

SCAMS AND SUPERANNUATION: WHAT EVERY AUSTRALIAN NEEDS TO KNOW

Scams are now an unfortunate reality in daily life, no longer characterised solely by poor grammar and stories of Nigerian royalties. Today, scamming has transformed into a lucrative business, with scammers employing sophisticated tactics that are increasingly challenging to detect.

With total superannuation assets exceeding \$4 trillion, it's no surprise superannuation scams have become a prime target for criminals. Every Australian is a potential victim.

The National Anti-Scam Centre (NASC), a sub-agency of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), is working to bring together industry and government in a united effort to combat scams. Every legitimate company you engage with has its own strategies to protect against fraud, and it's important to follow their guidance. That said, it's also valuable to revisit the types of scams that specifically target your retirement savings.

Phishing scams for your personal and superannuation details

Scammers can impersonate a trusted superannuation fund, often using copied AFS licence details and other information to appear legitimate. They may send you an email or text message containing links or attachments. The objective is to install malware on your device or direct you to a fake website to obtain your existing superannuation fund details, such as login information, account numbers and other personal information.

Once scammers have this information, they can create new superannuation accounts in your name and transfer funds to different accounts before withdrawing them. Remember - never click a link or open an attachment from a suspicious email or text message!

Self-managed superannuation fund scams

While SMSFs give members control and flexibility over retirement savings, they also attract scammers. In this space, scammers don't resort to high-pressure tactics. Instead, they pose as a professional financial services firm, building trust over time before convincing you to transfer your super to another SMSF or their account for withdrawal later.

The following should be considered red flags for these types of scams:

- Offering returns that are too good to be true.
- Offering to take care of everything for you, so there is no need to engage another professional.
- Offering to invest in non-standard assets such as cryptocurrencies or foreign currency bonds.

Professional websites, accreditations and licence numbers do not guarantee a legitimate organisation. Always do your homework before engaging with any professional.

Early super release

In some cases, a member can gain early access to their superannuation for reasons like terminal illness or financial hardship. However, beware – scammers might offer a quick and easy way to obtain an early release for a fee, even if you don't meet the legitimate criteria.

They use authentic-looking documents to establish an SMSF, which they then withdraw for personal use. Regardless of how real or professional the organisation and advice appear; this process is illegal and will result in tax and other penalties.

How to protect yourself

Scammers use every physiological tactic to deceive you into giving away your money. Do not automatically assume any email, text message, or phone call is legitimate. Scamwatch.gov.au, run by the National Anti-Scam Centre, provides some simple guidance.

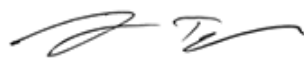
1. **Stop** – Don't give money or personal information to anyone if unsure.
2. **Check** – Check the person or organisation you're dealing with is real.
3. **Protect** – Act quickly if something feels wrong.

If you are ever in doubt about a communication you received, speak to a trusted person for a second opinion and stay alert.

Don't feel embarrassed if you've been scammed. If you suspect that your money has been stolen or your personal information compromised, act quickly—contact your bank, credit card provider, and superannuation fund to report the incident and stop any further transactions. You can also report the scam to <https://www.scamwatch.gov.au> to help protect others from falling victim.

Learn more

If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please contact your Bell Potter adviser.



Jeremy Tyzack

Head of Technical Financial Advice
Bell Potter Securities

Bell Potter's technical financial advice team can put together a strategy designed to help you achieve your retirement objectives.

Working with you and your Bell Potter Adviser, we can help with most financial aspects of retirement, including:

- Identifying your financial goals
- Structuring your existing assets appropriately
- Identifying your approach to investment and your appetite for risk, and
- Reviewing your current superannuation arrangements.

To create a tailored investment plan based on your needs and objectives call your adviser or 1300 0 BELLS (1300 0 23357).

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