



media release

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Privacy Commissioner launches Privacy Awareness Week (1 – 7 May)

With Australians among the highest users of social networking sites in the world, privacy issues are becoming a serious concern, according to NSW acting Privacy Commissioner John McAteer.

Speaking at the Sydney launch of Privacy Awareness Week 2011, Mr McAteer said millions of people on social networking sites were putting their privacy at risk by failing to consider their profile security settings.

“While social networking is clearly a popular way for people to communicate, it has its risks in terms of privacy,” Mr McAteer said.

“Users of these sites need to check their profile settings to ensure that only the people they wish to communicate with have access to their personal communications.

“By taking the time to check and maintain their security settings, people can ensure they gain all of the benefits of social networking while minimising the risks.”

Privacy Awareness Week is an initiative of the Asia Pacific Privacy Authorities (APPA), which have prepared a series of privacy tips for safe social networking (attached).

As part of the event, Mr McAteer also announced the opening of APPA’s international survey seeking information on social networking and privacy, and the launch of a new web video illustrating what can go wrong.

“The Privacy Awareness Week ‘tips for safe social networking’ and the important message in the video and survey should help users to better understand the need for privacy,” he said.

“This is especially so in the online world where instances of personal and private information being shared and sometimes ‘going viral’ are daily occurrences.

“Unwarranted attention, sometimes leading to ‘cyber stalking’ and other crimes, is an all too common and increasing by-product of lax privacy security.”

For more information on Privacy Awareness Week or the social media survey, visit the Office of the Privacy Commissioner NSW website: www.privacy.nsw.gov.au

Social networking – tips for protecting your privacy

- Know the privacy policy and settings of the social networking sites you use.
- Think about the information you share and how it's being used, eg, what might a future employer or partner think if they read it?
- Remember, the internet lets your information be collected and shared easily. The harmless information you post could be added to the mix, creating a full profile about you. Who might see it?
- Sharing information with just a few people doesn't stop it reaching a wider audience; be aware who might pass things on
- Before you post and tag pictures of someone else, ask for their consent – and request that they do the same to you
- Set up 'friend' groups to control the access different people in your life have to your personal details
- Don't accept friend requests from people you don't know
- Location based check-ins can be risky. Do you really want everyone to know that no one's home?