



## ACMA welcomes release of international guidelines for safer online social networking

**Social Networking service providers now have help in making the online environment safe for their users, after the recent launch of international good practice guidelines in the United Kingdom Parliament's House of Lords.**

ACMA was a major contributor to a UK Home Office Taskforce that developed the *Good Practice Guidance for Providers of Social Networking and Other User Interactive Services*, which ACMA Chairman Chris Chapman sees as an important step in providing a global safety net.

making social networking profiles for users under 18 private by default, and increasing reporting mechanisms for bullying or other antisocial behaviour on social networking sites.

It also provides recommendations for implementation by service providers to minimise the risks to users, and includes information that

The Good Practice Guidance is the result of 18 months work by the taskforce, which involved ACMA and other key players in the online world, including:

- social networking providers and industry such as Bebo, Yahoo, Orange, AOL, MSN, Google, Fox Interactive Media, Piczo Inc. and the UK Mobile Broadband Group
- community organisations including the Children's Charities Coalition on Internet Safety and ChildNet International
- key education and research institutions such as the London School of Economics and the Cyberspace Research Unit at the University of Lancashire
- International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE) organisations for the reporting of illegal online content
- America's National Center for Missing Children
- Britain's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre.

ACMA was asked to participate in the Taskforce in 2006—an acknowledgment of the regulator's work in the internet space on codes of practice, safety initiatives and as an INHOPE reporting hotline for illegal material.

The Good Practice Guidance is available at <[www.police.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.police.homeoffice.gov.uk)>.

**'The internet doesn't recognise geographic borders. By connecting Australian cybersafety work to parallel activities in other countries, we can start to generate globally effective solutions to online safety issues.'**

'The internet doesn't recognise geographic borders. By connecting Australian cybersafety work—such as the Internet Industry Association (IIA) development of a new online services code of practice—to parallel activities in other countries, we can start to generate globally effective solutions to online safety issues,' said Mr Chapman.

'I continue to be of the view that international cooperation will be increasingly the way to ensure children have a positive and safe experience of the internet and applications that utilise it—which is why ACMA allocates a very meaningful portion of its resources to supporting practical international collaborations.'

The Good Practice Guidance recommends

can be incorporated into Australian safety campaigns targeted to parents, carers and users of services.

'The guidelines aim to ensure the online social networking experience remains a positive one by providing good practice recommendations to online social networking providers. This will assist them in providing proper protections for their users,' said Mr Chapman.

Social networking services enable users to communicate and engage with each other in an online environment. Users of these services often create their own profile including personal information, images and links to friends. Popular online social networking services in Australia include MySpace, Bebo and Facebook.