

Law Council to launch national cyber security initiative as cyber threat grows

The Law Council of Australia will launch a national cyber security information campaign for the legal profession this year, as the threat of cybercrime and cyber espionage grows exponentially across the globe.

The Law Council has been working in partnership with the legal profession, cyber security experts, and government to formulate the information initiative since it nominated cyber security as a key priority at the beginning of the year. Launch of the campaign is expected by the end of 2016.

Law Council of Australia President, Stuart Clark AM, said the legal profession needed to be particularly vigilant about the threat of cybercrime and cyber espionage.

“With concerns about cyber security rising across all sectors of the economy, we should be particularly concerned about the very sensitive information held by lawyers that we know is seen as a real prize by cybercriminals,” Mr Clark said.

“Law firms face a number of challenges. Like every other business they are a target for cybercriminals trying to defraud the firm or extract a cyber ransom payment. They are also the target for cybercriminals who want to steal information.

“Law firms and lawyers hold sensitive client business information and intellectual property.

“Corporate clients, in particular, will often share market sensitive information, for example information about mergers and acquisitions, that could be stolen and used for insider trading.

“There is also litigation and negotiation strategies, settlement parameters, and analysis of evidence that can be used by an opponent.

“These threats fundamentally strike at the core of what it is that we do as legal professionals, because client confidentiality lies at the very foundation of the client/lawyer relationship.

“Lawyers must be able to demonstrate to their clients and regulators that they understand the nature of risk and are taking action to address the threat.”

Mr Clark said cooperation and coordination across the profession — and with government — were key.

“The Federal Government’s announcement this year of a \$230 million Cyber Security Strategy was significant and timely,” Mr Clark said.

“Cybercrime and cyber espionage are truly global phenomena and an appropriate response requires government to be working cooperatively with the private sector to exchange information about threats and security responses.

“The Law Council is developing both an education package and a hub for the exchange of information and security initiatives to strengthen the protection of the entire Australian legal profession.”

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