

External Interactive Outage of 30 April 2008/1 May 2008

Yesterday (Wednesday 30 April 2008) there was an outage in the external interactive access channel. This impacted all external logins for Industry but did not impact on the internal interactive usage by Customs and AQIS. EDI was also not impacted.

The root cause of the outage relates to a corruption in the data storage of the operating file systems for the hardware that supports the login services to the external interactive. This resulted in an inability to start these login services.

Due to the nature of the storage corruption it was not a straightforward exercise to identify the issue and the appropriate resolution strategy. Three actions were therefore pursued in parallel. The first was to restore the file system for the current login service; the second to create another instance of the login system on another part of the infrastructure; and the third was to switch the current interactive service to the equivalent services that had been established in the IBM data centres in preparation for the transition of these services. The external login services were redirected to the IBM infrastructure at 5.00pm. The original service was operational just after 5.15pm, with restoration back to these services completed by 5.30pm.

The restoration of the service was of paramount importance yesterday and therefore some temporary arrangements were implemented within the environment. These arrangements resulted in some disruption this morning (Thursday 1 May 2008) from around 8.45am until approximately 10.45am. Further work is scheduled to be completed tonight to finalise the recovery process and to enable industry access to the reports functionality.

A number of actions have been/will be undertaken to ensure more responsive resolution to this type of incident. This includes the design and implementation of a second instance of the login service to ensure more robust redundancy for this capability. Comprehensive post-incident reviews are also conducted for all incidents and events for our systems and this process will further inform additional actions that need to be undertaken.

The team is very aware of the impact that these outages have on industry and there was a strong focus and priority on restoring the service. They were disappointed that the resolution took the period that it did and will be determining how these incidents are firstly avoided in the future and secondly resolved more quickly if and when they do occur. The incident is not related to the transition process currently being undertaken and all the infrastructure operating the existing login service will be replaced as part of that transition program.

In addition, to reduce some of the dependencies that Industry has on the external interactive service, a project will shortly commence to develop an additional interactive channel that will have a subset of the current services. These services could include view and search capability. It would not include the online entry of transactions so that non-repudiation is no longer a requirement. This would allow for a less rigorous access approach rather than the PKI certificates that are currently required for transactions. A co-design approach will be utilised in further developing this concept and it will be undertaken as part of the IAG work program – within the CI Security item that is on the IAG priority list.

Once again, Customs apologises for the inconvenience associated with the unavailability of this service.