

Media Release

24 July 2015

PUBLIC WARNING OVER SOLAR PANEL COMPANY OPERATING IN SA

The state's consumer watchdog has issued a public warning against **Green Engineering (Vic) Pty Ltd**, an unlicensed business supplying and installing solar systems across South Australia.

Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Dini Soulio, said Consumer and Business Services (CBS) is urging people not to deal with the business while investigations are underway.

"It is alleged the business is a trader and installer of solar PV systems and is therefore required to hold either a relevant South Australian electrical contractor's license or a building work contractor's licence," the Commissioner said.

"Evidence indicates an affiliated company registered in Queensland holds an appropriate electrical licence in South Australia, however the entity trading as **Green Engineering (Vic) Pty Ltd** does not.

"This is a warning to residents across the state, in particular in regional areas, that they should be on guard about the way **Green Engineering (Vic) Pty Ltd** carries on its business.

"It is alleged door-to-door sales representatives from the business approached homes in regional South Australia and entered into signed agreements without meeting relevant requirements.

"The contracts specified the consumer had the right to terminate within only five business days.

"Under Australian Consumer Law, consumers are entitled to a compulsory 10-day cooling-off period in which they can change their mind if they do not want to proceed.

"In one instance, the business began to install a solar panel system the day after the contract was signed."

Failure to inform a person of the termination period or if work has begun during the cooling-off period can result in penalties of up to \$50,000 for corporations.

In the past two years, 16 formal complaints were made to CBS about their practices involving failure to meet contract agreements, breaching door-to-door sales conduct and an unwillingness to resolve disputes with customers.

"It is clear to me Green Engineering (Vic) Pty Ltd has failed to meet requirements under both the Fair Trading Act and Australian Consumer Law," Mr Soulio said.

"Under the Fair Trading Act, traders can be forced to the table to negotiate with a consumer and work through the dispute with CBS after a complaint is made.

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“**Green Engineering (Vic) Pty Ltd** failed to attend a number of compulsory conciliation conferences during 2014 and 2015. This can result in criminal prosecution with penalties of up to \$10,000 for each breach.

“Where the business did show up at a compulsory conciliation conference and signed agreements to resolve the dispute with a consumer - the business has, on more than one occasion, ignored its commitment and has ultimately failed to fulfil its undertakings.

“This conduct demonstrates an unwillingness on the part of the business to resolve ongoing disputes with customers and that is simply bad business.

“The purpose of compulsory conciliation conferences are for businesses to meet their commitments in resolving disputes and providing redress to consumers who have been left out in the cold - and this obviously has not occurred.”

If anyone has concerns about their dealings with **Green Engineering (Vic) Pty Ltd**, please contact CBS on 131 882.