

Media Release

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THIS VALENTINE'S DAY LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP INTO ROMANCE SCAMS AND JEWELLERY PURCHASES

Consumer and Business Services is cracking down on dodgy jewellery sales and warning of romance scams ahead of Valentine's day.

Commissioner for Consumer Affairs Paul White said his officers had been out in the lead up to Valentine's day to protect the rights of consumers who may be buying jewellery.

"Our officers carried out inspections at 58 independent and chain jewellery stores in the Adelaide CBD, suburbs and regional areas to check with compliance with Australian consumer Law.

"Officers found 13 cases of incorrect refunds information being given to consumers, either on signs or receipts.

"Inspectors removed incorrect signs and provided traders with compliant signs to display to ensure consumers are accurately informed about their rights.

"CBS received 23 complaints related to jewellery in 2012

"Last minute buys and the allure of the romantic can catch out the unwary and trusting," he said.

"Consumers are not entitled to a refund or replacement if they simply change their mind about a product.

"However, if the item is faulty, unsafe, different from a sample or description, or doesn't perform as advertised, consumers are entitled to a refund.

"And importantly, people who receive goods as gifts have the same rights and are entitled to the same remedies as consumers who purchase goods directly.

"Consumers should ask about the store's 'change of mind' policy before they buy, return goods as soon as a problem or defect is found, and keep the receipt as proof of purchase.

"And if consumers can't resolve a problem with the retailer, they should contact Consumer and Business Services on 131 882 or visit www.cbs.sa.gov.au

Commissioner White also warned that consumers were at risk of high debt and dissatisfaction from romance scams and he warned people looking for romance to get introduction agency agreements in writing and beware of online predators.

The ACCC reported Australians lost \$21 million to dating and romance scams in 2011. The average loss for a victim reporting a scam to the ACCC was more than \$20,000.



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In the 2012 calendar year, Consumer and Business Services received 11 complaints and notifications about introduction agencies and dating or romance scams.

Commissioner White said consumers using traditional and online introduction agencies should be wary of additional costs and ongoing requests for more money.

“For men and women using introduction agencies they need to be realistic about how many potential matches that may be in their local area or are going to meet very specific criteria.

“Consumers need to make sure any promises made by the trader is in writing and consumers should also be suspicious when traders make promises that there are lots of good matches for them.

The Australian Consumer Law allows consumers to claim compensation when an introduction agency does not meet a consumer guarantee. People may be able to claim compensation for their costs in time and money when something goes wrong with a service.

“We also received several complaints about dating and romance scams - many of which emanate from overseas.

“Repeated requests for more money are standard practice for traditional and online romance scammers, whether the requests come from an agency or prospective partners,” he said.

“Once you’re on the hook, a scammer will reel you in as long as you take the bait. The internet presents a whole range of risks for consumers looking for romance.

“Overseas scams continue to catch out consumers and domestic dating agency rip-offs also wreck romantic aspirations.”

More information about dating and romance scams is available at www.scamwatch.gov.au.