



## CONSUMER AFFAIRS CATCHES DEPOSIT CROOK

Dodgy builders be warned – take off with a consumer’s deposit and it is you who will face the price.

Last week, **Mr Luke Reuben Charles Knox** was convicted and ordered to pay over \$5,000 in fines, compensation and prosecution costs, after taking off with a \$500 deposit to build a fence for a Redwood Park woman.

Mr Knox then moved to Queensland without starting the fencing work or returning the deposit.

In addition, at no time was Mr Knox ever licensed as a building work contractor, despite being warned by the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) that he could not carry on business doing fencing work unless he was licensed.

Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Paul White, said Mr Knox’s conviction should serve as a warning to other dodgy and unlicensed builders.

“Taking advantage of the trust that consumers place in traders will not be tolerated,” the Commissioner said.

“Not only do the victims of this behaviour see financial loss and unnecessary stress, but this type of behaviour can tarnish the reputation of South Australia’s building industry and its credible traders.

“I encourage consumers to thoroughly research prospective traders before entering a contract or handing over a deposit.

“This includes checking the trader’s licence card or the licensed contractors’ register on the OCBA website.

“Instances of dodgy or unlicensed building work should be reported to OCBA,” Mr White said.

Mr Knox was convicted for breaching the *Fair Trading Act 1987* by accepting payment for the supply of services and not supplying all the services within a reasonable time, and the *Building Work Contractors Act 1995* by holding himself out as entitled to carry on business as a building work contractor without being licensed to do so.

Mr Knox received a \$4,000 fine and was ordered to pay \$667.10 compensation to the consumer. He was also ordered to pay \$800 in prosecution costs, plus Court fees and Victims of Crime Levy.

To report concerns about suspected unlicensed builders, or to lodge a complaint, contact OCBA on 8204 9777 or 131 882 for regional callers, or visit [www.ocba.sa.gov.au](http://www.ocba.sa.gov.au).