

Networked social lives

"People use them to have fun and share a joke."

Contrary to society's worst fears social networking sites such as Facebook add to Australians' social lives with only a minority of users experiencing harassment, research by Deakin, Ipsos Australia and I-view has found.

In a study of 531 users of social networking sites, like Facebook, MSN, LinkIn, MySpace and Twitter, Associate Professor David Bednall, set out to establish how people use the sites, in particular whether the sites are used to exchange information, and whether they had experienced harassment.

"Basically users of these sites are spread across the ages, not just Gen Y," he said. "People use them to have fun and share a joke, so there's a site for instance which was set up just recently entitled 'Come on Turnbull Don't Take Away my \$950'. They also use them for more serious purposes such as to support a particular cause or as a way of researching tourist destinations, looking at things like good countries to visit, good tourist attractions, good places to stay and places to avoid."

Associate Professor Bednall said only a minority of users experienced harassment. "This may be because social networking sites are a relatively new phenomena but also because the people they are interacting with are friends and acquaintances who know you are on the site, so there are some social controls," he said.



Low cost solar cells

Monash researchers have developed a solar cell which is thin, flexible and can be produced on a mass-scale using the same technology used to print polymer banknotes.

The first of the trial polymer solar cells have rolled off the presses at the Melbourne-based plant of Securrency International — the company responsible for printing Australian polymer banknotes and currency for 26 countries around the world.

Monash researchers Dr Udo Bach and Professor Yi-Bing Cheng are part of the Victorian Organic Solar



Cell Consortium — a team of scientists and industry partners working in collaboration to develop a polymer solar cell that can be printed cheaply and efficiently.

"The film-like solar cells are fabricated on a polymer substrate and are almost as thin as a sheet of paper. The ultimate goal of our work is to develop this alternative solar cell technology to a point where it can compete with conventional photovoltaic technologies already established on the market," Bach said.

The printable cells offer a number of advantages over traditional solar panel technology. They are lightweight and easily transportable, making them attractive to a domestic market and also flexible like a banknote. Being partially transparent, they can be installed almost anywhere, including roofs of homes and cars, windows or glass panels. The cells also float, allowing them to cover pools or dams, reducing evaporation while also generating energy.

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