Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board

PIDGEON v WORDSWORTH

Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Board Disciplinary Decision (2026/5)

Summary

Maximilian Wordsworth, Certifying Plumber and Certifying Gasfitter, was charged with carrying out gasfitting in a negligent manner that created a risk of serious harm or significant property damage in relation to the installation of a gas fryer, stove and associated pipework in a commercial food trailer.

Mr Wordsworth pleaded guilty to the charge.

The Board considered that Mr Wordsworth's offending was serious given the inherently high-risk nature of gasfitting in an enclosed space such as a food trailer. However, the Board noted that the potential harm did not materialise and considered that to be a relevant factor in distinguishing this case from more serious cases.

The Board accepted there were no aggravating factors personal to Mr Wordsworth and recognised that his guilty plea, cooperation throughout, and lack of previous disciplinary history were mitigating factors in his favour. The Board ordered Mr Wordsworth to pay a fine of $3,000, complete training on gasfitting on boats, caravans and food trailers, and pay $5,600 towards costs.

IN THE MATTER OF a disciplinary hearing pursuant to section 101 of the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Act 2006

BETWEEN **MICHAEL PIDGEON**

Investigator

AND **MAXIMILIAN WORDSWORTH**
Certifying Plumber and Certifying Gasfitter, Auckland |Tāmaki Makaurau

Registered Person

DECISION OF THE BOARD
31 August 2026

Hearing:	Held in Wellington/Te Whanganui-a-Tara on 11 June 2026
Members sitting:	Martin de Gouw (Chair), Beth Healy, Ian Olan, Jason O'Connor, John Gutry
Counsel:	Elena Mok for the investigator Maximilian Wordsworth was self-represented
Legal advisor:	Michael Hodge

Disciplinary hearing

1. On 11 June 2026, the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board (Board) held a disciplinary hearing to consider a complaint by Venura Gamage against Maximilian Wordsworth, Certifying Plumber and Certifying Gasfitter. The complaint related to work carried out by Mr Wordsworth on the installation of a gas fryer and stove within a food trailer (trailer). This work included all associated pipework and connections to the gas supply.

Guilty plea

2. On 23 April 2026, Mr Wordsworth pleaded guilty to carrying out gasfitting in a negligent manner that created a risk of serious harm to any person or significant property damage and signed an agreed summary of facts, the material parts of which were as follows:

    a. Mr Wordsworth is a registered and licensed certifying plumber and certifying gasfitter.

    b. Around 22 March 2025, Mr Wordsworth carried out gasfitting on a commercial food trailer. This work included the installation of a gas fryer, stove and associated pipework in the food trailer as well as connecting the installations to the gas supply. A gas safety certificate was also issued by Mr Wordsworth in respect of the gasfitting work he had done, which certified that the work was safe and compliant.

    c. The food trailer was moved between Auckland and Invercargill. On receiving the trailer, Mr Gamage found that the griddle had fallen off the bench and was damaged. Mr Gamage engaged a gasfitter to inspect the damage. On inspection, it was identified that there were numerous compliance issues with the gas installation in the trailer.

    d. The compliance issues were as follows:

        i. Mr Wordsworth had used a multilayer pipe for the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) gas system, which breached clause 5.1.4.4 of the mandatory gas installation standards in AS/NZS 5601.2.

        ii. Mr Wordsworth had used inadequate appliance restraints for the fryer, which would likely cause it to shift. This was contrary to clause 5.2(e) of AS/NZS 5601.2 and clause 6.2.14 of the gas installation standards in AS/NZS 5601.1.

        iii. Mr Wordsworth did not install individual appliance shut-off valves for the appliances in the food trailer, which was contrary to Table 6.4 of AS/NZS 5601.1.

iv. Mr Wordsworth did not apply warning labels to any of the appliances, contrary to clause 6.10.4 of AS/NZS 5601.2.

e. The gas certificate issued by Mr Wordsworth incorrectly certified that the work complied with the requirements of AS/NZS 5601.1 and AS/NZS 5601.2 and was safe to connect to the gas supply. In addition, the certificate recorded that the pipework test pressure was 2.75 kilopascals (kPa) when the required test pressure was 14 kPa, as required by clause F2.1 E of Appendix F of AS/NZS 5601.2.

3. The Board was satisfied that the facts in the agreed summary of facts meant that Mr Wordsworth had committed a disciplinary offence under section 89(b)(ii) of the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Act 2006 (**Act**).

