

Media Release



Government of South Australia

Office of Consumer and
Business Affairs

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WARNING TO REAL ESTATE AGENTS AND HOME OWNERS ABOUT PERTH PROPERTY SCAMMERS

The Commissioner for Consumer and Business Affairs, Paul White, is warning South Australian consumers to watch out for identity fraud, following a second case of real estate scamming in Perth.

A Perth couple realised they were victims of the scam when they returned from an overseas trip to find their property had been sold without their knowledge or permission.

Upon hearing of this matter, the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs met urgently with the Registrar-General of the Land Services Group and industry representatives from the Real Estate Institute of South Australia, Australian Institute of Conveyancers (SA) and the Law Society of South Australia to discuss the possibility of such an event occurring in South Australia.

“We are fortunate to have a robust system of checks and balances in our state, which commence at the time the agent signs an agreement with the vendor to sell the property, through to registration of the transfer of ownership at the Land Titles Office,” the Commissioner said.

“Industry and government have identified at least nine steps during this process, which should identify a possible scam situation.

“Given this stringent process, the risk of a real estate scam occurring in South Australian is minimal.”

However Consumer and Business Services warn property owners to be vigilant where they have rented properties and the keys to the property are held by a third party.

Consumer Business Services also warn real estate agents and conveyancers in South Australia to be vigilant when selling property, and ensure that appropriate identity checks are made.

“It is important that all documents are scrutinised to ensure their authenticity and agents must verify the owner’s details, including contact details, which involves more than a telephone call to identify the seller.” Mr White said.

“It is imperative that agents confirm new contact details against existing records to be certain they are dealing with the genuine owner of the property.

“Agents must ask questions that only the owner would have knowledge of and even consider asking for payment of advertising fees in advance, as some scammers resist making any upfront payments.”

The Real Estate Institute of South Australia has today released to its members an information sheet on what to look out for and how to handle situations where they are not dealing with the owner face to face.

“Consumer and Business Affairs are always keeping a watchful eye on scamming activities, to protect South Australians from falling victim to these scammers,” the Commissioner said.

“We will remain in close contact with industry bodies to make sure that our processes remain rigorous and ensure the safety of all South Australian properties.”

For all media inquiries contact the 24-hour AGD Media Line 0422 007 069