



Outlook

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 It smelt closer to home. In fact, it smelt like a home, on fire.
 COLUMNIST MATTHEW ABRAHAM PAGE 25
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We're all keyed up



More than 88 per cent of Australians own at least one mobile phone. Where does that leave the rest who don't have one, and are they happy? CATHERINE BAUER asked SA's new Thinker in Residence for her views:

AN 1880's stone cottage in the State's north with a drop toilet, one power outlet in each room and unreliable mobile phone coverage is the haven for SA's newest Thinker in Residence and technology nerd Dr Genevieve Bell. As often as possible – maybe once or twice a year – Dr Bell “bolts” to Terowie, population 150, whose claim to fame is a railway station where US General Douglas MacArthur delivered a famous “I shall return” speech in 1942. The Australian born, US-based anthro-

pologist and Intel Corporation executive spends a large part of her year crossing the globe studying and researching our use of, and reliance on, communication technologies. Dr Bell's fieldwork reveals some interesting international mobile phone trends: □ It's not uncommon for churchgoers in the Philippines to SMS one another during the service;

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HI-TECH LIFE: Mobile phones have changed the way we think. Picture: Roy Van Der Vegt



'Thinker' sends a message

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- The Pope has an SMS service to send quotes from his speeches and Bible texts;
- The devout can SMS prayers to Jerusalem's Wailing Wall;
- In Italy, where mobiles have been in use since the early 1980s, in a bid to be "cool", teenage boys turn their phones off for days at a time and girls swap phones as a sign of trust and friendship;
- In London teens view the internet as an outdated fad and are now using mobiles to keep in touch with one another;
- For Australian, French and American travellers, holiday choices are often made based on the availability of reliable phone reception; and
- Koreans use different ring tones to identify callers and to filter calls and it's trendy to have a plush toy attached to your mobile as phone jewelry.

Dr Bell believes our mobile obsession will fade as we get used to the technology.

Even so, she is contactable 24 hours a day on her mobile, doesn't have a home landline and admits to having a "full phone addiction".

She has friends with similar phone dependencies who have attempted going cold turkey in

a bid to control their use. "There is this panic about not being in touch, not being able to be reached, not being connected. But at the same time people can be upset that they are 'on' and contactable all the time." With a glut of modern communications including the internet and mobile phones, truly switching off can be difficult for many people.

For some travellers the idea of a holiday is somewhere that has no mobile phone coverage.

Internationally, Bell says, there's been a backlash against constant communication and mobile phones in particular. It's a trend she expects Australia to eventually follow.

"In Australia it's common for many people to still leave their phone on during a business meeting, that's not done in the States for example.

"We've always been a phone culture. Sunday nights, there used to be the phone calls to your grandparents, sitting by the phone waiting for that boy to call, as is the case now - it was the way life got organised.

"The thing now is that it's instant - it's too easy, too seductive and for some people it can be addictive."



GENEVIEVE BELL

Bell has worked with computer chip company Intel Corporation since 1998 and now is director of the Intel Digital Home Group's User Experience Group, based in Oregon in the US

- She leads a research and development team of social scientists, interaction designers and engineers to drive Intel's consumer electronic's product innovation
- Born in Australia, she received her masters and doctorate degrees in anthropology from Stanford University in 1993 and 1998
- Before joining Intel she was a Stanford Anthropology Department lecturer
- Dr Bell begins her South Australian residency in February and will supplement information submitted to the website by her own field work
- This month, the Thinkers In Residence office will launch SAstories.com, a site inviting South Australians to submit their views on technology and how and why they use technology to stay connected

THE RIGHT BALANCE: Thinker in Residence Genevieve Bell. Picture: Roy Van Der Vegt 72592



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Phones can push the wrong buttons

SOME mobile phone users suffer anxiety and self-esteem problems likened to substance abuse, an Australian researcher says.

Consumer behaviour researcher **Diana James** says Australians now own more than 19 million mobiles and, in cases of overuse, people can experience personal problems ranging from agitation if forced to turn them off, to low self-esteem if they didn't receive calls or texts.

James, from the Queensland



University of Technology's School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations, says that "without their phone,

people feel like they are out of the loop". "In some cases, some people suffer sleep deprivation and even repetitive strain injury as they lay awake at night texting on their mobile."

Tell-tale signs of addiction also include irrational reactions when away from a mobile phone, large bills you can't pay and negative impacts on relationships.

More than 88 per cent of Australians own at least one mobile phone and 10 per cent

have two phones, according to the 2007 Impact of the Mobile Phone on Work/Life Balance study carried out last year.

It also found that mobile use varies with age and that usage peaks in the age range 18 to 39 years, where 94 per cent regularly use a phone.

James says Australia has one of the highest mobile phone penetration rates in the world and it is important to find ways to measure mobile phone addiction.