

Before the Electrical Workers Registration Board

CE No. 22906

In the matter of:

A disciplinary hearing before the Electrical Workers Registration Board

Between:

The Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment

And

Joe Quirke a registered and licensed electrical worker (EW085875, I253079, Inspector) (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:

Wellington

Hearing Type:

In Person and by Audio Visual Link

Hearing Date:

18 June 2025

Decision Date:

18 June 2025

Board Members Present:

Mr T Wiseman, Registered Inspector (Presiding)

Mr J Hutton, Registered Inspector

Ms S Cameron, Registered Electrician

Ms L Wright, Barrister

Mr T Tran, Barrister

Appearances: M Geary, counsel for the Investigator and T Wilkinson, Investigator

J Quirke - self represented with [Omitted] as support person

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 sections 143(a)(ii) the Act.

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Summary of the Board's Decision

- [1] The Board determined the Respondent committed a disciplinary offence under section 143(a)(ii) of the Act.
- [2] The Board ordered:
 - a. A censure;
 - b. Costs of \$250;
 - c. The name of the Respondent to be published in this decision but not in the Electron.

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 to carry out an inspection of prescribed electrical work (PEW) associated with high-risk mains work and main earthing systems at [Omitted], on or around 7 April 2021.
- [5] The Respondent was served with a Notice of Proceeding dated 7 January 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 8 April 2021 at [Omitted], Mr Joe Quirke 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, while carrying out an electrical inspection, failed to identify elements of the high risk prescribed electrical work that did not comply with the requirements of AS/NZS 3000:2007 and may be regarded as electrically unsafe in breach of regulations 70(3), 70(a) of the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010.

Or in the Alternative

On or around 8 April 2021 at [Omitted], Mr Joe Quirke 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, while carrying out an electrical inspection, failed to identify elements of the high risk prescribed electrical work that did not comply with the requirements of AS/NZS 3000:2007 and may be regarded as electrically unsafe.

Second Alleged Disciplinary Offence:

On or around 8 April 2021 at [Omitted], Mr Joe Quirke has failed to provide a return being an offence under section 143(f) of the Act, IN THAT, he failed to issue a Record of Inspection.

- [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.
- [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

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

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 dated 18 June 2025 (ASOF), with the Respondent accepting responsibility for the disciplinary offence relating to the inspection and the Investigator offering no evidence in relation to the second disciplinary offence.

[12] In summary, the ASOF established that:

- a. The Respondent carried out prescribed electrical work (an inspection of high-risk PEW involving main earthing systems) at [Omitted] on 7 April 2021;
- b. The Respondent is a licensed Electrical Inspector (EW085875 / I 253079) and at all relevant times was the holder of a current practising licence;
- c. The complaint was received by the Board on 18 July 2024 regarding the inspection carried out by the Respondent;
- d. The PEW carried out at the Property included installation of a new MEN point, earth and neutral bus bars, a new PVC switchboard panel, a new surface mount switchboard enclosure, new circuit protective devices, and a new main earth conductor and electrode, constituting high-risk PEW under Regulation 6A(2)(b) involving work on mains and main earthing systems;
- e. The Respondent accepts he failed to identify that the location of the main earth electrode was not labelled on the MEN switchboard (main switchboard);
- f. This non-compliance constituted a breach of clause 5.3.6.4 of AS/NZS 3000:2007, which states: "The location of the earth electrode shall be identified at the main switchboard";
- g. The Respondent admits that his inspection should have identified this non-compliance;
- h. The Respondent acknowledges that Regulations 70(1), 70(3) and 59(1) of the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010 require that inspections be carried out in accordance with AS/NZS 3000:2007, and that his failure to identify this non-compliance constituted a failure to carry out his inspection in accordance with these requirements.

Board's Decision

Amendment to first charge – reference to incorrect

- [13] At the commencement of the hearing, the Investigator sought leave to amend the first charge to correctly reference regulation 70(3)(a) of the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010 rather than the non-existent “regulation 70(a)” as originally charged in the Notice of Proceeding. The Respondent did not object to this amendment, and the Board granted leave to amend the charge accordingly.
- [14] In addition, the Board observes that while the Notice of Proceeding alleged the conduct occurred “on or around 8 April 2021”, the ASOF states the inspection was carried out on 7 April 2021. The Board is satisfied that this minor discrepancy of one day is covered by the “on or around” language in the charge and does not affect the validity of the proceedings nor has it caused any prejudice to the Respondent.
- [15] Based on the Agreed Statement of Facts and having considered all relevant factors, the Board finds that the Respondent has committed a disciplinary offence under section 143(a)(ii) of the Act.
- [16] The first charge was laid with section 143(a)(ii) being the primary charge and section 143(a)(i) in the alternative. The Board finds that the conduct is most appropriately dealt with under section 143(a)(ii) - contrary to enactment, being the primary charge. The Respondent’s failure to identify the specific non-compliance with AS/NZS 3000:2007 clause 5.3.6.4 (requiring earth electrode location to be identified at the main switchboard) constitutes a breach of the prescribed regulatory framework under regulation 70(3)(a) rather than a demonstration of negligence or incompetence. The conduct involved a failure to follow the mandatory inspection requirements set out in the regulations and applicable standard, which is properly characterised as work carried out contrary to enactment under section 143(a)(ii).

