

Before the Electrical Workers Registration Board

CE No. 22872

In the matter of:

A disciplinary hearing before the Electrical Workers Registration Board

Between:

The Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment

And

Edwin Tope (a registered and licensed electrical worker EW104202) (the Respondent)

Decision of the Board in Respect of the Conduct of an Electrical Worker Under s147G and s147M of the Electricity Act 1992

Hearing Location:

Napier

Hearing Type: In Person and remote (Respondent attended remotely by audio only due to technical difficulties.)

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 S Rogers, Electrician.

Appearances: Mr Palethorpe as Counsel for the Investigator, Ms Hansen as Counsel for the Respondent.

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 Respondent was charged with offences relating to inadequate supervision of prescribed electrical work (PEW). The Respondent was also charged with providing a false and misleading return.
- [2] The Respondent accepted that he had committed the disciplinary offences as charged. The Board determined that he would be fined pursuant s14M(f) of the Act. The penalty was reduced from starting point of \$3000.00 to a final fine of \$1000.00 taking into account the significant mitigating factors present. The Respondent was also ordered to pay costs of \$250. A record of the offending will be recorded on the public Register for a period of three years and an article naming the Respondent will be published in the electron.

Introduction

- [3] The hearing resulted from a complaint about the conduct of the Respondent and a report under s147G(1) of the Act from the Investigator that the complaint should be considered by the Board.
- [4] The Respondent was served with a notice setting out the alleged disciplinary offences the Investigator reported should be considered by the Board.
- [5] Prior to the hearing, the Respondent and the Board were provided with all of the documents the Investigator had in his power or possession. The Respondent was engaged to carry out PEW at the Property associated with:
 - a) The installation of a new distribution switchboard.
 - b) The wiring of the switchboard.
 - c) The insulation of the cables.

- [6] The above PEW was carried out by the Respondent's workers on or around 9 October 2023.

Function of Disciplinary Action

- [7] 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 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.

- [8] 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."

- [9] The Board can only inquire into "the conduct of an electrical worker" with respect to the grounds for discipline set out in s143 of the Act. It does not have any jurisdiction over contractual matters.

Procedure

- [10] The matter proceeded on the basis of an Agreed Statement of Facts.
- [11] The Board was assisted by oral submissions from Mr Palethorpe, the Respondent and the Respondent's lawyer, Ms Hansen.

Evidence

- [12] 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 s147W 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.

- [13] 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, it was

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

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

not necessary to call any further evidence or to test the evidence as outlined in the Statement.

- [14] The alleged disciplinary offences were outlined in the notice of proceeding as follows:

First Offence Alleged Disciplinary Offence

1. On or around 9 October 2023 at A1460 **[Omitted]**, Mr Edwin Tope 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 directed employees to carry out prescribed electrical work, without adequate supervision resulting in:

(a) The new distribution switchboard was installed without fusing in breach of AS/NZS 3000:2007 2.5.1.2, figure 2.1, figure 2.9 and/or

(b) The installation of the switchboard wiring was incorrect in that the trainees joined a red 6mm wire with a red 16mm wire without a fuse in breach of AS/NZS 3000:2007 2.5.1.2 and/or

(c) Cables installed without secondary insulation in breach of AS/NZS 3000:2007 A1+A2 section 3.10.1.1 and 3.10.1.2

In breach of section 59(1) 63 of the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010.

Or in the Alternative

2. On or around 9 October 2023 at **[Omitted]**, Mr Edwin Tope 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 directed employees to carry out prescribed electrical work, without adequate supervision resulting in:

a) The new distribution switchboard was installed without fusing in breach of AS/NZS 3000:2007 2.5.1.2, figure 2.1, figure 2.9 and/or

b) The installation of the switchboard wiring was incorrect in that the trainees joined a red 6mm wire with a red 16mm wire without a fuse in breach of AS/NZS 3000:2007 2.5.1.2 and/or

c) Cables installed without secondary insulation in breach of AS/NZS 3000:2007 A1+A2 section 3.10.1.1 and 3.10.1.2

Second Alleged Disciplinary Offence

On or around 9 October 2023 at **[Omitted]**, Mr Edwin Tope has provided a false or misleading return being an offence under section 143(f) of the Act, IN THAT, he had issued a Certificate of Compliance stating that the PEW completed was lawful and safe, when it was not.

Board's Decision

- [15] The Board determined that the Respondent was guilty of the second alternative for the first alleged disciplinary offence, in that he caused prescribed electrical work to be undertaken in a negligent or incompetent manner as a result of the inadequate supervision provided. While the charge was laid in the alternative, the Board finds that the conduct is most appropriately dealt with under section 143(a)(i).
- [16] 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

- [17] 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*⁵ test of negligence which has been adopted by the New Zealand Courts.⁶
- [18] 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. The second is to consider whether the departure is significant enough to warrant a disciplinary sanction.
- [19] 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,⁸ 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.⁹
- [20] In the present case the Respondent's failures were significant in that he failed to supervise the work being undertaken by his employees. The Respondent did not visit the worksite or otherwise provide adequate supervision of his two trainees. The Respondent mistakenly thought that the trainees were competent to do the work, but this work was more involved than other work that the trainees had previously undertaken. The work was done in breach of the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010

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)

⁸ See s1A Electricity Act 1992

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

and in breach of AS/NZS 3000:2007. The Respondent's conduct departed significantly from acceptable standards.

