

CYBERSECURITY

Statement

HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral) [5.33 pm]: I would like to make a few brief remarks in response to the motion moved by Hon Kate Doust earlier on cybersecurity. It was obviously a very popular motion. I thought I would give my remarks as a member statement in the dying embers of this Thursday.

I feel compelled to talk to tech-related motions because of my background and because members have an expectation that I will talk about it because of my background. The reality is that about a decade in the software development field does not actually qualify me to talk on the topic of cybersecurity. The ICT industry is a very broad church. As I say to my mother when she asks me to fix the printer, “I don’t actually know anything about printers, but I can certainly have a crack.” That is what I intend to do with this cybersecurity motion.

If we are talking about cybersecurity in WA, one institution certainly needs a bit of a shout-out, and that is the Edith Cowan University cybersecurity program operating out of Joondalup. I visited the campus and saw the facilities in Joondalup recently with Ms Caitlin Collins, MLA, in our capacity as Parliamentary Friends of Technology and Innovation. I believe the cybersecurity program is producing about 20 per cent of the cybersecurity graduates in Australia, and it is producing graduates of a very high calibre. They are world leading. I think that is a bit of a double-edged sword; the desirability of these candidates means that they are being snapped up by other jurisdictions around Australia and around the world, and the graduates are chasing other opportunities and golden handcuffs in other areas, to the detriment of WA. I think this is one area in which the WA government can play role in trying to emphasise the importance of cybersecurity and ensure that we have opportunities to attract and keep these graduates in WA so we can learn from their expertise and become more resilient to the online attacks that are growing at a deadly rate.

When we talk about cybersecurity, I would like to give a quick mention to one individual: Cecily Rawlinson from CyberWest. CyberWest is based in that Joondalup precinct, and she is a big advocate in this space. She recently hosted a very successful conference on cybersecurity and should be commended for the work that she is doing.

I have one last point I would quickly like to talk about. It is a very big topic. I have certainly spoken about it previously, and it was mentioned by Hon Kate Doust. It is data privacy. When we talk about cybersecurity, data privacy is an aspect that needs to be addressed as well. The honourable member mentioned the need to have robust legislation in place for data privacy. There is a saying in cybersecurity: “It is not if you are going to be hacked; it is when.” Having the right legislation in place really puts at the forefront the importance of the information these organisations have the privilege of retaining. We can try to reduce some of the blast radius. Once a malicious actor gets into its system, an organisation can try to reduce the blast radius—the amount of information the actor accesses and the importance, I guess one could say, of that information. We have recently seen some very classic examples playing out around Australia. Organisations were hacked, and that had an extremely large blast radius in both the number of records and the importance of the personal information that was exposed to malicious actors. That is certainly important.

I mentioned this previously, and I will not get on this pedestal too much now, but WA is still the only jurisdiction without uniform data privacy laws governing the public sector and how it classifies, stores and handles the private and personal information of Western Australian citizens. I believe that a consultation paper has been released in response to community feedback about the potential data privacy legislation, which is tucked away on the Attorney General’s desk. The honourable member mentioned the golden words, the general data protection regulation, which is considered the golden standard in this place. It was mentioned in the consultation paper and, hopefully, it will become a reality when we see this legislation very, very soon.

I will quickly make one last point. A report produced by the Tech Council of Australia states that by 2025 we will need more than 280 000 tech workers in Australia, and obviously part of that relates to WA. This is a growing field, and cyber will certainly be part of the 280 000 jobs that we will need, so the government has a responsibility to attract, train and retain the right people and the right number of people across the ICT sector, including cyber. The number of bad actors is certainly going to grow. There are other jurisdictions that are basically operating bot farms and churning out bad actors, and they are intent on exposing weaknesses. The reality is that Australia is seen as a fairly soft target in this area. As we move more services online and our digital footprint continues to grow and the importance and value of personal information increases, we are going to see more and more attacks, so we need the right people with the right expertise in place in WA. That is certainly an area in which this government can play an important role.