

2016 IPAA WA Public Sector Research Day

Showcasing public sector related research in Western Australia



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There are no reliable statistics which accurately reveal the true extent of computer misuse within any agency in Australia. Most meaningful data is derived from statistics of members who have been caught for computer misuse and this is a highly under-representative measure at best. The extent of misuse is dependent on the combination of a number of variables which include, but are not limited to the following:

- The culture of the agency in how members collectively appreciate the propriety of accessing of private information.
- The induction and on-going training of staff to re-enforce their knowledge of the rules pertaining to the access of information.
- The sophistication and implementation of various IT solutions to prevent and deter members.
- The manner in which the RACS are constructed and the levels of security within each system.
- The complexity of the tools available to properly audit systems.
- The tenacity of the organisation to pro-actively identifying and deal with misuse.
- The type of information retained in the systems.
- The relevant policies & procedures which articulate how information may be accessed.
- The outcomes for members who have engaged in computer misuse and its general deterrence effect.

All State and Federal Law Enforcement Agencies utilise RACS to secure sensitive data.

In a report in November 2000 by the Queensland Criminal Justice Commission³ it stated *'However, it is clear that complaint statistics should not be relied upon as an accurate measure of prevalence for this type of misconduct, nor should the complaints' mechanism be considered a comprehensive system of monitoring and detecting improper access and/or release of confidential information'*.

In a detailed report by the Western Australia Corruption and Crime Commission⁴ (CCC) published in September 2005 it stated *'The exact extent of the problem of misuse of computer systems through unauthorised access and disclosure is not known and it is widely suspected that a great deal goes undetected, and further, 'all we are ever seeing is the tip, and the iceberg itself remain largely unseen and unknown.*

This paper proposes computer misuse falls into three broad categories (regardless of which agency owns the RACS) namely:

³ Queensland Criminal Justice Commission 'A report on the improper access to, and release of, confidential information from the police computer systems by members of the Queensland Police Service.

⁴ Corruption and Crime Commission⁴ CCC 'An inquiry into unauthorised access and disclosure of confidential information held on the electronic databases of public sector agencies'.