

Before the Electrical Workers Registration Board

CE No. 22950

In the matter of:

A disciplinary hearing before the Electrical Workers Registration Board

Between:

The Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment

And

Shitao Liu a registered and licensed electrical worker (E276614, EW140035, Electrician)
(the Respondent)

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

Hearing Location:

Napier

Hearing Type:

Audio Visual Link

Hearing Date:

20 August 2025

Decision Date:

20 August 2025

Board Members Present:

Mr R Keys, Registered Inspector (Presiding)

Mr T Wiseman, Registered Inspector

Ms S Cameron, Registered Electrician

Mr J Hutton, Registered Inspector

Ms L Wright, Barrister

Mr T Tran, Barrister

Mr S Rogers, Registered Electrician

Appearances: A Gordon, counsel for the Investigator and M Johnson, Investigator

S Liu - self represented

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.

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Summary of the Board's Decision

- [1] The Board determined the Respondent committed a disciplinary offence under sections 143(a)(i) and 143(f) of the Act.
- [2] The Board ordered:
- a. A fine of \$1,500 (reduced from \$3,000 starting point due to cooperation, the matter proceeded on an Agreed Statement of Facts and this being the Respondent's first offence);
 - b. Costs of \$250;
 - c. The name of the Respondent to be published.

Introduction

- [3] 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.
- [4] The Respondent was engaged by **[Omitted]** to carry out prescribed electrical work (PEW) associated with the relocation of a power outlet at **[Omitted]** Auckland, on or around 28 September 2024.

- [5] The Respondent was served with a Notice of Proceeding dated 26 June 2025 setting out the alleged disciplinary offences the Investigator reported should be considered by the Board.
- [6] The following disciplinary charges were alleged in the Notice of Proceeding (as served on the Respondent):

First Alleged Disciplinary Offence:

On or around 28 September 2024 at [Omitted] Auckland, Mr Shitao Liu 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. Failed to meet mandatory installation requirements for a socket outlet positioned, AS/NZS 3000:2007 6.2.4.2, table 6.1.*

Or in the Alternative

On or around 28 September 2024 at [Omitted] Auckland, Mr Shitao Liu 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:

- a. Failed to meet mandatory installation requirements for a socket outlet positioned*

In breach of regulations 59 of the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010, AS/NZS 3000:2007 6.2.4.2, table 6.1.

Second Alleged Disciplinary Offence:

On or around 28 September 2024 at [Omitted] Auckland, Mr Shitao Liu has provided a false return being an offence under section 143(f) of the Act, IN THAT, he provided a Certificate of Compliance that certified that the installation complied with the relevant standards and regulations and was safe when it was not.

- [7] Prior to the hearing, the Respondent and the Board were provided with all of the documents the Investigator had in his power or possession.

Function of Disciplinary Action

- [8] 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.

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.

- [9] 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. Those grounds relate to carrying out or supervising PEW.

Evidence

- [10] The Board must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the disciplinary offences alleged have been committed.³ 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.

Procedure

- [11] The matter proceeded on the basis of an Agreed Statement of Facts (ASOF), with the Respondent accepting responsibility for the disciplinary offences.

- [12] In summary, the ASOF established that:

- a. The Respondent is a licensed Electrician (EW140035 – E 276614 / I 004004 (pending)) and at all relevant times was the holder of a current practising licence;
- b. On 27 September 2024, the Respondent was engaged to carry out PEW associated with the relocation of a socket outlet within a damp area at the Property;
- c. The Respondent did not attend the Property and instead sent his apprentice **[Omitted]** (**[Omitted]** / **[Omitted]** / Limited Certificate holder) in his place to move the socket outlet;
- d. The Respondent instructed **[Omitted]** to move the power socket 400mm above the benchtop, but **[Omitted]** instead drilled the hole at 400mm high which meant the bottom of the power outlet was below 400mm and within the damp zone;
- e. The PEW was carried out on 28 September 2024;
- f. The Respondent was not engaged to do any other work except relocating the socket outlet;
- g. The Respondent issued a Certificate of Compliance when aspects of the work were non-compliant;
- h. The certification documents did not provide **[Omitted]** name or note that he was acting under supervision, a mandatory requirement under Safety Regulation 67;

³ *Z v Dental Complaints Assessment Committee* [2009] 1 NZLR 1.

- i. The Respondent has stated that he considered the work straightforward and he was confident in **[Omitted]** ability to complete the task, but accepts he holds the ultimate responsibility for the safety and certification of the work;
- j. The Respondent has cooperated with the Investigator throughout the investigation and proceedings and accepts the summary and that he has committed the disciplinary offences as set out in the Notice of Proceeding.

