



## Blowing Away Fake Invoices

Businesses should warn all employees in their company about scam callers chasing payment for products or services that have never been ordered, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Marsha Thomson, said recently.

"These scams are known as 'blowing' because the operators get on the phone and harass employees into authorising payment," said Ms Thomson.

"These cold callers frequently seek urgent payment for advertisements they claim have been booked by the company. Their modus operandi is often to claim the ads are due to appear in local business directories, 'official' government publications or websites.

"Others claim payment is outstanding for basic office supplies such as toner cartridges or stationery.

"Using high-pressure, aggressive tactics the callers' standard line is that 'someone' from your company has placed an order and you need to pay up now.

"Their aim is to create confusion and then hope your business will just write a cheque or authorise a credit card payment to make the problem go. It's a big scam that can hit small business really hard."

Ms Thomson issued the warning as part of the Australasian Consumer Fraud Taskforce's month-long anti-scam campaign.

Ms Thomson said there were tips companies should use to avoid being scammed, such as:

- Restricting the number of people within the company who can authorise orders and payment
- Maintaining a register of orders and deliveries
- Only placing advertisements in publications or on websites known to you
- Keeping a detailed record of when and where the company has advertised
- Always insisting on receiving a copy of the entire publication before payment, not just an advertisement which can be easily faked

Ms Thomson said the Bracks Government had strengthened the Fair Trading Act, making it an offence for a publisher to assert a right to payment without obtaining written authorisation for the advertisement.

Those who break the law risk fines of more than \$62,000 for a corporation and more than \$25,000 for an individual.

For more information call Consumer Affairs Victoria on 1300 55 81 81 or visit [consumer.vic.gov.au](http://consumer.vic.gov.au)



## Workplace Bullying Seminar at Swan Hill

The workshop will be held at the Swan Hill Performing Arts Centre from 10.30 pm to 1pm on 22 May.

Bookings are essential for the workshops which can be made online at [bullying\\_info@workcover.vic.gov.au](mailto:bullying_info@workcover.vic.gov.au).

The anti-bullying workshops will provide practical information about what constitutes bullying and how to prevent it from occurring through the introduction of anti-bullying policies.

WorkSafe's 'Prevention of Bullying and Violence in the Workplace' will be available at the workshop. It is also available online at [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au) or by calling WorkSafe's advisory service on 1800-136-089.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said community awareness of bullying as a serious workplace and community issue had risen along with workplace injury insurance claims.

The average cost for medical and rehabilitation of someone making a bullying claim is more than \$41,000 compared to \$23,000 for physical injuries.

"Bullying is an important topic for workers and employers to understand, but the cost of these claims indicates only part of the impact of bullying.

"The effects of bullying can last a lifetime. It doesn't only affect the victim but also their family and workmates.

"For employers, the ability to identify and deal with potential problems before they occur can prevent considerable disruption later."

Mr Merritt said claims costs were reflected in the premiums paid by employers for their workplace injury insurance.

"That should help motivate people to understand the issue and develop preventative strategies. Even when claims are not made, staff turnover and the related costs of recruitment, and damage to reputations can be considerable.

"As a community, we must do all we can to prevent this destructive behaviour," Mr Merritt said.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act requires employees and employers to ensure they identify and address workplace hazards that affect the psychological health of employees.

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