



with
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PUBLIC DEFENDER

Air con can't top an ex-cop

AFTER almost 40 years in the job retired policeman Geoff O'Loughlin is used to fighting for justice.

But the former superintendent recently won a battle of his own when an offer of \$50 flights for a Queensland holiday ended in he and wife Carol being slugged \$500 in inflated accommodation costs.

"There is nothing worse than a retired policeman because we have got nothing to do and we are just not going to let go," Mr O'Loughlin said.

The 63-year-old is among Victorians duped into unfair holiday accommodation voucher schemes.

Mr O'Loughlin said he and his wife were offered cheap flights provided they stayed at a nominated hotel for a week.

They were assured costs wouldn't be exaggerated.

When the Melbourne couple realised they had been conned they demanded a refund, which was refused, before successfully getting their money returned, thanks to Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Wes Hosking

"If it is an unsolicited phone call be wary of it," Mr O'Loughlin said.

Mandy Lane is another bogus accommodation voucher victim.

The Mornington Peninsula mother paid about \$400 for vouchers but the company, which had since gone to ground, never followed her booking requests through.

"I do not feel like they were serious about wanting to make it happen for us," Ms Lane said.

Consumer Affairs has received about 75 complaints about holiday accommodation vouchers since last August.

Consumer Affairs Minister Michael O'Brien said holidaymakers should research the value of vouchers and contact providers.

Consumers were also entitled to a 10-day cooling off period if they spent more than \$100, the minister explained.

To make a complaint, phone 1300 55 81 81.



Flight or fight: Ex-superintendent Geoff O'Loughlin sees justice done.

COMMON HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION VOUCHER GRIPES

- Aggressive sales tactics
- Failure to provide a cooling off period
- Misrepresentations about the value of vouchers and affiliated hotels
- Failure to receive vouchers
- Problems contacting the trader after paying

Leave for good?

ANDREW DIMSEY



PRINCIPAL LAWYER, MAURICE BLACKBURN

IT'S been a big week for some of our nation's female leaders in voicing opinions on how far we've advanced women's rights in the workplace.

Despite advances in women holding powerful office, many Australian women continue to be treated unfairly at work.

They not only feel re-stained, underpaid or overlooked because of their gender, but some face harassment and discrimination.

In January last year the National Employment Standards came into effect.

Under the standards workers are entitled to 12 months' parental leave after completing at least 12 months of continuous service with an employer.

This standard applies to all employees in Australia.

Unfortunately, some employers still make it difficult for people to take parental leave. Taking leave has been discouraged or the employee's role may be changed.

This week my firm filed claims under the Fair Work Act in support of two former Virgin Blue public relations executives who were forced to take redundancies after confirming that they were pregnant or returning from maternity leave.

Legal information is general in nature and is not to be regarded as legal advice from Maurice Blackburn.

BLOG WITH ANDREW from noon-1pm today
heraldsun.com.au/opinion

Q WE built a new home 18 months ago and our roof is now leaking.

After a host of calls to the building company we have not heard from the roof people — not even one call. Please help.

Ricky McNamara, Oakleigh South

qa YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

HOME HASSLES

A THE building company has advised your maintenance call was lodged with the roofers in January, so your wait is unacceptable. The builders advised the normal turnaround time is 48 hours.

I understand the roofers have now visited your property and made initial repairs after Public Defender's call and the builder's follow-through.

Q MY new \$4000 carpet showed signs of wear within a year of being put down.

The manufacturer has rejected my claim and the retailer has told me to proceed with small claims.

I am exhausted and can't face all the paperwork. Do you have any suggestions?

Joanne Mason, Watsonia North

A UNDER the law a consumer can pursue a claim from a manufacturer or the supplier of goods if they are not of acceptable quality or don't meet extra promises made about them.

It would appear reasonable to expect that a carpet wouldn't wear so severely in such a short time under normal conditions.

COMPLAINT OF THE WEEK

Q LAST November I purchased two tickets for Michael Buble. The price of the unallocated silver tickets was \$129.50 each.

When I received the tickets in January they were for only \$90 seats. I have been charged \$39.50 per ticket for service fees.

This seems excessive. Can I get a refund?
Christine Beans, Sunbury

Public Defender has been given the same runaround, despite several phone calls. Unfortunately, despite

A WHILE no refunds or exchanges are generally allowed, the company involved has advised it has a satisfaction guarantee.

After Public Defender's call they have pledged to contact you to resolve the dispute if you feel the extra charges were not properly disclosed prior to purchase.

the paperwork, action via Consumer Affairs Victoria appears the best resolution to this issue.

If you have to fight the system, don't fight it on your own.

Maurice Blackburn
Lawyers

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