

**Question on Notice  
No. 792  
Asked on 17 August 2004**

MRS SULLIVAN asked the Minister for Tourism Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development (Ms Keech)—

QUESTION:

What assistance is being given to help keep seniors up-to-date with the latest scams?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Pumicestone for her question and her strong and consistent advocacy on behalf of seniors in her electorate.

The Beattie Government through the Office of Fair Trading (the Office) continues to ensure Queensland seniors get early and informed notification about emerging scams. In 2003-04, the Office issued more than 190 media releases targeting consumers and businesses about scams and other unfair practices in the marketplace. In June, I held a media conference warning Queensland consumers not to participate in illegal chain letter schemes which ensured the widespread delivery of the message to consumers to be “scam smart and say no” to scams.

In addition to its education activities, the Office continues to investigate and take appropriate enforcement action against those involved in the promotion of scams. In order to ensure seniors are on the alert for deceptive behaviour, the Office also widely promotes successful prosecutions of individuals and traders, for example itinerant traders, that target older people.

Early alerts via the media are one way of ensuring seniors are informed about the range of scams targeting them in the marketplace. These scams have included:

- the recent ‘David Rhodes’ letters;
- naming or identifying known conmen (eg. Ronald Frederick);
- bogus charity collectors;
- lottery and mail scams;
- vanity publishing;
- door-to-door fraudsters such as painters, roof repairers and, air conditioner and house alarm installers, and;
- general consumer and safety advice.

The proactive warnings, in addition to a range of other communication activities targeting seniors resulted in 44.4% of Queenslanders reporting that they had read or heard advice about scams from the Office (Queensland Householder Survey, May 2004).

The Office continues to provide important information to seniors on how to recognise potential scams, arming individuals with the knowledge to protect themselves. This advice is provided through the ‘Scam Smart’ section on the Office’s website ([www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au)) which contains scam fact sheets, via regular radio interviews on 4BC and ABC, and through the Office’s publications such as *How to be Consumerwise*. This publication has a special seniors section that highlights consumer issues of particular interest to older Queenslanders such as retirement villages and home safety.

The Office also conducts regular face-to-face presentations in the community and at seniors’ expos. In August 2004, the Seniors Card Expo was engaged to distribute the Office’s “no door-to-door traders” stickers (3500) and copies of *Consumerwise* publication (3500) in official satchels.

In 2004-05, the Office will again roll out the ‘Scam Smart’ campaign which empowers all Queenslanders to recognise and avoid scams. The campaign will involve regular media updates and scam notification via the Office’s existing channels such as the weekly Fair Trading Update and website.