

Scam losses could hit \$4 billion, ACCC warns

BUSINESS

With attacks up 90 per cent, small businesses are urged to recognise fraudulent schemes.

By [Keonia Swift](#) • 08 November 2022 • 3 minute read



Scam losses could double to \$4 billion this year, the ACCC has warned as it joins forces with the ATO to raise alert levels for online cons in Scams Awareness Week.

The ACCC's Scamwatch said its reports, which capture just part of the overall activity, were already up 90 per cent as of September this year with over 166,000 incidents and \$424.8 million in losses.

It said in 2021 Australians filed more than 286,600 reports with Scamwatch, detailing losses totalling \$324 million, which along with reports from a dozen other organisations added up to \$2 billion in losses.

The ACCC will set up a national anti-scam centre with \$10 million in government funding announced in the recent budget.

“Millions of Australians are more vulnerable to scams following the recent spate of large-scale data breaches,” ACCC deputy chair Delia Rickard said.

It said two of the most common scams targeting small businesses were phishing, with over 50,000 reports, and fake billing, with over 16,000 reports.

Small firms were thought to be an easier target for scammers because overworked owners had less security than bigger companies.

There were 1,440 claims totalling \$6.6 million in losses from small firms. According to ACCC the most common ways scammers are communicating with victims are by phone calls, text messages, and emails, which is why Australians should remain alert to any suspicious contact they receive.

“Scammers evolve quickly, and their tactics are becoming increasingly sophisticated and unscrupulous. There have been hundreds of reports to Scamwatch in the weeks after the recent high profile data breaches and that is expected to continue,” Ms Rickard said.

“Cyber criminals have capitalised on the data breach by impersonating government departments and businesses to carry out identity theft and remote access scams.”

“While there is a great deal of work underway to disrupt scammers, our best defence against these types of scams is education. We want Australians to know what to look for, so they don’t get caught out,” Ms Rickard said.

Despite how concerning these figures are, one-third of scam victims keep their victimisation hidden, so the figures are likely far higher.

Scams Awareness Week is a national campaign involving 350 public and private sector partners, including top banks and financial institutions, technology firms, trade associations, consumer groups, and nonprofit organisations.