Building surveyor fined for unpaid building permit levies

A building surveyor has been penalised more than $23,000 after he was found guilty of 17 charges relating to various sites in suburbs including Prahran, Ivanhoe and West Preston.

Essendon North building surveyor Jeffrey Uren first came to the attention of the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) in 2011 after he failed to submit details of the building permits he had issued over a two-year period, and did not pass on the associated building permit levies to the VBA. Under the Building Act 1993, each month building surveyors must provide the VBA with a report of the building permits they have issued, and forward the levy payments for the permits.

After the VBA investigated the matter and launched legal action to recover the money, Mr Uren settled the outstanding amount. The VBA also referred the matter to the Building Practitioners Board (BPB) for an inquiry into Mr Uren’s conduct after levy audits revealed ongoing issues with unreported building permits and unpaid building permit levies.

At a hearing in August 2014, Mr Uren was found guilty of 17 charges, including:

- issuing a building permit when he could not be satisfied that the work would comply with the Building Act 1993 and Building Regulations 2006
- failing to pass on to the VBA, within the appropriate timeframe, levies from building permits he had issued
- failing to provide council and the VBA, within the appropriate timeframe, with the details of building permits and occupancy permits he issued
- approving building work that did not comply with regulations relating to overlooking adjoining properties
- failing to provide the VBA’s performance auditors with required information.

Mr Uren was fined $14,436 and ordered to pay $9276 in costs.

The VBA’s Compliance and Performance Director, Murray Smith, said building surveyors have a number of responsibilities under the building legislation.

“Most building surveyors take their responsibilities seriously and do the right thing. Unfortunately in this case, the building surveyor didn’t meet his obligations on a number of occasions, so an inquiry into his conduct was necessary.”

Mr Smith said the VBA regularly performs audits to ensure building surveyors comply with their obligations to report and submit building permit levies.
“As well as recovering the payments, which in many cases consumers have paid in full to the building surveyor, we need to ensure that those who do the wrong thing don’t gain a financial advantage over the rest of the industry.”

For more information about building permit levies and the VBA’s levy audit program, visit the VBA website at [www.vba.vic.gov.au](http://www.vba.vic.gov.au)

For a list of practitioners who have been found guilty of misconduct by the BPB, view the Practitioner Disciplinary Register at [www.vba.vic.gov.au](http://www.vba.vic.gov.au)

**What is the building permit levy?**
Building permit levies fund the building control system in Victoria. Anyone applying for a building permit for works costing more than $10,000 must pay a levy before the permit can be issued. This levy is collected by the building surveyor, who then forwards it to the VBA each month.

ENDS

**Media enquiries**
Senior Communications Advisor – Larissa Bell – 03 9618 9330 - larissa.bell@vba.vic.gov.au
Communications Manager – John Rees – 03 9618 9316