

Minister Gail Gago

Minister for Business Services and Consumers

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Get smarter with your data to protect from fraud

South Australians are being urged to get smarter with their data to keep it out of the hands of scammers, as part of 2015 National Consumer Fraud Week which runs from 18-24 May.

Business Services and Consumers Minister Gail Gago said it's important consumers and businesses are aware how to protect themselves from two of the nation's most reported scams - identity theft and computer hacking.

"If you haven't taken action or thought about how to keep your private information secure, chances are you could be leaving it wide open for scammers to use for fraud," Ms Gago said.

"The Australian Competition Consumer Commission's latest scam activity report suggests scammers are getting better at stealing people's personal details and money online.

"In 2013, South Australians lost almost \$5 million at the hands of scammers.

"The ACCC received more than 15,200 reports nationally of phishing and identity theft scams - an increase of nearly 74 per cent compared to 2012. In South Australia there were about 1200 reports.

"Phishing is an illegal attempt to get sensitive information such as usernames, password and credit card details, and use it to steal a person's identity, or commit bank fraud.

"As part of identity theft scams, people often receive a message claiming to be from a legitimate and well-known government, corporate or financial organisation requesting personal details to verify account details, pay a bill or win a prize.

"These types of scams are so common, it is likely most people think it's a nuisance and don't report it."

Computer hacking remains one of the most reported scams, with more than 10,400 reports nationally in 2013. Of these, 882 were from South Australia.

The traditional computer virus scam has evolved to now include social network and email account hacking. Scammers may claim there is a fault with a person's internet services and that it will be disconnected if they do not pay or give access.

Follow these tips to protect yourself and leave scammers out in the cold:

- Keep your personal details secure
- Think twice about what you say and do online
- Keep your mobile devices and computer secure

- Choose your passwords carefully
- Beware of any request for your details or money
- Get a copy of your credit report.

Ms Gago said financial losses are just one part of the impact scams have on the community.

“Scams can devastate the lives of victims, who report their mental health, work capacity and personal relationships suffer,” Ms Gago said.

“Victims often suffer in silence because of the social stigma of falling victim to a scam, but I encourage people to report a scam at www.scamwatch.gov.au

“We want to make sure consumers are vigilant in managing their personal data.

“Consumers need to be alert and remember not to respond but to report any suspicious activity - the more information we receive, the more we can work towards stopping scammers.”

For more information about scams, and how to protect yourself, visit:

www.cbs.sa.gov.au/wcm/consumers/scam/about-scams