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MEDIA RELEASE

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FIDDLY TRADIE FINED FOR FIDDLING CUSTOMERS

An Ashfield home handyman has been convicted of 10 breaches under the *Home Building Act 1989*, and ordered by Parramatta Local Court to pay \$17,083 in fines and costs.

Bassil (Bill) Haralambous operated his business, Fiddly Bits Property Maintenance Pty Ltd, without a minor maintenance and cleaning licence for almost two years.

In March 2010, one of Mr Haralambous's trade creditors applied to have Fiddly Bits Property Maintenance wound up and the company was placed into liquidation.

The following year Mr Haralambous applied to Fair Trading to renew his licence, but the application was refused.

Despite the refusal, Mr Haralambous continued to enter into maintenance contracts with people living in Croydon, Concord, Campsie and Brighton Le Sands and to undertake home renovations.

In total Mr Haralambous collected more than \$300,000 from four customers. In each case he failed to complete the contracted work and failed to provide home warranty insurance certificates.

He also charged consumers an excessive 25 per cent deposit, despite a 5 per cent cap on deposits for building work over \$20,000 in value under the Home Building Act.

Fair Trading Commissioner Rod Stowe said Mr Haralambous's breaches were serious and warranted a significant fine.

"People who consistently flout home building laws place themselves and their customers at considerable risk," he said.

"Always check to see if your builder has the appropriate licence for the work they are undertaking. And make sure you are supplied with a genuine home warranty insurance certificate for all building and renovation work valued at over \$20,000."

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