

Media Release



Government of South Australia

Office of Consumer and
Business Affairs

Contact: **Carolyn Warman**
Phone: (08) 8204 9507

**Education and
Information Services**

Ground Floor
Chesser House
91-97 Grenfell Street
Adelaide SA 5000

GPO Box 1719
Adelaide SA 5001
DX 225

Tel 08 8204 9516
Fax 08 8204 9509

www.ocba.sa.gov.au

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Severe penalty for unlicensed electrician

An unlicensed electrician who left at least ten households with unsafe electrical installations has today been ordered to perform 320 hours of community service within 18 months.

During 2006 and the early part of 2007 Nicholas James Hackett contracted for work without a licence and performed electrical work that did not comply with wiring rules. The offences occurred over an eight month period and involved 113 premises.

Magistrate Grantley Harris said that the nature of Hackett's offending was very serious and personal and general deterrence were of paramount consideration. However, taking into account Hackett's financial circumstances, Magistrate Harris stated that a fine would not adequately reflect the gravity of the offending; nor would a good behaviour bond. The only other sentencing option available to His Honour was to order community service. The Magistrate ordered 320 hours of community service - the maximum number of hours that can be ordered.

Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Mal Hemmerling welcomed the result, in light of Hackett's personal situation, and said this should serve as a warning to others who might consider engaging in unlicensed activity.

"Licensing laws exist to protect consumers; because the reality is that unlicensed tradespeople usually leave a trail of shoddy work and some very unhappy customers."

"The risks associated with faulty electrical work are significant, and for their own safety consumers should use a licensed tradesperson."

Examples of Hackett's shoddy and unsafe electrical work include:

- Inadequate earthing of cables.
- Uneven distribution of electrical loads through the system.
- No labels on switchboard or ID circuit breakers
- Circuits were not provided with over-current protection
- Holes in switchboard surrounds were not close enough to minimise spread of fire
- Installing wiring systems in positions where they could be knocked, potentially exposing live parts.
- Cable enclosures were not installed to prevent water from getting into electrical equipment and sockets.

The Commissioner encouraged consumers to use a licensed tradesperson for repairs or renovations - particularly for electrical work given the safety risks - and to report any unlicensed activity to the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA).

To find a licensed builder, electrician, plumber or gas fitter consumers are encouraged to visit the Licensing Public Register which is available at www.ocba.sa.gov.au/licensing/