

Drainage blitz sees plumbers pay thousands to fix issues

An inspection blitz by the state plumbing regulator on building drainage has found more than half were non-compliant, leaving one homeowner with a \$40,000 repair bill.

The Victorian Building Authority (VBA) is reminding plumbers that they must [book a drainage inspection](#) before the drain is backfilled to avoid infringements, prosecution or tens of thousands of dollars in rectification costs.

VBA inspectors conducted 93 drainage inspections in December 2020 with almost 52 per cent needing to be fixed, including a property in Mickleham with costs of \$40,000 to cut the slab and fix the plumbing.

The VBA's Executive Director of Operations Lynda McAlary-Smith said the results were proof that something needed to change.

"To have such a shocking amount of drainage inspections require rectification shows the importance of drainage inspections," she said.

"We know that the majority of plumbers do the right thing, but there is still a group of plumbers who try to cut corners to get the job done quicker."

The VBA has expanded operating hours to be able to hold inspections between 7am to 4pm Monday to Saturday, except public holidays, to ensure plumbers are following the rules.

A penalty of \$496 can be imposed when a plumber is late, the drain is not ready or the plumber does not show up at all.

Ms McAlary-Smith said all below ground sanitary drains need a consent to connect number and are to be offered to the VBA for inspection and are to comply with the relevant standards prior to being backfilled by the licensed practitioner.

"Skipping steps may seem like a fast track to finishing a project, but when we catch up with you it may end up costing you much more than you bargained for, if you have to do extra work," she said.

"We've seen cases in the last year where plumbers had to fork out \$30,000 to \$40,000 to cut open a slab and remove a building frame when it did not comply to the relevant standards."

The VBA conducts below-ground sanitary drainage inspections of plumbing work to ensure the work complies with the relevant standards, regulations and local laws.

Faulty drains can result in water and sewage leaks in properties, causing damage to homes and the environment.

In 2013 the VBA investigated a Doreen property that suffered cracks throughout the home resulting in \$300,000 worth of repairs as a result of non-compliant stormwater drainage being installed.

Plumbers can book a [drainage inspection](#) with the VBA between 7am and 4pm Monday to Saturday.

Homeowners can find a registered or licensed plumber on the VBA website.