

Before the Electrical Workers Registration Board

CE No. 22337
Electrical Worker: Timothy Fox (the Respondent)
Registration Number: E 269425
Electrical Worker Number: EW 132636
Registration Class: Electrician

Decision of the Board in Respect of the Conduct of an Electrical Worker Under section 147G and 147M of the Electricity Act 1992

Hearing Type: In Person by video conference
Hearing and Decision Date: 17 June 2021

Board Members Present:

Mel Orange (Presiding)
Michael Macklin, Registered Inspector
Monica Kershaw, Registered Electrician
Jane Davel, Lay Member
Russell Keys, Registered Inspector
Ashley Yan, Registered Electrical Engineer
Martin Perry, Registered Electrician

Appearances: Mr O Upperton for the Investigator

Procedure:

The matter was considered by the Electrical Workers Registration Board (the Board) under the provisions of Part 11 of the Electricity Act 1992 (the Act), the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010 (the Regulations) and the Board's Disciplinary Hearing Rules.

Board Decision:

The Respondent **has** committed disciplinary offences under sections 143(a)(i) and 143(f) of the Act.

Contents

Summary of the Board’s Decision..... 2

Introduction..... 2

Function of Disciplinary Action 3

Procedure 4

Evidence..... 4

Board’s Conclusion and Reasoning..... 5

 Negligence..... 5

 Certification..... 7

Penalty, Costs and Publication..... 8

 Penalty 8

 Costs..... 9

 Publication 9

Penalty, Costs and Publication Orders 10

Right of Appeal..... 11

Summary of the Board’s Decision

[1] The Respondent carried out prescribed electrical work in a negligent manner contrary to section 143(a)(i) of the Act and provided a false or misleading return contrary to section 143(f) of the Act. He is fined the sum of \$500 and ordered to pay costs of \$250.

Introduction

[2] The hearing resulted from a complaint about the conduct of the Respondent and a report under section 147G(1) of the Act from the Investigator that the complaint should be considered by the Board.

[3] The Respondent was served with a notice setting out the alleged disciplinary offences the Investigator reported should be considered by the Board. They were:

First Alleged Disciplinary Offence

1. On or around 23 August 2019 at [Omitted], Mr Timothy Fox has carried out or caused to be carried out prescribed electrical work in a manner contrary to any enactment relating to prescribed electrical work that was in force at the time the work was done being an offence under section 143(a)(ii) of the Act, IN THAT, he has failed to secure a socket outlet in the ceiling.

Or in the alternative

2. On or around 23 August 2019 at [Omitted], Mr Timothy Fox has carried out or caused to be carried out prescribed electrical work in a negligent or incompetent manner being an offence under section 143(a)(i) of the Act, IN THAT, he has failed to secure a socket outlet in the ceiling in breach of regulations 20 of the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010.

Second Disciplinary Offence

3. On or around 23 August 2019 at [Omitted], Mr Timothy Fox has provided a false or misleading return being an offence under section 143(f) of the Act, IN THAT, he has certified that the installation of a rangehood has been carried out in accordance with AS/NZS3000:2007 when he failed to secure the socket outlet in the ceiling.

- [4] Prior to the hearing, the Respondent and the Board were provided with all of the documents the Investigator had in his/her power or possession.
- [5] No Board Members declared any conflicts of interest in relation to the matters under consideration.

Function of Disciplinary Action

- [6] The common understanding of the purpose of professional discipline is to uphold the integrity of the profession. The focus is not punishment, but the protection of the public, the maintenance of public confidence and the enforcement of high standards of propriety and professional conduct. Those purposes were recently reiterated by the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom in *R v Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales*¹ and in New Zealand in *Dentice v Valuers Registration Board*².
- [7] Disciplinary action under the Act is not designed to redress issues or disputes between a complainant and a respondent. In *McLanahan and Tan v The New Zealand Registered Architects Board*,³ Collins J. noted that:
- “... the disciplinary process does not exist to appease those who are dissatisfied The disciplinary process ... exists to ensure professional standards are maintained in order to protect clients, the profession and the broader community.”*
- [8] The Board can only inquire into “the conduct of an electrical worker” with respect to the grounds for discipline set out in section 143 of the Act. It does not have any jurisdiction over contractual matters.

¹ *R v Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales* [2011] UKSC 1, 19 January 2011.

² [1992] 1 NZLR 720 at p 724

³ [2016] HZHC 2276 at para 164

Procedure

[9] The matter proceeded on the basis of an Agreed Statement of Facts.

