AUSTRALIA has signed anti-spam agreements with the US, Britain and Thailand to fight the plague of unsolicited email. "Illegal spam does not respect national boundaries," said Timothy Muris, chairman of the US Federal Trade Commission. "This agreement is an important next step to help law enforcers on three continents leverage resources to combat illegal spam."

The FTC signed the agreement with the Office of Fair Trading, the Information Commissioner and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in Britain, and with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the Communications Authority in Australia.

The agreement provides for the agencies to share information, exchange evidence and coordinate enforcement against cross-border spam violations.

The agreement "provides a framework for cooperation in fighting cross-border spam affecting all three countries," Australian Communications Authority acting chairman Bob Horton said.

IT and Communications Minister Daryl Williams and his Thai counterpart, Surapong Suebwonglee, signed the agreement which commits both nations to exchanging information on telecommunications policy and regulatory matters.

The agreement will also encourage cooperation on specialised international telecommunications organisations and implementation of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group's telecommunications and information working group mutual recognition arrangement.

It will also facilitate exchange of information on anti-spam policies. Mr Williams said the government was committed to working with other countries to target spam.

"I welcome the opportunity it provides for our two countries to share information about anti-spam strategies and policies," he said.

Earlier this year, Australia signed an anti-spam MoU with South Korea and has been pushing for a standard multi-lateral agreement.

One survey last month said spam represented as much as 76 per cent percent of all email traffic, despite laws in several countries seeking to curb unsolicited emails.

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