

Australian infrastructure at risk of criminal attacks

Australia's critical infrastructure is vulnerable to the kind of ransomware attack that threw much of the United States into chaos early this month with widespread fuel shortages prompting soaring prices and panic buying across its east coast.

Sapien Cyber chairman Stephen Smith said the Dampier Bunbury Pipeline – Western Australia's key gas pipeline - was the local equivalent to the Colonial Pipeline in the US and a sudden shutdown forced by cyber-attack would have a similarly devastating impact.

"Australia – in particular WA – has a tremendous amount of large-scale critical infrastructure underpinning our economy and lifestyle and we are just as vulnerable to cyber criminals as any other country," Professor Smith said. "There are no borders in cyber crime.

"We have seen a growing trend around the world of criminal gangs going for 'big scores' with ransomware attacks. Criminals have picked up the technology previously used by State-sponsored groups for political purposes and are now using it to hold big corporates and infrastructure providers to ransom for massive sums of money.

"The challenge for governments and infrastructure providers is to protect the community and businesses from the resulting chaos and disruption, like we saw recently in the United States."

Professor Smith made his comments at the official opening of Sapien Cyber's new offices in Joondalup today, where some of the world's leading experts in cyber security and threat intelligence have opened a new frontline in the global fight against cyber crime.

WA Governor, the Hon. Kim Beazley, WA Minister for Innovation and ICT the Hon. Don Punch MLA and WA Minister for Defence Industry the Hon. Paul Papalia CSC MLA joined Mr Smith and Edith Cowan University Vice Chancellor Steve Chapman to officially open the new offices on the ECU campus. Other guests included Federal Member for Moore Ian Goodenough MP, the Member for Joondalup Emily Hamilton MLA and Joondalup Mayor the Hon. Albert Jacob.

Sapien Cyber Chief Executive Officer Glenn Murray said cyber security breaches were estimated to cost \$29 billion each year in Australia and up to US\$6 trillion globally. Most businesses recognised the importance of cyber security but were overlooking an alarming vulnerability.

"The rise of user-friendly 'smart' cities, where many services are automated, networked and online is increasing the threat landscape and therefore has put Australian businesses at greater risk of cyber-attack," Mr Murray said.

"We see businesses doing the right thing and investing heavily in cyber security to protect their sensitive data and prevent unauthorised access. But their building management systems can also provide an access point into more sensitive business operational systems that are not protected from unauthorised access."

Sapien Cyber is an Australian company providing leading-edge cyber security and threat intelligence to major companies and government institutions in Australia and around the world with partners such as Honeywell, protecting critical infrastructure and people's lives from evolving cyber threats.

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