

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 299
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Agency
Program: Bureau of Meteorology (BoM)
Topic: BoM Cyberattacks
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Question Date: 17 October 2016
Question Type: Spoken

Senator Chisholm, Anthony asked:

Senator CHISHOLM: Just in relation to the recent media reports on the cyberattacks on the bureau, how did you discover that the bureau's computers had been compromised?

Dr Johnson: Again, I think this is a matter of public record, but I just reaffirm for this committee that we work closely with the Australian Signals Directorate and other agencies across government. We were alerted to the incursion into the bureau's systems by ASD, and so that is the history of the incursion that has been reported in the media.

Senator CHISHOLM: Is there any knowledge of what information was accessed?

Dr Johnson: Again, I really do not want to go into too much detail other than what has been published publicly in the Australian Cyber Security Centre's report. I do not think it would be appropriate to do that here. What I can say is that, to the best of our knowledge, no personal information or sensitive data in our database has been accessed, but I stress that is to the best of my knowledge.

Senator CHISHOLM: In terms of the use of contractors, were these approved by the Australian Signals Directorate?

Dr Johnson: We engage with contractors in a whole range of activities in the bureau. Is there a specific issue with contractors you wanted to understand?

Senator CHISHOLM: I suppose: has it led to a change in process around what contractors are used to ensure that they meet clearance?

Dr Johnson: The bureau has very stringent standards in terms of its use of external labour and external technology. I would have to take that question on notice, but again I would be very surprised if that were the case. I think the standards that we have—the very high levels of security and risk assessment that the organisation has—would just continue to be enhanced, and that would include the way in which we engage with contractors.

Senator CHISHOLM: Thanks.

Answer:

The Bureau of Meteorology's personnel security policies are determined by the Australian Government's Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF), which covers requirements for employees, contractors and service providers.

The Bureau conducts a risk assessment to determine whether contracted personnel require access to security classified information. If access to security classified information is required, the Bureau does not grant access to that information until an appropriate security clearance is issued.