

Research panel to assist ACMA

To support its regulatory decision-making more broadly, ACMA is establishing a panel of suitably qualified and experienced social and market research providers from which it may select to conduct research activities. Panel members may be selected and engaged to undertake qualitative and quantitative research into communications and media.

Research activities need to be matched to appropriate research skills and may include surveys—such

as computer assisted telephone interviewing, internet, face-to-face, mail-out and omnibus surveys—focus group discussions, in-depth interviews by telephone or face-to-face, ethnographic research or literature reviews.

Social groups targeted by ACMA's research activities may include, for example:

- communities, consumers or audiences
- specific sub-groups—children, young people, people with

disabilities or from non-English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

- small, medium and large businesses and organisations
- regional and remote communities, remote Indigenous communities
- industry sectors, for example, education, health and farming, and
- related professional organisations.

The panel arrangements will be maintained for a period of three years from the date of establishment and ACMA may invite extensions for

two further one-year periods with the mutual agreement of each panellist.

ACMA issued a request on 1 June 2007 inviting tenders from suitably qualified and experienced organisations capable of providing timely, value for money and high quality research services. Tenders closed on 27 June. For more information, contact Seniz Salih of ACMA's Market Analysis section by email to seniz.salih@acma.gov.au.

Australia assists Tonga to fight spam

ACMA's Anti-spam section met recently with Mr Franz Koenig Tu'uhetoka of the Public Service Commission in Tonga, who was visiting Australia in preparation for taking up a position with the Tongan Department of Communications as part of a new anti-spam team.

In 2004, the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) worked with the Government of Tonga to develop anti-spam legislation modelled on Australia's

Spam Act 2003, which is widely regarded as a best practice model for combating spam. However, legislation is only the first step of any effective anti-spam regime; the next, and arguably most difficult challenge, is the enforcement of the legislation.

Mr Tu'uhetoka visited Australia to meet with ACMA's anti-spam enforcement team to see how Australia enforces its legislation. He was given an overview of the complaint management and spam

reporting systems used by ACMA and was provided with a demonstration of the operation of the Australian Internet Security Initiative (AISI). The AISI is a system that helps address the emerging problem of 'zombie' computers, which are 'infected' computers controlled remotely to disseminate spam and undertake other harmful activities on the internet. More than 80 per cent of spam is now disseminated by

zombie computers. Mr Tu'uhetoka also met with staff from DCITA for an update on spam-related activities.

While spam is a problem for all countries, it is particularly problematic for countries that rely on satellite communications for internet data transmission. This is because satellite communications are generally more expensive than other forms of data transmission, so the costs associated with spam are greater for such economies.

A DCITA-led project—Strengthening Spam Legislation, Enforcement and Cooperation Regimes in the Pacific—will develop a package of anti-spam policy and legislation, modelled on Australia's Spam Act, and an effective enforcement regime for the participating Pacific Island countries—Niue, Samoa and Vanuatu. This project will build upon similar work undertaken in Tonga and the Cook Islands in 2004 and 2006, and was recently approved for funding under AusAID's Pacific Governance Support Project.

Information about the Spam Act and ACMA's anti-spam activities is on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au (go to For the public: Content & advertising > Spam – junk email & messages).



BRUCE MATTHEWS, MANAGER ANTI-SPAM, AND CHRIS DUFFY OF ACMA'S ANTI-SPAM SECTION WITH MR TU'UHETOKA IN MELBOURNE