

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates

2016 - 2017

Division/Agency: Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

Question No: 90

Topic: Indian families targeted and threatened with deportation

Reference: Written (19 October 2016)

Senator: Ketter, Chris

Question:

There was some recent media in relation to newly arrived consumers being targeted for money, through a scam, which threatened to deport these consumers. It was reported that more than 300 reports have been received since March, 2016.

(SOURCE: 7 October 2016 <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2016/10/08/indian-families-being-targeted-scam-threatening-deportation>)

- 1) Do you consider this to be a lot of reports? It's a significant problem is it not? When was the Minister informed of this problem? What was the date of the brief and/or meeting with the Minister? What was his response? Has he or the Department for Small Business taken any action? If not, why not?
- 2) Is the ACCC investigating this issue, perhaps in conjunction with the Federal or State police?
- 3) How are such sensitive personal details – such as passport numbers – being accessed?
- 4) What liaison has been occurring with the Department of Immigration?
- 5) Are any other ethnic groups or vulnerable groups being targeted currently?

Answer:

- 1) The ACCC monitors reports on a monthly basis for scam trends. It received over 100,000 scam reports during the period from March to September 2016. The 300 reports the ACCC has received about this scam over this period is not particularly high relative to other scams in the community. That said, the ACCC considers the nature of the scam to be of public concern and of special interest to people newly arrived to Australia. The ACCC does not routinely brief the Minister for Small Business about scams and did not brief the Minister on this matter. The ACCC has taken the action of releasing a public warning through its Scamwatch website and broadcast media.
- 2) The ACCC is not investigating this issue further, but continues to monitor and raise awareness about current scams.
- 3) The ACCC is not aware of the method scammers are using to obtain this data. More generally, the ACCC is aware that scammers are able to obtain personal information about their victims through a range of techniques including phishing for information from the victims themselves.
- 4) The ACCC and Department of Immigration and Border Protection collaborated on a public warning, which was released through the ACCC's Scamwatch website and sent

directly to 46,000 subscribers of the Scamwatch radar email service. This information is often picked up by the media, which extends its reach and is the source used by the aforementioned SBS article.

- 5) The ACCC is not aware of other specific ethnic groups or vulnerable groups being targeted by this particular scam.