

Tuesday, 11 August 2020

Driver convicted for assaulting EPA officers; company fined for asbestos breaches

Gavin Piller a truck driver for GP and Sons Demolition Pty Ltd of Largs Bay has been convicted, fined \$2100 and given a four-month suspended sentence for abusing, hindering and assaulting EPA officers.

The company also received a record fine for illegally storing asbestos at its premises.

Piller pleaded guilty to two counts of hindering EPA Officers and two counts of assaulting an EPA officer and was sentenced today in the Environment, Resources and Development Court.

The conviction related to an incident in April 2018 when EPA officers were investigating claims of asbestos being illegally stored at the company's premises at Largs Bay. EPA officers were attacked by Piller who struck one officer, removed equipment, pushed an officer onto the ground and punched the officer in the head. Piller then threatened the officer with a plank of wood.

This is the second time a person has received a custodial sentence for assaulting EPA officers.

EPA Chief Executive Tony Circelli thanked Judge Muscat for his ruling on the case in today's ERD Court, saying it sends a strong message to anyone who would abuse or assault a government officer.

"To launch a tirade or profanities and then physically attack EPA officers, who were on site to investigate the illegal storage of asbestos, is completely unacceptable," Mr Circelli said.

"As Chief Executive, I am deeply saddened that an EPA officer, lawfully carrying out their duties, was assaulted in this manner," Mr Circelli said.

The EPA officers were documenting the contents of two skip bins containing wrapped and unwrapped asbestos on 3 April 2018 at 185-191 Jetty Road, Largs Bay, when they were abused and attacked.

"Today's outcome is a strong message to anyone attempting to intimidate or assault EPA officers during the course of their duties," the EPA's Mr Circelli said.

The company was also convicted on two counts and fined \$49,000 for illegally storing asbestos at a site in Wingfield, plus the Largs Bay depot, without a licence.

"This type of illegal activity will not be tolerated – it risks both harm to the environment and the community, and damages confidence for investment and fair play for legitimate waste operators," Mr Circelli said.