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### **GENERATOR RIP-OFF DOING THE ROUNDS**

Scam artists flogging “cheap” generators are currently doing the rounds, reportedly targeting South Australian businesses and farmers.

Recent reports to SA Police and the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs suggest that the rip-off merchants involved have swindled more than \$25,000 from their victims so far, without handing over anything to consumers who paid upfront for generators they’ll never receive.

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Jennifer Rankine, said, “The fraudsters set their traps by contacting businesses and farmers, usually through an unsolicited call, asking them if they’re interested in buying a Honda generator for a lot cheaper than the market price,”

“What they then do is arrange to meet the prospective buyer in the CBD to pick up the cash, promising to go and get the goods. Of course they never return and the consumer is left with empty pockets and empty hands.”

So far police have identified three locations where the rip-offs have taken place – Palmer Place, the car park of the Old Adelaide Inn on O’Connell Street and Tynte Street.

Securing money upfront by meeting in a public location tends to be the classic modus operandi for scammers. The Fair Trading Act 1987 applies to all itinerant traders who do business in South Australia and the penalties for breaching this law can be as high as \$100,000.

“While offers that come out of the blue can appear tempting, consumers need to be alert and inquisitive.

“They should always ask themselves some basic questions about whether or not the proposal before them is legitimate one and whether they’d have any recourse should things go wrong,” Ms Rankine said.

When it comes to door-to door trading, people have a legal right to withhold payment for goods costing over \$50 until the 10-day cooling off period expires.

“Customers should always ask itinerant sales people for ID and details about the company they’re working for such as address and phone numbers.

“While everyone wants to get the best possible deal whatever the purchase may be the message from these types of scams is simple – follow the rules and you’re a lot less likely to be left red-faced and out of pocket,” Ms Rankine said.

If anyone has been the victim of this scam (or any other type of rip off) they should contact the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs on 8204 9777 or 131 882 for regional callers.