



Rising Tide of Online Scams: A Sydney Family Business's Call for Action

In the digital era, the proliferation of online scams has not only ensnared unsuspecting individuals but also cast a shadow over legitimate businesses. Containers First, a second-generation family-owned shipping container depot in Sydney, stands at the intersection of this crisis, confronting the surge in shipping container scams head-on.

Background of Containers First:

Nestled in Strathfield South, Sydney, Containers First has established itself as a cornerstone in the shipping container industry. With a sprawling yard capable of holding 1,000 20-foot containers and a dedicated team for repairs and certifications, the company serves a diverse clientele, including businesses, schools, and government entities. Their commitment to quality in providing new, used, and modified containers is unwavering.

The Onset of Scams:

The emergence of 2020 brought an alarming trend to Containers First's doorstep. Customers began reporting scams involving significant financial losses ranging from \$1,800 to \$6,500 for non-existent containers. Upon review, the company discovered scammers using their address and creating fake business entities with sophisticated documents and Australian bank accounts.

Raising Awareness:

In response, Containers First launched an awareness campaign, warning potential buyers to be cautious. However, the scams persisted, with individuals arriving weekly at their depot, misled by scammers using Containers First's address to fake legitimacy. Containers First makes sure it regularly publishes photos with their staff on Facebook and Instagram. The use of videos on tiktok and youtube

(<https://www.youtube.com/@ContainersFirstAustralia>) to show the container yard and modifications workshop in a hope that they can stand out from the scammers.

The Industry's Plight:

This epidemic of scams has not only financially harmed countless individuals but also tainted the shipping container industry, complicating the transition to online business models for legitimate sellers. Despite efforts to alert local and federal police and consultations with the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC), the response has been limited.

ERS Johnson's Identity Theft:

The crisis deepened in July 2022 when Containers First's parent company, ERS Johnson, had their identity stolen and used on a fraudulent fitness equipment site. This incident further highlighted the pervasive nature of online scams.

A Call to Action:

The ongoing struggle against online scams underscores the need for more robust government intervention. Containers First advocates for:

Increased Governmental Support: There is a pressing need for the Australian Government to intensify its efforts in protecting its citizens from this burgeoning crime wave.

Compensation Scheme for Victims: We propose the establishment of a compensation scheme for scam victims, potentially funded by the proceeds of crime seized by the police. Such a scheme would provide much-needed relief to those who have suffered financial losses due to these fraudulent activities.

Strengthened Cybersecurity Measures: Enhancing cybersecurity infrastructure and public awareness campaigns are crucial in combatting the sophistication of modern scammers.

The story of Containers First is a microcosm of a larger issue plaguing the digital world. As we navigate these troubled waters, it is imperative for authorities to take decisive action, providing a safety net for victims and safeguarding the integrity of legitimate businesses. Only through concerted efforts can we hope to stem the tide of online scams and restore trust in online commerce.

















