

Thursday, 27 November 2008

PLEASE EXPLAIN FOR CHARGING CHARITIES

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs Michael Atkinson is investigating whether South Australian charities are facing unfair costs when they collect donations from the public at commercial premises.

"It upset me to hear that the South Australian R.S.L. was asked to pay substantial fees before it could sell Remembrance Day poppies at shopping centres this year," Mr Atkinson said.

"Seeking to make money from volunteer fundraising efforts is an insult to our diggers. It appears to be blatant profiteering by people who clearly don't understand the sacrifices made by our returned servicemen and women," Mr Atkinson said.

The R.S.L. has told the Veterans' Affairs Office that its sub-branches have been asked to pay fees of up to \$200 to conduct fundraising at some shopping centres.

"This fee equates to the profit from selling 200 poppies. This is \$200 that won't be spent on veterans needs. It also means that 200 people have purchased a poppy thinking they're supporting the R.S.L., but they're actually paying a commercial operator!"

The Office has also been informed that The Salvation Army has faced charges of \$320 to collect donations at some places.

"Sensible, civic-minded businesses contribute to worthy causes in-kind, by allowing fundraising at their premises free of charge. This is the generous and kind-hearted thing to do.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs will write to companies and councils involved in the practice of charging charities for the right to fundraise.

"I will be asking them to justify their actions and explain what the fees pay for," Mr Atkinson said.

"If companies cannot explain why the fees are necessary, I will ask them to stop the practice and reimburse the charities they've already charged," he said.

Any other charity or veterans group that has been charged similar fees is encouraged to contact The Minister for Veterans Affairs Office on 08 8207 1723.