

## Before the Electrical Workers Registration Board

CE No. 22104

Electrical Worker: Colin Horne (the Respondent)

Registration Number: E 262441

Electrical Worker Number: EW 132679

Registration Class: Electrician

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

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Hearing Location: Timaru

Hearing Type: In Person

Hearing Date: 18 July 2019

Decision Date: 18 July 2019

#### Board Members Present:

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

#### 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 a disciplinary offence under section 143(b)(ii) of the Act.

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## Introduction

[1] 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.

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

1. On or around 30 November 2018, at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Mr Colin Horne has negligently created a risk of serious harm to any person, or a risk of significant property damage, through having carried out or caused to be carried out prescribed electrical work being an offence under section 143(b)(ii) of the Act, IN THAT he:
  - (a) Transposed mains polarity during a meter installation; and /or
  - (b) Failed to test mains polarity when re-connecting to supply.

Or in the Alternative

2. On or around 30 November 2018, at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Mr Colin Horne 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:
  - (a) Transposed mains polarity during a meter installation; and /or
  - (b) Failed to test mains polarity when re-connecting to supply.

In breach of regulations 13(1) and 73A(1)(e)(i) of the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010.

- [3] 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.
- [4] No Board Members declared any conflicts of interest in relation to the matters under consideration.

### **Function of Disciplinary Action**

- [5] 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*<sup>1</sup> and in New Zealand in *Dentice v Valuers Registration Board*<sup>2</sup>.
- [6] 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*<sup>3</sup> 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.”*

- [7] 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.

### **Procedure**

- [8] The matter proceeded on the basis of an Agreed Statement of Facts.
- [9] The Respondent appeared.
- [10] The appearance of the Investigator and Counsel for the investigator was excused.

### **Evidence**

- [11] The Board must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the disciplinary offences alleged have been committed<sup>4</sup>. The Board notes that 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*

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

<sup>2</sup> [1992] 1 NZLR 720 at p 724

<sup>3</sup> [2016] HZHC 2276 at para 164

<sup>4</sup> *Z v Dental Complaints Assessment Committee* [2009] 1 NZLR 1

*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.*

- [12] The matter proceeded on the basis of an Agreed Statement of Facts. The Statement set out that the Respondent was a contractor for a meter replacement project. In carrying out a meter replacement he transposed the phase and neutral conductors on an installation. The error was picked up by the main contractor as part of a quality assurance process. The error was rectified by other contractors. It was noted by the main contractor that testing would have identified the error.
- [13] The Respondent accepted his wrongdoing. He stated it was brought on by distraction and his state of mind and that it would not be repeated. The Respondent's contract was terminated as a result.
- [14] The Respondent accepted that he had negligently created a risk of serious harm.
- [15] 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 summary.

#### **Board's Conclusion and Reasoning**

- [16] The Board has decided that the Respondent **has** negligently created a risk of serious harm to any person, or a risk of significant property damage, through having carried out or caused to be carried out prescribed electrical work being an offence under section 143(b)(ii) of the Act, in that, he transposed the incoming phase and neutral conductor and failed to test the polarity prior to the connection of the supply.
- [17] The Board has found that the most serious of the alternatives applied. The Respondent accepted that this was the applicable charge. The Board agreed. There was a transposition of the phase (active) and neutral conductors at the meter box. This resulted in exposed conductive parts of the installation becoming energised. Fortunately, the error was identified by others prior to anyone receiving a shock.
- [18] It is to be noted that serious harm, as per the definition in the Act<sup>5</sup>, nor significant property damage need not occur for the Board to make a finding. There need only be a risk that either might occur. The risk must be real in that there needs to be a material or substantial possibility, chance or likelihood that serious harm or significant property damage will occur. A real risk has also been described as one that a reasonable person would not brush aside as being far-fetched or fanciful<sup>6</sup>.
- [19] To make a finding under section 143(b)(ii) of the Act also requires that the Board find that the Respondent was negligent. Negligence is 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

<sup>5</sup> Refer to section 2 of the Act for the full definition.

<sup>6</sup> Overseas Tankship (UK) Ltd v Miller Steamship Co Pty Ltd (The Wagon Mound No 2) [1967] 1 AC 617

as the person whose conduct is being inquired into. This is described as the *Bolam*<sup>7</sup> test of negligence which has been adopted by the New Zealand Courts<sup>8</sup>.

