CYBER ATTACKS — DEPARTMENT OF THE PREMIER AND CABINET

694.   Mr W.R. MARMION to the Minister for Innovation and ICT:

Based on answers in the Legislative Assembly regarding cybersecurity that identified that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's internal computer systems have been attacked 1.85 million times since the election, including successful attacks, I ask —

(1)   Can the minister confirm the number of attacks?

(2)   What data was compromised during the successful attacks?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for the question.

(1)–(2) I am pleased that after a considerable amount of time, I have received a question from the shadow minister for disruptive technologies, I think he calls himself. It is a very modern title for the portfolio. It is no surprise that government departments are subjected to thousands and thousands of attacks every month. The statistic on the number of attacks on the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to which the member referred is of absolutely no surprise to me at all, because governments face automated attacks on a regular basis. I have not been briefed on the particular attacks that the member talked about. I am not aware that there have been any data breaches at the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. A successful attack could mean a range of things. If the member wants me to get him some more information on that particular incident that he has referred to, I am more than happy to do it. The member would have seen the recent Auditor General's report that came out. I think it is the tenth Auditor General's annual report in a row that said that department after department during the Liberal Party's term in government continued to fail basic audit requirements in the areas of protection of personal information and business continuity.

Looking at the work that has been done in the last 12 months, the last report showed the first real signs of genuine improvement in this area, and I put that down to the emphasis that we as a new government put on this issue since coming to government. One of the first things I did as Minister for Innovation and ICT was address a forum of directors general at which I made it absolutely clear that cybersecurity was a high priority for the new government and that it expected directors general to take a personal interest in this area. For too long, report after report by the Auditor General said that directors general were not engaged enough on this issue because they saw cybersecurity as the responsibility of the ICT department. If there is no leadership from the highest level in government, improvement will not occur. We made it clear to the directors general that we take this issue seriously. We signed a memorandum of understanding, as the member may be aware, with Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, which is a world leader in the area of cybersecurity. We led a push for the Cyber Security Cooperative Research Centre to be headquartered at Joondalup, which will allow Western Australia access to more than $100 million in research funding in the area of cybersecurity. Just a couple of days ago as part of the memorandum of understanding, I met a group of six students from ECU Joondalup who are now working with the Office of Digital Government to improve cybersecurity in some of the departments whose cybersecurity was found wanting in the Auditor General's reports. As a government, we are getting on with it. It does not surprise me. Government agencies across the world are subjected to ongoing attacks. I am more than happy to see what I can find out about the particular incident to which the member referred, but as far as I am aware, there were no personal information data breaches—but I will confirm that.