

Media Release



Government of South Australia

Office of Consumer and
Business Affairs

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UNLICENSED FATHER-AND-SON BUILDERS HANDED HEFTY FINE

A father and son who carried out extensive building work while using a fictitious licence number were convicted and fined in the Magistrates Court today.

Barry Stewart Harper and Dean Paul Harper, both of Aldinga Beach were found guilty of contracting for building and plumbing work without the appropriate licenses and fined a total \$12,000, plus prosecution and court costs of over \$800.

Commissioner for Consumer Affairs David Green said one of the defendants had previously been warned by the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) not to undertake building work without a licence, and prosecution was the next step for repeat offenders.

“Dean Harper was issued with a formal warning against operating unlicensed in 2004 which advised him that if he continued to breach the law then further action would be taken.”

The court heard that the defendants, operating as Betta Bathrooms, undertook building and plumbing work for three consumers over a 6 month period, leaving them with substandard and incomplete work while pocketing payments of up to \$22,000.

The Commissioner welcomed the penalty, highlighting the importance of the outcome in upholding the integrity of the licensing system.

“The primary purpose of the licensing system is to protect consumers by ensuring only people who are suitably qualified and experienced are permitted to undertake building and plumbing work, and attempts to flout it will be met with court action.”

Paperwork provided by the defendants to the consumers contained a fictitious licensing number in order to deceive consumers into thinking that they were appropriately licensed to undertake the work.

The Commissioner warned consumers to do their homework before contracting with a tradesperson to ensure their licence credentials are genuine.

“This outcome shows the importance of checking a trade persons licence details on the OCBA Public Register before signing anything. It only takes a few minutes to verify someone’s licence details over the phone or by visiting the OCBA website.”

To report unlicensed activity or substandard work contact OCBA on 8204 9777 or 131 882 for regional callers. Consumers can also visit the Public Register at www.ocba.sa.gov.au/licensing/register.html