



## Media Release

Tuesday, 11 September 2023

### Magistrates Court orders “dodgy builder” to pay \$100K following VBA investigation

A Gippsland man who pretended to be a registered builder has been convicted and ordered to pay more than \$100,000 following a VBA investigation.

Ashwin Datta was fined \$55,000 plus fees and consumer compensation of \$61,737 by the Latrobe Magistrates Court for building work at a home in Warragul, that had to be demolished.

The VBA found he was not a registered builder, nor was his company a registered building company.

The Court heard Mr Datta was hired by a couple to build an extension to their property in Warragul, which was riddled with defects and had to be pulled down.

Magistrate Tim Walsh said building permits and the requirements for practitioners to be properly qualified were critical.

“I can only describe this as a ‘dodgy builder’,” Magistrate Walsh said.

“Situations occur frequently where naïve people rely on people who hold themselves out to be qualified.”

The VBA’s CEO Anna Cronin said the outcome was evidence that the VBA would hold wrong-doers to account.

“Building practitioners are responsible for ensuring building work complies with the National Construction Code and Victoria’s Building Regulations and is covered by relevant building permits,” Ms Cronin said.

“Any person found to be in breach of these rules will face enforcement action, risking financial penalties, the suspension or cancellation of their registration (for registered practitioners) and, in some cases, prison.”

Ms Cronin said consumers should use the VBA’s Find a Practitioner online tool to check whether the builder or plumber they are looking to use is registered with the VBA and whether they’ve faced any disciplinary action.

“We strongly advise consumers to make sure the builder or plumber they hire is registered or licensed and that they are who they say they are,” she said.

Mr Datta did not provide the customer with any invoice, agreement, contract, drawings, or copy of Domestic Building Insurance policy documents. In addition, the building and planning permits he provided were fake.

The VBA has an [online consumer resource portal](#) with information for anyone who is experiencing issues with builders or plumbers. Victorians can visit [vba.vic.gov.au/check](http://vba.vic.gov.au/check) to make sure their builder or plumber is registered or licensed.

#### Media Enquiries:

VBA Media  
0417 854 245 or [media@vba.vic.gov.au](mailto:media@vba.vic.gov.au)