

FROM THE ACCC'S INFOCENTRE:

Real stories about online dating scams

CASE 1 (FEMALE)

I WAS CONTACTED by a man through an online dating site. He told me his name was Hans Andrews, import/exporter. It turned out that he'd assumed a stolen identity and used false images off the internet. In fact, he was from Nigeria, part of a well-organised crime syndicate operating between Nigeria, the United States and Australia. I received flowers. I spoke to him on the phone most days for six weeks. I am concerned the US number may be looped back to Nigeria. He eventually claimed to be in Ghana and unable to get one of his shipments processed and that he needed money because his wallet had been stolen, so he could get home. Whenever I sent money to him, something else came up and he needed more. In total, I paid \$5836 via Western Union to help him. I have accepted that I will not get my money back, I want to protect other unwitting vulnerable women and try and put a stop to this in Australia.



“ ”

Whenever I sent money to him, something else came up and he needed more.

“ ”

I feel helpless and embarrassed and want these criminals caught and punished.

“ ”

I confronted him about all the things that didn't add up with his story and still he kept trying.

“ ”

I paid for visas, passport and airline tickets for Candice to come here from Manila to meet me.

CASE 2 (MALE)

I RECEIVED A MESSAGE from a lady to chat and then we exchanged email addresses. The lady claimed undying love and longed for a relationship. She claimed to have deceased parents and an inheritance in Nigeria which was left in security boxes and required a fee to be released. She asked for my home address and money to be sent by wire transfer to various accounts in Nigeria where she was stuck on family business. She claimed she actually lived in Albury, Australia, and wanted to visit me. I sent money via Western Union—\$3247. I feel helpless and embarrassed and want these criminals caught and punished.

CASE 3 (FEMALE)

I WAS CONTACTED by 'Frank' on an online dating service. It said on his profile he was from Melbourne. We chatted the first night using the online chat line and then he sent me his email address. Frank's profile was really sad; he'd lost his father, mother and wife all in the last seven years. He was supposedly a property developer from Melbourne and had a contract to build classrooms in Ghana, arranged by a charity organisation in Canada. Once in Ghana, he said he was mugged and lost US\$48 000 that he was using to pay the clearing agent to get his machinery from the port. I was contacted by another man saying that Frank was in a coma and they needed to know about his family. They asked me to forward US\$400 to a man to pay for medicine. When he came out of hospital. Frank asked me again to send money to him as he had lost everything and his world was falling apart. I confronted him about all the things that didn't add up with his story and still he kept trying. I gave him more information than I should have and feel ridiculous that I let this happen to me.

CASE 4 (MALE)

I MET A WOMAN called Candice online. She lived in the Philippines. We struck up a friendship and after some time she wanted to visit me in Australia. I paid for visas, passport and airline tickets for Candice to come here from Manila to meet me. She didn't show and she gave me excuses that I fell for. I sent money a second time to get her here but again she never showed, and gave me more excuses. I don't know what to say but I know now I was being used. It is very upsetting; Candice used a man to get the money so I think he is involved in the scam as well. I can only send and receive text from her; I don't have her address, only a phone number and email address. I had been in contact with her online since August and was supposed to meet her the last time at Christmas Eve. She told me she was at Adelaide airport and I was texting her but did not find her. The time before she vanished for a week and I had been in contact with the man in the Philippines trying to find her. The man asked me to send him money to pay the airline ticket office for all her travel details and said he would send them to me so that I could track her and find out where she was. I sent \$350 to him but got no info and then he claimed she came to Australia but was sent back. I haven't heard from her since Christmas Eve but the man has tried to call a couple of times but I didn't answer, I told Candice I was contacting the police.

If you believe you have been scammed, report it to the ACCC: contact 1300 302 502 or visit www.scamwatch.gov.au