



Ransomware attacks are one of the most significant cyber threats we face in our rapidly evolving digital world. They have been on the rise over the past several years, with businesses and critical infrastructure systems key targets. The impacts of these attacks can be crippling, threaten the way we live, and can be hard to recover from.

Ransomware attacks can be avoided. Awareness and education are key to protecting people and organisations from being targeted, but too many wrongly believe it won't happen to them.

In a collaborative project, the Cyber Security Cooperative Research Centre, CSIRO's Data61, WA's Office of Digital Government with the support of Edith Cowan University, created an interactive game to present to executives of the Western Australian Government, with the aim of raising awareness and encouraging critical thinking about how they would prepare for and respond to a ransomware attack.

Sixty WA Government employees from 42 different organisations participated in the game. Eight were from a critical infrastructure sector, two from health care, five from education, one from local government and 26 from other Western Australian state government agencies.

Participants were faced with a realistic scenario of a cyber attack on a fictitious WA port and were asked to consider the cyber security risks associated with key systems and business processes that operate the port. As teams, in which participants played key executive roles, the game fostered discussion about risk, risk-mitigation and compliance considerations in relation to ransomware and critical infrastructure in Australia. Through role-play, the teams addressed pressing issues associated with the port's ability to detect, respond and recover from the fictitious ransomware attack. Key factors, like governance processes, were tackled to help address adherence to existing compliance measures.

The fast-paced game provided participants with the opportunity to make decisions and engage with cyber security issues in a safe space. Through this experiential learning approach, the board game provided participants with the opportunity to broaden their understanding of cyber security risks and this knowledge back to their own agencies and departments.

Feedback was positive, with a satisfaction rate of 4.2 out of 5. Participants said they found the game educational and engaging.

Peter Bouhla, WA's Chief Information Security Officer at the Office of Digital Government Perth, said it was well received, with many enjoying the interactive element.