

## **AUSTRALIANS AT RISK AS THEY THROW AWAY THEIR IDENTITY**

*Australia's first ever National Identity Fraud Awareness Week took place recently with a warning to Australians that an increasing number of people are still putting themselves at risk*

National Identity Fraud Awareness Week took place recently, sending out a severe warning to the Australian public that they could, and should, be doing more to protect themselves against Identity Fraud.

The awareness drive is supported by an expert group of public and private sector partners, including the Australian Government Attorney-General's Department, Crime Stoppers, Fellowes Australia and Dun & Bradstreet.

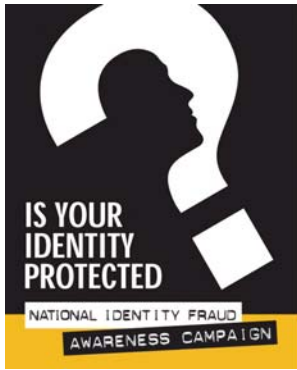
At a press conference held on Wednesday 29 August 2007, Peter Campbell, Fellowes National Marketing Manager and National Identity Fraud Awareness Campaign Spokesperson said: "The aim of the National Identity Fraud Awareness Week was to urge the general public to take the problem of identity fraud seriously and educate people on how best to protect themselves and their businesses from what is one of Australia's fastest growing crimes."

Research<sup>1</sup> reveals that the trusting Australian public are happy to throw out expired bank cards, Medicare cards, drivers licences, paid utility bills, statements from banks, credit or superannuation companies as well as other bills, statements, notices and application forms.

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<sup>1</sup> Galaxy Research Omnibus (May 2007) commissioned by Fellowes (global manufacturer of shredders). The survey revealed that 87% of Australians are concerned that they may be at risk of identity fraud and expressed a fear of the potential consequences that can occur; including financial loss, bad credit rating, feeling of personal violation and embarrassment if transactions are declined. Yet 75% of Australians still admit to throwing out enough personal information in their rubbish and recycling to put themselves at risk of falling victim to identity fraud.



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“Due to complacency, we are practically handing over our identities to thieves and fraudsters, allowing them to thrive. We need to stop making their lives too easy and make it second nature to shred all personal information before it is thrown away,” Campbell added.

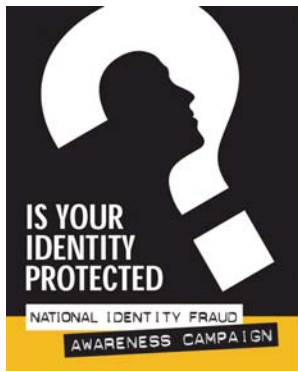
With this in mind, the National Identity Fraud Awareness Campaign seeks to stop the complacency found amongst the general public and provides critical information and advice to educate people on the dangers of identity fraud and the best preventative methods available.

As part of the national drive to increase awareness of this crime, a dedicated website has been set up on: [www.stopidtheft.com.au](http://www.stopidtheft.com.au). Here, Australians are also able to take the free online, user-friendly test [Are you at risk?](#) to assess how safe their identity really is.

Crime Stoppers, a supporter of the National Identity Fraud Awareness Campaign, is committed to helping all Australians protect themselves, their families and their businesses from falling victim to this crime.

Peter Price, Crime Stoppers Australia Chairman says: “Unfortunately identity theft is not a victimless crime and victims can spend years and thousands of dollars trying to clear their names as a result of being targeted.

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“It is time for the Australian public to listen; actually take heed of the warnings and act on the expert advice that is being offered,” Price added. “As Australians, we can help prevent one another from becoming a victim, we all have a neighbour, some of us live next door to these people, report them anonymously if you suspect something.”

Identity fraud is costing Australia billions of dollars each year and causes businesses and individuals alike stressful and sometimes irreversible repercussions.

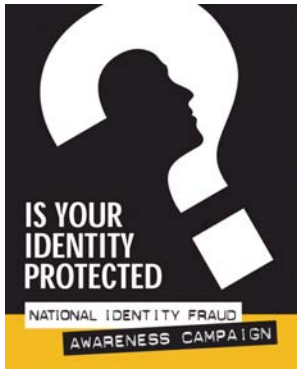
According to Christine Christian, Dun & Bradstreet's CEO, identity fraud is one of the most prevalent white collar crimes globally and it has enormous implications for Australian consumers and the economy.

“The cost of identity theft in Australia is alarming and the implications extend beyond financial detriment to reputation damage and possibly arrest for activities in which the victim was not involved.

“Efforts to correct inaccuracies associated with identity theft often take many years – Australians should protect their identity documents and remain vigilant about their financial affairs,” said Ms Christian.

Bob Waites, Assistant Commissioner NSW Police adds: "Be warned! Identity theft has the potential to adversely affect every Australian, whether it's an individual or a business. If your identity is stolen or cloned, and used for fraud, it can have a lifetime deleterious effect on your ability to utilise financial and transport systems.

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If anyone has any information about criminal activity, they should contact the Police or if they would like to remain anonymous call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editor:**

**Steps the public can take to protect themselves:**

- **Shred** all bank and credit card statements, tax records, receipts, registration papers, utility bills, expired drivers' licenses before disposing
- **Check** your credit report at credit reference agencies. Regularly monitoring of your credit report will alert you if someone else has been using your identity to obtain credit or goods in your name
- **Avoid** auto complete software which offers to remember your personal details to save you time when you next fill out a form online
- **Don't carry** identification documents, such as Medicare card or birth certificate, unless you need them on the day
- **Report** an identity theft or identity-related crime by anonymously calling Crime Stoppers in your state