

## Landlord fined \$60,000 for illegal garage conversions

An Auckland landlord has been fined \$60,000 after illegally converting North Shore garages into flats. Madhav Karmarkar was sentenced in the Auckland District Court on September 17 for turning two properties in Takapuna and three in Mt Roskill into 12 smaller units without consent.

The full extent of the illegal conversions was discovered following a complaint from a tenant querying if it was legal to rent a garage as a flat. Two of the converted units were former garages, one with low cramped ceilings, and the other even retaining the external garage roller door within the property.

In sentencing Karmarkar, Judge Jeff Smith took into consideration the deliberate nature of the offences in order to achieve financial gain. Enforcement orders were issued by the court requiring the illegal units to be disestablished and the dwellings returned to their legal state by end of February 2014.

Karmarkar was fined \$60,000 in his capacity as a landlord and director of two companies registered as owners of the properties - Jayashree Ltd and Jayashree Corporation Ltd.

Court costs and legal fees were also imposed.

Auckland Council resource consent manager Heather Harris said, depending on district plan zoning requirements, splitting properties into multiple residential units could sometimes be legal, but the right consents needed to be obtained first.

*"Illegal conversions can place tenants at risk, often forcing people to live in substandard accommodation with common problems including overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and inadequate essential services."*

Ms Harris praised council officers for their investigation and said that together with the court's sentencing, Auckland Council was sending landlords a message that non-compliant activity would not be tolerated.

*"We support appropriate development to help meet the housing needs of Auckland residents and have implemented processes to make it easier for people to engage with council's resource consent department."*

Anyone considering altering their property to a multiple occupancy dwelling was advised to consult the council to receive the appropriate guidance and advice.

Information about the resource consent process and the Resource Management Act can be found on the Auckland Council website.

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