Board's Decision

- [13] Based on the ASOF and having considered all relevant factors, the Board finds that the Respondent has committed disciplinary offences under sections 143(a)(i) and 143(f) of the Act.
- [14] While the first charge included alternatives under sections 143(a)(ii) and 143(a)(i), the Board finds that the conduct is most appropriately dealt with under section 143(a)(i).
- [15] In order to make a finding under section 143(a)(i), the Board has to be satisfied that the Respondent had conducted himself in a negligent manner.

Negligence

- [16] Negligence, in a disciplinary context, 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 as the person whose conduct is being inquired into. This is described as the *Bolam*⁴ test of negligence which has been adopted by the New Zealand Courts.⁵
- [17] The New Zealand Courts have stated that an assessment of negligence in a disciplinary context is a two-stage test⁶. The first is for the Board to consider whether the practitioner has departed from the acceptable standard of conduct. The second is to consider whether the departure is significant enough to warrant a disciplinary sanction.
- [18] 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,⁷ which includes protecting the health and safety of members of the public in connection with the supply and use of electricity, and promoting the prevention of damage to property in connection with the supply and use of electricity. 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.⁸

⁴ *Bolam v Friern Hospital Management Committee* [1957] 1 WLR 582

⁵ *Martin v Director of Proceedings* [2010] NZAR 333 (HC), *F v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal* [2005] 3 NZLR 774 (CA)

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 at p.33

⁸ *McKenzie v Medical Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal* [2004] NZAR 47 at p.71

- [19] In this case, the Respondent's supervision failure constituted a significant departure from the standard expected of a licensed electrical worker. The Respondent provided correct instructions to position the outlet 400mm above the benchtop but relied on a photograph to review the completed work. He failed to ensure the photograph contained measurements or other verification that the work had been carried out correctly. When questioned, he acknowledged that the photograph contained no measurements and that this was his mistake - he should have obtained proper verification before certifying the work. This failure to adequately review and verify the work through proper documentation represents a departure from the accepted standard of supervision expected of a competent electrical worker.
- [20] It follows that by issuing an Electrical Certificate of Compliance stating the installation was compliant when the socket outlet was improperly positioned within a damp zone without adequate protection, the Respondent provided a false return under section 143(f). Additionally, the certification documents failed to provide **[Omitted]** name or note that he was acting under supervision, which is a mandatory requirement under Safety Regulation 67.
- [21] Based on the above, the Board finds the charges under sections 143(a)(i) and 143(f) have been proven.

Penalty, Costs and Publication

- [22] Having found that one or more of the grounds in section 143 applies, the Board must, under section 147M of the Act,ⁱ consider the appropriate disciplinary penalty, whether the Respondent should be ordered to pay a fine, any costs and whether the decision should be published.
- [23] The Board received submissions from the parties at the hearing regarding penalty, costs, and publication.

Penalty

- [24] The Board has the discretion to impose a range of penalties, which are set out in section 147M of the Act. Exercising that discretion and determining the appropriate penalty requires that the Board balance various factors, including the seriousness of the conduct and any mitigating or aggravating factors present.⁹ It is not a formulaic exercise, but there are established underlying principles that the Board should take into consideration. They include:¹⁰
- (a) protection of the public and consideration of the purposes of the Act;
 - (b) deterring Respondent and other Electrical Workers from similar offending;¹¹
 - (c) setting and enforcing a high standard of conduct for the industry;¹²

⁹ *Ellis v Auckland Standards Committee 5* [2019] NZHC 1384 at [21]; cited with approval in *National Standards Committee (No1) of the New Zealand Law Society v Gardiner-Hopkins* [2022] NZHC 1709 at [48]

¹⁰ Cited with approval in *Robinson v Complaints Assessment Committee of Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand* [2022] NZCA 350 at [28] and [29]

