

14 September 2021

Chair  
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
Email: [le.committee@aph.gov.au](mailto:le.committee@aph.gov.au)

Dear Chair,

I thank the Committee for bringing to our attention the potential COVID-19 phishing scam discussed on the Nextdoor social media platform.

Cybercrime and fraud are currently the most common ways that organised criminal groups seek to exploit the development and roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine. Cyber criminals may take advantage of heightened public anxiety from the pandemic by using evolving methods such as phishing scams.

The AFP is aware of a range of COVID-19 themed phishing campaigns that use official health services and Australian Government branding to target Australians and seek to obtain sensitive personally identifiable information. These phishing emails or text messages come from addresses that very closely resemble official Australian Government email accounts and claim to contain information about COVID-19, such as the economic stimulus payments or official health advice.

These scams are occurring internationally, and the AFP regularly exchanges scam related information with international and domestic partner through the INTERPOL and Europol networks. An INTERPOL Global Alert was recently issued highlighting to all member countries the types of modus operandi used in attempted scams such as the one you have raised.

The AFP is working closely with the Australian Cyber Security Centre's Report Cyber development team to design and implement reporting features that allow the public to quickly and easily report any COVID-19 vaccine-related scams.

To foster public confidence in the vaccine program and prevent criminals taking advantage of any public confusion, mistrust or ambiguity through phishing and other scams, the AFP and other Commonwealth agencies are working together to employ simple, positive messages and maintain a consistent approach in their communications.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's ScamWatch website contains up-to-date information on current scams. Members of the public can also provide information on potential scams that they may have encountered. Anyone who has been a victim of cybercrime, including online fraud, can make a report through the Australian Cyber Security Centre.



Commander Geoff Turner  
Commander Crime  
Australian Federal Police