DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Economics References Committee

22 August 2023

QoN Number: 1

Subject: Scope and inclusions in the ChatGPT questionnaire

Asked by: David Shoebridge

Question:

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: How much confidence can we have in Home Affairs' capacity to guide the country for cybersecurity if you don't even have the most basic controls in place in your own department? How much confidence should we have?
Mr Hansford: I don't agree with the premise of your question. Home Affairs does have a range of different security frameworks in place, including education of staff and different integrity frameworks, and the department does take its responsibilities on cybersecurity policy and cybersecurity regulation extremely seriously.
Senator SHOEBRIDGE: You had staff asking ChatGPT—and I'll quote from your questionnaire—to write scripts for work. What scripts?
Mr Hansford: I don't have that level of detail with me, and again it is not my area. That's a general question for the department to—
Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Well, you'll take it on notice? What scripts?
Mr Hansford: I can take the question on notice.
Senator SHOEBRIDGE: What about the computer code that you were trying to get ChatGPT to sort out? What computer code was it?
Mr Hansford: I have absolutely no idea. I don't have that level of detail with me. Not having asked ChatGPT about codes and scripts myself, I couldn't possibly answer that question.
Senator SHOEBRIDGE: What about your department? Apparently, according to the hazy memory of some officer, someone in Home Affairs was asking ChatGPT to help write computer code for the department. What code was it?
Mr Hansford: I'll refer you to my previous answer.

Answer:

The ChatGPT website (openai.com) was blocked from the Department's network on 17 May 2023. Prior to this, departmental staff use of ChatGPT was being monitored. Analysis of the access up to 17 May 2023 identified that the topics researched on the site were related to general curiosity regarding the ChatGPT technology, technical background research and troubleshooting, and personal awareness. There was no evidence that any staff member used ChatGPT to make a formal decision on behalf of the Department. Further, there is no evidence that departmental or classified information was included as part of a ChatGPT search.

No specific codes and/or scripts were produced and/or uploaded into departmental systems as a result of these ChatGPT queries. Any reference to 'scripts' and/or 'code' was generic and questioning in nature, for staff understand the operation of the technology.

The Department's Acceptable Use of Departmental ICT Systems and Information procedural instruction directs staff on the acceptable and appropriate use of accessing the departmental ICT environment, systems and networks. This procedural instruction and other related policies are a key component of the Department's Agency Security Plan and Policy Statement, and incorporates the Australian Government's regulatory requirements for information security under the Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF), the Information Security Manual, and the Department's Security Risk Management Framework.

Failure by an APS employee to comply with any direction contained in the procedural instruction may be determined to be a breach of the APS Code of Conduct, and be referred to the Department's Integrity and Professional Standards Branch, and/or other external integrity bodies for investigation.

In addition to robust information management and security policies, departmental officers undergo rigorous security vetting processes. The Department also requires all staff to annually complete mandatory online training which includes modules on integrity, safety, records, security and legislative obligations.