

CYBERATTACKS

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

I refer to the massive cyberattack by a sophisticated foreign-based state actor, which was brought to our attention by the Prime Minister. Can the minister outline to the house which government agencies and businesses have been targeted and were any of these attacks successful?

**Mr D.J. KELLY replied:**

I thank the member for the question. The Western Australian state government was given a heads-up by the Prime Minister that he was going to make some comments about cybersecurity last Friday. It was clear to me from the briefings that I received that the comments that the Prime Minister was going to make were not related to a new specific cyberattack; rather, he was simply going to highlight to the Australian community the current heightened risk. The state government has been aware from the briefings that it has received that there has been increased activity of this nature for months so although what the Prime Minister announced to the Australian community may have sounded and come as a bit of a shock to some members of the Western Australian community, it was not a shock to the Western Australian government because we have been monitoring this situation in recent times. It was nothing new to us. It is common knowledge among state governments and, frankly, business that significant state actors out there are, for whatever reason, testing the defences of governments and corporations. There have been a number of well-documented and well-reported private sector cyberattacks in recent times, and so really the Prime Minister was trying to alert the Australian community to the need to be vigilant, especially when everyone is focused on the health pandemic and organisations can drop their guard on cybersecurity. We know that we have to do both. We have to deal with the health pandemic but, at the same time, we do not want to drop our guard. Despite the Prime Minister's comments, there have been no specific breaches. I am very pleased with the progress that we have made on cybersecurity issues since we have been in government. For the first time, there is a dedicated cybersecurity unit within the Office of Digital Government, which has permanent funding and full-time equivalents who are dedicated to cybersecurity. State government agencies are constantly battling off cybersecurity attacks—it is constant. Some of them are automated little bits of trouble that are wandering around the net looking for any weakness they can find, while others are specifically motivated by organisations trying to cause trouble. It happens all the time. Although the Prime Minister's comments on Friday were dramatic in the eyes of the general public, the state government has been continuing to address this issue. We can never be completely sure that someone will not breach our defences, but I am pleased that we are at least making progress with some of the best minds in Western Australia looking at this issue for us.