

16 OCT 2003

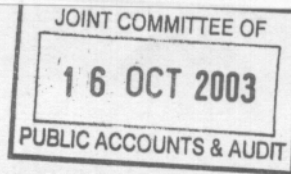
JAMES



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Submission No. 84



Mr Bob Charles, MP
Chairman
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Parliament House
R1 108

Dear Mr Charles,

Request for Information on Computer Related Security Breaches

In response to your letter of 16 September which sought advice on any breaches of computer security that may have occurred in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the Department) and its associated agencies, since July 1998 the following information is provided:

Losses of Software and/or Hardware.

Departmental records indicate that 16 laptops and 15 workstations have been lost/stolen since July 1998 including the recent loss of several laptops in the Canberra bushfires. Each of these systems would have held some form of departmental records however, officers involved confirmed that no information of a classified nature was held on the subject systems. Departmental guidelines address the issue of handling classified information using Information Technology equipment and materials. All incidents were reported to authorities however to date no systems have been recovered.

Unauthorised Access to Computer Systems.

The Department is a member of the Group 8 IT outsourcing arrangement. The service provider (Ipex ITG) is responsible for management, monitoring and reporting of network/security breaches involving the departmental network. To date there have been no reported instances of unauthorised access to computer systems.

Significant events involving Information Technology Security

Since July 1998 only 2 events involving information technology have been registered in the department.

The first was a potential defacement of a portfolio member's website in June 2003. Initial investigation confirmed that no defacement of the website had occurred and there was no evidence of intrusion. Further investigation revealed that the access point advertised by the hackers was incorrect and unavailable.

The second incident involved the spate of viruses that have recently emerged on the internet. The Blaster Worm virus infected one of the department's web servers and several workstations. The infection was found quickly and neutralised within a very short time frame causing minimal impact to the Department.

No other records have been located in relation to any earlier breaches or incidents.

Yours sincerely

Bill Pahl
Chief Operating Officer

13 October 2003

CC: Michael Taylor - Secretary