

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2007

### GIVE COLD CALLS, COLD TREATMENT

Interested in an “unreal getaway” perhaps to Florida or even the Bahamas?

These are just some of the enticements being offered over the phone to unsuspecting South Australians.

However, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Jennifer Rankine, has warned people are much more likely to be taking a trip to their bank to sort out their credit card rather than jet setting off to the promised holiday destination.

People have recently contacted Consumer Affairs for advice about callers who are offering free getaways to Florida and the Bahamas. Victims claim the calls come out of the blue and are told that “in order to get more information about the offer, press ‘9’ to continue.”

“Most of us would be excited at the prospect of a free holiday, but there is always a catch. People are being tempted by the initial proposal of a vacation to an exotic location, but are then asked to press “9” to continue the call.

If they do press nine, they get information about the trip, but soon discover they will have to pay for the travel insurance by credit card immediately, if they want to take advantage of the offer,” Ms Rankine said.

These *cold calls* have renewed concerns about the security of people’s credit card information.

People are urged to stop and think twice before accepting any offer. There’s no way of checking whether any telephone offer is genuine while you are on the line.

“Always request further information about any offer, namely the real costs of the promotion, who you are dealing with, and what you will have to do to take up any offer. If you can’t get the answers you want, just hang up.

The reality is that there are plenty of scammers who want your credit card details purely to engage in fraudulent behaviour at your expense. People should never divulge their credit card details to any organisation they don’t know,” Ms Rankine said.

Earlier this year, Consumer Affairs was involved in the national “SCAMS TARGET YOU - Protect Yourself” scams awareness, an initiative of the Australasian Consumer Taskforce. The campaign was established to help people protect themselves from becoming victims of scans.

Consumer Affairs warns that while the majority of scam contacts are made by mail or email, quite a few involve a phone call out of the blue offering some kind of opportunity.

Types of scams include:

- Supposed outstanding investment opportunities – which inevitably don't exist.
- Inviting businesses to advertise in a magazine - but it is never produced.
- Offering a great deal or a freebie, often accompanied by a tale about the seller being in dire straits. The offer appears a great bargain, but the goods turn out to be rubbish.
- Offering a “free” holiday, but to claim it you have to attend a seminar where you are pressured to invest in time-share or other property schemes.

To enquire about a suspicious call or report a suspected scam contact Consumer Affairs on 8204 9777 or 131 882 for regional callers. Information on scams is available at [www.ocba.sa.gov.au](http://www.ocba.sa.gov.au) or [www.scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au).