- [21] The Respondent was not always available to the trainees by phone while he was undergoing treatment. He had asked an Inspector to be available by phone for his trainees, but the trainees did not contact the inspector.
- [22] The Certificate of Compliance was false and misleading in that the work was non-compliant and unsafe. This was signed without the Respondent inspecting the work.
- [23] The Board has determined that the Respondent failed to comply with section 143(a)(i), and section 143(f) of the Act.

Penalty, Costs and Publication

- [24] Having found that one or more of the grounds in section 143 applies the Board must, under s147M of the Act¹⁰, consider the appropriate disciplinary penalty, whether the Respondent should be ordered to pay any costs and whether the decision should be published.
- [25] Counsel for the Respondent was invited to make submissions at the hearing as regards penalty, costs and publication, as was Counsel for the Investigator. Both Counsel agreed that a starting point of a fine of \$3000.00 was appropriate for the offending.

Penalty

- [26] The Board has the discretion to impose a range of penalties, which are set out in s147M 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.¹⁰ It is not a formulaic exercise, but there are established underlying principles that the Board should take into consideration. They include:¹¹
 - (a) protection of the public and consideration of the purposes of the Act;¹²
 - (b) deterring the Respondent and other Electrical Workers from similar offending;¹³
 - (c) setting and enforcing a high standard of conduct for the industry;¹⁴
 - (d) penalising wrongdoing;¹⁵ and

¹⁰ *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]

¹¹ Cited with approval in *Robinson v Complaints Assessment Committee of Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand* [2022] NZCA 350 at [28] and [29]

¹² Section 1A Electricity Act 1992

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

¹⁴ *Dentice v Valuers Registration Board* [1992] 1 NZLR 720 (HC) at 724

¹⁵ *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee* HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

(e) rehabilitation (where appropriate).¹⁶

- [27] Overall, the Board should assess the conduct against the range of penalty options available in s147M of the Act, reserving the maximum penalty for the worst cases¹⁷ and applying the least restrictive penalty available for the particular offending.¹⁸ In all, the Board should be looking to impose a fair, reasonable, and proportionate penalty¹⁹ that is consistent with other penalties imposed by the Board for comparable offending.²⁰
- [28] 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.²¹
- [29] During the time of this offending the Respondent was suffering significant, serious health issues. He had tried to put a system in place during his absence, but that system failed. The Board considers these facts to be substantial mitigating circumstances.
- [30] Based on the above, the Board's penalty decision is the starting point for the offending is fine of \$3000.00. Taking into account the Respondent's guilty plea, previous good character, remorse, co-operation, the Respondent's health and his attempts to put in place a supervision system, the final fine will be \$1000.00.
- Costs
- [31] Under s147N 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.
- [32] 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.²²
- [33] In *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*,²³ 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.

¹⁶ *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

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

¹⁸ *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee* HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818

¹⁹ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

²⁰ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

²¹ 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.

²² *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.

²³ [2001] NZAR 74

- [34] In *Kenneth Michael Daniels v Complaints Committee 2 of the Wellington District Law Society*,²⁴ 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.

- [35] 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.
- [36] Based on the above the Board's costs order is that the Respondent is to pay the sum of \$250.00 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

- [37] 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 Act²⁵. The Respondent did not seek non-publication. The Board can, pursuant to s147Z of the Act, also order publication over and above the public register notation. Under s147Z 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.
- [38] 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.
- [39] Within New Zealand, there is a principle of open justice and open reporting which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights Act 1990²⁶. The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 sets out

²⁴ CIV-2011-485-000227 8 August 2011

²⁵ Refer sections 128 of the Act

²⁶ Section 14 of the Act

grounds for suppression within the criminal jurisdiction²⁷. Within the disciplinary hearing jurisdiction, the courts have stated that the provisions in the Criminal Procedure Act do not apply but can be instructive²⁸. 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*²⁹.

- [40] 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 interest³⁰. 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.
- [41] Based on the above, the Board will publish a general article in the *Electron* summarising the matter. The Respondent will be identified in the *Electron*. The Registrar will 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.
- [42] 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

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

Penalty:	Pursuant to s147M(1)(f) of the Electricity Act 1992, the Respondent is ordered to pay a fine of \$1000.00.
Costs:	Pursuant to s147N of the Act, the Respondent is ordered to pay costs of \$250.00 (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 s128(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 <i>Electron</i> which will focus on the lessons to be learnt from the case lessons. The Respondent will be named in the publication.

- [44] 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.

Right of Appeal

- [45] The right to appeal Board decisions is provided for in s147ZA and s147ZB of the Actⁱⁱ.

²⁷ Refer sections 200 and 202 of the Criminal Procedure Act

²⁸ *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council* [2014] NZAR 350

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ *Kewene v Professional Conduct Committee of the Dental Council* [2013] NZAR 1055

Signed and dated this 18th 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):*
 - (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.*

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- (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.*