

Tuesday, 23 September 2008

CAR DEALER FINED FOR WINDING BACK ODOMETER

A second-hand car dealer has been convicted for interfering with vehicle odometers, after action taken by the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs.

Benjamin Ronald Buttigieg, 25, of Plympton, today was found guilty in the Adelaide Magistrates Court of:

- 3 counts of interfering with the odometers of second-hand vehicles, in breach of the Second-hand Vehicle Dealers Act 1995
- 4 counts of falsely representing that second-hand vehicles had a particular history, in breach of the Fair Trading Act 1987.

Buttigieg was fined \$12,000 and ordered to pay prosecution costs of \$7570 plus court costs and levies.

The offences occurred while Buttigieg was a licensed second-hand vehicle dealer, first on Torrens Road at Woodville and then on South Road at Clovelly Park.

Buttigieg wound back the odometers of three vehicles by a total of more than 500,000 kilometres.

Consumer Affairs Minister Gail Gago said tampering with odometers was a serious offence.

“Dealers who tamper with vehicle odometers are not just dishonest – they are playing with other people’s lives,” Ms Gago said.

“The distance a car travels may affect its roadworthiness and, in turn, the safety of road users.

“When buying a second-hand car, consumers are entitled to expect that the odometer reading is correct.

“Consumers who bought the cars from Buttigieg may have paid considerably more than the vehicle was really worth, by assuming that the lower number of kilometres displayed on the odometer was correct.

“Consumers who suspect that a vehicle they have bought or are considering buying has had the odometer tampered with, should contact Consumer Affairs so that the matter can be investigated. This court ruling should serve as a warning to any dealer who is tempted to falsify a vehicle’s history in any way. If they are found to be breaching their legal requirements they will be prosecuted.”

Consumers are encouraged to report suspected odometer interference to OCBA on 8204 9777 or 131 882 for country callers.