
Thursday May 4, 2006

PERMANENT DISQUALIFICATION FOR ELECTRICIAN

South Australia's Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) has successfully taken legal action against an electrician for repeatedly undertaking unlicensed electrical work.

Yesterday in the District Court, Paul William Conaghty was permanently disqualified from being licensed as an electrical contractor.

He was also permanently prohibited from being a director of a body corporate that is a contractor, and prohibited from being employed or otherwise engaged in the business of a contractor - until he meets stipulated conditions under the ***Plumbers, Gas fitter and Electricians Act 1995***.

In 2002, he was prosecuted by OCBA for carrying on business as an electrician without holding the appropriate licence. Subsequently, OCBA took disciplinary action against him over the same issues.

In March 2003, the District Court disqualified him from being licensed as an electrician for a period of 2 years.

In 2004, the Supreme Court ordered that he be restrained from contracting for and/or performing electrical work until March 2005.

Further disciplinary action was taken when Conaghty continued to carry on business as an electrical contractor while not licensed to do so, and acted unlawfully, improperly and unfairly in the course of his business and as an electrical worker.

OCBA gathered evidence that, despite repeated oral and written warnings and the disciplinary and prosecution actions already taken, he was continuing to contract for and perform electrical work without holding the appropriate electrical contractors licence and electrical workers registration.

Consumer Affairs Minister Jennifer Rankine says the OCBA had no choice but to take disciplinary action against Mr Conaghty.

“Conaghty did not heed the warnings and continued to contract and perform electrical work. Restraining orders were taken in 2004, and it became appropriate to seek permanent disqualification,” says the Minister.

Between November 2000 and June 2004, Conaghty was paid a total of more than \$39,000 for his unlicensed electrical work. This included the installation of power points and ceiling fans, running new cables, checking earth leakages and moving a main meter box. He also failed to provide a certificate of compliance for his work contrary to the ***Electricity Act 1997***.

The Minister says electricity is inherently dangerous, and appropriately qualified and registered people should only perform electrical work.

“Mr Conaghty was a danger to consumers and it was necessary to protect them.”

Conaghty’s disqualification follows similar successful legal actions by the OCBA during the past few years, including:

- The case of an electrician - permanently disqualified from holding an electrical contractors licence and electrical workers registration. Fined \$20,000. Examples of poor work included exposed live wires in the ceiling and crawlspace at the Penneshaw Area School;
- A plumber and a plumbing company, who faced disciplinary action for contracting for, and carrying out, gas fitting work without the appropriate licence or registration. The company and the plumber prohibited (until further order) from being employed or otherwise engaged in the business of a gas-fitting contractor. Poor work included installation of a gas space heater without ensuring the gas flow was at the correct pressure, or that the room had sufficient ventilation, and failure to ensure sufficient gas pressure to a gas water heater due to installation of incorrect pipes.

“I want to warn any one who might think that they can get away with these types of behaviours - the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs is always on the lookout. They are vigilant in hunting down and exposing any tradespeople who put the safety of the public at risk,” says Ms Rankine.

The Minister also urged consumers to check the licensing public register before they contract any tradesperson - particularly electrical work - as it is just too risky.

“Consumers should report any unlicensed activity or inferior quality work to OCBA.”

To find a licensed tradesperson or to verify someone’s licence details, consumers are encouraged to visit the Licensing Public Register at www.ocba.sa.gov.au or telephone 8204 9696.

For further information, contact David Heath on 0422 004 439
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