

Media Release



Government of South Australia

Office of Consumer and
Business Affairs

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Out of Gas

Today in the District Court, Jim Higgins Master Plumbers Pty Ltd (the company) and Clifford James Higgins, of Whyalla Playford, faced disciplinary action for contracting for, and carrying out, gas fitting work without the appropriate licence or registration, breaching the requirements of the *Plumbers, Gas Fitters and Electricians Act 1995*.

The Court ordered that the company and Higgins be, until further order, prohibited from being employed or otherwise engaged in the business of a gas-fitting contractor.

The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) brought the action against Higgins because of his dangerous work, failing to comply with an assurance he signed in April 1999, unlicensed contracting by the company and unregistered work by Higgins. Under his assurance, Higgins promised not to engage in carrying on business as a gas fitting contractor and acting as a gas-fitting worker without the required licence or registration.

The Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Mark Bodycoat, said that Higgins' actions since giving the assurance showed a blatant disregard for the licensing system, his own safety responsibilities and the interests of consumers.

"Even after signing the assurance, he still did gas fitting work without the appropriate registration. His actions put other people's safety at risk."

Higgins unlicensed activity included the installation of a gas space heater without ensuring the gas flow was at the correct pressure and burning properly, or that the room had sufficient ventilation. The result could have been the resident being exposed to carbon monoxide poisoning and possible death.

Other unsafe work included the failure to ensure sufficient gas pressure to a gas water heater due to the installation of incorrect pipes and failure to ensure that a gas water heater was able to be isolated from the gas main.

Even though the company held a plumbing contractor's licence and Higgins himself was a licensed plumber, neither had ever been licensed or registered to do gas fitting work.

"The licensing system tries to make sure that only people who are suitably qualified can work in South Australia. The system is designed to protect consumers from operators like Mr Higgins."

Higgins and the company will continue to hold a plumbing contractors licence and plumbing workers registration.

Members of the public can contact the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs on (08) 8204 9777 or visit the Licensing Public Register at www.ocba.sa.gov.au to check whether a person is appropriately licensed or to find a licensed tradesperson in their local area. OCBA also encourages consumers to ask to see a licence card and read any conditions shown on the register or on the card.