



Worldwide scam targeting Mandarin-speaking community

Victoria Police is issuing a new warning about a scam targeting the Mandarin-speaking community. The scam operates worldwide, including in Victoria.

The scam involves:

- pre-recorded messages in Mandarin left via voicemail or on social media networks such as WeChat and WhatsApp
- a message telling victims they have a parcel on hold for them
- threats to transfer large sums of money
- extortion via fake kidnappings
- threats of deportation or arrest.

Victoria Police first received reports of the scam in July 2017 and they stopped occurring during COVID19 restrictions. However, since Chinese students have returned to schools and universities we are seeing the same criminal tactics being used by scammers.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The scams vary but the most common factors include a pre-recorded phone message in Mandarin notifying people there is a parcel on hold for them.

Victims who respond to the call are transferred to people claiming to be from a courier service who tell the victims they have been implicated in a crime and that a parcel with their name on it has been intercepted. This is always a lie.

Victims are then threatened by people claiming to be Chinese authorities such as government officials or police and forced to transfer large sums of money to prevent themselves or any of their family or friends from being deported or charged. This is always a lie.

The scammers then request money is transferred to Bank of China accounts. In most instances these bank accounts are located overseas and are established using false details.

In 2023, police have seen a number of victims staging kidnappings on the instructions of the scammers for their use to attempt to extort money from the victim's family members. The victims are tricked into believing that they must comply.

On some occasions the scammers have also demanded that victims:

- film themselves committing sexual acts, and
- obtain loans, use their personal savings or purchase Crypto currency to transfer money into their overseas bank accounts.

Other red flags include scammers requesting victims activate their video chat function or attend a local police station to appear credible. This request is then met with the scammer creating reasons not to meet.



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WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- If you receive a random phone call from someone claiming to be a government official of Chinese police telling you that you are suspected of committing a crime, hang up.
- If you have any doubts about someone who says they are from a government department, contact that department directly. Don't use any phone numbers, email addresses or websites provided by the caller. Find the correct number through an independent source or through an online search (official website).
- Do not provide or confirm any personal details to anyone over the phone unless you made the call yourself.
- Never send money via wire transfer or cryptocurrency to anyone who requests it over the phone unless you made the call yourself.
- If you are unsure about any phone calls, emails or messages, do not comply with any requests – talk it over with someone you trust, or the Victoria Police.

Visit the [Scamwatch](#) website for more information about current scams in Chinese languages.

IF YOU ARE A VICTIM:

If you believe you have been a victim of this scam and it includes an extortion to commit sexual acts, this should be reported directly to your local police station.

If you believe you have been a victim of this scam and it includes transferring large sums of money, report it to <https://www.cyber.gov.au/acsc/report>

This system collects your initial report and sends it to police in your area for further assessment and investigation.

Provide as much information as possible in this report such as:

- a record of all contact, both sent and received, with the scammers;
- screenshots of messages;
- transaction details; and
- phone call records.

If you have transferred money, alert the bank or transfer service as soon as possible.

It is important to note that being a victim of a scam, or reporting the matter to police, will not impact your visa.

If you have relevant information and wish to remain anonymous you can call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or submit a confidential report at <https://www.crimestoppersvic.com.au>