JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

BANKS AND POLICE WARN CONSUMERS TO PROTECT THEIR PERSONAL INFORMATION ONLINE

Sydney, 8 March, 2005: Banks and Police have joined forces to launch a national education campaign to warn consumers about protecting their personal information online.

The Australian Bankers' Association (ABA), its member banks and the Australian High Crime Centre (AHTCC), hosted by the Australian Federal Police (AFP), are outlining practical ways consumers can protect themselves and reduce risks of fraud perpetrated by criminals over the Internet.

To build awareness of this criminal activity, banks and police have worked together to produce a national newspaper advertising campaign and free consumer fact sheets, with useful tips for minimising risks, which will roll out over the next three weeks.

Fact sheets which will be available:

• Protect Your Information Online, today;

• Protect Your Financial Identity, 15 March;

• Small Business – Protecting Your Business Information; 22 March.

Launching the campaign today in Sydney, the ABA Chief Executive, David Bell, AFP Commissioner, Mick Keelty, and AHTCC Director Federal Agent, Kevin Zuccato, agree that education is one of the key weapons in the fight against crimes such as phishing[1] and other online fraud by ensuring everyone is aware of the steps they can take to minimise this criminal activity.

Our advice is to install and keep up-to-date anti-virus software and firewalls, never give out your PIN or password, delete spam e-mail and don't access Internet banking from a link in an e-mail.

David Bell, CEO of the ABA, said customer security is a number one priority for banks.

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[1] Where customers receive fake emails which appear to be genuine and ask for confidential banking information

"When you access the Internet through e-mail or the World Wide Web, it's important that you safeguard your personal information. Banks use a combination of safeguards to protect your information such as employee training, strict privacy policies, rigorous security and encryption systems."

"All users of the Internet have a responsibility to protect themselves against Internet crime, in the same way they buy cars with safety and security features to protect themselves, anti-virus and firewall protection should be installed on the home or business computer."

"It's also important to be vigilant in checking your credit card statements. Always report any unauthorised or suspicious transactions billed to your card and contact your financial institution immediately. Early detection helps banks and police effectively investigate credit card fraud."

"Identity theft is a complex crime and is an emerging threat, not just for banks, but for individuals, for other corporations and the entire community."

AFP Commissioner, Mick Keelty, underlined the importance of the collaborative effort undertaken by the ABA and the AHTCC.

"Initiatives like this campaign are reflective of the ongoing efforts to combat a variety of online crimes both in Australia and across the globe. The AFP, as part of a whole of government approach, is working to build the Australian public's trust and confidence in Internet technologies."

"While the number of online fraudulent transactions is low compared to more traditional types of fraud, it is an emerging issue and one that we must work with the community to address. Figures show that round 40% of the Australian population bank online and there are simple steps they can take to protect themselves from becoming victims of Internet-based fraud."

Australian High Tech Crime Director Federal Agent, Kevin Zuccato, said: "The AHTCC has a public and private approach to investigating instances of phishing and related criminal activity with the banking and finance industry. The AHTCC works closely with industry patrons, not only in conducting investigations, but also in educating the community in the safe and secure use of e-commerce."

Chair of the Australian High Tech Crime Centre Board and South Australian Police Commissioner, Mal Hyde, was present at the launch and congratulated the AHTCC and the ABA on their continued efforts to educate the Australian public about online crime.

Notes for editors:

The advertising campaign will run for three weeks. The first advertisement will run tomorrow, the second, 15 March, and the third, 22 March.

The advertisements will be published in the following newspapers – 'The Daily Telegraph', 'Herald Sun', 'The Canberra Times', 'The Advertiser' (Adelaide), 'The Mercury' (Hobart), 'The West Australian', 'Northern Territory News' and 'The Courier-Mail'.

The advertisements will encourage consumers to seek more information from free fact sheets which will be available on the ABA website (www.bankers.asn.au), the AHTCC website (www.ahtcc.gov.au) and on various member bank websites. To obtain hard copies of the fact sheets telephone the ABA: 1800 009 180 (free call) and copies will be posted to you.

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