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Fox fined \$5000 for illegal renovations

Steve Butcher

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MULTIMILLIONAIRE trucking boss Lindsay Fox has avoided a conviction for illegal work during a \$650,000 improvement to his daughter's Toorak house.

Mr Fox was fined \$5000 — half the maximum penalty — and given two months to pay it and a costs order of \$1935.

Mr Fox, 69, did not appear in the Melbourne Magistrates Court, but pleaded guilty through a barrister to carrying out building work without a permit.

John Hoey, prosecuting for the City of Stonnington, told the court that after a complaint to the council on May 16, its records showed no permit had been issued for the work at the Lisbuoy Court house.

Mr Hoey said a council inspector checked the site that day and saw internal and external walls had been demolished and a steel framework built.

Other work included footings for steel columns, internal and external stud walls, a new timber wall, a roof to an existing balcony and a ground-floor extension.

Mr Fox admitted he was responsible for the building site. Mr Hoey said the work began in April and Mr Fox was told to stop the work until a permit was issued on May 31.

Brian Bourke, defending, said Mr Fox did not want to defend the charge and "tease council along".

Mr Bourke said there had been nothing clandestine about the work, which did not affect the facade of the old house. There was no damage or inconvenience to anyone and no one's rights had been denied, he said.

Mr Bourke submitted there was no need to convict Mr Fox because of his age, lack of prior convictions and his co-operation and frankness with the council.

Asked by magistrate Carmen Randazzo why a permit had not been obtained, Mr Bourke said it was "difficult to fathom", but someone had indicated one was not needed for "alteration" work.

Ms Randazzo said several mitigating factors warranting a non-conviction order included the nature of the work and that it was Mr Fox's first time before a court. Mr Fox could not be reached for comment.

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