

A BRIGADE OF CYBER WARDENS SET TO TRANSFORM SMALL BUSINESS CYBERSECURITY LANDSCAPE

The ultimate line of defence against cyber criminals is about to march in, and they mean business.

Embargoed until 12.01am August 1, 2023: In a groundbreaking collaboration to help shield small businesses from cybercrime, Australia's maiden group of regional Cyber Wardens will graduate at a special event in Wagga Wagga today.

A group of small businesses will assemble to get acquainted with a revolutionary approach to training through the Cyber Wardens initiative, a program aimed at educating employees on simple actions and habits that can help thwart cyber criminals.

This state-of-the-art initiative equips regular workers with the tools they need to help secure their small business against sophisticated cyber threats.

Cyber Wardens is a program from Australia's leading small business advocacy body, the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia (COSBOA), with founding sponsors CommBank and Telstra. Recognising the critical importance of cyber safety in the small business sector, this partnership created Australia's first-ever cyber safety workplace certification program.

Currently cyber threats and scams targeting small businesses cost the Australian economy an estimated \$29 billion a year.

Research conducted on behalf of Telstra, the CommBank and COSBOA earlier this year revealed small businesses in regional areas were less concerned about the risk of a cyber attack than those in metro areas, increasing their risk profile. Their confidence in dealing with a cyber attack was also lower.

Crafted by small businesses, for small businesses, the Cyber Wardens program aims to empower owners and their workforces with easy-to-use, complimentary tools available via an interactive eLearning platform.

Participants at the Wagga Wagga event will become Australia's pioneer regional Cyber Wardens graduates. They will complete the training at the event, which includes the skills to help carry out regular cyber security inspections and risk audits, as well as keeping passwords and data safe, and reporting any suspicious messages and threats.



After graduating, the attendees will have a chance to network and share experiences.

According to data from the Australian Cyber Security Centre, having a trained cyber warden who can identify and help prevent a single attack could save a small business tens of thousands of dollars¹.

COSBOA CEO Luke Achterstraat said the Cyber Wardens program was making cyber security simple and accessible for Australian small businesses.

“We know regional small businesses are not as prepared for cyber threats, which leaves them more vulnerable to attacks,” Mr Achterstraat said.

“Educating your team about cyber threats is the best way to protect your small business.

“Once trained in online safety, Cyber Wardens will take their skills with them when they transfer to a new job, expanding the program throughout the small business workforce.”

Busy employees putting off a software update, sharing simple passwords across a business or failing to identify a scam message masquerading as legitimate business are scenarios that account for 19 out of 20 cyber attacks.

The free program aims to create up to 60,000 Cyber Wardens in small businesses within three years, building small business cyber resilience from the ground up.

Small business owners can join the waitlist to get free access to the Cyber Wardens program over the coming weeks.

Date: Tuesday 1 August | **Time:** 8.30am - 11am

Location: Mercure Wagga Wagga, 1 Morgan St, Wagga Wagga

For more information please visit www.cyberwardens.com.au

Media inquiries: Alex Sampson, 0400 065 667

¹Figure 9: Average reported losses per successful BEC cybercrime report made in financial year 2020–21 compared with financial year 2019–20, ACSC Cyber Threat Report 2020/21



Additional comments

Anne Da Cuhna

Telstra, Small Business Executive

“Telstra helps protect our customers by blocking millions of scams each month via our Cleaner Pipes initiative, and the Cyber Wardens program is another way we help educate small business by sharing practical technical skills to be cyber safe.

“It’s not just big businesses in big cities that need to worry about cybersecurity - it’s everyone, including small businesses in regional areas.

“We have a proven track record of investing in regional and remote communities and are proud to graduate the first Cyber Warden regional cohort.”

Shaun Stevens

Commonwealth Bank, General Manager Small Business Banking NSW ACT

“Scammers and hackers are using increasingly sophisticated attacks to target small and medium sized businesses. The Cyber Wardens training program is specifically designed to help SMEs respond to the risks and support them to build an effective culture of cyber security.

“Empowering small businesses to identify and manage cyber threats is essential. Our first graduates to the regional Cyber Wardens program will be able to take their knowledge and skills out to others, helping the entire local Wagga Wagga business community to lock their doors to cyber threats.”