



NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT MEDIA RELEASE

13 September 2002

DR PETER TOYNE MLA Minister for Justice and Attorney-General

WARNING ON WAVE OF FAX SCAMS

Minister for Justice Dr Peter Toyne is alarmed at the wave of scams inundating Territory mailboxes, fax machines and emails - *including his own Ministerial office fax machine today* - and again warns Territorians to be wary of such scams.

Over the past week, Consumer Affairs officers have been inundated with complaints from irate consumers who have received numerous scam-type proposals to participate in faxback offers.

Dr Toyne urged Territory consumers to remain vigilant to scam offers and take the sensible approach when evaluating 'too good to be true' offers.

"It's time for Territorians to get tough on fax fraud and refrain from replying to these scam offers".

"Consumers hold the key to winning the fight against these mercenary cheats, and should throw these offers into the bin where they belong," Dr Toyne said.

Some of the latest in a long line of similar scams include:

Faxbacks - that cost consumers, or their employer, a fortune

The 4 and 5 day diet, is a recent example. This scam offers consumers a weight loss program with miracle results in just four days. Consumers make the request and the diet is forwarded by return fax at a cost of \$5.50 per minute, and takes up to 22 minutes for the miracle diet to be printed off your facsimile - a rip-off of more than \$100.

Any diet program offering miracle results in just four days is simply too good to be true!

Wanted - people for modelling, TV and extra work

A scam from a UK based modelling agency. Directed to males and females, short, tall, young, old, fat or thin and lures recipients into believing that by returning the fax, they *may* become famous. This is a concern for younger Territorians who are more vulnerable to this type of advertising.

Cost to the recipient, \$5.50 per minutes and can take up to 20 minutes to process - a rip-off of more than \$100.

Buy a Porsche 911 for just \$21,800

The latest faxback is offering Government and Police Disposal Sales information. Recipients are being advised of the sale of stolen vehicles, which is misleading, as trading in stolen vehicles is not permitted.

The cost for this faxback is \$5.50 per minute and takes about 10 minutes to process. The 14 page reply, some of which is propaganda, just refers the recipient back to auction houses. Consumers have the right to make their own judgement of 'value for money', considering the information is readily available on the internet and in the yellow pages. Other than misleading, the deception is that the supplier doesn't tell you up front, that your fax account is being charged in excess of \$50-\$55 for the information.

Work from home schemes

These type of offers promise high returns for simple tasks that can be done at home. In reality, they are heartless cons that target the unemployed and needy. They require an up-front payment for what often turns out to be a photocopied note advising the victim to put up their own 'work from home' signs and cheat others.

The Nigerian Sting: A scam that has been around for years, and has left a number of Territory consumers sadder, wiser and thousands of dollars poorer.

Dr Toyne said Territorians should be suspicious of any offers that attract such a large cost to the consumer - for some scams more than \$100 - especially when there is no proof of legitimacy of the offer.

Fax scams operate through a 1902 line where the fax fee is automatically charged back to the sender's facsimile account and the scam operator then receives the majority of the scammed money.

"To put a stop to 1902 number fax scams Territory Consumer Affairs Officers are working with other States and the ACCC to have the 1902 facsimile number closed down."

"However, consumers play a key role in undermining this type of fax fraud by continuing to take slick promises of easy money with a grain of salt, and trashing them," Dr Toyne said.

For advice on potential scams or to advise of received scams you can contact the Office of Consumer Affairs 7 days a week on 8999 1999.