Contrary to Enactment

- [17] A finding under section 143(a)(ii) requires the Board to be satisfied that the Respondent has 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.
- [18] In this case, the Respondent’s failure to identify that the location of the main earth electrode was not labelled on the main switchboard constituted a breach of his obligations under regulation 70(3)(a) of the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010.
- [19] Regulation 70(3) requires that a person who inspects high-risk PEW must undertake whatever tests, visual inspection, or other actions are necessary to satisfy the person that:
 - a. The work has been done in accordance with these regulations; and
 - b. The installation or part installation on which that work has been done is, and will be when enlivened, electrically safe.

- [20] By failing to identify the non-compliance with AS/NZS 3000:2007 clause 5.3.6.4, the Respondent failed to ensure that the work had been done in accordance with the regulations as required by regulation 70(3)(a).
- [21] The Board notes that the Respondent has acknowledged his failure and has cooperated fully with the investigation and proceedings.

Second Alleged Disciplinary Offence

- [22] At the hearing, the Investigator advised that no evidence would be offered in respect of the second disciplinary offence relating to the failure to issue a Record of Inspection. Accordingly, this charge has not been made out.

Penalty, Costs and Publication

- [23] 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.
- [24] The Board received submissions from the parties at the hearing regarding penalty, costs, and publication.

Penalty

- [25] 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.⁴ It is not a formulaic exercise, but there are established underlying principles that the Board should take into consideration. They include:⁵
- (a) protection of the public and consideration of the purposes of the Act;
 - (b) deterring Respondent and other Electrical Workers from similar offending;⁶
 - (c) setting and enforcing a high standard of conduct for the industry;⁷
 - (d) penalising wrongdoing;⁸ and
 - (e) rehabilitation (where appropriate).⁹
- [26] 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 cases¹⁰ and applying the least restrictive penalty available for the particular

⁴ *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]

⁵ Cited with approval in *Robinson v Complaints Assessment Committee of Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand* [2022] NZCA 350 at [28] and [29]

⁶ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

⁷ *Dentice v Valuers Registration Board* [1992] 1 NZLR 720 (HC) at 724

⁸ *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee* HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

⁹ *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

¹⁰ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

offending.¹¹ In all, the Board should be looking to impose a fair, reasonable, and proportionate penalty¹² that is consistent with other penalties imposed by the Board for comparable offending.¹³

- [27] 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.¹⁴
- [28] In terms of penalty, the Board considered that a censure is appropriate in the circumstances. This reflects the seriousness of the breach while recognising the mitigating factors present including the Respondent's acceptance of responsibility, genuine remorse, the improvements made to his practice to ensure this never happens again, cooperation with the investigation and this was his first appearance before the Board.
- [29] Accordingly, a censure is imposed.

Costs

- [30] 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.
- [31] 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.¹⁵
- [32] 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.

- [33] In *Kenneth Michael Daniels v Complaints Committee 2 of the Wellington District Law Society*,¹⁷ 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

¹¹ *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee* HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818

¹² *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

¹³ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

¹⁴ 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.

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 CIV-2011-485-000227 8 August 2011

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.

- [34] 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.
- [35] Based on the above, the Respondent is to pay costs of \$250, which is significantly less than actual costs in recognition of his co-operation through the ASOF process.

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.¹⁸ 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.
- [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 1990¹⁹. The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 sets out grounds for suppression within the criminal jurisdiction.²⁰ Within the disciplinary hearing jurisdiction, the courts have stated that the provisions in the Criminal Procedure Act do not apply but can be instructive.²¹ 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*²².
- [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.²³ It is,

¹⁸ Refer sections 128 of the Act

¹⁹ Section 14 of the Act

²⁰ Refer sections 200 and 202 of the Criminal Procedure Act

²¹ *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council* [2014] NZAR 350

²² *ibid*

²³ *Kewene v Professional Conduct Committee of the Dental Council* [2013] NZAR 1055

however, common practice in disciplinary proceedings to protect the names of other persons involved as naming them does not assist the public interest.

- [40] In this case, the Board has decided that the Respondent will be named in this decision, which will be publicly available on the Board's website. However, having regard to the circumstances of the offending itself and the risk of hardship on his son who works for the company, the Board has decided not to name the Respondent in the Electron publication, which is widely circulated to electrical workers throughout the industry.

Penalty, Costs and Publication Orders

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

Penalty: Pursuant to section 147M(1)(g) of the Act, the Respondent is censured.

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 not be named in the publication.

Right of Appeal

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

Signed and dated this 18th day of July 2025



T Wiseman
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:
 - (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.*

