



## Frequently Asked Questions #26



### WHAT IS A 'BITUMEN BANDIT'?

'Bitumen bandits' are bogus tradespeople who rip-off unsuspecting and vulnerable consumers, by peddling bitumen-laying services for a supposed "substantial discount". They use misleading and deceptive conduct. The scam starts when someone knocks on your door and tells you they have asphalt or bitumen leftover from a "nearby job" and offer to sell it to you at "a heavily reduced cost". Consumers are forced to comply because if the work isn't finished, they're unable to use their driveway. Regardless of how solid the offer seems, itinerant bitumen layers often leave consumers out of pocket:

- they may ask for a deposit and simply never return to do the work, or
- they do such a substandard job with watered down bitumen, it may cost you a lot more money to fix the job, or
- they do (more) damage, or
- they may initially quote a low cost, but then a much higher payment is demanded during the work for it to be completed.

#### A licence is required for:

- residential building work valued at more than \$5000 (Inc GST) in labour and materials
- all specialist work regardless of cost.

Specialist work includes electrical wiring, plumbing, drainage and gas-fitting work and air conditioning and refrigeration work (except plug-in appliances).

**Check any contractor or tradesperson** is qualified and/or licensed to do the job by using the NSW Fair Trading Home Building Licence Check online tool:

<https://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/help-centre/online-tools/home-building-licence-check>.

The Licence Check will tell you of any cancellations, suspensions, formal cautions, penalty infringement notices, non-compliance or public warnings issued.

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| FOR EMERGENCIES (Including anyone on your property)    | 000           |
| TO REPORT ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS (Crime Stoppers)         | 1 800 333 000 |
| TO REPORT NON-EMERGENCY CRIME (Police Assistance Line) | 131 444       |
| IF YOU'RE NOT SURE (Hornsby Police Station)            | 9476 9799     |
| TTY—To ask for Police, type PPP                        | 106           |
| SPEAK AND LISTEN                                       | 1800 555 727  |

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### When choosing a tradesperson:

1. Get several quotes
2. Ask family and friends for recommendations
3. Ensure all quotes are written down
4. Don't pay any money without a written contract
5. Ask for references
6. Request to see examples of the tradesperson's past work
7. Check if a licence is required
8. Do a Licence Check (using the online tool mentioned)
9. Ensure the contract is written down.
10. Discuss insurance.

### If you have been visited by any Bitumen Bandits, or fake tradespeople:

1. Please be community-minded and warn others ASAP.
2. Make a note of their appearance, vehicle registration and description.
3. Report them AT THE TIME to the Police Assistance Line (PAL) or the local police station – see phone numbers below.
4. Report them to the **National Travelling Conmen Hotline 1300 133 408** (8:30am – 5:00pm, Mon - Fri).

### Related information:

If you require more information or wish to lodge a complaint against a trader you can click on the following link [www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au).

### Notes:

Bitumen is also known as 'Asphalt', or 'Tarmac'.

'Travelling Conmen' includes tree-loppers, roofers, 'Bitumen Bandits' and fake tradesmen.

This information was compiled by volunteers with Neighbourhood Watch within Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby. Please contact your Crime Prevention Officer (CPO) at Hornsby Police Station for more information. Phone: 9476 9799. Tips and other resources are available to download free from the Neighbourhood Watch in Ku-ring-gai & Hornsby website: [au-NHWKuringgaiHornsby.org/Tips/](http://au-NHWKuringgaiHornsby.org/Tips/).

See also the community's one-stop-shop of crime prevention information: [WatchOut.org.au](http://WatchOut.org.au).

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or at our [website](#). Contact us at: [NHWKuringgaiHornsby@gmail.com](mailto:NHWKuringgaiHornsby@gmail.com).