

# Media Release



Government of South Australia

Office of Consumer and  
Business Affairs

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## www “Blowing” scam warning

The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) is warning South Australian businesses against a false billing scam hitting the state. Businesses are being targeted by a company called www.Business Search Pty Ltd. The fraudsters try to squeeze money out of businesses to pay for advertisements that were never authorised.

False billing scams are often referred to as “blowing” because the initial approach is made over the “blower”, the telephone.

Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Mark Bodycoat said, “Blowers use a range of tactics to scam money out of people, mainly businesses. Information from interstate fair trading agencies suggests that these blowers are targeting businesses in the Barossa Valley.”

Reports to OCBA provide reason to believe that www.Business Search Pty Ltd uses an Indian call centre to contact businesses. South Australian businesses that have been contacted have been asked to “confirm” their details and are then told to either renew or place their advertisement in the electronic directory.

“Then, all they receive from this exercise is a copy of their advertisement, one they have had in the Yellow Pages, a CD and a floppy disc. These discs represent little or no value and appear to be distributed only to the businesses that have advertised. The real insult is that they also receive an invoice for \$379.50.”

The blowers also try to intimidate their victims by threatening legal action or listing the business as a credit risk if they do not pay the amount of the invoice.

Commonwealth, State and Territory fair trading agencies exchange information and assist one another to warn the community and more effectively combat this practice, but where the scams have offshore operations they can be hard to stamp out.

Earlier this year OCBA, through the Magistrates Court, successfully prosecuted Dwayne Joseph Watts and Steven Scott Bastian, formerly both trading as Blue Chip Publishing of Salisbury Downs. Both pleaded guilty to invoicing businesses for magazine advertisements they had never organised. These two scammers squeezed money out of businesses to pay for unauthorised advertisements in the Touring SA magazine.

“But the simple message is to keep good records. If you didn’t authorise it, don’t pay it. I encourage businesses to keep a record of all ads that they authorise to guard themselves against false billers. If you suspect a blowing scam, contact Consumer Affairs”.

For further information about these and other scams, contact the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs on (08) 8204 9777 or visit [www.ocba.sa.gov.au](http://www.ocba.sa.gov.au).