

The New Zealand Herald

Online buyers lose \$100,000

By [Amelia Wade](#)

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Nearly 40 people who bought cars on Trade Me have lost a combined \$100,000 after the seller put his company into voluntary liquidation.

Omar Chaudhry ran an online car importing business through Hayat Group Ltd, listing cars on his own website and Trade Me.

Auction winners were asked to pay a 50 per cent deposit upfront so the cars could be shipped from overseas.

But 36 people lost their deposits when Mr Chaudhry put the company, of which he is the sole director and shareholder, into voluntary liquidation at the start of this year.

Mr Chaudhry said he was forced to liquidate his company because Customs confiscated two fully paid BMWs, totalling \$50,000.

"I got stuck in the middle. I had no money to give back to the people. I tried my very best," he told the Herald.

He said he was upset so many lost so much money.

He was doing everything he could to repay them.

The liquidator, Pritesh Patel, has filed a civil case in the High Court against a number of import companies Mr Chaudhry bought the cars through.

If successful, Mr Patel said he should be able to give a "reasonable amount" back to the creditors who lost their deposits.

Auckland man Stephen Zhao paid Mr Chaudhry \$24,600 in cash for his "dream car" a month and a half before the company went under.

"I'd been saving for two years for that car," he said.

The electrical engineering PhD student said he expressed interest in a Series 5 BMW after seeing it listed on Trade Me in October last year.

The 23-year-old then visited Mr Chaudhry at his Grey Lynn car yard where he was told the car was still in Japan and he needed to pay a 50 per cent cash deposit to confirm shipment to New Zealand.

Two weeks later, Mr Chaudhry said the car had arrived at Customs and Mr Zhao needed to pay the remaining sum on the car. However, he was left out of pocket and without a car when Hayat Group Ltd went into liquidation.

A senior manager at Nichibo Japan Trading Co Ltd, one of the car importing companies Mr Chaudhry used, said the business had received numerous calls from Hayat Group creditors.

Nichibo Japan Trading Auckland manager Robert Young said Nichibo Japan would not be pursuing legal action because there was "no point".

"But what he's done he should be held to task for ... if someone goes into a dairy and holds someone at gunpoint, they'll get quite a lengthy jail sentence," Mr Young said.

Trade Me spokesman Paul Ford said Mr Chaudhry's account was put on the auction site's Trust & Safety radar after one non-delivery complaint from a buyer in December 2010.

Soon after, his account was stopped from being able to sell.

A few days after Hayat Group Ltd went into liquidation in January, Trade Me was made aware of four other non-delivery complaints.

He said some information about activity on the account had been given to the liquidator.

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