

Fraud Alert: Immigration Scam Continues to Scam People Out of Their Money

Imagine receiving an unexpected call from someone claiming to be from the Department of Immigration Australia or the High Commission of India in Australia. The caller claims that the visa paperwork you have completed in India was incorrect and a case has been opened. The caller states that a letter from the Department of Immigration outlining this issue was sent to you, and you could be deported if the matter is not resolved.

The caller is very intimidating and insists that you remain on the phone. The caller asks you to immediately make a payment to resolve the visa issue via a money transfer company or to deposit cash into a certain bank account to avoid deportation.

This is a scam. Government officials will never call and demand payment immediately using a money transfer service.

Unfortunately, once you have sent the money or made the payment, you have just become a victim of a scam that is happening across the country known as the Immigration Scam. This scam involves calls from individuals claiming to be from the Department of Immigration Australia or the High Commission of India in Australia. Scammers have even cloned the numbers from these government organizations to convince you the call is genuine.

Be careful of calls that appear to come from phone numbers or contain caller identification details that resemble those of government authorities. Examples of known phone numbers include:

- 02 8239909
- 0386011141
- 0386486525

Wayne Howarth, Regional Fraud Risk Manager Asia Pacific, Western Union says, "Criminals often target migrants, but in reality, anyone can be a target of a scam. Awareness is the best defense against consumer fraud. Scams can be convincing, but it's important to keep a few things in mind before you rush to send money."

Howarth recommends you do not transfer money to anyone who asks you to send them money:

- For an emergency situation you haven't confirmed.
- For an online purchase.
- For anti-virus protection.
- For a deposit or payment on a rental property.
- To claim lottery or prize winnings.
- To pay taxes.
- For a donation to charity.
- For a mystery shopping assignment.

- For a job opportunity.
- For a credit card or loan fee.
- To resolve an immigration matter.

If you transfer money, the person you're sending it to gets the money quickly. After the money is paid, Western Union may not be able to give you a refund, even if you are the victim of fraud, except under limited circumstances.

If you believe that you are the victim of fraud, call the Western Union Fraud Hotline at 1800 023 324. For more information on scams or for more tips on how to help protect you from scams, visit wu.com.fraudawareness. For more information on the Immigration Scam, visit ScamWatch at scamwatch.gov.au/news/immigration-scam-targets-migrants

