

OFFICE OF DIGITAL GOVERNMENT

431. MR S.J. PRICE to the Minister for Innovation and ICT:

Can the minister outline to the house how the McGowan Labor government is strengthening cybersecurity across the public sector, and addressing the eight years, six months and five days of neglect by the previous Liberal–National government?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for Forrestfield for that very precise question.

It was with some degree of pride that we yesterday announced the formation of the new Office of Digital Government. It will mean that for the first time in Western Australia we will have an agency that has a specific responsibility for protecting the Western Australian public and services and information that government holds around the issue of cybersecurity. Under the last government, there were successive reports by the Auditor General that outlined how poorly the previous government had done at protecting data held by government, and how poorly the previous government had done at protecting the Western Australian government from cybersecurity attacks. During its term in government there were eight successive reports by the Auditor General —

Several members interjected.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Some members are saying this is boring. This is boring! This is the response —

Several members interjected.

Mr D.J. KELLY: I think —

The SPEAKER: I know you like to hear your own voice, member for Dawesville, but we do not like to hear it all the time. I call you to order for the first time.

Mr D.J. KELLY: I think I have heard it all—the member for Warren–Blackwood calling someone boring! I think the former member for Pilbara accused the member for Warren–Blackwood of being boring in his pitch speech, so just sit down for a minute.

Mr D.T. Redman: I am!

Mr D.J. KELLY: Good! Just stay there, watching the grass grow as we go!

Under the previous government there were eight consecutive reports of the Auditor General that not only noted a lack of improvement, but also a continuing decline in a number of areas of preparedness to protect the information of the Western Australia public sector. The ninth report, issued last year, capped off the period of the Barnett Liberal government. Those reports showed continuing inaction in the areas of protecting personal data and business continuity. It was appalling that the last report handed down by the Auditor General showed that only 39 per cent of government agencies had adequate protection in the area of protecting personal data. In the area of business continuity, it was less than 30 per cent. Twenty-seven per cent of government agencies met the required standard for ensuring business continuity. There was also an Auditor General’s report specifically into protection from malware, delivered in December 2016. It found that the previous government lacked a coordinated approach to protecting the state of Western Australia against cybersecurity threats. It could not have been more stark, yet the previous government did nothing.

Yesterday we announced the Office of Digital Government. For the first time we will have an agency with the specific responsibility of looking at the cybersecurity threat that we face across the public sector, in a coordinated way. Members might find it boring, but it is actually essential. That probably shows why the former government did nothing about it in eight years. We will have a dedicated team in the Office of Digital Government, located in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, with for the first time a whole-of-government approach to cybersecurity. Members opposite might be surprised to know that every month the Western Australian public sector faces tens of thousands of cybersecurity attacks on our systems. So it is absolutely vital that we do the right thing by the people of Western Australia, by ensuring their personal data is protected and that public sector services are protected.

After our announcement yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition was on the telly last night saying, “All they’re doing is shuffling a few chairs.” What is new about what we did yesterday is, first of all, we will have a dedicated agency with a specific responsibility for cybersecurity. We have allocated new money to this task, and all the Leader of the Opposition can say is, “Oh you’re just shuffling a few people around.” It just shows, Leader of the Opposition, why for eight years a government it did nothing about it. The former government was absolutely asleep at the wheel on this issue. We are taking action. We are listening to the Auditor General and the concerns he raised, and I think the people of Western Australia were actually pleased with the announcement we made yesterday. Absolutely pleased. The vast majority of people in Western Australia have a smartphone. They know how important the issue of cybersecurity is, and they are pleased that we finally have a state government that is actually determined to make a difference on this issue.

