

Top Australian university reports vast, 'sophisticated' hack

June 4 2019



Australian National University said the vast hack by a 'sophisticated operator' had gained access to 19 years of sensitive data

A top Australian university with close ties to the country's government and security services on Tuesday said it had been the victim of a vast

hack by a "sophisticated operator" who gained access to 19 years of sensitive data.

In a message to staff and students, the Australian National University did not say who was believed to be behind the cyber intrusion, which is thought to have started in late 2018.

But vice-chancellor Brian Schmidt said the data accessed included "names, addresses, dates of birth, phone numbers, personal email addresses and emergency contact details, tax file numbers, payroll information, bank account details, and passport details."

The hack also breached student academic records.

"In late 2018, a sophisticated operator accessed our systems illegally. We detected the breach two weeks ago," Schmidt said.

"We're working closely with Australian government security agencies and industry security partners to investigate further."

"The University has taken immediate precautions to further strengthen our IT security and is working continuously to build on these precautions to reduce the risk of future intrusion."

The Canberra-based institution is backed by the [federal government](#) and is one of Australia's foremost research and teaching universities.

It started as a [research institution](#) after World War II, but today also teaches tens of thousands of students each year, including former prime ministers, cabinet officials and [civil servants](#).

This is just the latest in a series of hacks targeting the Australian establishment.

Earlier this year, the Australian parliament reported that its computer network and some political parties had been compromised.

The breach was blamed on a "sophisticated state actor" with experts pointing fingers toward Beijing.

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Citation: Top Australian university reports vast, 'sophisticated' hack (2019, June 4) retrieved 4 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-06-australian-university-vast-sophisticated-hack.html>

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