

## Crowdfunding scammers use death of Darwin pilot John Gotts to extract fake funeral costs

By [Kate Ashton](#)



**Photo:** Darwin pilot John Gotts' family and friends became victims of online scammers after his death. (Supplied: Facebook)

The recent death of a Darwin pilot in a crash has been used by online crowdfunding scammers to extract funeral donations from his friends.

### Key points:

- Several fake Facebook accounts were set up to extract money after the death of pilot John Gotts
- Mr Gotts died in a light plane crash on Sunday morning in Darwin's rural area
- His widow Ellen said the family is not seeking donations and wants the public to be aware of the scam

John Gotts, a 64-year-old from Darwin's rural area, [died on Sunday after his light plane crashed into scrubland](#) near a small airfield about 40 kilometres south-east of Darwin.

Less than 48 hours after Mr Gotts's death, his immediate family members became aware fake Facebook accounts had been set up to imitate them, his widow Ellen Gotts said.

The accounts shared the same names and profile pictures as Mr Gotts's family members, including some of the couple's children.

They were then used to message friends and family with links to crowdfunding pages for "funeral costs", Ms Gotts said.

Ms Gotts said at least three fake Facebook accounts had been set up and some friends had already donated through the fake pages.



**Photo:** John Gotts's family said they were horrified to discover a crowdfunding scam targeting their friends. (Supplied: Facebook)

"Sadly, some of our dear friends have already donated in good faith and are horrified to have found out that this is a scam," she said.

"This is a horribly low blow for a family in mourning."

"We have been reporting to Facebook and the accounts are being deleted quickly."

Ms Gotts said the family wanted to warn friends and members of the public that the scammers were continuing to open new accounts under different names.

"We desperately hope that this is the end of the matter so my family can focus on what a truly wonderful person John was and not the horror of someone trying to profit from his death."



**Photo:** John Gotts's wife Ellen discovered several fake social media accounts impersonating her family. (Supplied)

## Pilot remembered as loving family man

The family has remembered Mr Gotts as a loving father and grandfather who was proud of his achievements and those of his children.

"Off-key singing, incorrectly pronounced words, a charming arrogance, hilarious throw-away statements and a quick and dry wit are all traits that live on in his children," a statement from his family said.

"He was the unconventional and much-loved John, 'Dad' and 'Johnny' to a tribe and touched the lives of many."

Northern Territory Police said the scam pages were under investigation and the jurisdiction of the offender would determine any potential penalty.



**Photo:** John Gotts died after crashing his plane into scrubland in Darwin's rural area. (ABC News: Sowaibah Hanifie)

A criminal deception charge carries a maximum sentence of seven years in prison in the NT.

Crowdfunding site Go Get Funding said it deleted a campaign for Mr Gotts's funeral costs after it was reported as fake.

In a statement, a spokeswoman said it was grateful to members of the public who report fake campaigns, as it is "incredibly difficult" to identify them all.

She said the site also provides guidance and support to ensure donors can retrieve money donated to fake sites.

Extracted from:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-29/online-scammers-pose-as-family-of-dead-pilot/11650942>

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