

# Man fired over Facebook rants

Nicole Everett | 19th August 2011

EMPLOYEES are being warned to be wary of what they post on social networking sites, after an employee was fired for posting an expletive-filled Facebook rant against a manager on his home computer outside of work hours.

The case, which highlights the hazy line between work and private lives, saw Australia uphold the rights of an employer to fire computer technician Damian O'Keefe over the rant – which included a threat aimed at a manager.



**Facebook users are warned to be wary of what they say in their posts.**

Many people yesterday agreed social networking and work sometimes didn't mix, and people could go too far without thinking of the ramifications.

Aaron Scott said he felt the actions of the employer were appropriate.

"Facebook is a public space.

"If you post something on Facebook people can read it and they need to understand what is posted may hold consequences," he said.

Queensland University of Technology School of Law lecturer John Pyke said employers have an obligation to their employees and had to ensure they took action in circumstances where they were being bullied or threatened, or else they left themselves open to legal action.

Mr Pyke said people also needed to be mindful of the consequences of posting on Facebook.

"Don't put anything on Facebook that you aren't prepared to shout out at the top of your lungs in a packed room full of your co-workers and bosses," he said.

Mr Pyke said, at the extreme, an employee who made a threatening Facebook post could be prosecuted under the law.

"If the victim suffers some sort of psychiatric stress there are all these cases where they could be sued for what lawyers call nervous shock," he said.

Police Superintendent Rowan Bond said there had been cases where people had been charged for a number of offences—including harassment—after posting threatening rants on Facebook.

"Facebook is a public domain and any complaint made to police in relation to these posts is taken with the same seriousness as any threat," he said.

"A threat is a threat," he said.