

Select Committee: internet unsafe on a PC* (who knew?)

The Commons Science and Technology has just published a report on cyber crime

Apparently the internet can provide an opportunity for criminals and criminal behaviour and there are dangers for everyday users of the internet too.

No sh*t, Sherlock? What else?

*a personal computer running Microsoft Windows according to the BCS

The Committee were told that PCs are infected with malware to create networks which are used by criminals and that the owner of the PC may suffer:

- loss in performance of their PC
- data compromise (personal details, bank details etc)
- unwitting hosting of illegal and unpleasant content
accusations of criminality

The loss of information can cause financial loss, affect relationships or destroy irreplaceable records.

Let's stretch our minds back to 2009 and across to Australia: Don't Bank on Windows, when the New South Wales Police told a public hearing:

The first rule was to never click on hyperlinks to the banking site and the second was to avoid Microsoft Windows

In response to his suggestion that for commercial transaction on the internet one should "use a Linux boot up disk", MPs were enthusiastic but clueless. One MP said:

You may need to explain further for us

Another MP responded:

Yes, we need to understand that

Then there's last year's news: While we wait for more words, US Govt released a linux distro from which we can learn that with Lightweight Portable Security Linux:

A user can improve security by rebooting between sessions, or when about to undertake a sensitive transaction. For example, boot LPS immediately before performing any online banking transactions

Remind me again what advice the UK Govt is receiving? Oh yes, in March 2011 Ian Watmore insisting:

the government was committed to using more open source software to save cash - but had to balance this with concerns about how easily it could be hacked

That comment was made in despite, in December 2010, the Government having been a victim of the Zeus malware with undisclosed loss of sensitive information). Regardless, he continued:
95% of the business and government world still use Microsoft for its basic desktop products because it is reliable and it works

-- Gerry Gavigan, Chair, 3 February 2011

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