

NATIONAL NSW CRIME

Trusted handyman jailed over 'atrocious' thefts from elderly woman

By Angela Thompson
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A handyman, who used his access to an elderly woman's home to steal her belongings, has been jailed.

Aaron James Scott Simons pinched a fridge, a television set, a pedestal fan, an electric mower, a DVD player, a portable clothes line, a kettle, four canvas prints, two heaters and a pair of binoculars - \$6500 worth of goods in all - in the seven days he held a key to the home in Wollongong.

The 81-year-old woman's daughter employed Simons - a family friend - to carry out repairs and maintenance at the home after her mother, suffering from dementia, moved into a retirement home.

The family paid him \$3500 upfront and handed him the key on January 16.



Business was in trouble: Aaron James Scott Simons. FACEBOOK

When the woman's daughter returned to inspect the work on January 22, a long list of items was missing.

When questioned, Simons told the woman's daughter they must have been stolen by someone.

But the woman later spoke to neighbours who said they had seen Simons moving the items.

After contacting police, she searched online for her mother's belongings, and found some of them listed for sale on Facebook Marketplace.

The listing led police to Simons' home, where several of the missing items remained. Some had already been sold.

Simons, 25, later pleaded guilty to charges of stealing property and dealing with proceeds of crime.

On Wednesday, Wollongong Local Court heard Simons' own fridge was broken when he justified his decision to begin stealing from the woman.

His lawyer, Stewart Holt, told the court that Simons' business, On the Clock 24hr Handyman Services, was underperforming and he had relationship troubles at the time.

"He instructs me he feels very bad about what he did," Mr Holt said. "He does acknowledge he's done the wrong thing and he's learnt his lesson."

Magistrate Michael Stoddart condemned Simons' "atrocious behaviour".

"You were paid \$3500 cash upfront to carry out the work - also given a key to the premises," he said.

"And then you go and steal all these things.

"In my view this sort of stealing [by] ... a person who has been entrusted with the key, has had money upfront, is nothing short of disgraceful and you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Simons expressed remorse for his actions in court on Wednesday, saying he had known the family for 16 years and it was "a shame I done that to them".

He was convicted of stealing and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. He is due to be released on September 6.

He was placed on a two-year good behaviour bond for dealing in the proceeds of crime.

His lawyer immediately lodged an appeal. He is expected to apply for bail in Wollongong Local Court on Thursday.