

## Victorian man penalised for plumbing work without licence

A Sunbury man has been ordered by the Sunshine Magistrate's Court to pay more than \$5,500 for performing plumbing work without a licence and providing false information.

As part of an adjourned undertaking to the court, Ryan Barnes has been required to pay the VBA \$4000, pay compensation of \$1000 and \$950 to his respective victims for money they had to spend to fix the work he did at their properties and to be of good behaviour for 12 months.

Mr Barnes was found to have breached the *Building Act 1993* with two counts of undertaking plumbing work without a licence or registration, as well as one count of providing false information.

The VBA's Executive Director of Operations, Lynda McAlary-Smith, said Mr Barnes' actions caused considerable stress to his victims and had the potential to cause harm.

"Mr Barnes deceived his clients and performed work where there was a risk of serious injury or death," Ms McAlary-Smith said.

"If you don't follow the rules you will be caught, the VBA is ready to take action to protect Victorian consumers, especially the most vulnerable."

In 2017 Mr Barnes, who was working at the time for company PremiAir Flow, altered air conditioning ducts and installed zone monitors at a home in Taylors Lakes, north-west of Melbourne.

The property owners experienced subsequent ongoing issues with the heating and cooling in the house, including during the hot summer months.

In 2019 Mr Barnes, operating heating and cooling business Vortex, took it upon himself to install a gas heater and flue at the home of a 91-year-old resident in Airport West, also in Melbourne's north-west.

The flue was installed in a less than competent manner, with the flue not being adequately separated from a wooden truss, which had the potential to cause a fire.

In both matters, Mr Barnes performed plumbing work without a licence or registration.

When questioned by the VBA, Mr Barnes said that he was a licensed plumber and provided false licence and registration information.

The Court said the payments Mr Barnes was ordered to make as part of the adjourned undertaking were to send a signal to the wider plumbing industry.

"It is important by way of general deterrence that people who are involved in, or would involve themselves in, this kind of conduct would know that potentially it will cost them a lot of money," the Magistrate said.

"It is unfair to someone who has done an apprenticeship, done a course, who has paid the fees, that they can have (Mr Barnes) go and do the work that only they should be entitled to carry out."

Victorians wanting to engage a builder or plumber can visit [vba.vic.gov.au/find](http://vba.vic.gov.au/find)

The VBA has an online [consumer resource portal](#) with information for anyone who is experiencing issues with builders or plumbers.