Evidence

[10] The Board must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the disciplinary offences alleged have been committed⁴. The Board notes, as regards evidence in proceedings before it that the provisions of section 147W of the Act apply. This section states:

In all proceedings under this Part, the Board may, subject to section 156, receive as evidence any statement, document, information, or matter that may in its opinion assist it to deal effectively with the matter before it, whether or not it would be admissible as evidence in a court of law.

[11] The matter proceeded on the basis of an Agreed Statement of Facts. The Board also heard from the Respondent prior to it making its decision. The Agreed Statement of Facts set out that the Respondent was engaged to carry out the replacement of a switchboard and associated wiring. The work included the replacement of a rangehood for which the Respondent provided a certificate of compliance.

[12] After the work was completed, the property owner engaged another electrical worker to carry out further work at the property and to remove unused cables that were left in the ceiling. While carrying out the additional work, the electrical worker found an unsecured socket outlet, covered by insulation, that was connected to the rangehood.

[13] Mr David Olsen, an Electrical Inspector (1245614) was engaged by the Investigator to carry out a technical review of the prescribed electrical work carried out. He noted that the unsecured socket-outlet breached AS/NZS 3000:2007 and Regulation 20(2)(d) of the Electricity (Safety) Regulations. Mr Olsen stated:

“Withdrawing a plug from unsecured socket or cables pulled in ceiling accidentally causing cable termination/connections to be unsecure. Potential for arcing or earth conductors breaking are possible”.

[14] The Respondent acknowledged that the socket-outlet was replaced during the installation of the new rangehood and accepted that the socket-outlet was left unsecured. He accepted that he had carried out or caused to be carried prescribed electrical work in a negligent or incompetent manner being an offence under section 143(a)(i) of the Electricity Act 1992. The Respondent also accepted that he had issued a false and misleading return being an offence under section 143(f) of the Electricity Act 1992.

[15] The Respondent noted that the work in question was carried out by a fourth-year apprentice, that he was on-site and that he had seen most of the work but had not

⁴ *Z v Dental Complaints Assessment Committee* [2009] 1 NZLR 1

checked how the socket had been left. He stated the apprentice was no longer in his employ.

- [16] The general rule is that all facts in issue or relevant to the issue in a case must be proved by evidence. As the Investigator and Respondent agreed to the facts as outlined above, it was not necessary to call any further evidence or to test the evidence as outlined in the Statement.

Board's Conclusion and Reasoning

- [17] The Board has decided that the Respondent **has** carried out or caused to be carried out prescribed electrical work in a negligent manner being an offence under section 143(a)(i) of the Act in that he failed to secure a socket outlet in the ceiling in breach of regulations 20 of the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010.
- [18] The Board has also decided that the Respondent **has** provided a false or misleading return being an offence under section 143(f) of the Act in that he certified that the installation of a rangehood that had been carried out in accordance with AS/NZS3000:2007.
- [19] The reasons for the Board's decisions follow.

Negligence

- [20] The first charges put before the Board was laid in the alternatives of negligence or incompetence under section 143(a)(i) and contrary to an enactment under section 143(a)(ii).
- [21] The Respondent accepted that he had been negligent or incompetent. The Board decided that negligence was the appropriate finding.
- [22] Negligence is considered to be the departure by an electrical worker, whilst carrying out or supervising prescribed electrical work from an accepted standard of conduct. It is judged against those of the same class of licence as the person whose conduct is being inquired into. This is described as the *Bolam*⁵ test of negligence which has been adopted by the New Zealand Courts⁶.
- [23] The New Zealand Courts have stated that an assessment of negligence in a disciplinary context is a two-stage test⁷. The first is for the Board to consider whether the practitioner has departed from the acceptable standard of conduct of a professional. The second is to consider whether the departure is significant enough to warrant a disciplinary sanction.
- [24] When considering what an acceptable standard is, the Board must have reference to the conduct of other competent and responsible practitioners and the Board's own

⁵ *Bolam v Friern Hospital Management Committee* [1957] 1 WLR 582

⁶ *Martin v Director of Proceedings* [2010] NZAR 333 (HC), *F v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal* [2005] 3 NZLR 774 (CA)

⁷ *Martin v Director of Proceedings* [2010] NZAR 333 (HC), *F v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal* [2005] 3 NZLR 774 (CA)

assessment of what is appropriate conduct, bearing in mind the purpose of the Act⁸. The test is an objective one and, in this respect, it has been noted that the purpose of discipline is the protection of the public by the maintenance of professional standards and that this could not be met if, in every case, the Board was required to take into account subjective considerations relating to the practitioner⁹.

