

Media Release

The Hon Nick Staikos MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs
Minister for Local Government



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LOVE AT FIRST SWIPE? STAY SAFE FROM SCAMS THIS VALENTINES

The Allan Labor Government is urging people to stay safe online as Valentine's Day approaches – with Victorians reporting losses of \$5.5 million to romance scams last year.

Minister for Consumer Affairs Nick Staikos today reminded Victorians to keep their hearts open but their heads alert for red flags when chatting and dating online.

Romance scams are continuing to evolve, with scammers using different channels to target specific age groups.

Australians reported losses of \$23.5 million to romance scam fraudsters throughout 2024, with men, women and people of all ages impacted.

One Victorian man was scammed after he started a relationship with a woman on an online dating website. He paid the woman \$250 for a date in advance, then paid another \$500 to buy a gift card. He never met the woman and couldn't get his money refunded.

Stories like this are far too common, highlighting the need for people to recognise the warning signs of a scam. To protect yourself or someone you know from a romance scam – look out for the red flags:

- be wary of anyone who makes over-the-top expressions of love known as 'lovebombing', or anyone who quickly tries to move the conversation to another app
- be mindful of those who encourage you to make 'easy money' through investments, like cryptocurrency
- question anyone who requests money or banking details – they may tell you they have an emergency and urgently need your money, or ask you to set up accounts or transfer money
- be mindful of your own profile across social media channels, particularly personal information you share. Scammers may use details to help target you.

Anyone who believes they have been the victim of a romance scam should contact their local police and report the matter to Scamwatch at scamwatch.gov.au or to Consumer Affairs Victoria.

As well as financial losses, romance scams can cause significant emotional suffering. If you are experiencing emotional distress, you can contact Lifeline on 13 11 14.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Consumer Affairs Nick Staikos

"We know that these scammers go to extreme lengths to 'groom' their victims and gain their trust, typically by asking for money for a range of emotive reasons."

"Scammers have no hesitation in exploiting people's emotions, often to gain financial advantage. It's important to look out for the warning signs to avoid being scammed."

"Victorians need to be alert when meeting someone online and should report a scam as soon as possible to Scamwatch or Consumer Affairs Victoria so we can warn and protect others."

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