

**Money down the drain:** Yarraville resident Owen Wade helped expose tradies who charge more for the same work in different suburbs. Picture: CHRIS SCOTT



Same job, different suburb, higher cost

# Tricks of the tradie

## QUOTE TIPS

- Compare at least three quotes, even if the work is urgent
- Don't agree to a job until you've obtained estimates
- Use the quote process to learn more about your job. Ask for details about the process, how long it will take and costs for any parts
- Find out if more than one callout may be required
- Check the tradesperson's policy if there are issues with the completed job
- Ask for written quotes with a breakdown of costs for labour and parts and validity period specified
- Use the internet to compare hourly rates and prices for parts

TRADIES are slugging customers in different suburbs up to 30 per cent more for the same work.

Householders are being warned to do their homework to avoid getting ripped off.

Public Defender had three householders phone the same Melbourne-wide tradies to price four common jobs.

Half yielded different quotes.

In the worst case, a St Kilda resident was told it would cost \$300 to fix a sticking door — \$80 more than the same company quoted residents in Yarraville and Wantirna South.

Quotes to install a deadlock varied each time, with

**PUBLIC DEFENDER**  
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	Yarraville	Wantirna South	St Kilda
Fix sticking door	\$220	\$220	\$300
Install deadlock	\$145	Up to \$185	\$143
Fix a leaking tap*	\$97	\$97	\$97
Install power outlet*	\$65	\$65	\$65

\*Callout fee, which is added to any further cost

the biggest difference more than \$40.

Handle My Complaint chief executive officer Jo Ucakalo, who runs a consumer-help website, said householders needed to be told whether they were being stung extra.

"Businesses have a right to estimate for a job as they see fit," Ms Ucakalo said.

"It's not reasonable for consumers to see a variation in quotes when there is no justification for it.

"If there's travel involved then that could involve an additional expense, but that should be highlighted.

"Consumers should not be paying extra just because they are seen to be in a more expensive area."

Each householder gave the same description of work required as part of Public Defender's test.

Tradies asked to fix a leaking tap and install a power outlet quoted a callout charge only.

Yarraville resident Owen Wade, who placed some of the calls, said it was easy for consumers to pay too

much if they lacked trade knowledge.

"Tradesmen are generally pretty good and they give you a good service," Mr Wade said.

"But you have just got to be wary — there are some shonks out there."

Housing Industry Association chief executive Graham Wolfe said it was hard for tradespeople to provide quotes without an inspection.

"Quoting over the phone can be quite difficult," Mr Wolfe said.

"Often it is an indicative amount based on rule of thumb.

"You need to be careful that those rates don't change when they come and have a look at it."

## Skin trick for ageing

A NEW range of anti-ageing creams that trick human skin cells into regenerating themselves is expected this year.

The products, designed to smooth out wrinkles and repair damaged skin, have been designed by experts in glycobiology, the science of using naturally occurring sugars to improve health.

L'Oreal hopes its attempt to harness the technology, registered as Glycanactif, will prove a popular addition to the cosmetics market.

Artificial chemicals have

been developed to mimic the behaviour of natural chemicals that penetrate the surface and stimulate the regeneration of skin cells.

These natural chemicals become less active with age, so it is hoped the cream would cause a manufactured stimulus to the skin to hopefully improve its condition and appearance as if the body were much younger.

Researchers are reported to have found improvements in skin's elasticity, thickness and smoothness.

Bruno Bernard, research director at L'Oreal, said: "There is still much more to cell signalling and the ageing process, but all the cosmetics we had before were acting on the surface.

"We are able to create a rejuvenating effect on the deeper levels of the skin."

Similar technology has led to the medical advances such as a vaccine against fatal infant flu.

It is also expected to be a key element in the fight against cancer.



Film on him: Sir Elton John.

## Elton picks Justin

SIR Elton John is working on a biopic about himself and says he'd like Justin Timberlake to play him.

The film would be a "jukebox musical" with possibly a couple of new songs, John said.

"It's going to be a surreal look at my life... I just don't want it to be a normal biopic because my life hasn't been like that."

John, 64, said there would be an announcement about the film very soon.

"We have a director on board, and then it's just

going to be a matter of getting the script exactly the way we want it," he said.

He said Lee Hall, who wrote megahit *Billy Elliot*, had written the screenplay and that they would soon start trying to cast and plan production.

On who will play him, John said: "I've got a wish list of people. Number one on my wish list is Justin Timberlake, because he played me before in a David LaChapelle video of (John's classic) *Rocket Man* and was superb."