Report identifies key trends in online risk

The rapid progression of mobile phone technology and the community's growing use of social media have been studied closely in the ACMA's third annual report on measures for promoting safety in the online environment.

Released in February, the 2009 report is the final in a series prepared for the Minister for Broadband Communications and the Digital Economy. In June 2007, the ACMA was directed to investigate and report annually on international developments in internet filtering technologies and other safety initiatives to protect consumers, including children, from risks they may encounter when accessing and using online services.

The report explores the roles of different players in the digital economy, noting that governments, regulators, operators of online services and users themselves can all contribute towards the effective management of online risk. The latest report draws on published research and information from both Australian and international sources to assist in informing the development of online risk responses.

ACMA looked at a range of measures operating internationally, including digital literacy programs, parental control tool options, user and regulatory measures to address privacy concerns regarding the sharing of personal information via social media, and industry initiatives which provide information and advice to schools. ☞

All three reports are available on the ACMA website at **www.acma.gov.au** (go to About ACMA: Publications & research > Research > Online risk and safety in the digital economy).

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The final report, *Online risk and safety in the digital economy*, explores the consequences of the way information communications technologies (ICTs) are used in the emerging digital economy for the management of online risk and promotion of safety. The report identifies a range of key trends which have implications for managing online risk in the future, including:

> Rapid take-up and high usage of third generation mobile phones as a platform for internet access and the increased functionality of mobile phones.

> Increased use of social media and online transactions across all ages. Social media includes a range of services which facilitate collaboration through the exchange of information such as Facebook, YouTube and Wikipedia.

> Some interactive features of social media, such as blogs, posting photos and distribution of content, are becoming more pervasive and are evident in established media outlets such as newspapers, radio and television.

> The variation in the online activities of youth and adults. Youth are more likely to use the internet for entertainment, social networking and downloading music while adults are more likely to use the internet for e-commerce, research and health information.

Since the reporting series commenced, measures developed for the management of online risk have evolved in response to the challenges posed by increased participation in the digital economy. In preparing the report, the