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Malware a threat for government agencies

In his report released today, [Malware in the WA State Government](#) (Report 28 – December 2016) the Auditor General found WA state government agencies are the target of malware related communication.

Auditor General Colin Murphy said government agencies store significant amounts of confidential and personal information that makes them a prime target for infiltration and attacks.

'At the 6 agencies, we found all were facing constant cybersecurity threats and, at 2, we found malware infections that present a serious risk to the agency network, systems and data.

'Although there was a high volume of attacks that had breached at least a first security layer, we did not find a substantial number of ongoing infections, which indicates the agencies generally deal with malware,' Mr Murphy said.

The attacks and malware observed during the audit are common, well understood and use techniques that security tools and agencies should be aware of.

Yet because of weak or missing security controls, many were still able to enter the network and attempt to infect computers.

Mr Murphy said for a number of years I have advised agencies there are very basic, easy to implement and cost effective solutions that reduce the risk of malware infections and breaches.

System security is not only about the tools, it is also about the people. Skilled professionals, staff aware of the dangers of malware and engaged executives are crucial to providing ongoing security management and monitoring.

The audit highlights the need for a coordinated approach to the management of cyberthreats. A whole-of-government approach would take advantage of experiences, techniques and tools and offer valuable lessons learnt and help prevent repeated mistakes.

The Auditor General also tabled [Opinions on Ministerial Notifications](#) (Report 27 – December 2016) on the decisions by 14 Ministers not to provide the strategic asset plans of 41 agencies to Parliament.

Mr Murphy said the decisions were not reasonable and therefore, not appropriate as the SAPs are not prepared solely for consideration by Cabinet and may contain both confidential and public information.

Both reports are available on the Office of the Auditor General website at www.audit.wa.gov.au

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