

Response to Winding Down Australia's Cheque System

Please Note the following points:

- The number of cheques currently in use is reducing because, for some time, the Banks have been actively discouraging businesses and individuals from using cheques and have thereby been manipulating the volume of cheques being used.
- In Victoria alone thousands of incorporated Associations are required by the Associations Incorporation Act (Victoria) to operate a Cheque Account with all cheques to be signed by two signatories. The reason for this is to reduce the opportunity for embezzlement of funds.
- Other States in Australia require incorporated Associations to have a Cheque account with cheques to be signed by two signatories.
- The Tax Office also requires Charities to have a Cheque Account with all cheques to be signed by two signatories for the same reason.
- The Tax Office also requires Deductible Gift Recipient Funds to have a Cheque Account with all cheques to be signed by two signatories for the same reason.
- Many Incorporated Associations, Charities and Deductible Gift Recipient Funds do not have their own Internet Access. If cheques are removed as a form of payment will the Federal Government fund their Internet connection and increased costs?
- It takes approximately 2 minutes to approve a payment at a Committee Meeting, fill out the Cheque and get two signatories to sign it. It will take much much longer to get two signatories for log onto the internet, log into the bank and then the bank account and authorise the electronic payment. This will be an imposition on what are mostly volunteers acting to help our communities.
- Cheques are very safe compared with electronic or other forms of payment as can be seen by the greatly increased fraud and scams abounding since the introduction of Credit Cards and electronic banking. I have never been scammed with a dud cheque but I have been scammed with fake credit card transactions which the banks take ages if ever to rectify.
- Computing power is increasing at such a rate that it will soon be possible to decrypt the most heavily encrypted electronic banking transactions which are all sent through multiple computers where they can be trapped and stored by scammers for later decryption when the computing power finally becomes available at a cheap enough price (Refer Attachment 1).
- Ask yourself who will benefit from the winding up of the Cheque system –
 - Will it be the Bank's customers who are already suffering greatly reduced levels of service in order for the Bank Executives to cut costs in order to realise the achievement of their Bonus packages? No.
 - Will it be the Banks Depositors who are already experiencing the widest margin between Bank Deposit Interest Rates and Bank Lending Rates ever experienced?
 - Will it be The Reserve Bank or the Federal Government? No.
- The only beneficiaries of the winding up of the Cheque System which the Banks have been heavily manipulating to downgrade it for some time will be the Banks who will cut their costs and increase their current huge yearly profits by further reduce their services so that the Bank Executives can achieve their Salary Bonus Packages.
- The Federal Government is meant to be there for the benefit of all the people of Australia, the old, the middle aged, the young and businesses of all sizes who are already struggling with the reduced bank services and branch closures we have to put up with so don't bow to the Bank's pressures to wind down the Cheque System and give them a financial windfall as they further reduce the services many of us need including the safety and convenience of cheques.

Quantum cyber threat to data

APPENDIX 1

Herald Sun | Tuesday January 9, 2024

Defences are not sufficient

James Dowling

Cybersecurity experts have warned Australia is quickly approaching "Q-Day", where advances in quantum computing technology will allow hackers to access people's data that is currently inaccessible to criminals, with calls on Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to improve the nation's cybersecurity defences.

Q-Day is described as the point when a quantum computer can brush past all the current encryption used to protect data and infrastructure, potentially exposing data used in online banking.

"If proper safeguards are not put in place (before Q-Day), this pretty much would affect every user of technology," said Dr Muhammad Esgin from Monash University.

Hackers could also potentially reach back and compromise the data of today in the future through a technique known as "harvest now, decrypt later", a strategy that opposition cybersecurity spokesman James Paterson is concerned the Albanese government has not prepared for.

"We need to recognise that quantum computing could also have significant privacy and security implications retroactively," Senator Paterson said.

"Large troves of sensitive encrypted information that have already been stolen but are currently unreadable (could)

be cracked open overnight by a sufficiently advanced quantum computer."

According to the Department of Home Affairs, in 2022 to 2023 there was one cyber incident reported every six minutes.

Former political adviser and musician Marty Breen was a victim of both the Medibank and Optus data breaches in 2022.

"There is no evidence that Medibank had the competence to protect us, so it must fall to the government to act," Mr Breen said.

Greens senator and digital rights spokesman David Shoebridge echoed this concern.

"Attacks are becoming more common and the responses, both corporate and government, have not addressed the scale or the urgency of the problem," Senator Shoebridge said.

"There is a very real prospect that all of our existing digital defences could be knocked over with a single powerful reform in quantum computing."

The Department of Home Affairs claimed the risk of cyber attacks was on the rise, describing the cyber threats environment as "deteriorating".

"Australia continues to be actively involved in the development of standards for post-quantum cryptographic algorithms," a Home Affairs spokesman said.

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