[25] The Board notes that the purposes of the Act are:

1A Purposes

The purposes of this Act are—

- (a) *to provide for the regulation, supply, and use of electricity in New Zealand; and*
- (b) *Repealed.*
- (c) *to protect the health and safety of members of the public in connection with the supply and use of electricity in New Zealand; and*
- (d) *to promote the prevention of damage to property in connection with the supply and use of electricity in New Zealand; and*
- (da) *to provide for the regulation of fittings and electrical appliances that are, or may be, exported pursuant to an international trade instrument; and*
- (e) *to provide for the regulation of electrical workers.]*

[26] The Board also notes, as regards acceptable standards, that all prescribed electrical work must comply with the Electricity (Safety) Regulation 2010 and the cited Standards and Codes of Practice in Schedule 2 of the Regulations. As such, when considering what is and is not an acceptable standard, they must be taken into account.

[27] Turning to seriousness in *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*¹⁰, the Court's noted, as regards the threshold for disciplinary matters, that:

[21] Negligence or malpractice may or may not be sufficient to constitute professional misconduct and the guide must be standards applicable by competent, ethical and responsible practitioners and there must be behaviour which falls seriously short of that which is to be considered acceptable and not mere inadvertent error, oversight or for that matter carelessness.

[28] The Respondent accepted that he had been negligent or incompetent when he failed to secure a socket outlet. The Investigator's expert noted that withdrawing a plug from an unsecured socket or cables being pulled in the ceiling could cause cable terminations or connections to become loose. This could, in turn, result in safety risks.

⁸ *Martin v Director of Proceedings* [2010] NZAR 333 at p.33

⁹ *McKenzie v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal* [2004] NZAR 47 at p.71

¹⁰ [2001] NZAR 74

- [29] The work was carried out under the Respondent's supervision. Supervision is defined in section 2 of the Act as:

Supervision, in relation to any work, means that the work is undertaken under such control and direction of a person authorised under this Act to do the work [or, in the case of section 76, a person authorised to supervise work under that section] as is sufficient to ensure—

- (a) That the work is performed competently; and*
- (b) That while the work is being undertaken, appropriate safety measures are adopted; and*
- (c) That the completed work complies with the requirements of any regulations made under section 169 of this Act:*

- [30] The definition was considered in *Electrical Workers Registration Board v Gallagher*¹¹. Judge Tompkins stated at paragraph 24:

As is made apparent by the definition of "supervision" in the Act, that requires control and direction by the supervisor so as to ensure that the electrical work is performed competently, that appropriate safety measures are adopted, and that when completed the work complies with the requisite regulations. At the very least supervision in that context requires knowledge that work is being conducted, visual and other actual inspection of the work during its completion, assessment of safety measures undertaken by the person doing the work on the site itself, and, after completion of the work, a decision as to compliance of the work with the requisite regulations.

- [31] On the basis of the legal principles noted above and the Respondent's acceptance of responsibility, the Board, which includes persons with expertise in the electrical industry, finds the Respondent's conduct has fallen below a reasonably expected standard and that it was serious enough to warrant a disciplinary outcome.

Certification

- [32] The charge under section 143(f) of the Act related to the provision of a false or misleading return. In determining whether a return is false or misleading is a question of fact to be decided objectively, and the intention of the issuer is irrelevant¹².
- [33] The returns referred to are issued under the Regulations. There is a requirement that an Electrical Safety Certificate be issued for all prescribed electrical work. It must contain a statement to the effect that the installation or part installation is connected to a power supply and is safe to use. There is also a requirement that a Certificate of Compliance is issued for high and general risk prescribed electrical work. A Certificate of Compliance must state that the prescribed electrical work has been done lawfully and safely and that the information in the certificate is correct.

¹¹ *Electrical Workers Registration Board v Gallagher* Judge Tompkins, District Court at Te Awamutu, 12 April 2011

¹² *Taylor Bros Ltd v Taylor Group Ltd* [1988] 2 NZLR 1

- [34] As the prescribed electrical work that the Respondent certified has been found to have been completed in a manner that was not compliant with the regulatory requirements, it follows that the Respondent has provided a false or misleading return. It is also noted that the Respondent has accepted that he did provide a false or misleading return.

Penalty, Costs and Publication

- [35] Having found that one or more of the grounds in section 143 applies, the Board must, under section 147M of the Act¹, consider the appropriate disciplinary penalty, whether the Respondent should be ordered to pay any costs and whether the decision should be published.
- [36] The Respondent made submissions at the hearing as regards penalty, costs and publication.

