

Scams: It's personal

Romance and dating scams often begin when scammers post fake ads on legitimate dating sites. The fake relationship can then last months or even years. Because of the duration of these scams and the manipulation of emotions, these types of scams can be the most devastating both emotionally and financially.



More and more people are meeting their significant other on-line. A recent survey found that 25 per cent of Australian adults are using the internet to find a partner.¹

This is despite online dating sites being used by people who seek to scam money out of would-be partners by claiming the funds are for airfares or internet bills that need to be paid to carry on the relationship.

While romance and dating scams made up only 2.7 per cent of the total number reported to the ACCC in 2010, the financial losses reported were over \$15 million or around a quarter of the total for all scams.

'We are working with online dating sites to make dating sites safer. We have established a working group and of course these sites want to educate and protect their users from scammers,' ACCC Deputy Chair Peter Kell said.

While all scams can have a devastating financial and emotional impact, the victim of a romance scam is more likely to keep the matter to themselves and not seek help because they don't want to admit to having been duped.

'People should not be afraid to report or seek support if they think they are involved in a romance or dating scam,' Mr Peter Kell said.

'We often get calls from friends or relatives because they are worried that someone they care about is being taken advantage of through some form of romance and dating scam,' he said.

'People need to realise they are not alone and people of all ages, from all kinds of backgrounds including lawyers and university professors fall for scams. Many scams are very believable and sophisticated. The more people share their stories about scams the less likely it is that other people will be taken advantage of.'

Romance and dating scams often begin when scammers post fake ads on legitimate dating sites. The fake relationship can then last months or even years. Because of the duration of these scams and the manipulation of emotions, these types of scams can be the most devastating both emotionally and financially.

'There are some things you can look out for to avoid being scammed when you are trying to meet someone special,' Mr Peter Kell said.

'One is people will often ask you to correspond away from the legitimate site you met on. They will often profess strong feelings very early in the relationship and initially the amounts of money they ask for may be very small,' he said.

Money is usually asked to be sent via a wire service as they are quick and hard to trace.

These are some of the reasons romance or dating scammers give to get money from their victims:

- › They ask for money for a phone, internet connection or computer to keep in touch.
- › They pretend to develop an illness or have an accident and need money for treatment.
- › They pretend that their child or other close family member develops an illness and needs help paying for treatment.
- › They pretend they will visit but need money for airfares, visas, taxes etc.
- › They claim they are trying to send a gift to you but they need to pay a customs fee.
- › They claim they have inherited some money or something of worth but need help paying upfront fees such as taxes.
- › They pretend to have an interest in a business they want to share with you but need help to pay wages etc.

SCAMwatch twitter

SCAMwatch twitter will keep you up to date on the latest scams targeting Australian consumers and business and will give you tips on how to recognise, avoid and report scams. Stay one step ahead of scammers by following SCAMwatch on Twitter twitter.com/SCAMwatch_gov or [@SCAMwatch_gov](https://twitter.com/SCAMwatch_gov)

For more information on dating and romance scams visit www.SCAMwatch.gov.au

'We often get calls from friends or relatives because they are worried that someone they care about is being taken advantage of through some form of romance and dating scam.'

¹ www.abc.net.au/news/events/love-bytes/