

Review of recommendations made following unauthorised release of confidential information from the Public Transport Authority

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Introduction

- [1] On 18 October 2018, the Corruption and Crime Commission reported on the unauthorised release of confidential information by an employee of the Public Transport Authority (PTA), Mr Andrew Forrester.
- [2] Mr Forrester accessed and saved the details of 1,750 PTA employees and disclosed these details to the Australian Rail Tram and Bus Industry Union. This information was then used by the union as leverage in negotiations with the PTA.
- [3] The information accessed and disclosed was confidential, personal information of public sector employees. The Commission noted that employees are entitled for such details to be kept private, and they trust their employers to have the appropriate information technology security measures in place to protect that information from others.
- [4] The Commission formed an opinion of serious misconduct in respect of Mr Forrester's conduct.
- [5] The Commission also made two recommendations that the PTA:
 - a) tightens access controls over confidential information including individual logins; and
 - b) reinforces to all staff the seriousness of accessing confidential information.
- [6] In November 2019, the Commission sought information from the PTA regarding the action that has been taken to implement these recommendations. The PTA provided a prompt response.
- [7] This report details the Commission's review of that response.

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Recommendation one

Public Transport Authority tightens access controls over confidential information including individual logins.

Commission report

- [8] Mr Forrester's access to the confidential information on PTA's restricted-access computer systems was facilitated by an employee who left his desk unattended and computer logged in.
- [9] The Commission's report recommended that the PTA tighten controls over confidential information, including logins, to prevent recurrence of this type of misconduct.

Public Transport Authority response

- [10] PTA has taken a number of actions to address this recommendation.
- [11] PTA employees may not access PTA computer systems until they have acknowledged PTA's Telecommunications Use Policy Agreement, which includes advice to users in relation to disciplinary action that may be applied following a breach.
- [12] PTA has introduced a mandatory automatic suspension of user accounts when the account is inactive for three months.
- [13] Information stored on two shared drives is now automatically deleted after 30 days to reduce the visibility and volume of shared documents.
- [14] A report is distributed every six months to PTA Executive Directors and General Managers providing a list of files accessible by employees. Access is reviewed and adjusted or suspended as required.
- [15] The PTA is implementing "follow me" printing to better secure print jobs and make scanned jobs accountable and auditable.
- [16] PTA's Objective document system has been enhanced to increase security controls, and training has been improved to include more information about appropriate security of records and maintaining confidentiality of information.

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- [17] PTA is developing a more robust approach to securing its confidential information across its information technology systems and ensuring that its employees only have access to information relevant to their roles.
- [18] **The Commission considers this recommendation to be complete.**

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Recommendation two

Public Transport Authority reinforces to all staff the seriousness of accessing confidential information.

Commission report

- [19] In light of the serious unauthorised disclosure of confidential information in this matter, the Commission also recommended that PTA reinforce to all staff the seriousness of accessing such information.

Public Transport Authority response

- [20] On 18 October 2018, all PTA employees were notified by email of the Commission's report and recommendations, and reminded of their obligations pursuant to PTA's Code of Conduct and Telecommunication Use Policy. The requirement to lock or turn off computers when not in use was reinforced. The Commission was provided with a copy of this communication.
- [21] PTA's Information Security Policy was updated in December 2018. The policy outlines how all information at PTA should be dealt with and includes information about unauthorised access or removal of PTA information. The Commission has also reviewed this policy.
- [22] The PTA has recently updated and released Accountable and Ethical Decision Making training to their employees, including specific training relating to accessing and disseminating confidential information.
- [23] PTA's Director Integrity and Investigation conducts face-to-face training with all new PTA employees, which includes specific information about protecting PTA information. In addition, ongoing, targeted training is provided to all PTA employees.

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- [24] PTA has reinforced to its employee's their obligations in relation to the access and disclosure of confidential information. Relevant to this matter, they have also been reminded to secure their computer and logins.
- [25] The training and information being provided to PTA employees ought to be sufficient to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities.
- [26] **The Commission considers this recommendation to be complete.**

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Conclusion

- [27] PTA advised that it has completed a comprehensive review of its systems, and is satisfied that its information security has been significantly enhanced whilst taking into account the need to maintain trust in their employees and ensure business needs are met.
- [28] The Commission considers that PTA has taken adequate measures to address the concerns raised in the report and to reduce the risk of the unauthorised access or disclosure of confidential information.
- [29] **The Commission considers these recommendations to be closed.**