

# Media Release



Government of South Australia

Office of Consumer and  
Business Affairs

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## Up, up, and away - with your money

The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) is warning South Australians not to get sucked in by Departure Central Inc, an illegal pyramid scheme.

Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Mark Bodycoat said, "The scheme is a reincarnation of the 1980's aeroplane pyramid schemes. They have just changed the name. Regardless of what it is called, it is illegal."

This pyramid scheme has jetted into Australia from the USA. New members are required to pay a fee to join and are promised money or benefits from recruiting more "passengers", and sending money higher up the pyramid.

The scheme is promoted through its own website. Visitors to the site are encouraged to become premier members at a cost of \$75 each. Each member is said to gain access to their own personal travel booking system and will earn commissions from each travel related booking made.

Members actually join a "virtual plane" consisting of 15 "seats", from coach class to pilot. Members or participants recruit others into the scheme, enabling the first member to eventually achieve "pilot" status.

"The only way this scheme generates money is by taking it from the supply of people prepared to become paying 'passengers'."

Similar pyramid schemes include the Concorde Game, Aeroplane or Rocket Game. A similar pyramid scheme that has previously popped up at Christmas time is Santa's Sleigh Ride.

"Consumers should not participate in this or any other pyramid scheme. All of these scams leave people out of pocket.

Under the *Fair Trading Act 1987* participants face fines up to \$20,000 for an individual and up to \$100,000 for a body corporate.

"People need to understand that they are going to lose money and face the risk of prosecution action by consumer affairs agencies. Not only is the scheme operator liable for a penalty but so are all participants."

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).