



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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AFP joins with credit unions, building societies to say: "Don't be a money mule"

Credit unions and building societies, in partnership with the Australian Federal Police (AFP), are warning the public about online job offers which can lure them into becoming **money mules**.

Money mules assist criminals with money laundering activities and participate in these activities can result in prosecution.

Money mules allow criminals to transfer stolen money or proceeds of crime into their banking accounts and send funds overseas using wire remittance services, keeping a commission for themselves. The mule is usually approached online via email or instant message, or criminals may advertise on legitimate employment websites and in newspapers.

"These scams carry a high risk of prosecution as money mules are effectively laundering money for criminals," said Abacus CEO Louise Petschler. "We also see unsuspecting people being duped into sending money overseas after visiting romance and dating sites - these are also examples of how criminals are using scams."

AFP National Manager High Tech Crime Operations Neil Gaughan warns that the penalties for this kind of illegal activity can be severe.

"The prospect of making some easy money may appear attractive, but 'commission' payments are recovered by police as they are the proceeds of fraud and the person, the money mule, can become part of a police investigation that could lead to a maximum penalty of 25 years imprisonment," Assistant Commissioner Gaughan said.

"Australians who act as money mules are actually engaging in money laundering and can be prosecuted for that offence. A number of persons have already been prosecuted in Australia."

Credit Unions and mutual building societies, together with police advise that if you are offered an opportunity of making easy money and the offer seems too good to be true, then it probably is.

There are, however, some ways to be alert and spot a money mule scam:

- 1) Always be wary about unsolicited job offers or opportunities which promise you can work from home and make easy money. Legitimate companies will never pay you just to transfer money or goods;
- 2) Be informed - you should always verify **any** company whenever you apply for a job online by using company registration searches, website and company annual reports and local telephone searches;
- 3) **Never** give out your confidential account details, card or personal information like a tax file number or home address to **anyone** unless you are certain it is a legitimate job offer;
- 4) Dating and romance scams can result in being asked to send money, so don't be drawn in. Never send money for airline tickets or visas to someone you don't know; experience tells us you won't ever see the person or the money.

For more information on how money mules are recruited, go to: www.afp.gov.au

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