

Indigenous consumers scammed out of \$1.2m last year, a rise of 65%

Dating and romance scams cause the greatest loss among Indigenous consumers, totalling more than \$613,000

By Melissa Davey

Wednesday 18 May 2016

Indigenous consumers lost more than \$1.2m to scammers last year, an increase of nearly 65% compared with 2014, data from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has shown.

Dating and romance scams caused the greatest monetary loss among Indigenous consumers, totalling more than \$613,000. This loss was spread among just 15 people, according to the figures released on Tuesday.

However, Indigenous people were most commonly affected by buying and selling scams, said the commission's deputy chairwoman, Delia Rickard.

"So we saw things like ads for a puppy where people send the money for the puppy but it never gets delivered, or failure to supply goods like shoes and phones, and people buying cars on Gumtree but the car never being delivered," she said.

"What is noticeable is that while investment scams doubled in terms of the number of reports among the Australian population, Indigenous people are less susceptible to those."

Inheritance scams and computer and prediction software also caused significant losses among Indigenous people. Last year, the ABC reported that Indigenous people were being targeted by funeral companies building unnecessary and unfair costs into what were ultimately scam plans.

Rickard said there were two reasons why the money Indigenous people lost to scams had increased so much since 2014.

"With social media and Facebook, it's so much easier for scammers to reach huge numbers of people," she said. "On top of that we have been working hard at building closer relationships with Indigenous communities and so hopefully we are reaching more people and they are reporting scams to us more often."