



Speech by

Mr JIM PEARCE

MEMBER FOR FITZROY

Hansard 3 September 2002

MAIL SCAMS

Mr PEARCE (Fitzroy—ALP) (7.06 p.m.): It is a pleasure for me to bring to the attention of the House the need for Queenslanders to be aware of international cash award scams circulating throughout the state. The scams come in various forms, but they are about one thing: they are about convincing individuals to pay sums of money in return for promised cash prizes. I do not have a lot of time, but I will give the House a few examples from the stack of letters I have here. One letter states—

Your \$6,500 Cash or premium item will be released immediately upon receipt of your processing fee ...

You must pay a nominal processing fee of \$15.00 to release your cash or premium item.

Another letter states—

... \$20,000.00 Cash Is In The Bank And Waiting To Be Claimed!

It states that the recipient must pay a \$5 judging fee to get access to that \$20,000.

Another states—

You are the £20,000.00 cash prize winner!

There is a \$59 fee for that one. Another states—

... \$20,000.00 is at stake! This notice is for real and is not a misprint. The \$20,000.00 Cash Prize is guaranteed to be awarded.

That one involves a \$15 fee. Another handy one involves a person signing a release form. It states—

I am claiming my \$2,000.00 Money Vouchers. Here is the required release fee of \$36.95.

These scammers are very generous. People can pay by cheque or money order. If they really want to be clever, they can send along their credit card details! I have plenty of similar examples.

How many people have won Gold Lotto without ever lodging an entry? I have no doubt that the answer is not one, because we know the old adage 'You've got to be in it to win it'. So why are so many constituents falling for these overseas mail scams which suggest they have won a cash prize? The answer, of course, is that the operators of these scams are very smart. They know exactly which buttons to push to get the consumer to respond. Messages such as 'Prompt action imperative', 'Don't jeopardise your guaranteed cash status' and 'Reply now or your cash potential position will be cancelled' compel consumers to instantly reply. And those who do respond are usually the most vulnerable members of our community—the battlers, the pensioners, the unemployed and those for whom the offer of a cash prize seems like the answer to all their concerns.

Sadly, thousands of Queenslanders just are not taking the time to think about what they are doing before sending away their hard-earned money. For many, the lure of guaranteed riches is just too great and the crooks keep on reeling them in. I have said it before and I will keep on saying it until the message sinks in to consumers: don't be fooled. If it reads as if it is too good to be true, it usually is.
