



What is the 'Dark Web'?

-NSW

Australian children's personal information is being sold online after being stolen from gaming sites

ANNABEL HENNESSY, The Daily Telegraph

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POPULAR video games such as Fortnite and Minecraft are being used to harvest children's personal data by web fiends who flog it to anyone willing to stump up the cash.

An investigation by The Saturday Telegraph can reveal cyber-criminals are selling "data sets" of children's personal information, including their email addresses, phone numbers and passwords, for as little as \$15 on the dark web — a nefarious hidden part of the internet infamous for illegal activity.

It comes as The Telegraph can reveal federal Minister for Law Enforcement and Cyber-Security Angus Taylor is planning to introduce new laws to crack down on the lowlifes using gaming applications to exploit kids.



Max Mcbeth playing the game Fortnite at home in Bangor. Picture: Jonathan Ng

Examples of information advertised for sale online includes passwords and email addresses for gaming accounts and phone numbers obtained from social media site Snapchat.

Security in Depth chief executive Michael Connory said that the sale of children's data was a growing trend.

"We've found over the past 18 months the number of children's IDs being advertised for sale has grown substantially," Mr Connory, who has provided cyber-security advice for government agencies including DFAT, said.

"The advantage to having children's ID is it's far more usable for someone to perpetrate long-term identity theft. It's unlikely a child will look at their credit history or if they're applying for loans or setting up bank accounts."

He said there was also a concern the data could be used by paedophiles for grooming purposes.





Popular video games such as Fortnite and Minecraft



are being used to harvest children's personal data

Cyber-safety expert Ross Bark said crooks could use a child's username and password for a gaming site like Fortnite to extract more information including phone numbers, credit card details, dates of birth and home addresses.

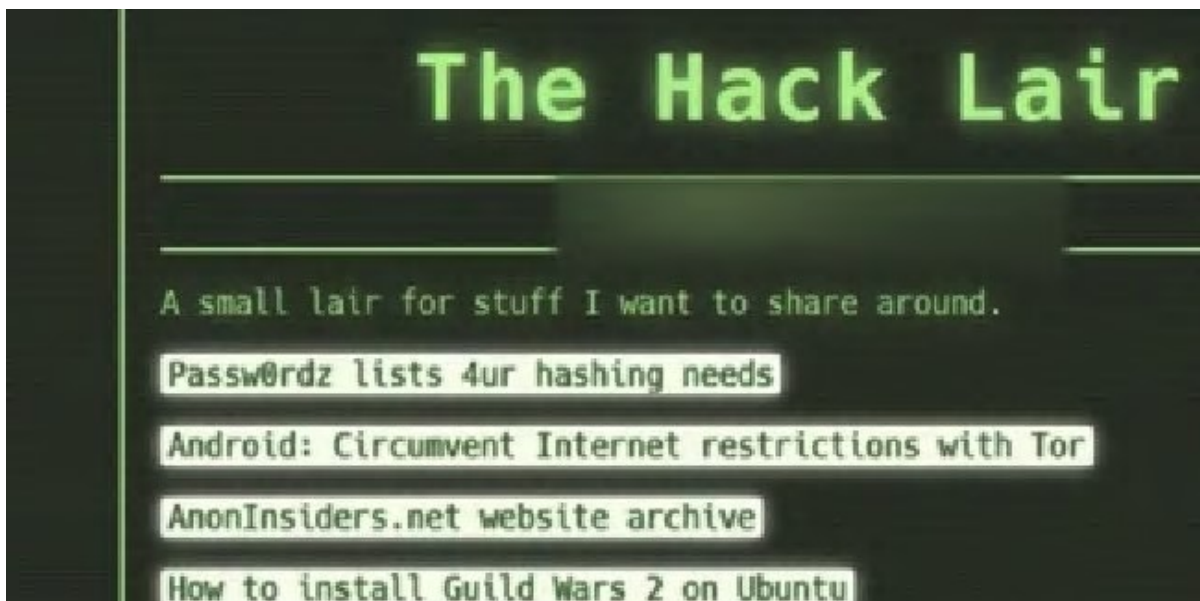
"Websites like Fortnite ask users to hand over a lot of personal information, which is very valuable to criminals," Mr Bark said. "The account details would usually be purchased in bulk by the hundreds."

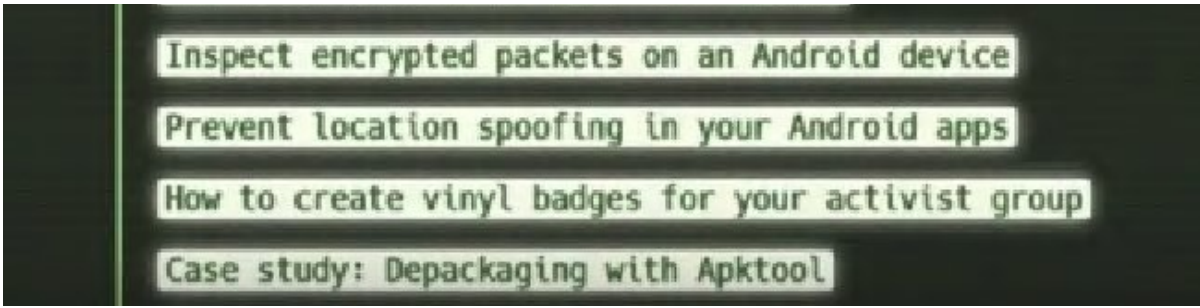
Mr Taylor told The Saturday Telegraph the government was making reforms to target criminals using gaming applications for illegal activity. "With the rise of encryption, new social media platforms and online games have increasingly become a haven for criminals to conceal their activity," he said.

Under the reforms the heads of law enforcement agencies will have greater power to compel communication companies into assisting investigations.

Sue Fisher's 14-year-old son Max is an avid Fortnite player and she was disturbed to learn crooks were targeting the site.

"It's pretty scary. Now that I know I will talk to him about changing his password every month," Ms Fisher said.





 Hack Lair, a dark web site offering training and tips for wannabe hackers. Supplied

WHAT IS THE DARK WEB?

THE dark web is a hidden part of the internet which is known for being a hotbed of criminal activity.

Dark web sites can't be found on the normal internet or found in search engines and can only be accessed by downloading a special browser.

Sites on the dark web conceal their IP addresses- the code used to find where a website is being run from.

Recent research from Monash University used AI technology to scan 200,000 pages of the dark web.

It found more than two thirds of the activity was classified as illegal and unethical with a high proportion of sites dedicated to money laundering, drugs and child pornography.

WHAT IS FORTNITE?

PLAYED by more than 45 million, Fortnite is a Hunger Games-style video sweeping the globe.

Free to play online, the game pits up to 100 players against each other in a fight to the death using rocket, launchers, grenades and assault rifles.

Popular with primary school aged children, Fortnite can be played on mobile, PC, Xbox and PlayStation.

While the game is rated unsuitable for under 12s, there have been reports of children as young as six playing it.

Experts have also raised concerns about the game's addictive nature with some kids spending more than four hours a day playing.



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