OFFICE workers downloading files to build music and video collections cost Australian businesses $60 million a year, a new survey has found. Exinda Networks, a Melbourne-based supplier of network management and monitoring systems, collated recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and one of the nation's largest private internet service providers, covering around 10,000 internet users.

Australian businesses, which spend a total of $450 million a year in internet costs, were forking out an estimated $4.9 million a month for employees' music and video files, the study found.

This was the equivalent of one million MP3 files daily and does not include lost productivity costs.

Exinda Networks director Con Nikolouzakis said downloading files took up capacity on computer networks, slowing them down and affecting productivity.

"Beware of the employee who comes to work with an MP3 player," he warned.

"They can store up to 40 gigabytes of music, movies and programs and kill your network performance."

The problem accelerated in the last 12 to 18 months because more MP3 files are being downloaded and businesses are increasingly reliant on their computer networks, Mr Nikolouzakis said.

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