

A man in a plaid shirt stands with his hands on his hips, looking out over a field at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The man is in the foreground, and the field extends to the horizon. The sky is filled with soft, golden light and some clouds.

# Small Business and Ransomware attacks

# Ransomware attacks can happen to anyone, even a business with no employees

Dave\* bought a block of land in NSW with a small herd of cattle as a new income stream. The last thing he expected was to become the victim of a ransomware attack!

When he logged onto his computer one morning, he found a message on the screen.

“It read that in order to access my files I had to pay \$990 US,” Dave said.

This was an amount he couldn’t afford to pay. Thankfully, Dave didn’t believe he had too much data on his computer, so he simply wiped it clean and gave up any hope of accessing his previous information.

He thought he had “dodged a bullet”. What he didn’t realise was he was still in the firing line.

His Gmail account sent an email that “someone had used a suspicious app to access his password”. The 30 passwords he had saved within his browser had been accessed and the hackers had been using his accounts to go on a mini shopping spree.

“I changed all my passwords and thought that was the end of it,” he said.

Then he started receiving letters in the mail from banks about new debit cards and he realised the hackers had access to his previous emails, which included emails that had his driver licence details attached.

“I never delete my emails, and after 10 years there is a lot of stuff in there. Like your old passport that you send to your wife or resume. It was like a second wave that came through, with all these bank statements that are being sent to me.”

Prior to this incident, Dave’s understanding of cyber threats was limited. It was the kind of stuff he read in headlines affecting big organisations.

His own security extended to a free antivirus he had downloaded. He didn’t have two-factor authentication set up on his accounts.

“I thought ransomware would only be costly for a large business... I didn’t think the repercussions for me would be that great. I didn’t perceive it as a threat.”

*\* Dave is not his real name.*