



Media release

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SMS scam targeting natural disaster victims promises 8% bonus on tax returns

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is warning the community about a new SMS scam which promises an 8% bonus on 2020 tax returns to victims of recent natural disasters.

ATO Assistant Commissioner Karen Foat said this is a classic case of fraudsters impersonating the ATO in an effort to collect personal information from people like names, addresses, emails, phone numbers and online banking login details.

This particular scam includes a link to a fake myGov website which looks genuine.

Over the past few years the ATO has seen an increasing number of reports of scammers contacting members of the public pretending to be from the ATO by SMS, email, and phone, and the scammers are becoming more and more sophisticated.

“Last year, over 15,000 people reported to us that they provided scammers with their personal identifying information”, Ms Foat said.

“Your personal and financial information is like the keys to your identity and your money. Once a scammer has your data, they will either sell it on the black market or use it to impersonate you.

“Armed with your details, scammers can do things like get a loan or commit fraud in your name, access your bank account and shop using your credit card, lodge tax returns, or steal your superannuation.

“If you receive an SMS, call, or email and aren’t sure if it’s genuine, it’s OK to not respond. Instead, you can phone the ATO’s dedicated scam line **1800 008 540** to check if it is legitimate. You can also report a scam online at **ato.gov.au/reportascam** or give us a call” Ms Foat said.

The ATO does send SMS and emails, and also makes phone calls to taxpayers. But there are some tell-tale signs that it is not us. We will never:

- > send an SMS or email requesting you click on a hyperlink to log on to government services
- > ask you to provide any personal identifying information in order to receive a refund
- > use aggressive or rude behaviour, or threaten you with immediate arrest, jail or deportation
- > project our number onto your caller ID – so people can be sure that if there’s a number on their caller ID, it’s not the ATO calling
- > request payment of a debt via cardless cash, iTunes or Google Play cards, pre-paid Visa cards, cryptocurrency, or direct credit to a personal bank account.

"If you or someone you know has fallen victim to a tax related scam, the best thing to do is call the ATO as soon as you can on **1800 008 540**", Ms Foat said.

Any member of the community impacted by disaster and needing assistance or anyone suffering financial hardship is encouraged to talk to their tax or BAS agent or contact the ATO on **1800 806 218**, when they are ready, to discuss their situation. Detailed information is available on the ATO website at **ato.gov.au/NaturalDisasters**

Due to natural disasters, Australians are entitled to an 8% bonus on their 2020 tax return. Please begin the process by filling out the form below.

<https://my.gov.verifications-digital.com>



Text Message