¹¹ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

¹² *Dentice v Valuers Registration Board* [1992] 1 NZLR 720 (HC) at 724

- (d) penalising wrongdoing;¹³ and
 - (e) rehabilitation (where appropriate).¹⁴
- [25] Overall, the Board should assess the conduct against the range of penalty options available in section 147M of the Act, reserving the maximum penalty for the worst cases¹⁵ and applying the least restrictive penalty available for the particular offending.¹⁶ In all, the Board should be looking to impose a fair, reasonable, and proportionate penalty¹⁷ that is consistent with other penalties imposed by the Board for comparable offending.¹⁸
- [26] In general, when determining the appropriate penalty, the Board adopts a starting point based on the principles outlined above prior to it considering any aggravating and/or mitigating factors present.¹⁹
- [27] In terms of penalty, the Board considered a fine is warranted in the circumstances. The Respondent stated that he was able to pay a fine.
- [28] Counsel for the Investigator referenced the *Torres*²⁰ decision where a \$2,000 starting point was implemented for similar offending also done by an electrician's apprentice but submitted that in this case a starting point of around \$1,000 given the negligence element would be appropriate.
- [29] The Board adopted a starting point of \$3,000 for a fine, higher than the \$2,000 starting point in *Torres*. The Board considers a higher starting point necessary to provide adequate deterrence for supervision failures involving apprentices, particularly where safety-critical work in domestic environments goes unverified and false certification occurs. The combination of inadequate supervision and false certification in a kitchen environment requires a deterrent penalty that reflects the seriousness with which the Board views such conduct.
- [30] From a starting point of \$3,000, this is reduced by 50% to \$1,500 taking into account:
- a. The Respondent's cooperation with the investigation and proceeding by way of an ASOF;
 - b. This was his first appearance before the Board; and
 - c. His early acceptance of responsibility for the offending.
- [31] Accordingly, a fine of \$1,500 is imposed.

¹³ *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee* HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

¹⁴ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354; *Shousha v A Professional Conduct Committee* [2022] NZHC 1457

¹⁵ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

¹⁶ *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee* HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818

¹⁷ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

¹⁸ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

¹⁹ In *Lochhead v Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment* 3 November [2016] NZDC 21288 the District Court recommended that the Board adopt the approach set out in the Sentencing Act 2002.

²⁰ *Torres* [2020] EWRB 22182.

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, the 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.²¹
- [34] In *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*,²² 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] In *Kenneth Michael Daniels v Complaints Committee 2 of the Wellington District Law Society*,²³ the High Court noted:
- [46] All cases referred to in *Cooray* were medical cases and the Judge was careful to note that the 50 per cent was the general approach that the Medical Council took. We do not accept that if there was any such approach, it is necessarily to be taken in proceedings involving other disciplinary bodies. Much will depend upon the time involved, actual expenses incurred, attitude of the practitioner bearing in mind that whilst the cost of a disciplinary action by a professional body must be something of a burden imposed upon its members, those members should not be expected to bear too large a measure where a practitioner is shown to be guilty of serious misconduct.
- [47] Costs orders made in proceedings involving law practitioners are not to be determined by any mathematical approach. In some cases 50 per cent will be too high, in others insufficient.
- [36] The Board has adopted an approach to costs that uses a scale based on 50% of the average costs of different categories of hearings: simple, moderate and complex. The current matter was simple. Adjustments based on the High Court decisions above are then made.
- [37] Based on the above, the Respondent is to pay costs of \$250, which is significantly less than actual costs in recognition of his cooperation through the ASOF process.

Publication

- [38] 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.²⁴ The Board

²¹ *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.

²² [2001] NZAR 74

²³ CIV-2011-485-000227 8 August 2011

²⁴ Refer sections 128 of the Act

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.

- [39] 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.
- [40] Within New Zealand, there is a principle of open justice and open reporting, which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights Act 1990²⁵. The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 sets out grounds for suppression within the criminal jurisdiction.²⁶ Within the disciplinary hearing jurisdiction, the courts have stated that the provisions in the Criminal Procedure Act do not apply but can be instructive.²⁷ 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*²⁸.
- [41] 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.²⁹ 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.
- [42] In terms of publication, the Respondent submitted that he would prefer his name not to be published, citing concerns about damage to his reputation and potential loss of clients. He expressed the view that clients would not want to work with someone who had been publicly disciplined and confirmed he had specific clients who might not work with him if his name was published. The Board also noted that the Respondent did not receive payment for the work that formed the subject of the complaint.
- [43] The Board considered the Respondent's submissions regarding publication but found that he provided no evidence to support his claims about potential client loss or specific clients who would not work with him. His submissions were speculative and unsupported by documentation. The Board found there was no evidence to displace the presumption of open justice and determined that the public interest in transparency and maintaining professional standards outweighs the Respondent's speculative concerns about potential reputational damage.
- [44] In this case, the Board has decided that it will publish a general article in the Electron summarising the matter where the Respondent will be identified. Further, a copy of the decision will be available on the EWRB website and the Respondent will be named.

²⁵ Section 14 of the Act

²⁶ Refer sections 200 and 202 of the Criminal Procedure Act

²⁷ *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council* [2014] NZAR 350

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ *Kewene v Professional Conduct Committee of the Dental Council* [2013] NZAR 1055

Penalty, Costs and Publication Orders

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

- Penalty:** Pursuant to section 147M(1)(f) of the Act, 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, which will be publicly available on the Board's website.
- 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 be named in the publication.

Right of Appeal

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

Signed and dated this 10th day of September 2025



R Keys
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):*

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- (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.]

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.