

Media Release



Government of South Australia

Office of Consumer and
Business Affairs

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LOTTERY SCAMS TOP THE LIST

Lotteries make up the most reported set of scams, according to the 18 consumer protection agencies that form the Australasian Consumer Fraud Taskforce.

Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Mark Bodycoat, said that lottery scams been increasing at an alarming rate in recent years.

“The scams tell the consumer that they’ve had a big win! Some consumers believe that paying a fee to receive the winnings is worth it in comparison to the amount they think they’ve won.”

“A number of South Australian consumers have reported sending money to overseas lotteries in the hope of collecting large amounts of money. They should beware – these are scams. Consumers should not respond.”

In addition to requiring payments for insurance, release fees and so on, lottery scams often ask consumers for detailed personal information. The consumer may then be subject to identity fraud or be targeted as an ‘easy mark’ and subject to a range of similar scam offers.

Mr Bodycoat warned that consumers who sent money to these lottery scammers would never see it again.

There are also many reports of consumers being invited to purchase tickets for legitimate overseas lotteries through a syndicate, but it is often cheaper for consumers to buy a ticket direct.

Some tell-tale signs of a lottery scam include:

- Winning a lottery or sweepstake that you have not entered.
- Limited contact details provided such as a PO Box number or mobile phone number
- Being notified by email. Official lottery offices do not use email to advise winners.
- The sender claims the offer is legal or has Government Approval.

Destroy it, delete it or hang up!

The Australasian Consumer Fraud Taskforce advises consumers that the best defence against lottery scams is to destroy or delete them without responding.

“Scammers cannot succeed without consumers who respond” said Mr Bodycoat.

To report a suspected scam contact the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs on 8204 9777 (or 131 882 for regional callers). A list of scams is available at www.ocba.sa.gov.au or www.scamwatch.gov.au

Background

This campaign initiative is part of a range of strategies that will be undertaken from 13 February – 10 March in the campaign co-ordinated by the Australasian Consumer Fraud Taskforce. All 18 member agencies (including Commonwealth and State agencies and two New Zealand agencies) have an interest in enhancing the role of government and the private sector in reducing the impact of consumer-related frauds and scams. The Taskforce aims to help consumers throughout the campaign to recognise scams upfront and to not respond to them.

This nation-wide campaign has been timed to coincide with the Global Consumer Fraud Prevention Month which is being co-ordinated by the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN), a membership organisation consisting of the consumer protection law enforcement authorities of more than 30 countries including Australia. The international campaign aims to raise awareness of the problem of consumer fraud for consumers, business and government alike.

Taskforce members

For a list of the 18 members visit www.scamwatch.gov.au/content/scams/acftdescription.asp

Taskforce partners

Taskforce members are joined in communicating with Australian consumers about scams by a range of community, non-Government and private sector organisations. Visit <http://www.scamwatch.gov.au/content/scams/partners.asp> for a list of Taskforce partners.