

Scam season is on and it seems that con artists robbed Australians nearly \$800,000 in November 2018 alone (source: ABC News). They come in many forms and constantly change their tactics and methods to keep you guessing. A typical example is that of a scam caller posing as an officer from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), which incidentally reported that about 37,000 scam attempts were made (source: ABC News), using a voice recording to demand a call back using the threat that:

‘you have committed tax fraud and if we don’t hear back from you, we will issue an arrest warrant under your name.’

This usually throws victims off and the scammers provide fake complaint numbers and IDs, making the call sound more genuine. They build up their story using further scare-tactics and aggressive language to fish out your personal information to their advantage: identity, addresses, bank details, passport details etc. The consequences of these range from being fleeced of huge sums of money, identity theft (around 1100 reports in December 2018, source: ACCC) and many others. First of all, the ATO does not project numbers using caller ID, so if the numbers are displayed, it’s a scam. Furthermore, the ATO does not use rude behaviour or threaten arrest or jail. Lastly, **do not** divulge any personal information over these calls, specifically your name, address, bank account details, credit card details, your TFN, etc. If the scam call is from any other government department and you have doubts regarding the caller’s identity, check with them by contacting them directly.

Having said that, here are a top few things that you can do if you are a victim of these scams:

1. Call the ATO/ government body where you got the supposed call from and report the scam immediately. Notify them of all the information that you can provide including phone numbers, the details that you provided the scammers etc. Seek information from them on further steps to take.
2. Block the numbers from where you received calls from. You can also register your number on the ‘do not call register’, which takes only a minute to do so. This will greatly reduce unsolicited calls to you.
3. If you provided your personal information/account details, contact your bank and local police regarding the situation and seek information on what would be the best course of action.

You can also report scams and get further information at [www.scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au).