Penalty

- [37] The purpose of professional discipline is to uphold the integrity of the profession; the focus is not punishment, but the enforcement of a high standard of propriety and professional conduct. The Board does note, however, that the High Court in *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee*¹³ commented on the role of “punishment” in giving penalty orders stating that punitive orders are, at times, necessary to provide a deterrent and to uphold professional standards. The Court noted:

[28] I therefore propose to proceed on the basis that, although the protection of the public is a very important consideration, nevertheless the issues of punishment and deterrence must also be taken into account in selecting the appropriate penalty to be imposed.

- [38] The Board also notes that in *Lochhead v Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment*,¹⁴ the Court noted that whilst the statutory principles of sentencing set out in the Sentencing Act 2002 do not apply to the Electricity Act, they have the advantage of simplicity and transparency. The Court recommended adopting a starting point for a penalty based on the seriousness of the disciplinary offending prior to considering any aggravating and/or mitigating factors. The same applies to disciplinary proceedings under the Electricity Act.
- [39] The Board adopted a starting point of a fine of \$1,000. The amount was consistent with other fines imposed for similar disciplinary offending. The starting point is a combined fine for the two disciplinary offences.
- [40] The Respondent cooperated with the investigation and accepted responsibility at an early stage. A full hearing was not required. Those factors will be taken into consideration as mitigation.

¹³ HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

¹⁴ 3 November 2016, CIV-2016-070-000492, [2016] NZDC 21288

[41] The Respondent described his business, noting that he now had a better ratio of supervisors to supervisees. He also set out the changes he has made to his business practices and what he had learnt as a result of the complaint.

[42] Given the mitigating factors present, the Board decided to reduce the fine to \$500.

Costs

[43] Under section 147N of the Act, the Board may require the Respondent to pay the Board any sum that it considers just and reasonable towards the costs and expenses of, and incidental to the investigation, prosecution and the hearing.

[44] The Respondent should note that the High Court has held that 50% of total reasonable costs should be taken as a starting point in disciplinary proceedings and that the percentage can then be adjusted up or down having regard to the particular circumstances of each case¹⁵.

[45] In *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*,¹⁶ where the order for costs in the tribunal was 50% of actual costs and expenses, the High Court noted that:

But for an order for costs made against a practitioner, the profession is left to carry the financial burden of the disciplinary proceedings, and as a matter of policy that is not appropriate.

[46] Based on the above the Board's costs order is that the Respondent is to pay the sum of \$250 toward the costs of and incidental to the matter. In setting the amount of costs the Board took into account that the Respondent had agreed to the matter proceeding by way of an Agreed Statement of Facts.

Publication

[47] As a consequence of its decision, the Respondent's name and the disciplinary outcomes will be recorded in the public register as required by the Act¹⁷. The Board can, pursuant to section 147Z of the Act, also order publication over and above the public register notation. Under section 147Z the Board may, if no appeal is brought within 20 working days of its decision, direct the Registrar to cause a notice stating the effect of the decision or order, the reasons for the decision or order, and (unless the Board directs otherwise) the name of the person in respect of whom the decision or order was made, to be published in the Gazette and any other publications as may be directed by the Board.

[48] As a general principle such further public notification may be required where the Board perceives a need for the public and/or the profession to know of the findings of a disciplinary hearing. This is in addition to the Respondent being named in this decision.

¹⁵ *Cooray v The Preliminary Proceedings Committee* HC, Wellington, AP23/94, 14 September 1995, *Macdonald v Professional Conduct Committee*, HC, Auckland, CIV 2009-404-1516, 10 July 2009, *Owen v Wynyard* HC, Auckland, CIV-2009-404-005245, 25 February 2010.

¹⁶ [2001] NZAR 74

¹⁷ Refer sections 128 of the Act

- [49] Within New Zealand there is a principle of open justice and open reporting which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights Act 1990¹⁸. The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 sets out grounds for suppression within the criminal jurisdiction¹⁹. Within the disciplinary hearing jurisdiction, the courts have stated that the provisions in the Criminal Procedure Act do not apply but can be instructive²⁰. The High Court provided guidance as to the types of factors to be taken into consideration in *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council*²¹.
- [50] The courts have also stated that an adverse finding in a disciplinary case usually requires that the name of the practitioner be published in the public interest²². It is, however, common practice in disciplinary proceedings to protect the names of other persons involved as naming them does not assist the public interest.
- [51] Based on the above, the Board will publish a general article in the Electron summarising the matter but will not order further publication. The Respondent will not be identified in the Electron.
- [52] The Respondent should also note that the Board has not made any form of order under section 153(3) of the Act which allows for prohibition of publication.

