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TASKFORCE ISSUES NEW WARNING ON SCAMS

Thousands of Australians continue to be bombarded by electronic, phone and postal scams as swindlers become increasingly sophisticated in targeting unsuspecting victims.

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Jennifer Rankine said, "Scams are a widespread problem that can have devastating effects on individuals who respond. It's paramount that people know how to recognise these often ingenious scams and refuse to respond."

Today, The Australasian Consumer Fraud Taskforce announced its four-week campaign designed to help people protect themselves from becoming the next target.

Over the last 2 years, the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs says scams and schemes formed the highest number of complaints, while old scams are resurfacing with many adapted for email and SMS distribution.

"Throughout March, consumers will be given crucial and simple precautions to help them protect their hard-earned money.

It's an insidious and growing crime. The scammers are out there, and they're active with new tricks, the Office of Consumer and Business affairs re-enforcing the message, **'SCAMS TARGET YOU - Protect Yourself.'**

Minister Rankine says, "By working together, government agencies can identify trends, develop prevention strategies, and provide a stronger voice to warn consumers of the potential dangers of various scams that emerge.

One of the best ways to combat this kind of fraud is to help people take the steps to prevent being caught out in the first place."

Consumers are encouraged to report suspected scams to OCBA on 8207 9777, or for regional callers 131 882.