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DRIVING OUT DODGY BITUMEN LAYERS

Dodgy bitumen layers are back in the Victor Harbor area, door-knocking households and offering services including laying driveways, supposedly for a bargain price.

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gail Gago, is warning consumers to avoid at all costs the itinerant bitumen layers who are claiming to represent the Highways Department.

“These illegal bitumen layers have a history of over-charging and carrying out work that is of a very poor standard, and then quickly disappearing with the cash,” Minister Gago said.

“The bitumen is usually laid so thinly and in such a slap-dash manner that it results in the bitumen driveway breaking up in a short period of time and being unusable. The shoddy work will cause significant further costs to the householder who has to resurface the driveway.”

Consumers have reported these dubious groups of bitumen layers operating in Mount Compass and Victor Harbor with evidence to suggest they are now moving towards Cape Jervis. Consumers are paying anything from \$8,000 to \$14,000 for the shoddy workmanship and the workmen are giving invalid address and contact details.

“Investigation officers from the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) are concerned about the activities of itinerant bitumen layers and are tracking their movements and hoping to intercept them,” Minister Gago said.

“We strongly advise consumers to request to see the trader's *Building Work Contractor's Licence* before considering engaging the bitumen layer.

“Itinerant bitumen layers do not provide documentation and demand payment in cash so that they cannot be traced or held accountable for their dodgy work.

“Just a few months ago, several bitumen layers were intercepted and one even jailed for using fake identification to swindle consumers. OCBA worked closely with SAPOL and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship towards this successful outcome.

“Consumers should not deal with door-knocking bitumen layers, otherwise they'll probably end up with a poorly laid driveway that needs significant repair work or even complete demolition. They will have little hope of getting a refund or repairs dealing with these people.”

Itinerant bitumen layers usually operate in breach of the provisions set out in the *Fair Trading Act 1987*. The provisions give consumers a 10-day cooling off period during which they can consider a door to door purchase, and the trader must not provide any goods or services or accept any payment until the cooling off period expires.

If a trader breaches these provisions then consumers are entitled to have their money refunded and the contract nullified.

Consumers who have information about the activities of itinerant bitumen layers are urged to contact OCBA on 8204 9777, or for country callers 131 882 (local call cost).