

Media Release

TANYA PLIBERSEK MP
Minister for Human Services
Minister for Social Inclusion

Friday, June 17, 2011

Warning of scammers posing as Centrelink workers

The Federal Government is warning people to be wary of a new Nigerian-like scam where victims are asked to transfer money to someone claiming to be a Centrelink employee.

Minister for Human Services Tanya Plibersek today said several recent reports have emerged of customers being asked to transfer several hundred dollars to an account in India in order to facilitate a substantial return payment.

“We have received several reports of people making phone calls claiming customers will receive a large Centrelink payment when they transfer several hundred dollars to a designated bank account,” said Ms Plibersek.

“People should be aware that claims made by callers of large sums of money being available in exchange for payments are a scam and they should not cooperate.”

“Centrelink never asks its customers to transfer funds and I urge people not to send money to anyone they don’t know.”

Ms Plibersek said recent months reports of people being targeted by scammers purporting to be Centrelink workers have occurred in West Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and Queensland.

The most recent report of the scam occurred in West Australia when a man was asked to transfer \$300 to India in return for \$3,000. In another recent call an elderly Queenslanders was asked to send \$800 through Western Union in return for \$3,000.

The scam is similar to the so-called “Nigerian 419 scam” where people are contacted by email or letter and asked to transfer money to assist in the release of funds for a substantial “reward.”

“Unscrupulous people who perpetrate scams often target the most vulnerable in the community such as the elderly and people from non-English speaking backgrounds.”

“I urge anyone who suspects they have received a scam phone call to make a note of the details including the time and date of the call, the gender and accent of the caller and what the caller said.”

Ms Plibersek said people who received such calls should report them to the Australian Government’s fraud tip-off line on **13 15 24**.

Information about scams can also be found at www.scamwatch.gov.au

Media contact Minister Plibersek’s office: Simon Crittle 0466 773 531