

CYBERSECURITY OPERATIONS CENTRE

765. Ms J.J. SHAW to the Minister for Innovation and ICT:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's \$1.8 million commitment to establish the state's first cybersecurity operations centre. Can the minister outline to the house how the cybersecurity operations centre will help combat the increased level of malicious cyber activity that we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, and advise the house how this centre will provide more job opportunities for those working in cybersecurity?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for Swan Hills for that very important question.

It is well known that cybersecurity is becoming more and more of an issue around the world. Attacks on not only the private sector, but also governments around the world are becoming more numerous and more sophisticated. Unfortunately, during the COVID pandemic, we have seen some malicious actors using the pandemic as an opportunity to mount additional attacks on governments and private enterprise. They have used the pandemic to create a number of additional cybersecurity scams in order to extort money from individuals, the private sector and government.

Members on this side of the house understand how important it is, especially during a pandemic, to maintain service delivery, and that is why I am very pleased that we have announced a \$1.8 million commitment to establishing the state's first cybersecurity operations centre. During this term of government, we established the Office of Digital Government, which, for the first time, has 18 cybersecurity experts who are not replacing the work done by individual agencies but complementing that work. With this announcement, we have gone one further. By announcing a new cybersecurity operations centre, we will, for the first time, have the ability to look across the public sector in real time to see what traffic is out there and to identify earlier than would otherwise be possible signs of malicious attack. Again, that will not replace the work done by individual agencies; it will complement it.

The operations centre will be staffed initially by cybersecurity professionals from the Office of Digital Government, but we are recruiting additional cybersecurity professionals to supplement those roles as the centre becomes fully operational.

We are determined to continue to offer the citizens of Western Australia greater access to online services, but we are adamant that if we are to do that, we need to ensure that we are as protected and as ready as we possibly can be in the event of a cybersecurity attack.

Because of the prevalence of cybersecurity issues around the world, it is actually one of the fastest growing industries, so there are great opportunities for Western Australians who have an aptitude for this type of work to seek new careers. One thing we will do through the cybersecurity operations centre is to engage with TAFEs and universities to allow some of the best students, if you like, to come through and get real-life experience in this area. We have previously committed \$5.6 million to the Cybersecurity Cooperative Research Centre, which is headquartered at Edith Cowan University in Joondalup, so we already have a relationship with ECU. We have now broadened that to other universities and to TAFE. We are protecting Western Australians. We are doing our bit during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that Western Australia is safe and strong. At the same time, we are delivering new job opportunities for the many talented young Western Australians in particular who see this as an industry that they can really make a career in.