

Media Release



Government of South Australia

Office of Consumer and
Business Affairs

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“Rip-off” roof painters at it again

The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) today issued an urgent warning to consumers after receiving a number of complaints in the metropolitan area.

Two men posing as painters are using stand-over tactics to attempt to force consumers to pay for jobs that they did not agree to or didn't ever approve.

In one case, two men conned an elderly couple into paying \$5,000 in cash. Another couple in their 80's from the Croydon area, were advised by two men posing as painters that their roof was in need of repair. After about 30 minutes they told the couple that they had repaired the roof and also painted it! They then demanded \$2,500 in cash for the job.

The couple stated that they did not agree to the job and, in any case, they did not have that amount of money in the house. The painters told the couple that they would take them to the bank straight away to withdraw the cash. The elderly lady felt intimidated by the immediate demands for cash and called the Police. The “painters” disappeared empty-handed before the Police arrived.

Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Mark Bodycoat said, “These elderly consumers did the right thing by calling the Police after being intimidated by these unscrupulous itinerant painters. Demanding \$2,500 for half an hours work is outrageous. These sham operators roam from state to state targeting vulnerable people and demanding large cash payments for substandard, and often unauthorised work. They hastily move on when the authorities become aware of their activities.”

Under the door-to-door provisions of fair trading legislation, the painters are not entitled to payment and should not have commenced the work until after the mandatory 10 day cooling-off period afforded to consumers.

“The conduct of these people is deplorable. Consumers are warned to be careful when dealing with itinerant tradespeople. Ask to see their contractor's photo-licence and ensure that they provide a proper contract with cooling-off provisions. If they want to start work straight away with immediate payment, they are ripping you off.”

OCBA has also received information about itinerant painters currently operating in the northern and north-eastern suburbs. They are advertising via posters attached to signposts. OCBA contacted one of the painters through the advertised mobile number, and while that person claimed to be licensed to do the work, he refused to give out his full name or licence number. It is not yet clear whether this is the same group that attempted to fleece the elderly couple in the Croydon area.

Another elderly man in his 90's from Gawler was driven to the bank and withdrew \$2,900 for repairing and repainting the roof when it actually appears all they did was spray water on the roof. Another couple paid \$4,600 to paint the outside of their house but the painters disappeared before finishing the job.

Consumers are warned not to deal with tradespeople who will not provide their licence number. Information about licensed tradespeople is available on the Public Register on the OCBA website www.ocba.sa.gov.au or by calling 8204 9644.

To report any concerns about itinerant traders contact OCBA on 8204 9777 or 131 882 for regional callers.