

# Media Release



Government of South Australia

Office of Consumer and  
Business Affairs

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## **Dodgy bitumen layers targeting South Australia**

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The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) is warning consumers not to get taken in by unlicensed bitumen layers that have moved in to South Australia.

[www.ocba.sa.gov.au](http://www.ocba.sa.gov.au)

A group of three itinerant operators have been door-knocking houses in the north east suburbs and Adelaide Hills areas with dirt driveways. They offer quick, cheap services, but want immediate payment in cash or cheque, and won't give receipts or provide any other contract documents. They rapidly and frequently move from area to area and may resurface in any region in SA. They are not licensed and may produce false identification.

The Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Mark Bodycoat said consumers should be very wary of these people and report them to OCBA or Police immediately.

"These unlicensed operators are moving around South Australia providing poor quality bitumen laying services. As soon as they get your money they move on. Because they keep moving, it is impossible to track them down later. Consumers may part with a lot of money and have no way of getting any problems fixed. You risk paying a lot up front then paying a lot more to someone else later to get the work fixed."

These itinerant operators have already tried to sting two consumers. Both of these consumers contacted OCBA for advice, but did not pay any money. One consumer was quoted work for \$4,900 and the other consumer \$1500.

OCBA has been in close contact with South Australia Police, and the Queensland Fair Trading authorities who alerted OCBA the bitumen layers were likely to be heading here. Information from Queensland alleges that the itinerant operators are using watered down bitumen and not enough road base to hold the driveways together. They may demand payment before the job is finished and often finish in the dark so consumers can't see the bad result.

"Apart from the poor quality of their work, these people are ignoring their responsibilities under the consumer law. Carrying on business the way they do is door-to-door selling, and is regulated under the Fair Trading Act."

Under the Act, consumers get a ten-day cooling off period. Traders should give them a contract that spells out details of the services to be provided and the trader's licence and identification details. A form to enable the consumer to "cool off" should also be provided. Traders should not do any work or take any money until the cooling off period expires.

"OCBA is working with Police to catch these shonky operators. If you are approached by this group or have contracted their services, contact OCBA immediately. Do not pay the traders."

To report these itinerant operators contact OCBA on 8204 9777 or 131 882 for regional callers or Police on 131 444.