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FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

BLURRING THE LINES BETWEEN VIRTUAL AND REALITY **Australians spend one-third of their daily** **leisure time online**

SYDNEY. 3 March 2009 — The average Australian now spends an hour and a half of their leisure time online each day, most (79%) login from home daily and many have met an online acquaintance in person, according to a recent global digital study conducted by market information group TNS.

The Digital World, Digital Life study, which investigated online behaviour in 16 countries, found that we spend one-third of our leisure time online. Globally, the amount of leisure time spent online overall was similar, but several Asian nations, such as China (44%), Korea (40%) and Japan (38%), are leading the way in terms of spare time spent online.

In the UK, people are spending 28% of their leisure time on the internet, and in the US, people are spending 30% of their spare time in online pursuits.

Director of Technology research, TNS Sydney, Marcus Pritchard said: "The figures from our study show how far the internet has progressed in becoming part of our daily lives. We're finding Australians becoming more and more engaged in social networking, online communities and virtual worlds."

One in two Australians use social networking sites, such as Facebook or MySpace, and on average we are members of 2.7 different sites. The global average is membership to 2.5 different sites, with the leading nation Korea at 4.6.

"Apart from social networking sites, however, we're not active contributors to the internet. We're more feeders from it.

"Content general is not the key activity here," says Pritchard. "We're information downloaders – we'll take what's there but not always provide content."

Generally, awareness of web 2.0 platforms in Australia is high, but contribution to these mediums is low, particularly when compared to other countries. While 93% are aware of blogs, only 40% have accessed them and even fewer have contributed (13%). Likewise, many (83%) are aware of virtual worlds, but only 26% have viewed or contributed to these sites, such as SecondLife. Awareness of wikis is lower at 71% with only 6% having contributed to these knowledge sharing platforms.

One in three (36%) Australians have friends or contacts that they met online with whom they regularly communicate, similar to the global average of 37%. The most gregarious online users reside in China, with 75% having met a friend or contact online that they are still in contact with.

Australians who chat to people online have 23 contacts on their list that were sourced from online. Globally, the figure is 18. Interestingly, once Swedes decide to meet people online they do so at the highest rate, with an average of 39 contacts retained.

Around 6 in 10 Australians with online acquaintances have met them in person and over half have spoken to them on the phone. Once again, this is in line with the global figure but behind nations like Germany (76%), Sweden (75%), France (75%), Denmark (74%), and Norway (73%) who meet up in person more readily.

Despite our active online lives, face-to-face remains the preferred way of communicating with family members, partners, and friends. Other modes of communication elected in preference to online communication include voice calls from mobile and land-line phones and text messages.

According to Pritchard: “Despite the move to using online avenues for socialising, in most situations Australians still prefer face-to-face contact over online forms of communication when talking to established networks.”

The communication preferences of Australians are:

Family	Partners	Friends
1. Face-to-face	1. Face-to-face	1. Face-to-face
2. Voice calls from mobile	2. Voice calls from mobile	2. Email
3. Voice calls from land line	3. Text messages	3. Voice calls from mobile

In some countries mobile phones are used more than face-to-face for communicating with friends, such as Korea where four-fifths (80%) of respondents say they communicate with friends by mobile phone, but only six in ten (61%) say they communicate face-to-face with their friends.

Australians are also engaging in other leisure pursuits the internet has become infamous for. Twenty-two per cent admit to having visited an adult website and having used a chatroom, and one in ten to having used an online dating website. Forty-four per cent have downloaded music and one in five have downloaded a film.

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About Digital World, Digital Life

TNS completed analysis of Digital World, Digital Life – its 16-country study into online behaviour and perspectives around the world at the end of 2008. A total of 27,522 people aged 18 to 55 years were interviewed online in the following countries: Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The research focused on four themes. First, the survey looked at how we are using the internet for entertainment, information and commerce. Second, the survey analysed whether people are using

online channels when making major life decisions – health, family, education, investment etc. Third, how far social media has developed was investigated. And, lastly, the survey covered trust in online sources of information versus traditional media or straightforward recommendations from friends.

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