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Scams targeting the Vietnamese speaking community

The Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) runs the National Anti-Scam Centre which was established in July this year to make Australia a harder target for scammers. The National Anti-Scam Centre does this by facilitating cooperation and collaboration across industry and government. You can find out more about what we're doing to stop scams on the [ACCC website](#).

We have become aware of a rise in scams targeting the Vietnamese speaking community in Australia.

How the scam works

The recent scams targeting Vietnamese speaking community include the following, though not all elements are present every time.

- The victim receives a phone call, often “spoofing” the actual phone number of a police station or government department in Vietnam. Because this number mimics the real phone number, when victims search for it on the internet, they see it's a real number and believe the call to be genuine. It is not.
- The scammer speaks in Vietnamese and may ask for the victim by name. The scammer may ask for personal information such as date of birth or passport number.
- The scammer informs the victim that they are in trouble with police or immigration authorities, either in Vietnam or Australia. Alleged wrongdoing may include:
 - Making an error or false claim on immigration applications.
 - Sending documents, credit/debit cards, or passports through the post from Australia to Vietnam.
 - Money laundering for criminal activity.
 - Drug use.
- Sometimes the scammers say that the victim has not broken the law, but that someone using their identity has.
- The phone call may be transferred to other scammers pretending to represent different government or police agencies in Vietnam.
- The scammers demand the victim pay a fine to avoid going to jail, or they may demand the victim transfer money to a bank account to prove their innocence. The victim is told that they will not be allowed to return to Vietnam until this money is paid.

Neither the Vietnamese nor the Australian government or police are involved in these calls. They are conducted entirely by scammers falsely claiming to represent government institutions.

This type of scam is highly sophisticated and convincing because it involves multiple perpetrators who play on their victim's fears by threatening them with jail time or the lie that they cannot return to Vietnam.

Warning signs

- You receive an unexpected call, message, or email from someone claiming to be from the police, a phone company, bank, government department, or trusted company.
- The caller claims that someone is using your identity or alleges you have been involved in a serious criminal matter.
- You are told you need to prove your innocence.
- You are threatened with legal action, arrest, or deportation.
- The caller will tell you that to fix the matter you will need to pay a fee, fine, bond or bail money.
- You may be told not to speak about this matter with anyone.
- The caller may ask for your personal information, such as your passport details, date of birth, or bank information.

Protect yourself

- Don't be pressured by a threatening caller asking you to prove you have not been involved in a crime. Hang up and don't respond.
- If someone tells you that you are being investigated, speak to the local police in Australia, the international student support body of your university or your local Australian-Vietnamese community support service.
- Don't engage with the caller and do not follow their instructions. If you do, they will escalate their intimidation tactics and attempt to get your money.
- Never leave your camera on because someone has instructed you to.
- If you are concerned for your safety, contact the police in Australia immediately by calling 000.

The ACCC website has information in Vietnamese about to protect yourself from scammers. www.scamwatch.gov.au/about-scamwatch/tools-resources/in-your-language/vietnamese. Please share this link with friends and family to help protect them from scammers.

There is no need to be ashamed or embarrassed if you or others you know fall victim to scammers. They are very sophisticated and target hundreds of people across Australia every day. Please [report the scam](#) to us to help protect others.

Up to date information about scams and how you can protect your business and customers from scams is available on the ACCC [website](#).