- [20] The New Zealand Courts have stated that assessment of negligence in a disciplinary context is a two-stage test<sup>9</sup>. 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.
- [21] 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 assessment of what is appropriate conduct, bearing in mind the purpose of the Act<sup>10</sup>. 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 practitioner<sup>11</sup>.
- [22] 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.]*

- [23] 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.

<sup>7</sup> *Bolam v Friern Hospital Management Committee* [1957] 1 WLR 582

<sup>8</sup> *Martin v Director of Proceedings* [2010] NZAR 333 (HC), *F v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal* [2005] 3 NZLR 774 (CA)

<sup>9</sup> *Martin v Director of Proceedings* [2010] NZAR 333 (HC), *F v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal* [2005] 3 NZLR 774 (CA)

<sup>10</sup> *Martin v Director of Proceedings* [2010] NZAR 333 at p.33

<sup>11</sup> *McKenzie v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal* [2004] NZAR 47 at p.71

- [24] Turning to seriousness in *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*<sup>12</sup> 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.*

- [25] Looking at the conduct in question the Respondent has caused a transposition. Whilst that may have been come about as a result of an error or carelessness the Respondent then failed to test. Testing would have identified the error. Under the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010 testing is mandatory requirement and is fundamental to the safety regime under the Regulations. A reasonable practitioner would have carried out such testing.
- [26] Taking the above factors into account the Board, which includes persons with extensive knowledge and experience in the electrical industry, has found that the Respondent was negligent and that his conduct was sufficiently serious enough to warrant a disciplinary outcome.

#### **Penalty, Costs and Publication**

- [27] Having found that one or more of the grounds in section 143 applies the Board must, under section 147M of the Act<sup>i</sup>, consider the appropriate disciplinary penalty, whether the Respondent should be ordered to pay any costs and whether the decision should be published.

#### Penalty

- [28] 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*<sup>13</sup> 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.*

- [29] The Board also notes that in *Lochhead v Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment*<sup>14</sup> 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

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<sup>12</sup> [2001] NZAR 74

<sup>13</sup> HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

<sup>14</sup> 3 November 2016, CIV-2016-070-000492, [2016] NZDC 21288

advantage of simplicity and transparency. The court recommended adopting a starting point for 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.

- [30] Transpositions are very serious matters. Deaths can and do occur as a result of them. The Board has adopted a starting point of \$3,500.
- [31] The Respondent noted that there were personal matters in his life at the time which impacted on his work performance. He also noted that he had done a high volume of similar installations without making any significant errors. He has been very cooperative and has accepted responsibility. The matter was dealt with by way of an agreed statement of facts. Those are all mitigating factors the Board can take into consideration and, based on them, the Board has decided to reduce the fine to \$1,500.

### Costs

- [32] 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.
- [33] 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 case<sup>15</sup>.
- [34] In *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*<sup>16</sup> 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.*
- [35] Based on the above the Board's costs order is that the Respondent is 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

- [36] 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 Act<sup>17</sup>. 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

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<sup>15</sup> *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.

<sup>16</sup> [2001] NZAR 74

<sup>17</sup> Refer sections 128 of the Act

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.

- [37] 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.
- [38] Within New Zealand there is a principle of open justice and open reporting which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights Act 1990<sup>18</sup>. The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 sets out grounds for suppression within the criminal jurisdiction<sup>19</sup>. Within the disciplinary hearing jurisdiction the courts have stated that the provisions in the Criminal Procedure Act do not apply but can be instructive<sup>20</sup>. 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*<sup>21</sup>.
- [39] 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 interest<sup>22</sup>. 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.
- [40] Based on the above the Board will order further publication but has decided that the Respondent will not be named. The article will focus on the need to test and the risks associated with repetitive work.
- [41] 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.

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<sup>18</sup> Section 14 of the Act

<sup>19</sup> Refer sections 200 and 202 of the Criminal Procedure Act

<sup>20</sup> *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council* [2014] NZAR 350

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

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



### **Penalty, Costs and Publication Orders**

[42] 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 \$1,500.

**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.**

**In terms of section 147Z of the Act, there will not be action taken to publicly notify the Board's action.**

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

### **Right of Appeal**

[44] The right to appeal Board decisions is provided for in section 147ZA and 147ZB of the Act<sup>ii</sup>.

Signed and dated this 29<sup>th</sup> day of July 2019.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mel Orange', written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Mel Orange**  
Presiding Member

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<sup>i</sup> **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:
  - (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.]

<sup>ii</sup> **Section 147ZA Appeals**

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- (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.*