



Letters to Consumer chief executive, Sue Chetwin

Payment in full

Q. I live in Wellington and am having a sliding door custom-made by an Auckland company. After spending quite some time discussing plans and then receiving a quote, the company mentioned it required a 50% down-payment before beginning work and the remaining 50% before the finished product left its Auckland factory. This means I will have paid for the door in full before seeing any proof the door is completed, let alone inspected the final product to ensure it is what I ordered and the quality is acceptable. Is it legal to require full payment of a custom-made product before delivery and inspection?

A. Suppliers are legally entitled to demand payment, either in part or in full, as a condition of completing the work. This has become fairly common practice, particularly for products such as custom-made joinery which has little or no resale value if the purchase isn't completed. It means you have to be as sure as possible that the company you're dealing with is reputable.

Not laughing gas

Q. I am renting a property with gas water-heating supplied by refillable gas bottles. I've recently refilled a gas bottle but am now leaving the property. It seems the gas company doesn't offer a refund on almost unused bottles. Where do I stand legally? I've paid for a bottle of gas which I can no longer use and the company won't reimburse me.

A. If it says in the contract that you don't get reimbursed for a partially used bottle, the company is entitled to refuse a refund. It's worth asking your landlord to arrange for the next tenant to reimburse you for the cost of the gas.