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First National Real Estate Karratha reprimanded and fined for overcharging clients

Seaville Holdings Pty Ltd trading as First National Real Estate Karratha has received a reprimand and fine of \$5,000 by the State Administrative Tribunal for overcharging clients for property inspection and management fees.

The agency was found to have charged the owners of four properties more than what was contracted for property inspection fees between December 2011 and March 2014. The agency had also charged too much to four other property owners for management fees between November 2011 and March 2015.

The total overcharging in these eight instances was in excess of \$5,500. As the overcharging breached the Code of Conduct for Agents and Sales Representatives 2011 and given the amount of the excess charges for these eight properties, Consumer Protection took disciplinary action.

It was accepted that the overcharges were the result of administrative errors and were not deliberate. The overcharged amounts have been refunded to the owners. Following an investigation by the Department, the agency undertook a review of all its owners' files and has refunded clients more than \$19,000 that had been overcharged.

Acting Commissioner for Consumer Protection David Hillyard said it's imperative that real estate agents only charge fees agreed to within their management authorities.

"With proper checks and balances in place, accounting errors should not occur in the management of client's accounts, especially over such a long period of time," Mr Hillyard said.

"Property owners should check their statements carefully and ensure that the fees being charged are in accordance with their agreement. If not, take the matter up with the agency and contact Consumer Protection if the problem is not rectified immediately."

More information on the obligations of real estate agents and sales representatives is available on the Consumer Protection [website](#) or enquiries can be made by email: consumer@commerce.wa.gov.au or by calling **1300 30 40 54**.

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