Understanding Telephone Scams

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The most prolific form of identity compromise currently impacting the Australian and New Zealand communities are telephone scams.

Most scams originate from offshore. There are two common varieties –

1. scams that deceive individuals to provide personal information and payment details over the phone;
2. scams that can lead to remote access of a device for the purposes of harvesting information, transacting and/or installing malware, such as ransomware.

Detecting telephone scams

- Cold calls from individuals that claim to be from well-known government and private sector organisations.
- Numbers may appear from Australia or New Zealand, but will likely be routed from offshore.
- Scammers will look to incentivise individuals to act on something, for example a prize, a grant, an unpaid tax, a virus.
- Some may even threaten legal action or money loss.
- Scammers will ask you to "prove" who you are or ask for access to your device.

Preventative measures:

- Good organisations won't call you and then ask you to prove yourself.
- Scam calls can be received from landline or mobile numbers and the "Do Not Call" register will only keep honest telemarketers at bay.
- Don't feel pressured to act. If you think a call may be legitimate take down the person's name and number and do your own research. Make sure when you hang up you hear a dial tone – some scammers will pretend to hand up and catch you dialling the real organisation's number only to pretend to answer it (when they haven't disconnected from the first call).
- Don't think a message left is more legitimate, it's not.
- Hang up if you suspect it is a scam and talk to family or friends about it.

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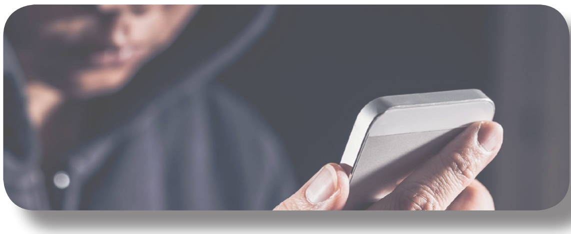
Responding to telephone scams:

- If you believe that you have experienced a telephone scam contact IDCARE for assistance 1300 432 273 (AUS) 0800 201 415 (NZ) or idcare.org.
- Disconnect your device immediately from the Internet if they have gained remote access.
- Immediately contact your financial institution(s) and inform them of what has happened.
- Engage service providers and ask what additional security can be put in place.
- Note down any identifiers of scammers, such as the telephone numbers they have called from.
- If you believe you have had your licence, passport or other high-risk credential compromised see our Fact Sheet about Credit Reporting Agencies.



More information

- In June 2018, 45% of individuals experienced a telephone (remote access) scam.
- One of the main reasons for believing a telephone scam was the scammer knowing details about an individual (eg. name and address.
- Another reason for believing a scam was if an individual was experiencing issues with their internet or device.

Other Fact Sheets

- Credit Reporting Agencies
- Scam Prevention and Education
- Engaging Organisations
- Social Media
- Devices and Technology
- Your Rights