

CYBERSECURITY — GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

190. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Premier:

Before I ask my question, I want to recognise that the purple pin that I am wearing today came from Hon Kate Doust. It recognises the sixtieth anniversary of the Epilepsy Association of Western Australia, and, in particular, its Purple Walk this Sunday, 26 March from 10.30 am to 1.30 pm at Curtin University's Edinburgh Oval South.

In her report released yesterday, the Auditor General revealed that 13 state government agencies had such poor cybersecurity practices that she could issue only qualified financial audits for them, a doubling of the number reported last year. Additionally, 282 agencies, which is equal to half of the number audited, had not resolved cybersecurity deficiencies identified in last year's audit.

- (1) Why is the Premier's government failing to treat cybersecurity threats seriously enough to ensure that it is protecting people's personal data and the integrity of the agency computer systems?
- (2) If he believes that he is treating this issue with the required seriousness, how can we see a doubling of the number of agencies with cybersecurity-related financial audit findings and half of all previous findings still unresolved in the past year?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(2) Obviously, cybersecurity is increasingly becoming an issue around the world. Indeed, we saw some major breaches by significant Australian companies in recent months. In particular, Optus and Medibank, amongst others, had some significant breaches. It is an issue that will continue to impact both the private and public sectors in Australia and around the world. We are not immune to that. We are not alone in having to deal with that, but we do take the risk seriously. We have been putting in place a range of measures to help us to deal with that. The Auditor General has acknowledged the efforts the government is making to mitigate the risks. Indeed, she said in her report yesterday, "I also acknowledge the hard work being done by staff and leaders across state government" to deal with those matters.

We established the first cybersecurity policy and we established the cybersecurity operations centre in 2020, and 62 agencies are already connected to that. A directive was issued earlier this year to all entities to further cybersecurity preparedness, and we established the \$900 million digital capability fund to assist public sector entities on a competitive basis to improve their cybersecurity and IT systems across government. That is \$900 million that we have announced in the course of the last year or so. I quote what the Auditor General had to say about that —

While the full value of this investment will take many years to realise, the enhancements are essential and it is pleasing that a number of entities have already accessed funding ...

The Auditor General's report further found that there has been no proven misuse of health information, court proceedings, prisoner information or child protection information. We take the matter extremely seriously. There have been some significant improvements on what was in place during the last government and a range of policy changes and also a huge amount of investment into this important area.