

Avoid scammers targeting users of accommodation websites



Share:

ALERT PRIORITY MODERATE

7 December 2016

As the holiday season draws near, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is warning about scammers who use popular accommodation websites (such as Airbnb) to cheat people out of money and personal details.

The ACCC says the scammers advertise accommodation deals at great locations at cheap prices. However, according to ACCC Deputy Chair Delia Rickard, "when you go to book a break, scammers direct you away from the site and ask you to pay them directly using money orders or wire transfer services such as Western Union and MoneyGram."

Ms Rickard says some reports indicate scammers are creating very convincing fake versions of sites in order to collect personal details and banking information. "Be aware that the scammers may send 'confirmation' emails which appear to be official, using a logo or email address that imitates the real thing."

When booking accommodation through websites, you should:

- Never click on suspicious emails and do not reply to them.
- Double-check that the URL, website or email address is correct (be aware that links may redirect you to a fake address that looks similar to the legitimate website).
- Use approved payment methods outlined on the legitimate website. (Most legitimate websites and peer to peer platforms set up secure payment systems where the operator acts as an intermediary between the traveller and property owner. Paying through the platform's system can provide owners and customers with safeguards such as refunds, cancellation policies and dispute resolution in the event that problems arise).