



**THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP**  
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

**THE HON MICHAEL SUKKAR MP**  
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Stopping ATO phone call scams**

Scammers making phone calls which fraudulently appear to come from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) have had their business model comprehensively disrupted following action under the Morrison Government's Scam Technology Project.

Under this scam, Australians were receiving calls which appeared to come from a legitimate phone number used by the ATO. In 2019, the ATO received over 107,000 reports of impersonation scams from the community.

Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said "Displaying a misleading phone number in a phone's 'caller line identification' (CLI) display is known as 'spoofing' and is commonly used by scammers to make their calls appear legitimate to unsuspecting victims."

"Our Government was determined to act to stop these scammers preying on Australians and using a 'spoofed' ATO number as part of their scam. At the Government's request, Australia's telcos joined together with the ATO and Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) on a three-month trial of technology to block these scam calls appearing to originate from legitimate ATO phone numbers."

The scammers use software to mislead the CLI technology which is a feature of most mobile phones and modern fixed line phones. Rather than transmitting the actual phone number the call is coming from – frequently an overseas number – instead they 'overstamp' it with another phone number. In this scam, they used numbers which had been widely publicised by the ATO for use by Australians wanting to call the ATO.

Under this technology trial, the participating telcos used software to identify calls which had been over stamped with the specified ATO phone numbers – and blocked them.

"This trial has been highly successful in blocking spoof calls from specified ATO numbers. While it will not stop scammers randomly ringing Australians pretending to be from the ATO, it will stop specific ATO numbers appearing in the CLI display on the recipient's phone, thus making the scam seem much less convincing," Minister Fletcher said.

Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer Michael Sukkar said Australians need to remain alert to scammers and should only ever contact the ATO and other organisations through a trusted source.

“Australians should continue to be vigilant about calls allegedly from the ATO and other organisations in which the caller claims that money is owed or attempts to gain access to personal information,” Minister Sukkar said.

“If in doubt about a call, hang up and ring the organisation directly by finding them through a trusted source, such as a past bill or online search. If you are not sure that an ATO interaction is genuine, don’t reply to it and phone 1800 008 540.”

Disrupting this ATO phone scam is just one of several initiatives under the Government’s Scam Technology Project, working in partnership with industry to take action on scam calls on Australian telecommunications networks.

As part of the project, the industry peak body for the telecommunications sector, Communications Alliance is developing an industry code, Reducing Scam Calls, which will mandate steps the telcos must take to identify, trace and block scam calls, and create an information-sharing framework for telcos to work with regulators against phone scams.

For more information on how to protect yourself from scams and fraud visit the [ACMA’s website](#).

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