



For immediate release

BUSINESS EASY TARGET FOR IDENTITY THIEVES

Australian businesses are placing their customers and staff at risk of identity fraud through the sloppy handling of sensitive personal information, Crime Stoppers Australia has warned.

Consumers are regularly asked by businesses to provide identifying information, handing over a wealth of personal detail such as addresses, dates of birth, bank account and credit-card details.

But inadequate storage and disposal of this information leaves them exposed to identity fraud.

Speaking ahead of National Identity Fraud Awareness Week, which runs from October 5 to 11, the chairman of Crime Stoppers Australia, Peter Price, urged businesses to treat customer applications and records as carefully as they would cash and pin numbers.

“We understand there are instances where organised criminals are paying accomplices’ money for every document they find from rummaging through the bins on business premises. The goal is to find personal financial details for use in identity theft.”

Peter Campbell, National Marketing Manager of Fellowes Australia, major partner of Identity Fraud Awareness Week, says that businesses are inadvertently fuelling the boom in identity fraud, Australia’s and the world’s fastest growing crime.

Half a million Australians have been the victim of identity fraud at an estimated cost of \$1 billion, according to groundbreaking research released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics last year¹. Nearly a quarter of those had had their identities stolen.

“Any business that collects personal and financial details of customers and employees is at risk,” Peter Campbell said.

“Information such as names, addresses, bank account numbers or employee payment details can be used by thieves to recreate documents and steal identities.

“Detailed biographical information on customers and employees taken from invoices, statements, pay slips and old personnel documents commonly found in business rubbish can be worth their weight in gold to identity thieves.

“Too often we hear in the media of yet another business that has carelessly discarded highly sensitive customer and employee information.”

In some cases, sensitive materials are disposed of in recycling bins meaning thieves don’t even get their hands dirty to steal people’s identity.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (Released 27th June 2008) Personal Fraud Survey, Australia.

"It is crucial that businesses educate their staff about the safe disposal of sensitive information," he says.

"The National Privacy Act specifically regulates how the private sector handles the collection, use, storage and ultimate disposal of personal information.

"It states that an organisation must take reasonable steps to destroy or permanently de-identify personal information if it is no longer needed. Shredding is not only the easiest and most cost-effective way for business to comply with the law in this area, it's the only way to ensure that someone's identity doesn't fall into the wrong hands," Peter Campbell urged.

About National Identity Fraud Awareness Week and its Partners:

National Identity Fraud Awareness Week is an international campaign that aims to educate consumers and businesses about the dangers of ID fraud and the preventative steps that can be taken. It takes place annually around the globe in Europe, Asia, the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

In Australia, NIFAW is a joint initiative of Fellowes, Crime Stoppers Australia, and partners: Veda Advantage, Symantec – makers of Norton Internet Security – and Australia Post Post Office Boxes.

For more information on how to protect yourself from identity fraud, and how to cope if you are a victim of ID fraud, visit the official campaign website www.stopIDtheft.com.au or www.Crimestoppers.com.au

Fellowes

Founded in 1917, Fellowes is a global operation that employs over 1700 people. As a global manufacturer and marketer of business machines, records storage solutions and technology accessories, Fellowes enables people to work with greater security, organisation and productivity. To see the full range of Fellowes shredders visit www.fellowes.com.au.

Crime Stoppers

Crime Stoppers has become an integral part of policing, with information gathered and supplied by the community essential to crime fighting and crime prevention. Globally Crime Stoppers helps to solve a crime every 14 minutes!

Symantec

Symantec is a global leader in providing security, storage and systems management solutions to help consumers and organisations secure and manage their information-driven world. Our software and services protect against more risks at more points, more completely and efficiently, enabling confidence wherever information is used or stored. More information is available at www.symantec.com.au.

Veda Advantage

Veda Advantage has been at the forefront of the information business for many decades. Issues such as privacy, data security, fraud and business intelligence are part of our commercial landscape.

Veda Advantage is the largest custodian of credit related information in Australia and New Zealand. We provide insights into more than 16.5 million credit-active individuals and 4.4 million companies and businesses throughout New Zealand and Australia. The vast majority of applications for credit in Australia are checked against the files held by Veda Advantage - providing businesses with the information and knowledge to assist them in making informed decision in customer acquisition and credit risk management.

Veda Advantage recently acquired personal security specialists [Secure Sentinel](#). Veda Advantage will now offer cost-effective and comprehensive identity protection services to help Australians adopt a proactive stance against identity crime.

SecureIdentity

4.4 million Australians have been impacted by identity theft*. To help Australians combat this alarming issue of identity theft, we can now offer you a service called SecureIdentity. A SecureIdentity membership will provide you with:

- A copy of your credit file to assist you in managing your credit history information
- An alert system on your credit file, so that you're notified when a credit provider accesses your credit file. You will receive an electronic alert letting you know who has viewed your credit report, any changes to address information, or if new credit applications have been made under your name. This service helps you take action to prevent financial loss from someone else taking out a loan or credit card in your name.
- In addition, one call to Secure Sentinel, 24hrs/7days and we'll immediately arrange to cancel and assist with the reissue of your lost or stolen credit, debit, fuel, ATM and charge cards. You are also covered against the fraudulent use of your registered cards from the time you register your loss with us, to the time we notify the relevant financial institutions.

For more information on how you can protect yourself against identity theft, visit www.secureidentity.com.au or call 1800 022 043. After all, your identity is your most important asset.

*Veda Advantage Galaxy Survey (April 09)

Australia Post - Post Office Boxes

With 1.7 million post office boxes installed in over 3,500 outlets across the country, Australia Post has the largest post office box network in Australia.

Post office boxes can be leased at Australia Post outlets in city, metropolitan, rural and remote areas and are available in a range of sizes to suit private and business customers.

To find out more about post office boxes call in to any Australia Post outlet, visit www.auspost.com.au/postofficeboxes or call 13 13 18.

ENDS

For further information or to request an interview, please contact:

Jenny Stevens
Communicado
Tel: 03 9522 9944 /0416 911708
Email: jenny.stevens@communicado.com.au

David Coghlan
Communicado
Tel: 03 9522 9707
Email: david.coghlan@communicado.com.au