

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
—Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing—October 2016**

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **ICT outage – Friday 28 October 2016**

Question: **18**

Written: **Senator Wong**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 2 December 2016

With reference to the disruption to Outlook services at 11 am on Friday 28 October 2016:

1. What was the cause of this outage?
2. Were there outside actors involved?
3. How many users were affected?
4. What was the duration of the outage?
5. Why were measures in place insufficient to protect the network?
6. What preventative measures can be put in place to prevent this happening again?
7. Is the outage related to a previous outage that occurred on Monday 10 October 2016?

Answer

1. One of the email servers hosting mailboxes for Senators, Members, their staff and Departmental staff began to display a high level of resource utilisation resulting in slowness and freezing of email services for those users with mailboxes residing on the affected server. Those affected users' mailboxes were moved to a backup server and the problem server was rebooted before the mailboxes were moved back. During the movement of the mailboxes a larger number of users were also impacted for a period of 30-40 minutes until the system stabilised.
2. Prior to the outage no external actors were involved. Following the outage Microsoft and other third party vendors with expertise in this area were engaged in order to assist with root cause analysis of the fault leading to the outage. However no third party was involved leading up to the outage occurring. There is no evidence there was any element of human error or intervention. Cyber intrusion or malware has also been ruled out as the cause for the incident.
3. Initially 1,872 users with mailboxes attached to the problem server would have been impacted if they were trying to access their email. Following the movement of the mailboxes to the backup server, all users of the APH mail system would have temporarily experienced slowness and freezing of email for approximately 30-40 minutes until the system stabilised.
4. The outage duration was 3 hours and 48 minutes. Some users may have experienced issues with email issues prior to this time period. When it became clear to the IT Service Desk that there was a significant issue, an incident was raised at 11am and closed at 2.48pm after services were restored to normal.
5. At the time of writing (7 November 2016) the root cause of the issue has not been diagnosed and therefore measures (if any) which could have prevented the issues cannot be determined. The issue was related specifically to the APH Email environment; there was no outage to the APH network or any other applications.
6. Both Microsoft and a number of third party vendors with extensive expertise have been engaged to perform a full diagnostic and health check on the APH email and related subsystems. These checks have been extensive and exhaustive and have included software, hardware, storage and network subsystems. As at 7 November, our internal investigations and those of the external vendors have

found no faults or issues and have indicated that the environment is optimally configured. We continue to investigate to try and locate the root cause of the incident.

7. No, there is no connection with this outage and the outage on Monday 10 October 2016.