

# Media Release

31 July 2015

## Warning as dodgy bitumen bandits target Adelaide's south

The State's consumer watchdog has issued a formal public warning notice warning consumers not to deal with a business by the name of "Hildenbrand Roads Pty Ltd", acting as unlicensed bitumen layers operating in Adelaide's South.

Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Dini Soulio, said the travelling conmen are offering unsolicited work laying bitumen in the southern suburbs.

"Consumer and Business Services (CBS) has received reports of the conmen doorknocking in Aldinga, Old Reynella and Sellicks Hill," Mr Soulio said.

"We believe it's a small group of men with Irish accents who have made approaches in the area offering to undertake bitumen work for cash.

The sole director of the company Fabio Hildenbrand, named on the business cards, is believed to be a German backpacker.

"The group are handing out business cards with the name Hildenbrand Roads, and were seen travelling in a white Toyota truck with a yellow tray, with Victorian registration YNZ 499.

"They also have a Ford Ute (SA plate WVK 026), a Mitsubishi truck (SA Plate SB93KF) and Toyota Station Wagon (SA Plate S102BGO).

"We understand that they have approached numerous businesses and homeowners in Adelaide's south, offering to lay bitumen, and in some cases, thousands of dollars have been handed over.

"The work is often substandard, with bitumen laid too thin, and breaking up as soon as any vehicles are driven on it.

"Another tactic used it so do more work than was initially agreed, and demand large amounts of cash to pay the unauthorised work.

"Bitumen layers are required to be licensed under the *Building Work Contractors Act*. There is no indication that this company is licensed."

The growth in traveling conmen scams involving bitumen laying, roof painting, tree lopping and other building trade services has resulted in an increasing number of South Australian consumers experiencing poor quality and costly work.

"Once payment is handed over, the conmen will disappear, making it extremely difficult to seek redress for shoddy or incomplete work, so any repairs will cost you extra," Mr Soulio said.

"They typically use state and territory borders to escape detection by authorities.



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“Under Australian Consumer Law, these dodgy traders operate in breach of door-to-door sales regulations.

“Consumers are entitled to ask door knockers to leave, or to provide a 10-day cooling off period during which the trader cannot provide any goods or services or accept any payment.”

Individual traders who breach the legislation under the Australian Consumer Law can also face penalties of up to \$220,000 and up to \$1,100,000 for companies.

Undertaking unlicensed building work carries penalties of up to:

- \$50,000 for a first or second offence; or
- \$50,000 or 12 months imprisonment or both for a third or subsequent offence
- for an offence committed by a body corporate this penalty increases to \$250,000.

“I urge people in Adelaide’s south to be vigilant and take precautions if approached by tradespeople. However, the conmen may be on the move, so anyone who is approached for bitumen work should be wary,” Mr Soulio said.

“Please ensure you ask them to produce their SA builder’s licence card or alternatively you can check if they are licenced by using the online CBS licensing register.”

South Australians who have had any dealings with Hildenbrand Roads Pty Ltd are urged to contact CBS on 131 882.

More information on travelling conmen is also available at [www.facebook.com/StopTravellingConMen](http://www.facebook.com/StopTravellingConMen).