

MEDIA RELEASE

Acting Commissioner for Consumer Affairs

25th February 2008

BEWARE OF SEDUCTION & DECEPTION

The Northern Territory Consumer Affairs Office will be taking part in the Australasian Consumer Fraud Taskforce's two week awareness campaign "Fraud Fortnight".

Acting Commissioner for Consumer Affairs Gary Clements said the two week campaign reminds consumers of the message 'SCAMS TARGET YOU! Protect Yourself' – a warning that scammers are out to seduce and deceive.

Fraud Fortnight runs from 24 February to 8 March 2008 and aims to raise awareness about deceptive and seductive scams.

"Scams are designed to trick you into giving away your money or your personal details. Scams can come in many forms – mail, email, telephone, over the Internet and door-to-door," Mr Clements said.

"Seduction scams involve great offers that are never intended to deliver.

"It can be as simple as clicking on a computer pop-up for a prize that sends a virus to your computer, or entering a competition that seems legitimate but is really collecting information to steal your money or your identity.

"Deception scams involve criminals pretending to be from legitimate companies and requesting information that will allow them to profit from their fraud.

"They can be very hard to spot, and are very good at making you think they have something to lose. It's easy to panic when you are unexpectedly contacted by someone who sounds official particularly if they say money is at risk."

Mr Clements said new technology meant scammers have new ways to contact and deceive consumers.

"If in doubt, don't give it out," he said. "Just because someone is asking for your details, doesn't mean you should hand them over.

"Check the story through a web search, or call the organisation back through a known number. Never use the organisation's contact details given by the person requesting the information.

"The SCAMwatch website is also an excellent resource to check up on current scams, report a scam, or to see if there's already a warning."

Fraud Fortnight is an initiative of the Australasian Consumer Fraud Taskforce.

Established in March 2005, the Taskforce is comprised of 19 Federal and State government regulatory agencies and departments (including New Zealand) that have a responsibility for consumer protection in relation to frauds and scams.

The Australasian Consumer Fraud Taskforce is part of the Mass-Market Global Fraud project of the International Consumer Protection Enforcement Network (ICPEN).

Due to the exponential growth of global scams, more than 30 ICPEN consumer regulatory agencies around the world participate in campaigns to warn consumers against global scams and fraud during the February/March period.

“I encourage consumers who have been the subject of scams to fill out a scams survey on the Australian Institute of Criminology website at web.aic.gov.au/surveys/acft,” Mr Clements said.

Gathering this information will help agencies such as ours to improve the prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of scam offenders.

To find out more about scams and to report scams visit www.scamwatch.gov.au or call SCAMwatch on 1300 795 995.

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