

Media Release

The Hon Marlene Kairouz MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs,
Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Minister for Suburban Development



**DELIVERING
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

Monday, 11 February 2019

DON'T FALL FOR ROMANCE SCAMMERS ON VALENTINES DAY

The Andrews Labor Government is urging Victorians to avoid being exploited by heartless scammers when looking for love online ahead of Valentine's Day.

According to the *ScamWatch* website, dating and romance scams accounted for more than \$24 million in losses across Australia in 2018, with Victorians losing more than \$4.1 million.

A 69-year-old man lost \$377,000 after signing up to a dating agency. The scammers organised for him to meet a woman they claimed wanted to marry him. The scammers, who are believed to be from interstate, made multiple trips to Victoria, where the victim handed over large amounts of cash.

The victim was told that the money would cover the cost of the wedding, and help fund his fiancé's legal battle against an overseas government for access to lucrative land and property owned by her deceased ex-husband.

Minister for Consumer Affairs Marlene Kairouz said that some people become so invested in a relationship that they do not question any tactics the scammer may be using to elicit money from them.

In order to protect yourself, or someone you know, from a romance scam:

- Be extremely suspicious of anyone who:
 - avoids meeting you in person or being seen via video chat
 - asks you a lot of questions, but is vague when talking about themselves
 - makes over-the-top expressions of love or a marriage proposal
 - quickly tries to move the conversation off the dating site or app to your personal email or another channel.
- Never send money or share your bank details with someone you have not met in person – money sent via money order, wire transfer or international funds transfer can be impossible to recover.
- Use Google's reverse image search function to check if their photos appear elsewhere on the internet.

For more information go to consumer.vic.gov.au/reportascam

Quotes attributable to Minister for Consumer Affairs Marlene Kairouz

"These romance scammers deal in the art of lies and deception, cruelly misleading honest people searching for love and companionship."

"Victims do not only suffer financially – many are left feeling a sense of betrayal and humiliation for investing so much time and money into what they thought was a legitimate relationship."

"Victorians need to be alert when meeting someone online, and advise anyone who may be a victim of a romance scam to report it."

Media contact: Stephanie Jones 0448 359 507 | justicemedia@minstaff.vic.gov.au