fire.

Jump forward to the present day and all houses and offices are so well sealed and insulated that perhaps the air in the houses and offices is going stale.

People stay at home in their nice warm houses a lot more as their entertainment is readily available and there is no need to go out in the fresh air.

This may explain why those who work outside generally have a fresher outlook on life.

Paying for people to go to a trade show, what does this have to do with the functions of the Board? Looking at training models and apprentices models is certainly border line as well.

Perhaps as part of the induction for new Board members they should be forced to read the Auditor General's Report and follow up report regarding the investigation into the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board and also the Hazel Armstrong report into the relationship and responsibilities of the Board and Industry Training Organisation.

It seems we have stepped back a decade and roles and responsibilities are being forgotten. This is very easy when there is limited accountability.

So what accountability is there? The Minister of Building and Construction has no power over the Board, she can simply hire and fire. There is an accountability agreement but that is generally a set of agreed targets and no one sets a target they can't achieve.

The other accountability is to the industry and what can we do – nothing except expose the issues.

The Government has no investment in the industry and we believe this is why nothing ever gets done. The last major thing done with regard to the industry was the passing of retrospective laws to make legal that which was illegal (the unlawful fees imposed on the industry).

If the Government had a monetary investment in our industry and we were bleeding money like some other government agencies we are sure they would be taking action. We would hope there would be tight accountability so trips to Germany, the USA, the United Kingdom and Australia had real purpose.

We believe that with great investment comes great return and there is real accountability. If you impose your will with no investment how do you expect loyalty and dedication?

When you don't invest, you can't expect a return on your investment.

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