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Fresh copyright accusations for property firm

Fresh accusations have emerged that property spruiker and seminar company Richmastery copied intellectual property without permission and used it in websites and presentations.

After the Sunday Star-Times last week revealed seminar material was lifted directly from authors Peter Aranyi, Olly Newland and Mark Withers, David Hows, former business partner of Richmastery founder Phil Jones, said copyright infringement had happened before at Richmastery.

In a posting on the PropertyTalk website on Monday, he wrote, "(Richmastery's) borrowing of intellectual property is not an insulated or careless incident. Phil's continuous borrowing of IP and copyrighted material was one of the major reasons that I left the relationship."

Hows' and Jones' partnership ended acrimoniously in 2004, and Jones last week rebutted Hows' claims, suggesting they were related to ongoing ill-feeling between the two.

Hows says Richmastery copied material on several occasions, including the copying of an online finance calculator from finance company Cairns Lockie. After the threat of legal action Richmastery stopped using the calculator.

William Cairns of Cairns Lockie confirmed Richmastery had copied its calculator, "which at the time was pretty good".

"They just went and took it," he said. "If they had just asked us for it we would have given it to them."

Cairns said he only threatened legal action on principle.

Jones said the use of Cairns Lockie material was the fault of a website developer. "The intention was that we produced our own Richmastery calculator that simply provided our clients with a similar result as the Cairns Lockie one which was cited as an example only. When we discovered that the website developer had in fact simply stolen the Cairns Lockie calculator we immediately took the appropriate action to correct the matter."

Jones added, "It is disappointing that three years after Mr Hows and I ended our partnership, he still feels the need to publicly air what I can only assume are sour grapes".

Aranyi, who discovered material in Richmastery course notes identical to passages from his book *Commercial Real Estate Investor's Guide*, is seeking damages for infringements. Richmastery has called the copying a "mistake" and Jones said he had arranged for the disputed material to be removed from future presentations.

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