

Media Release



Government of South Australia

Office of Consumer and
Business Affairs

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DECEITFUL OPERATOR EXPOSED

An unlicensed building contractor who had illegally carried out work in South Australia's mid north has been convicted and fined \$7500, plus costs, after an investigation by the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA).

Scott Matthew Harper, formerly of Port Broughton, pleaded guilty to seven charges in the Kadina Magistrates Court this week relating to breaches of the *Building Work Contractor's Act 1995* and the *Plumbers, Gas Fitters and Electricians Act 1995*.

The offences included carrying out work beyond the scope of his building work contractor's licence, performing plumbing and electrical work which he was not registered to undertake, demanding an excessive deposit, failing to have building indemnity insurance and displaying a non-existent licence number on an advertising sign.

Consumer Affairs Commissioner Mal Hemmerling says that Mr Harper's breaches of the *Building Work Contractor's Act 1995* and the *Plumbers, Gas Fitters and Electricians Act 1995* showed a complete disregard for the law and his actions put consumers at risk.

"Mr Harper's breaches were at the more serious end of the scale and his convictions and \$7500 penalty send a message to other deceitful operators like him that they will be pursued with the full force of the law once their illegal actions come to our attention," said Mr Hemmerling.

"Mr Harper was undone after a consumer complained to OCBA. The warning to people contemplating this type of illegal activity is simply that they will be exposed sooner or later – either through a complaint to OCBA or through our system of compliance checking.

"Consumers with any questions about people they've engaged to do building work or repairs, or plumbing or electrical work, should check the Licensing Public Register before locking in any arrangements for building or trades work.

"It only takes a few minutes to verify someone's licence details over the phone or by visiting OCBA's website <http://www.ocba.sa.gov.au/licensingregister.html>

"The licensing system is designed to protect consumers from poor business practices and substandard workmanship."

"To check the Licensing Public Register visit www.ocba.sa.gov.au or phone 8204 9644 or 131 882 if you're a country resident."