

MEDIA RELEASE

Acting Commissioner for Consumer Affairs

17th July 2008

RENTAL PROPERTY SCAM

Territorians are being ripped off through rental property scams on the internet.

The Acting Commissioner of Consumer Affairs Gary Clements has warned renters to be careful when responding to rental properties advertised on the net where the owner says they are interstate or overseas.

Consumer Affairs has received complaints from Territorians who have been ripped off by the scams.

One scammer, calling herself Margarethe Joensen, advertised a Darwin property on www.share-accommodation.net using photos of the property put on the net by the owner when it was advertised for sale years earlier.

The scammer told potential tenants she was overseas for business but they could move in while she was away as long as they paid a bond and rent in advance. The tenants paid the money but then discovered the property was not available for renting and the scammer was not the owner.

"We believe a number of Territorians may have been caught out by this scam and have lost large sums of money in the process," Mr Clements said.

"Consumers should never make an upfront payment for rent or bond by direct debit unless they are confident the person who advertised the property is the owner. This scam comes at a time when the rental market is tight and consumers are most vulnerable.

"I urge anyone who has fallen prey to this form of scam or the activities of Ms Joensen to contact Consumer Affairs on 1800 019 319".

MEDIA CONTACT: Gary Clements 8935 7735 Mobile 0401 116 821

NOTE: A consumer who provided details of this scam is willing to speak on this issue, please call Mr Clements for contact details.