



How to avoid becoming a victim of a Tax Scam

Scammers. It seems they're everywhere. The ATO has received over 40,225 reports of impersonation scams and over \$1 million in losses from over 300 Australian just this year alone. You can't turn one way or the other without being targeted.

Scammers are also getting smarter. The latest tax scams mimic businesses and government departments so well, you'd think you were speaking with the ATO itself.

How are scammers doing it?

Scammers have adopted 'Robocall' technology, which sends pre-recorded messages to land line and mobile phones across Australia. This technology manipulates caller identification so that phones display a legitimate ATO phone number despite having come from overseas. Known as 'spoofing', it is a technique to make their call seem legitimate.

It's important to note that calls made by the legitimate ATO do not show a number on caller ID, nor do they use pre-recorded messages. If you are rung from a person claiming they're from the ATO, chances are, they're faking it.

How can you protect yourself if you are targeted for a tax scam?

If scammers do make contact with their victims, they will request payment of a non-existent tax debt through unusual methods, such as:

- bitcoin
- gift cards
- vouchers
- pre-paid cards
- direct credit to a bank account
- issuing a direct web link via email or SMS to a login page to make a payment
- requesting a fee to release finds owed to you

Scammers will also threaten with immediate arrest, jail or deportation and do their best to keep you on the phone until payment has been made. They may also become rude and aggressive and can be very persuasive.

What can you do to protect yourself from a tax scam?

Be careful when clicking on links, downloading files or opening attachments you may receive. These may contain invasive viruses that, when downloaded onto your computer, can access private identification numbers and bank account details. Only give these types of details to people you trust,

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such as your registered tax agent, and never post them on social media. If you do receive a suspicious email, you can forward it, unopened, to ReportEmailFraud@ato.gov.au

If you do receive a suspicious text or message and you're just not sure it's authentic, follow up. Call the ATO on 1800 008 540 to verify the message. Do not reply to the message or call back. Your registered tax agent will also be well versed with the latest scam data and can tell you if you have been targeted.

If you're still not sure and you've answered a call:

- Ask for their full name and extension number
- Ask for their team leaders full name and extension number
- Hang up and verify the information with the ATO

What do you do if you have been scammed?

If you have been the unwitting victim of a scammer and have provided information about your funds, your TFN, or provided personal details, phone the ATO straight away. These details can be compromised. Contact your bank straight away if you have provided credit card details as a part of the scam.

Keep up to date

The ATO has a scam alert web page, which is updated with the latest scams. You can access this page here: <https://www.ato.gov.au/General/Online-services/Identity-security/Scam-alerts/>

The ATO's general email updates include information about the latest scams, as well as general information on the ATO web site. You can subscribe here: <https://www.ato.gov.au/Subscription.aspx> There's no need to be a victim.

Help is at hand. ITP The Income Tax Professionals can help you with any tax related questions you may have. Schedule an appointment or drop by your nearest ITP office today!

ITP The Income Tax Professionals are more than tax agents. They have been helping Australian individuals and businesses with their business accounting and advice for 50 years and offer a wealth of knowledge. Speak to a Professional today and see how your business can be more profitable.



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