Penalty, Costs and Publication Orders

- [53] For the reasons set out above, the Board directs that:

Penalty: Pursuant to section 147M(1)(f) of the Electricity Act 1992, the Respondent is ordered to pay a fine of \$500.

Costs: Pursuant to section 147N of the Act, the Respondent is ordered to pay costs of \$250 (GST included) towards the costs of, and incidental to, the inquiry of the Board.

Publication: The Registrar shall record the Board's action in the Register of Electrical Workers in accordance with section 128(1)(c)(viii) of the Act.

The Respondent will be named in this decision.

A summary of the matter will be published by way of an article in the Electron which will focus on the lessons to be learnt from the case. The Respondent will not be named in the publication.

- [54] The Respondent should note that the Board may refuse to relicence an electrical worker who has not paid any fine or costs imposed on them.

¹⁸ Section 14 of the Act

¹⁹ Refer sections 200 and 202 of the Criminal Procedure Act

²⁰ *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council* [2014] NZAR 350

²¹ *ibid*

²² *Kewene v Professional Conduct Committee of the Dental Council* [2013] NZAR 1055

Right of Appeal

[55] The right to appeal Board decisions is provided for in section 147ZA and 147ZB of the Actⁱⁱ.

Signed and dated this 23rd day of June 2021



Mr M Orange
Presiding Member

ⁱ Section 147M of the Act

- (1) *If the Board, after conducting a hearing, is satisfied that a person to whom this Part applies is guilty of a disciplinary offence, the Board may—*
- (a) *do 1 or more of the following things:*
 - (i) *order that the person's registration or practising licence (or both) be cancelled:*
 - (ii) *order that the person's provisional licence be cancelled:*
 - (iii) *order that the person may not apply to be reregistered or re-licensed before the expiry of a specified period:*
 - (b) *order that the person's registration or practising licence (or both), or the person's provisional licence, be suspended—*
 - (i) *for any period that the Board thinks fit; or*
 - (ii) *until that person does 1 or more of the things specified in subsection (2):*
 - (c) *order that the person's registration or practising licence (or both), or the person's provisional licence, be restricted for any period that the Board thinks fit, in either or both of the following ways:*
 - (i) *by limiting the person to the work that the Board may specify:*
 - (ii) *by limiting the person to doing, or assisting in doing, work in certain circumstances (for example, by limiting the person to work only on approved premises or only in the employ of an approved employer):*
 - (d) *order that the person be disqualified from doing or assisting in doing prescribed electrical work that the person would otherwise be authorised to do in that person's capacity as a person to whom this Part applies—*
 - (i) *permanently, or for any period that the Board thinks fit; or*
 - (ii) *until that person does 1 or more of the things specified in subsection (2):*
 - (e) *order the person to do 1 or more of the things specified in subsection (2) within the period specified in the order:*
 - (f) *order the person to pay a fine not exceeding \$10,000:*
 - (g) *order that the person be censured:*

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- (h) make no order under this subsection.
- (2) The things that the person can be required to do for the purposes of subsection (1)(b), (d), and (e) are to—
- (a) pass any specified examination:
- (b) complete any competence programme or specified period of training:
- (c) attend any specified course of instruction.
- (3) The Board may take only 1 type of action in subsection (1) in relation to a case, except that it may impose a fine under subsection (1)(f) in addition to taking the action under subsection (1)(b), (c), (e) or (g).
- (4) No fine may be imposed under subsection (1)(f) in relation to an act or omission that constitutes an—
- (a) offence for which the person has been convicted by a court; or
- (b) infringement offence for which the person has been issued with an infringement notice and has paid an infringement fee.
- (5) The Board must not exercise any authority conferred by this section in respect of any offence committed by any person before the date of that person's registration or, as the case may be, the date on which that person's provisional licence was issued if at that date the Board was aware of that person's conviction for that offence.
- (6) If a person is registered under Part 10 in respect of more than 1 class of registration, the Board may exercise its powers under subsection (1)(a) to (e) in respect of each of those classes or 1 or more of those classes as the Board thinks fit.]

ii Section 147ZA Appeals

- (1) A person who is dissatisfied with the whole or any part of any of the following decisions, directions, or orders may appeal to the District Court against the decision, direction, or order:
- (e) any decision, direction, or order under any of sections 108, 109, 120, 133, 137, and 153 or Part 11 (except section 147C).

Section 147ZB Time for lodging appeal

An appeal under section 147ZA must be brought within—

- (a) 20 working days after notice of the decision, direction, or order was given to, or served on, the appellant; or
- (b) any further time that the District Court may allow on application made before or after the expiration of that period.