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DODGY BITUMEN LAYERS STRIKE IN THE STATE'S NORTH

Consumer Affairs Minister, Jennifer Rankine, says itinerant traders offering dodgy bitumen laying services appear to be targeting consumers across the State, with people in Gawler and Port Augusta the latest victims.

Last month, Minister Rankine called on people to be on the look out for the door-to-door sales scam, which was reported to the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) after people were being ripped off in the South East region of the state.

Minister Rankine says just a few days ago, the itinerant scammers approached a householder in Gawler with an offer to lay bitumen for a fee of \$4,500.

“The customer agreed and was supposed to pay the fee once the job was near completion. As the project was winding up, he became suspicious and after making enquires discovered that the company he called had nothing to do with the job in question” Ms Rankine said.

“In the Gawler incident, the victim ended up with substandard bitumen, however, his instincts spared him from handing over a huge amount of money and was concerned enough to report the scam to OCBA and police.

“However, in the Port Augusta incident late yesterday the unsuspecting victim forked out more than \$1700 - almost half of the amount being charged for the job.

“It appears at least three workers are involved and one of them has an English accent. People have also reported that the traders involved are travelling in a truck with Victorian registration plates WKT 636 and in two utilities – one with SA registration plates XYL 863 and the other with Victorian plates TDR 263.

OCBA’s compliance officers and SAPOL are investigating these incidents but the people involved appear to be working quickly and moving on just as fast.

They could be headed for the West Coast after doing their dirty work in the South-East and parts of the north. In any event, the message from these incidents is that people should beware of unscrupulous traders who operate illegally.

“These fraudsters are slick at giving customers the slip and making it hard to track their next move. They usually leave as soon as they’ve been paid, well before the consumer realises they’re the victim of shoddy workmanship.

“If you fall for the ruse, you could end up losing thousands of dollars for work that’s of poor quality and have no way of making them fix any dodgy or unfinished jobs.

“People should stick to the basics – demand receipts, contract documents, proof of ID and proof of the trader’s building work contractor’s licence.

“They should also know that a ten-day cooling off period applies whenever a door-to-door product or service worth \$50 or more is on offer,” Ms Rankine said.

Consumers who may have information about these itinerant bitumen layers should contact OCBA on 8204 9777, or for country callers 131 882 (local call cost)”.