

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing—October 2012

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **MS Outlook**
Question: **157**
Written **Senator Ronaldson**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 30 November 2012

With respect to the security of Members' and Senators' diaries and personal information on the PCN:

- a. How, specifically, and when did the DPS become aware of the issue with Outlook allowing all PCN users access to some Senators' and Members' email and calendar profiles?
- b. Is the DPS aware of how long this could have been a problem for?
- c. Can the DPS inform the Committee as to the likelihood of some PCN user accessing a Senator's or Member's profile during this period? Can DPS exclude the possibility that a PCN user accessed a Senator's or Member's profile without their permission during this period?
- d. Can the DPS list the security and/or privacy ramifications from someone accessing, or potentially being able to access, a Senator's or Member's profile, particularly for constituents?
- e. Why was this problem not discovered earlier? Does the DPS have systems in place to ensure that profiles are set up correctly to begin with and to monitor the status of access to Senators' and Members' profiles?
- f. If this situation can occur, what other situation or situations could occur which could jeopardise the security of Senators' or Members' profiles? Is the DPS aware of all the possible scenarios that could jeopardise the security of Senators' or Members' profiles? Can DPS preclude another security situation such as this occurring?
- g. What action will the DPS take and/or what systems does the DPS have in place to prevent a breach of security and/or to check on the current security across each of these scenarios?
- h. Can DPS update the Committee at the next Senate Estimates in February 2013 as to what actions it has taken with respect preventing possible security breaches?

Answer

- a) On 13 September 2012, the 2020 support desk was advised by a user that she could see the calendar information of Senators and Members by hovering her mouse pointer over their name when she was sending them an email.

Upon investigation, two separate issues were found.

The first issue was that the default access permissions to some email and calendar profiles had been changed so that they could be accessed by other PCN users. DPS had set the default permission to not share any email information and only show if a user was free or busy on their calendar. It appears that some users had changed these default permissions.

The second issue was that some staff of Members had accidentally been given computers that had Microsoft Communicator installed and this allowed them to view the availability of other users on the PCN. This problem affected 31 Members' staff and was resolved the same day it was discovered.

- b) The rollout of Windows 7 and Office 2010 to Senators and Members during the winter adjournment (July 2012) made this issue visible; although the default access changes could have been made by users any time prior to this. The incorrectly set permissions for some users may have been in place for some time.

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- c) The likelihood of PCN users inappropriately accessing a Senator's or Member's mailbox is low. The user would have to have inadvertently discovered that they could access the mailbox; then have the knowledge required to access exposed mail. This is generally beyond the basic user operation.

DPS cannot exclude the possibility that a PCN user accessed a Senator's or Member's mailbox without their permission as mailbox/calendar auditing/logging is not currently enabled, due to the performance and capacity implications of doing so.

- d) DPS cannot list the security and/or privacy ramification as it does not know the contents of a Senator's or Member's inbox or calendar or the intent of any user who may have inadvertently or maliciously discovered that they may be able to access a mail box or calendar. DPS does not govern or monitor the content of a Senator's or Member's mail box, so cannot comment on the impact of said data being accessed.

- e) DPS has a set of standard procedures for the correct creation of new user profiles and checks have shown this is done correctly. There is no evidence to suggest DPS has misconfigured or altered these settings from the default or that the migration to the new SOE (Standard Operating Environment) caused any of these issues.

The problem was not discovered earlier because mailbox and calendar access is the responsibility of the user and is not monitored by DPS. DPS is aware that Senators and Members allow their staff to access and manage their mailboxes and calendars, and has provided documentation detailing how to grant access to other users. This documentation has a bolded note stating a user should not to change the "Default User" permissions. The 2020 support desk is also available to assist users who are not sure how to make such changes.

Since this issue was discovered, a weekly process is run to reset the Default User permission of all Senators', Members' and their staff's Calendars and email to remove this type of misconfiguration.

- f) DPS cannot cover all the different scenarios that may occur or jeopardise the security or privacy of Senators' or Members' information. DPS sets policies to provide the best level of protection and functionality for users; but many of these rely on the user to ensure security and privacy is maintained. The ability to change the profile is a feature of the Microsoft email/calendar system and cannot be locked down to remove the ability for users to change these settings. DPS cannot guarantee that this situation will not occur again as it is controlled by the users themselves.

DPS has put in a weekly procedure to reset any default mailbox and calendar access permissions that have been changed. Better education for users in regards to mailbox and calendar access would also help alleviate this issue. The 2020 support desk is available to help users who are unsure of how to provide other staff with access to their email and/or calendar

- g) Refer to information in 3rd paragraph of e) above.

- h) Yes.