Australia's spam laws successful

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AUSTRALIA says its tough laws punishing businesses responsible for unsolicited spam emails with hefty fines were working and should be used as a global blueprint. The Australian Communications Authority, a government watchdog, said the laws introduced in April had proved an effective deterrent to local spammers.

Under the legislation, commercial organisations that repeatedly sent unsolicited emails can be fined up to $1.1 million a day until they stop.

"The ACAs initial focus was on spammers allegedly sending high volumes of offensive unsolicited material including pornography and marketing for products such as herbal Viagra," ACA acting chairman Bob Horton said.

"At the end of the first three months of the Spam Act it appears that these particular major players have stopped operating in Australia because complaints about them stopped when the act came in."

A recent survey estimated spam accounts for three-quarters of all emails sent on the internet, costing businesses billions of dollars and raising fears it could swamp the web.

Spam monitoring service Spamhaus confirmed the drop-off in Australian spam and said the country's anti-spam laws were the best in the world.

"Australian spammers have been keeping a low profile, many appear to have almost ceased activities and at least one is known to have left the country," it said in a statement.

"The Australian anti-spam law is working."

The ACA said it had received 30,000 reports of spam since the laws came into force in April and had advised 100 businesses to improve their email practices, serving four formal notices to businesses threatening punishment if action was not taken.

However, Mr Horton said the Australian laws could only be used against Australian spammers and other countries needed to adopt similar tough measures to tackle the problem on a global scale.

"Spam is a global problem that requires a global solution," he said.

"While Australia is cleaning up its own backyard, only two per cent of global spam that Australians receive comes from Australian sources - the key to improvement in the Australian user experience depends on all nations taking similar action to counter spam."

He said Australia had signed agreements with the United States, South Korea and Britain on reducing spam.

Agence France-Presse

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