

News Release

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Hon Gail Gago
Minister for State/Local Government
Relations
Minister for the Status of Women
Minister for Consumer Affairs
Minister Government Enterprises
Minister Ast Minister for Transport, Infrastructure & Energy

Friday, 13th November 2009

NOT HARD TO FIND “TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE” OFFERS ON THE INTERNET

An alarming number of websites are being investigated for promoting offers that look suspiciously like scams.

Consumer affairs agencies from more than 20 countries participated in an Internet sweep - an initiative of the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network - focusing on websites promoting miracle cures, health claims and employment opportunities. Around 1400 websites were scanned in Australia, of which 400 sites are undergoing further analysis.

Staff from the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) worked with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) in checking 110 sites in South Australia, with 42 of these sites being further investigated.

Minister for Consumer Affairs Gail Gago says “I am greatly concerned that more than a third of all the websites checked in South Australia have a cloud of suspicion hanging over them.”

“This reinforces that consumers simply cannot afford to take websites at face-value. They really need to do their own research to check that the claims are legitimate and the trader is reputable.”

Many of the traders and individuals behind the websites are based offshore, making it difficult to track them down, however the ACCC will be working to protect consumers where there is sufficient evidence of a scam.

“The internet opens up opportunities for consumers to interact with traders from all over the world, but unfortunately it also increases the risk of being exposed to unscrupulous operators,” says Ms Gago.

Minister Gago is encouraging consumers to report concerns about websites featuring outlandish or unproven claims about products or services.

“Many consumers are adept at recognising scams, but if they don’t report a suspect site then it can remain on the web for other more vulnerable consumers to come across it,” says the Minister.

To report concerns about misleading statements by online traders consumers can contact OCBA on 8204 9777, or 131 882 for country callers or contact the ACCC on 1300 302 502.