

# Home builder decision

In Brief

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

The administrator of collapsed builder Botanic Homes says a decision on whether to report Botanic's directors for possible insolvent trading is imminent.

Botanic Homes met with administrators nearly four weeks prior to it going into voluntary receivership on 3 May while at the same time appearing to hire still-unpaid tradie-contractors.

Botanic Homes owes up to \$5 million to 250 creditors including customers and tradies. One tradie told Star News he was owed \$200,000 and had been assured of the company's financial viability up to the day it folded.

He held small hope of recovering the debt.

Administrator Jason Stone of PKF Melbourne said an "in-depth investigation" of the directors Robert Bender and Craig Garvey's conduct would likely occur after the Hallam company's future

was decided by the end of August.

He said a report would be prepared for corporate regulator Australian Securities and Investments Commission on whether the directors' conduct was "appropriate".

In June, Mr Stone told Star News that PKF believed the directors were trading insolvent but "it's difficult to prove".

"From what we have in our possession, the records we have reviewed ... it appears the company has been insolvent in the last few months leading up to the appointment and there is a claim of insolvent trading," he said.

Under law, PKF must report the directors if there's a suspicion of any offences, such as insolvent trading.

PKF can also prosecute the directors to claim any new debts incurred while trading insolvent.

"We advise ASIC regardless of whether we prosecute the directors or not," Mr Stone said.

"It's up to ASIC to determine if they take further action against the directors. I suppose ASIC has limited funding and are quite selective on which matters they take on and which they don't."

Mr Stone said directors Mr Garvey and Mr Bender were among the listed creditors, claiming unsecured loans they contributed to alleviate "some working capital difficulties".

The directors' claim could be used to offset any prosecution for insolvent trading debts against them, Mr Stone said.

Meanwhile, customers who are left with partly or completely unbuilt Botanic Home houses say they are frustrated by delays and extra costs as they chase insurers and PKF.

An ASIC spokeswoman said the regulator was unable to comment on whether it was investigating a company and its directors.

## Road rage ends in crash

A Casey motorist had their window smashed with a crowbar after a prolonged mid-June road rage incident in Narre Warren.

The victim was tailgated and brake-checked on the Princes Highway in the incident which continued onto Hallam Road.

The perpetrator, who was driving dangerously and swerving in and out of traffic in a black VZ Holden Commodore, eventually crashed into the victim's vehicle on Hallam Road.

The driver then got out of the Commodore and smashed the victim's side windows with a crowbar.

Anyone with information on the attack is urged to contact Narre Warren police on 9705 3111 or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

## Calling off refund bluff

Police are investigating a series of thefts and deceptions at supermarkets, including in Endeavour Hills.

An unknown man and woman have struck at least 11 times at supermarkets in metropolitan Melbourne in the past 10 months.

They have typically bought items from a supermarket and retained the receipt.

The pair then return to the supermarket, choose the same items and get refunds for them using the old receipt.

At an Endeavour Hills supermarket, a man filled an empty bag with goods and left it near the specials merchandise area on 25 June about 7pm.

A few minutes later, a woman entered, collected the bag left by the man and used a receipt to get a refund.

The man is described as Caucasian with a slim-to-medium build and short dark hair.

The woman is described as Caucasian with a medium build and straight blonde hair.

## Raiders hit milk bar

A Hallam milk bar worker has been held up by two men armed with a pick-axe in the mid-afternoon of 23 July.

The two men, described as about 25 years old and Caucasian, demanded cash and cigarettes from the attendant in the Marshall Place milk bar about 4.30pm.

Senior Sergeant Phil Byrne of Endeavour Hills police said the victim did the right thing by "handing over what (the robbers) wanted".

After the armed robbery, the men fled in a small hatchback.

## House fire probed

Police are investigating a suspicious house fire on Heatherton Road in Dandenong.

A passer-by saw smoke coming from the address about 10pm on Tuesday 19 July and called triple zero.

The CFA attended and extinguished the fire, containing it to a small area of the house.

Police said no one was home at the time.

He said CFA and police arson experts had deemed the fire suspicious.

# School screening's drive to tackle region's scourge

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Hallam Senior College students are joining the latest push for Casey residents to think and talk about family violence's underestimated scourge.

VCAL students will be helping out at a premiere feature-length screening of Call Me Dad that aims to pack out the college's theatre.

It's a cathartic and rare insight into participants in men's behaviour change groups and women support groups in Casey.

The project feeds into the students' practical investigation into family violence, how it can be tackled and how solutions might be found, said vice principal David Caughey.

The aim is to make it real to them, he said.

As part of the drive, the students will hunt for sponsors, fund-raise and help out on the film night.

More awareness is important for an issue "that's still a little bit in the periphery," Mr Caughey said.

"It's a strong philosophy of the school that we're here to serve the community, rather than serving ourselves. It's not just about an ATAR score."

Of course, for some families and children in Casey it's not peripheral but "front and centre" and their friends might not understand what victims are going through, he said.

"Events like this help people develop a language on how to talk about it."

As is widely known, Casey has the highest reported family violence in the state.

But as Mr Caughey points out "it's still difficult to say how widespread it is because it's a little bit more in the shadows".

The documentary features David Nugent - who also works as counsellor at Hallam Senior College - and his Heavy METAL (Men's Education Towards Anger and Life) group.

Mr Nugent told Star News that many people don't understand that family violence includes verbal abuse and manipulation inside the household.

"This is a community problem and it needs to be solved in the community."

The screening is at 7-10pm on 26 August at Hallam Senior College and is followed by a question and answer community panel.

Tickets are at [eventbrite.com/e/call-me-dad-tickets-25834649131](http://eventbrite.com/e/call-me-dad-tickets-25834649131).

For more details contact David Nugent on 0401 766 876 or email [hvymetal@bigpond.net.au](mailto:hvymetal@bigpond.net.au).



Student counsellor David Nugent, front, and school teacher Jason Tickner with students, from left, Joel, Jamal, Jamie, Jenna and Louise. 157358 Picture: ROB CAREW

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