



What does the **ASD Essential 8** mean for Australian businesses?

Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) Essential 8

Designed to mitigate common cyber security threats

The essential eight strategies, or ASD8, are a response to the increasing need for cybersecurity awareness in Australian business.

The Australian Signals Directorate has identified a comprehensive list of 37 approaches designed to limit any organisation's exposure to the vast majority of cyber threats. The ASD8 are the eight most effective strategies selected from this list. They form a strong baseline of protection and the most practical starting point.



Australian Government
Australian Signals Directorate



The challenges the ASD Essential 8 present for businesses

There are several key challenges that Australian businesses may encounter when attempting to implement the ASD8.



1. Determining maturity

Alongside the essential strategies, the ASD outlines three levels of maturity to help companies determine their current status and how they can improve. The maturity levels are defined as:

Maturity Level One:

Partly aligned with intent of mitigation strategy.

Maturity Level Two:

Mostly aligned with intent of mitigation strategy.

Maturity Level Three:

Fully aligned with intent of mitigation strategy.

These categories look fairly straightforward. However, when you get down to the nitty gritty of individual security solutions, it can be very tricky to define your standing. Not only are companies struggling to determine where they currently stand in terms of security maturity, there is also some confusion deciding which level should be the goal.

There is a misconception that everybody needs to be adhering to the full security maturity levels as soon as possible, but in reality this is far too laborious, not to mention expensive, for many companies. Furthermore, security maturity is something that can be built up over a period of time, not raced towards immediately.

Determining current maturity levels and creating an intelligent plan as to where to start improving is a task in itself.



2. Time and cost

Security is a highly technical field requiring specialist experience, training and facilities. To put it simply, the ASD8 strategies are not things that can be simply tacked on to the to-do list of an already busy IT department. They will take time, investment and likely your own expert security team or at least members of staff.

Many businesses still don't understand that security improvements will bring with them time intensive processes and unavoidable costs. But to ensure that you aren't wasting your resources, it's important to optimise any investments that you make and get good advice in developing a thorough security plan. Considering outsourcing some or all of your security needs may also be an efficient way for you to effectively improve security services without unnecessary expense.



3. Market noise

The business security industry is a bustling place, and there are quite literally millions of 'unique' products which promise all forms of benefits. This busy market can be overwhelming, particularly for those just starting out on their security journey. So how can you be sure that you are getting the products best suited to you for a reasonable cost?

Doing plenty of research and getting good advice before deciding on a security supplier is the best way to start. Furthermore, researching and finding specialist solutions with a strong reputation for success is a must.



4. Past security experiences

Cyber-security is far from a new endeavour, so it's likely that many Australian businesses have tried some form of solution or product in



the past. Sadly, many of these encounters are overwhelmingly negative.

Using generic, unsuitable or poorly integrated tool sets will likely have led to a bad customer experience combined with poor business operations. Neither scenario is acceptable for a thriving modern company.

The burn of past ordeals can often lead companies to be cautious or unwilling to adapt to their current security needs. It is important that the issues of the past are thoroughly analysed to ensure that management understand how to avoid these problems in the future.



5. Whitelisting and patching

The two most significant strategies advised in the ASD8 also happen to be the most challenging to implement. These are patching and whitelisting.

Patching:

The practice of regular updates or changes which correct bugs and remove security vulnerabilities. Patches are very effective but require constant skilled effort to develop. If built incorrectly they can also lead to faults and disruption to the service.

Whitelisting:

The practice of creating a specific index of approved applications that have permission to be present and active on a computer system. This must be a dynamic list which doesn't impede UX, however this can make whitelisting very tricky to maintain.

ASD8 as a managed service (ASD8aaS)

The Missing Link's ASD8 as a Service (#ASD8aaS) is currently the only managed service to focus specifically on the Essential 8 security controls.

Our process begins with a thorough evaluation and penetration testing to determine your ASD8 maturity level and which areas will need the most focus. From there, we can tailor our support to provide the exact level of service you require. This is done through a selection of modular options, each with rapid implementation.

We have designed the #ASD8aaS as an entirely outsourced solution, so it removes the time consuming nature of onsite security tasks, and also utilises our world leading expertise and technology resources.

The #ASD8aaS is specifically designed to allow businesses to deploy best practice security controls, at an affordable price.

Our service is:



Cost effective:

Implementing these strategies in-house is expensive. The skills, time and technology required to put them in place and maintain water tight security will likely need a department of full time staff. By contrast our monthly fees are a drop in the ocean.



Tried and tested:

This service has been developed over many years and has been behind numerous client success stories. We are confident that the current service is the most effective defence against cyber attacks on the market.



Modularly deployed:

We always recommend you implement all essential eight strategies, but sometimes this isn't possible. We offer all eight strategies as separate modular services which can compliment already existing technologies.



Provides round-the-clock access to leading experts:

Our security specialists are experts in their field, and considered one of the strongest and most certified security teams in Australia.

#ASD8aaS Benefits



Reduce business risk



Block malicious applications



Reduce your attack surface



Increase your cyber resilience



Control user privileges

 85%

or more of the most common types of cyber attacks are mitigated by the ASD Essential 8

* Source: acsc.gov.au



“The Missing Link did a great job delivering the first step on our digital security journey. Our network refresh replaced aging equipment with more modern technology to prevent, detect and respond to the growing digital threats. The Missing Link also worked to incorporate other security focused solutions via their ASD8 as a Service.”

Lee Bustin – CIO, Law Society of New South Wales



Insights from the experts:

The ASD8 has provided businesses throughout Australia with a clear and achievable view of what good security looks like. It has also given companies a way to monitor the success of their security products and align them to tangible goals.

At The Missing Link we are proud of our success in safeguarding clients against digital threats. Here are some of our experts' thoughts on what the ASD8 as a service means for Australian businesses:

David Bingham, Senior Security Sales Executive:

“ASD8 as a Service guarantees the peace of mind that fundamental security practices are performed on time, every time, resulting in a significantly reduced attack surface.”

Aaron Bailey, Chief Information Security Officer

“Our ASD8 as a Service offering brings to Australian businesses, for the first time, a modular and maturity level-aligned approach to achieving the basic building blocks of strong cyber resilience as recommended by the Australian Signals Directorate and endorsed and embraced by all levels of government. It will mean that Australian businesses will be able to achieve a high level of cyber resilience. An assurance that wasn't previously available, for greater peace of mind and the ability to focus on their core business offerings and compete more aggressively with confidence in their chosen market.”

Zoaib Nafar, Security Sales Manager

“The Essential 8 are a great way for organisations to implement a set of proven controls to prevent and restrict highly skilled and targeted attackers from obtaining control of a business's most critical assets. For organisations looking to uplift their security posture with these mitigation controls, our Essential 8 as a Service provides this capability at a fixed monthly cost, doing away with the need for maintaining in-house staff to run these functions.”

To learn more about ASD8 as Service contact The Missing Link team today.



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