

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

For immediate release

### **New research centre to look at ‘smart’ online services**

**SYDNEY, July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008.** Australians will soon see new and improved services in online environments, with the launch of the Smart Services Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) in Sydney today.

The centre, which will be based at Australian Technology Park, is the result of a \$120 million collaboration between governments, universities and industry partners

As one of the centre’s key research partners, Swinburne University of Technology will be undertaking a number of research projects based around social media, immersive services, service aggregation and service delivery frameworks.

According to Swinburne senior researcher Darren Sharp, the new centre will open up a range of opportunities for research in the online services area.

“This is a really exciting opportunity, as we will be able to build on our successes of the past, and come together to drive new research in the future.”

Under the new centre, Sharp will investigate the significance of web 2.0 and participatory culture in the Australian marketplace, and explore strategies for the successful deployment of user-led innovation.

“The move towards a services economy makes it possible for customers and audiences to move beyond being consumers of media, culture and knowledge to being active producers,” he said.

According to Sharp, this type of user-led innovation is already starting to occur overseas, however is yet to be accepted in the Australian marketplace. He sites an example in the US, where passionate customers fascinated by Lego robots hacked into the toy's software.

"Instead of punishing these 'lead users', Lego flew them into head office and got them to share their knowledge and ideas. Ultimately they became involved in the co-creation of new Lego products and services."

Sharp anticipates that the new Smart Services CRC, will facilitate this kind of grass-roots 'user' participation in the Australian marketplace for the first time.

"Rather than using traditional focus groups to inform the development of products and services, we want to engage consumers in new and different ways," he said. "Our research will be looking at collaborative website environments, where consumers can offer up new ideas and become co-creators."

Swinburne researcher Mandy Salomon, will also be leading research at the Smart Services CRC. She will research the immersive web and virtual worlds, looking at how online spaces such as Second Life, can work for governments and corporate partners.

"Virtual worlds allow users to step into the internet. They are powerful tools with which to communicate, collaborate, prototype, visualise and imagine," she said. "Our research will be exploring ways to harness the immense possibilities of these platforms."

Other Swinburne research will explore service quality in online environments and investigate new ways of service delivery that will connect service providers and service consumers.

### **About Swinburne University of Technology**

*Swinburne has a strong history of providing quality, career-oriented education for both undergraduates and postgraduates. Swinburne graduates have the skills and knowledge that will help them find jobs and success in their careers. In addition, Swinburne is one of the few Australian universities offering an extensive range of programs for school leavers including undergraduate degree programs as well as a wide range of TAFE programs. We also provide our students with a number of well-defined 'pathways' between our TAFE and Higher Education divisions.*

*Swinburne's strong vocational emphasis and our close links with industry ensure that our study programs keep pace with developments in the commercial and community sector. The University has a strong research focus that complements coursework programs.*

### **About the Smart Services CRC**

*The Smart Services CRC is a \$120m research collaboration between 12 leading industry participants, six leading universities and the Federal Government and NSW and Queensland Governments. The focus of the Smart Services research is in delivering new and improved services for the services economy. The CRC has a particular strength in understanding the service needs of customers, development requirements of ecosystems for service delivery and long-term trends for services of the future. Smart Services will draw on the background of its Participants to deliver initial demonstrators in the finance, government and media sectors.*

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