

# Bruce Atkinson

Spokesperson for Small Business,  
Sport and Recreation

Parliament House  
Spring Street, Melbourne 3002  
Tel: 9651 8512 • Fax: 9651 8426  
Email: bruce.atkinson@parliament.vic.gov.au



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### THOMSON ALLOWS UNLICENSED ESTATE AGENT TO TRADE

The Bracks Government has adopted a heavy handed attitude to charity fundraising by one of Australia's major corporate companies, Safeway, while turning a blind eye to an unlicensed real estate trader.

In a monumental case of mismanagement, Labor's Minister for Consumer Affairs Marsha Thomson has obtained a Magistrate's Court order to prevent Safeway supermarkets from conducting fundraising appeals in any of their stores unless they formally register as a charity with Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Safeway has been a good corporate citizen with a long history of responsible involvement in charity fundraising and the Bracks Government has been heavy handed in taking the retailer to court.

Marsha Thomson is prepared to waste taxpayers' money trying to shut down Safeway's fundraising efforts but do nothing to protect homebuyers from unlicensed agents.

She has failed to stop Peter Mericka of Lawyers Real Estate from trading in real estate, when he has been refused a license by the Business Licensing Authority.

The Business Licensing Authority was not satisfied that Mr Mericka could be licensed to sell properties or negotiate real estate sales contracts under the provisions of section 14 of the Estate Agents Act.

Although Mr Mericka does not hold a license to run a real estate business, he appears to be conducting such a business and Marsha Thomson has done nothing to ensure consumers' interests are protected.

Under section 79 of the Estate Agents Act, consumers who use the services of Mr Mericka in a real estate transaction do not have recourse to the Victorian Property Fund because he does not hold an estate agent's license.

On 16 November this year, Marsha Thomson told the Parliament that the Bracks Government advises all consumers to deal with licensed real estate agents. *"We are very clear about the importance of using a licensed real estate agent, because with that comes not only the protection of the law and access to the Estate Agents Act and all within it but it ensures, we would hope, that the person you are dealing with is performing their duties appropriately,"* (Hansard, 16 November 2005)

Mr Mericka is not a licensed real estate agent yet the Bracks Government has failed to act on his unlicensed real estate trading.

Marsha Thomson is wasting time and money pursuing Safeway supermarkets for fundraising for charities at Christmas time.

This kind of mismanagement and skewed priorities are a hallmark of the Bracks Government.

**Media contact: Bruce Atkinson 9625 1381**