

Media Release

21 May 2018

CONSUMERS WARNED TO BEWARE OF THREAT-BASED SCAMS

South Australians are being urged to look out for scammers who use threats to scare people into giving them money or personal information, as part of Scams Awareness Week from 21 to 25 May 2018.

Dini Soulio, Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, today said that South Australians lost more than \$3.6 million to scams in 2017, including almost \$26,000 to scams that scared victims into parting with their money, such as threatening someone's life.

"Impersonation is a common tool used by scammers - they use the name of a government agency or trusted business to trick you into thinking they're genuine, like the tax office, Telstra, Australia Post or the police," Mr Soulio said.

"Scammers then threaten people with fines, disconnecting their internet, taking them to court, arrest or even deportation.

"They will often try to make you feel as if you've done something wrong and you must act immediately or suffer the consequences.

"It is important that all South Australians stop and check – is this for real?"

ACCC's 2017 Targeting Scams report revealed that investment scams caused South Australians the most losses at \$1.8 million, up 21% from the previous year.

Romance scams resulted in the second highest losses of \$598,157, down 24%.

If anyone receives an unexpected and threatening call or email that seems to be from a government agency or trusted business they should:

- Verify the person's identity through a phone book or online search, then contact the organisation to check that the call or email was real. Don't use the contact details provided by the caller or in the message sent to you.
- Never send money, give your banking or credit card details or other personal information to anyone you don't know or trust, and never by email or over the phone.
- Remember that a government agency or trusted business will never ask you to pay them with gift or store cards, iTunes cards, wire transfers or bitcoin.
- Never give anyone remote access to your computer if they've contacted you out of the blue, whether through a phone call, pop-up window or email.

For more information about these scams, where to get help or to report a scam, visit the Scamwatch website: www.scamwatch.gov.au/scamsweek2018.