

# 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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## SHRED AWAY IDENTITY THEFT

The Andrews Labor Government is reminding people to dispose of confidential documents securely while working from home to protect themselves from identity theft.

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation Melissa Horne today joined locals at the Footscray Library to dispose of personal documents in a shredding truck and speak about privacy protection.

With many Victorians spending most of the past financial year away from the office and working from home, shredding facilities are not as available as they may normally be.

Even for those who don't work from home or an office environment, coronavirus restrictions have meant more people are using online services, so it's important to know what you can do to protect your personal information online.

A new financial year passing also means Victorians will be lodging tax returns – often in hardcopy – and is a timely reminder to always destroy these private documents properly once they're no longer required.

Identity theft involves someone using your identity to steal money or gain other benefits. This is often done by scammers physically stealing personal information through mailboxes or discarded documents, or via fake emails or texts prompting consumers to click a link and fill out their personal details online.

ScamWatch figures reveal reports of identity theft in 2020 across Australia almost doubled, with more than 20,000 cases reported compared to 11,000 in 2019. Victorians reported the largest amount of financial loss due to identity scams last year, with almost 6,000 reports and losses of almost \$1 million.

To protect yourself from identity theft you should:

- put a lock on your mailbox
- destroy any documents containing personal information that are not required
- be cautious about requests for your personal information over the phone and in person
- regularly check your bank and superannuation statements.

You can also ask your bank or utility suppliers to send you bills electronically.

If you suspect that your personal information has been stolen or misused, it's important to act quickly and notify the relevant organisation, such as your bank, or report it to the police.

For further information on identity theft and scams visit [www.scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au).

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Consumer Affairs Melissa Horne

*“Protect yourself from identity theft by making sure scammers can't gain access to your private information through carelessly discarded documents.”*

*“We've seen too many Australians fall victim to these often financially devastating scams over the past year. Today is an important reminder to always take extra safety steps when dealing with your personal information.”*

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