

Media Release

The Hon Melissa Horne MP

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation

Minister for Ports and Freight

Minister for Fishing and Boating



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BEWARE OF ONLINE SCAMMERS WHILE STAYING AT HOME

The Victorian Government is urging people to be wary with their personal information during the pandemic, with Victorians losing more money in the first eight months of this year as they were in the entire 12 months of last year.

With Scams Awareness Week beginning, Minister for Consumer Affairs Melissa Horne said being mindful of who you give your details to has never been more important, given the huge number of people working, studying, and shopping from home due to coronavirus restrictions.

Coronavirus restrictions mean more people are turning to digital platforms to communicate, and while social media is a great way to stay connected, it can also be a hunting ground for scammers.

New Scamwatch data shows Victorians have have been scammed out of more than \$10 million already this year, compared to just over \$8.2 million in 2019.

Almost 2,000 Australians reported potential identity theft so far in 2020 alone. Identity scams can happen in many ways, ranging from someone using your credit card illegally, to having your entire identity assumed by another person and business conducted in your name without your knowledge or consent.

Often scammers use stolen personal information for opening and operating new bank accounts in your name or accessing your bank accounts, with one consumer noting her details had been used to place a \$300 order from a business she had not purchased from.

Anyone can fall for a scam, but Victorians can help protect themselves by keeping the following things in mind:

- stop and think – do not give your personal information to unexpected messages and emails asking for your details, even if they claim to be from a reputable organisation or government authority
- do not open or click – do not open attachments or click on links in unexpected social media message or pop-up windows
- find and verify – if you are unsure about the legitimacy of a message, contact the person or business using contact details you have found independently.

If you suspect your personal information has been stolen, act quickly to report it to police and notify the relevant organisation, such as your bank, if you think your credit card is being misused.

Scams Awareness Week 2020 runs from 17-21 August. For more information visit scamwatch.gov.au/scamsweek2020.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Consumer Affairs Melissa Horne

“It’s appalling that anyone would use this situation to take advantage of someone, but we all need to do our part to protect our safety online.”

“Our growing use of technology gives scammers more opportunities to trick you into giving away your personal or financial information – people need to be careful and report any suspected scams to police.”

“Scams Awareness Week is a great time to remind Victorians’ that identity theft is serious and can have long-term financial and emotional consequences, and that it’s so important to be vigilant and know the warning signs.”

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