

Office browsing bill put at \$1bn

WORKERS indulging in Internet browsing could be costing the Australian economy \$1 billion a year – or nearly \$3 million a day – in lost productivity, a study has found.

The cost could be far higher if other factors - such as increased bandwidth consumption within an organisation, possible threats to computer network security and potential legal repercussions – were considered.

The study was conducted by Perth-based information technology company Livingstone Group, which markets anti-misuse software.

Managing director Jack Andrys said Australia was in the top five countries for Internet users per capita, and about half that online access was the Internet at work.

“But with that increased Internet usage and the benefits it brings comes the cost of Internet abuse,” he said. “Our research and case studies have shown that the biggest expense to business of Internet misuse is loss of productivity – either through loss of revenue or increased business expense.”

If all of the 2.75 million Australians who used the Internet at work spent an hour a day browsing, the total cost to the economy would be more than \$1 billion. “While the Internet brings enormous benefits and cost savings, it is important to realise that there is a real cost associated with people spending time during working hours browsing the Internet – whether it be to check out the sports results, search the job pages or visit their favourite entertainment sites,” Mr Andrys said.

Overseas studies had confirmed Internet misuse was a global problem, the company said.