

# 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

Monday, 2 March 2009

## **AUSSIES LOSE A BILLION DOLLARS TO SCAMS**

Consumer Affairs Minister Gail Gago says research suggests as many as one in 20 Australians may have lost up to a billion dollars in scams perpetrated by fraudsters in just one year.

The Minister says the scams often involve approaches to consumers by email or letter making claims or promises that can only be met by sending money to an overseas destination.

“What I find alarming is that so many of us fall for these scams, regardless of education or income,” Ms Gago says.

According to the Personal Fraud report released last year by the Australian Bureau of Statistics more than 800,000 Australians aged 15 years and over had fallen victim to personal fraud during the previous 12 months.

While nearly 40 percent of scam victims had a gross weekly income of less than \$500, more than 15 percent of victims earned at least \$1500 per week. More than a third of victims also held a degree, diploma or high educational qualification.

“Many of these people may not consider themselves to be vulnerable or gullible but they clearly are.”

The Minister’s warning coincides with the start of National Consumer Fraud Week - an initiative of 19 consumer protection agencies across Australia and New Zealand who are working together to increase awareness of scams.

Of all the complaints lodged with the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) in 2008 scams topped the list. Minister Gago said that the office took a proactive approach to warn consumers about the latest scams and encouraged consumers to report any scams that they received.

Already this year (2009) OCBA has received almost 500 calls about bank frauds, lottery scams and inheritance scams. The latest scam reported to OCBA involves an email, supposedly from the Federal Government, asking consumers to update their personal and banking details so they can receive payments under the recently announced stimulus package.

“Scammers are quick to find new ways to fool consumers into parting with their money or personal details. If you think something looks suspicious then report it to Consumer Affairs and remember the old adage – if it looks too good to be true then it generally is.”

For more information about scams contact OCBA on 8204 9777 or country callers 131 882, or visit [www.ocba.sa.gov.au](http://www.ocba.sa.gov.au) or [www.scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au)