Summary of investigator's submissions on penalty and costs

4. On behalf of the investigator, Ms Mok submitted that the purposes of professional disciplinary proceedings are to ensure public protection and maintenance of proper industry standards, which in her submission included general and specific deterrence. The purpose is not to punish the relevant professional.

5. Recognising that consistency with other cases was an important consideration, Ms Mok submitted that the Board should impose the least severe penalty appropriate given the circumstances of the case.

6. Ms Mok submitted that Mr Wordsworth's offending was serious. Gasfitting on trailers requires particular skill and care because of the risk of gas leaks in a confined space. She further submitted that the use of open flames within the confined space of the trailer increased that risk. Ms Mok submitted that Mr Wordsworth lacked the necessary experience to complete gasfitting work on trailers, which he had acknowledged by accepting that he should not have completed the work due to his inexperience.

7. Ms Mok submitted that two compliance issues posed an extreme risk of harm to persons or property, the use of a prohibited and damage-prone pipe and inadequate appliance restraints. She also submitted that Mr Wordsworth issued a Gas Certificate that recorded the incorrect pipework, and that Mr Wordsworth's work was not carried out with sufficient care and diligence, as demonstrated by the compliance issues with the work.

8. Ms Mok referred the Board to its previous decisions in *Jury v East* (2024/21) and *Pidgeon v Rudolph* (2024/9). In *East*, Mr East was found guilty of carrying out gasfitting work on a boat, which included the installation of a gas water heater and connection of a gas barbecue. Mr East engaged a worker who was not authorised to carry out gasfitting work, the worker did not cap off a gas valve when removing the existing heater, and Mr East failed to identify this when inspecting the work. When

the family travelled in the boat, they smelt gas and identified that gas was leaking from the pipe. The Board viewed this conduct as highly serious and adopted a fine of $4,550. Ms Mok submitted that the work completed by Mr Wordsworth was less serious than in *East*. Ms Mok submitted that the non-compliant work in this case and in *East* was carried out in an enclosed space. In *East*, a gas leak eventuated, which did not happen in the present case.

9. In *Rudolph*, Mr Rudolph was found guilty of negligently creating a risk of serious harm to any person or significant property damage. Mr Rudolph was engaged to install a gas fire in an existing brick fireplace. Mr Rudolph engaged another gasfitter to carry out the work. The homeowner later noticed that smoke was coming out of the stainless steel box that was part of the fire installation and that the gib board in the chimney was very hot. The gasfitter had not installed a zero-clearance box and flexi flue, meaning the fire was not discharged properly. The Board considered that Mr Rudolph's conduct was at a high level of seriousness and adopted a fine of $4,500. Ms Mok submitted that the work completed by Mr Wordsworth was less serious than in *Rudolph*, as *Rudolph* involved actual property damage. However, Ms Mok submitted that the potential danger posed by the non-compliant work completed by Mr Wordsworth was still highly serious given the risk of explosion.

10. Having regard to previous comparable decisions, Ms Mok submitted that a starting point fine should be in the vicinity of $5,000, given that Mr Wordsworth's conduct was less serious.

11. Ms Mok submitted that the investigator was not aware of any personal aggravating factors and acknowledged that Mr Wordsworth would have a discount available to him for his guilty plea, cooperation during the proceedings, and lack of disciplinary history.

12. Ms Mok submitted that under section 107 of the Act, the Board could require Mr Wordsworth to pay a contribution towards the costs and expenses of the investigation, prosecution, and hearing. She submitted that the starting point for an order of costs was typically half of the costs, though it was a matter for the Board in its discretion to determine. Ms Mok submitted it was open to the Board to make a reduction to that contribution to reflect Mr Wordsworth's guilty plea and cooperation in the proceeding.

13. In response to Mr Wordsworth's application for name suppression, Ms Mok submitted that the reasons put forward by Mr Wordsworth were the ordinary consequences faced by any practitioner found guilty of a disciplinary offence. She submitted that those reasons did not rise to the level that would warrant the Board departing from the default position of publication, particularly in a case involving serious offending where Mr Wordsworth had acknowledged his conduct.

Summary of Mr Wordsworth's submissions on penalty and costs

14. Mr Wordsworth submitted that the Board should impose a moderate fine with the addition of education. He submitted that he accepted responsibility for the compliance issues identified in his work. He noted that the compliance issues came from his poor professional judgement, which took place outside his usual area of experience and that he would not undertake future work involving commercial food trailer gasfitting due to his lack of experience.

15. He submitted that this was his first disciplinary offence and that he had no previous disciplinary history. He believed these issues were unlikely to occur again because he had learned from this experience. Mr Wordsworth submitted that the non-compliant work created a safety risk and that his conduct was serious.

