

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
—Additional Estimates Hearing—February 2014**

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: IT
Question: 231
Written Senator Ludwig

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 11 April 2014

1. Is Opensource software allowed on the parliamentary network?, what are the benefits of closed source applications?
2. What is the whitelist of approved applications for use of the parliamentary network?
3. Are there plans to allow the provision of wifi in electoral offices?
4. What programs are approved for use on parliamentary network computers for statistical analysis?
5. Why is the R statistical program on parliamentary network computers?
6. Why are VNC clients not allowed on the parliamentary network computers?
7. What allowances are there for Mac OS computers on the parliamentary network including electoral offices?
8. What applications are approved on the parliamentary network computers for editing of plain text files?
9. Why websites run under the APH.gov.au provide PDF files with the ashx suffix? Is this a way of avoiding disability access requirements? Could they be provided with the .pdf suffix? What are the APH managed websites plans for provision of plain text versions of answers to questions on notice?

Answer

1. Yes, open source software is allowed to operate on the Parliamentary Network. DPS complies with the [AGIMO Circular 2010/004](#) on open source software and the [Open Source Software Policy](#). The primary interest is to ensure that the software selected by DPS, whether open or closed, is functional and properly supported. With closed source applications this support is generally provided through the vendor or its reseller.

Closed source applications vendors typically operate with a more structured update and release cycle with formalised testing.
2. The whitelist contains a list of all applications sanctioned to run on the Parliamentary Computing Network (PCN). Requests to add software to the Whitelist are normally made by contacting the DPS ICT Helpdesk to request the software or product evaluation. As part of the evaluation process a number of checks will be performed to assess the suitability of the product, including whether it will operate correctly on the PCN, cause issues for other software or users and if it will affect the security of the environment. If the software or product is found suitable it is then added to the whitelist.

DPS would be happy to provide this list of applications directly to Senators and Members as required. Providing a publicly accessible list of approved software may impact the security of the parliamentary network.
3. Providing wireless in Electorate Offices is not covered in the current entitlements special appropriation. Active consideration is being given to the proposal by both DPS and the Department of Finance.

4. There are a number of products available for statistical analysis in the Parliamentary Network, including:
 - Stata
 - SAS
 - Excel Diff
 - Microsoft Excel
 - R

Some of these applications are licenced and only available to users with a current licence.

5. The “R” statistical program is used by the Parliamentary Budget Office.
6. Virtual Network Computing (VNC) clients are not presently endorsed to run on the PCN as they represent a potential security risk to the environment. VNC clients could be used by malicious attackers to connect and transfer data from the Parliamentary Network to another location on the internet.
7. DPS allows Mac OS computers to be used on the DPS network on a “Bring Your Own” basis. The PCN is primarily built around the use of Microsoft Windows based platforms.
8. The following applications are available for editing of “.txt”, “.html”, “.rtf” files:
 - Adobe Acrobat
 - NotePad
 - Notepad ++
 - Word Pad
 - Microsoft Office
 - Dreamweaver
 - Google Chrome
 - Microsoft Visual C++
 - Wysiwyg

9. Why do websites run under the APH.gov.au provide PDF files with the ashx suffix?

ASHX is a standard Microsoft extension for documents stored in databases and is a mechanism that allows documents with various extensions to be presented to the reader. It does not change the original file type extension and the reader will open, read and save as the original file type.

Recent changes to the system configuration have been implemented and the links that are internally generated by the system are now presenting the .PDF suffix.

Document links in the APH website do however come from a number of sources. Each of these sources provides the PDF links with a different extension. The sheer number of documents means that efficiencies are being made in both computer capacity and resources by linking to documents that are hosted in other systems. Some links will continue to use the ASHX suffix.

Is this a way of avoiding disability access requirements?

No. DPS is committed to making its website accessible to as many people as possible and meeting the WCAG 2.0 standards.

Could they be provided with the .pdf suffix?

As described above, for new content the core APH Website now shows the original file extension (previously ASHX media handler) for most situations.

What are the APH managed websites plans for provision of plain text versions of answers to questions on notice?

The systems that create and maintain this content are managed by the Department of the Senate.