

# Bushfires and scams

The start of 2020 has not been an easy one for Australia, particularly those impacted by the bushfires. Scamwatch is warning all Australians to be on the lookout for fundraising scams and do their research when donating so that money can get to those who are in need, rather than those who would take advantage.

Following every disaster it is natural to want to help and donate as quickly as possible. However, scammers also follow disasters in order to take advantage of the generosity of Australians.

These scammers will most often pretend to be associated with well-known charities, large businesses or government departments to make them look legitimate.

Scamwatch has seen many types of scams spring up in response to the bushfires, including:

- Calls and text messages impersonating businesses or government organisations seeking 'donations' that they will be sending on to well-known charities.
- [Business email compromise scams](#) where the scammer impersonates a high level employee in a business claiming the business will be making a donation to the bushfires to the scammers account.
- Individuals on social media and crowdfunding sites claiming to be fundraising where it is dubious that the money raised will actually be donated.
- Impersonation of real charities via calls, text, and even in person through door to door charity appeals.
- Individuals claiming to be relatives of those affected by the bushfires seeking donations.

Ensure your money gets to those who need it by following this advice:

- Do not donate via fundraising pages on platforms that do not verify the legitimacy of the fundraiser or that do not guarantee your money will be returned if the page is determined to be fraudulent.
- Be careful about crowdfunding requests as these may be fake and also come from scammers. Check the terms and conditions of funding platforms and ensure

you are dealing with official organisations. If you are unsure, make your donation to an established charity instead.

- The best way to avoid scams and make sure your dollars get where they are needed is to do your research and donate directly to registered charities.
- You can look up registered charities on the [Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commissions website](#)

If you believe you donated to a scam you should:

- Contact your bank to report the transaction immediately.
- Report the scam to the website it is hosted on.
- [Make a report](#) on the Scamwatch website, or find more information about [where to get help](#).

The ACCC has also set up a dedicated phone number for the public to report bushfire related scams. People can call **1300 795 995** to report these scams.