16. Mr Wordsworth submitted that he took responsibility for the decisions he made in relation to the job. He submitted that he is now clearer on the requirements for gasfitting work within food trailers. Mr Wordsworth submitted that he had changed his practices, including how he assessed and accepted work.

17. To ensure the issue does not arise again, he submitted that he would be more careful about understanding the requirements of a job before starting and would not take on jobs involving food trailers.

18. Mr Wordsworth requested that the Board consider name suppression. His reasoning was that this was his first disciplinary offence, involving work outside of his normal area of experience.

Decision on penalty

19. When it comes to imposing penalties in disciplinary cases, the Board's primary considerations are the need to protect the health and safety of the public and maintain industry standards. Any disciplinary penalty should aim to ensure the competency of a practitioner by holding them to account, assist with their rehabilitation, and deter them and other practitioners from disciplinary offending.

20. Having considered the parties' submissions and the facts of the case, the Board determined that Mr Wordsworth's offending was at a high level of seriousness. The Board acknowledged that the defects in the installation had the potential to create a serious safety risk as a gas leak in a confined space such as a food trailer could have had serious consequences.

21. The Board noted that in the circumstances, the risk did not eventuate, and that a number of additional factors would have had to align before a significant harm event would have occurred. While that does not excuse Mr Wordsworth's negligence, the Board considered it a relevant factor in distinguishing this case from one at the very highest level of seriousness.

22. The Board also considered that Mr Wordsworth had done everything correctly following notification of the complaint. He acknowledged that he was responsible for the non-compliant work and that it had been a mistake to work outside his area of competence in relation to gasfitting. Mr Wordsworth has also accepted that it was not appropriate for him to work on food trailers in the future without further training or upskilling, and the Board commended him for this approach.

23. The Board considered that a fine and training were the appropriate penalties, adopting a starting point of $5,000. Recognising the mitigating factors in this case, the Board reduced the fine to $3,000.

Costs

24. Section 107 of the Act provides that, in addition to any penalty imposed, the Board may order a registered person to pay a reasonable sum towards the costs and expenses incidental to the investigation of the complaint, prosecution, and hearing. The Board was provided with a schedule of estimated costs for the investigation, prosecution and hearing amounting to $14,033.

25. The Board recognised Mr Wordsworth's cooperation and the fact that his guilty plea had avoided the costs of a full defended hearing. The Board determined that he should pay $5,600 towards costs, which was around 40% of the total costs.

Name suppression

26. The Board accepted that it had authority under section 113 of the Act to grant suppression orders, including in respect of Mr Wordsworth's identity. The test for granting suppression orders was whether the particular circumstances of the person requesting such an order outweighed the wider public interest in knowing the identities of practitioners who had been found guilty of disciplinary offences.

27. In this case, the Board considered that Mr Wordsworth's concerns were the ordinary consequences faced by any practitioner found guilty of a disciplinary offence. Those concerns did not outweigh the public interest in publication and did not reach the threshold for granting name suppression. In addition, publication of Mr Wordsworth's name in the full context of the situation would show that he understood the error he had made and was unlikely to repeat it. The application was therefore declined.

Publication

28. In accordance with the requirements of the Act, the Board ordered that details of the action taken against Mr Wordsworth should be recorded on the register of plumbers, gasfitters, and drainlayers in the usual way.

29. Any publication of the Board's decision will be made at the discretion of the Registrar of Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers.

Board orders

30. Being satisfied that Mr Wordsworth was guilty of a disciplinary offence under section 89(b)(ii) of the Act, the Board made the following orders:

    a. Pursuant to section 106(1)(f) of the Act, Mr Wordsworth pay a fine of $3,000.

    b. Pursuant to section 106(1)(e) and 106(2)(c) of the Act, Mr Wordsworth complete a training course on gasfitting in caravans, boats, and motorhomes at his own cost in order to renew his practising licence after the 2026-2027 licensing year.

    c. Pursuant to section 107 of the Act, Mr Wordsworth pay $5,600 towards the costs of the investigation, prosecution, and hearing.

Appeal

31. If Mr Wordsworth is dissatisfied with the whole or any part of this decision or these orders, he may appeal to the District Court under section 162(1)(f) of the Act. Any appeal must be brought within 20 working days from the date on which this formal written decision is received, or within any other timeframe the District Court may allow.

Dated 31 August 2026

Signed



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Martin de Gouw
Chair
Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board