

BYTES & PIECES.

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DO YOU KNOW?

What is the “Rule of thirds”? Why do some zoomed digital pictures turn out grainy? How many megapixels are needed to make an A4 enlargement? What's the most common cause of blurred pictures? When should you deliberately move your camera? Find all the answers and more in our new Digital Photography hints now on the website.

http://hobartpcgroup.org.au/files/hints/Digital%20photography/digital_photography.htm

There are also many other new hints, covering email, Internet browsing, word processing, Windows utilities and more. Check them out.

<http://hobartpcgroup.org.au/files/hints/hint-index.htm>

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WEBSITE OVERHAUL

Talking of the Group's website, it now has around 230 pages. Virtually all the old pages have been reviewed, amended, and/or expanded in the last couple of weeks, and many new ones have been added. There are lots more hints, a feature article on Faster Internet, a formatted copy of the Rules of the Association, recent *Bytes & Pieces* in easy-to-read HTML format, a fresh new look, and some subtle changes to the navigation structure.

Unfortunately in the course of uploading the files, I uploaded a batch of old files causing a number of problems late Sunday afternoon (18 April). These were not completely rectified until Monday night. If you used the website during that period, you may need to flush your browser's cache or reload pages if you find pages or parts of pages missing. My apologies for any inconvenience caused.

If you haven't had a look for a while, now would be a good time to reacquaint yourself with this valuable information resource. Once you've discovered what is there, introduce your non-member friends to the site and suggest they subscribe to this newsletter. Only by getting the word out to other computer users can we

ensure that the Group flourishes. Remember until the Committee decides otherwise, the website is open to everybody, members and non-members alike, and so is the HCUG-List and this newsletter.

<http://hobartpcgroup.org.au/index.htm>

The overhaul hasn't ended yet. Like all good websites, ours is a work-in-progress. Next on the list of jobs to do are a revised Photo Gallery, more links to other websites (especially other clubs and sites providing courses and tutorials). Following that we'll see if we can come up with some more Feature Articles. If you have any suggestions or material that we can add to the website, such as photos of Group meetings, please email the Webmaster (see link at the end of the newsletter).

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LINSPIRE ME!

Forced into a corner by court decisions in a number of countries, Lindows.com has announced that it will change its product and website names to *Linspire* ("*Lin*" from "Linux" and "*spire*" meaning "pinnacle"). Implementation of the change began on 14 April 2004 and will be completed as soon as possible. CEO Michael Robertson says, "We're hoping that this puts a halt on the international lawsuits. A Microsoft spokesperson has publicly stated that 'We're only asking that Lindows change their name' which is what we have done. However, the US lawsuit is well underway and we look forward to having our day in court."

"Microsoft has appealed to the 9th Circuit. We are continuing to ask for a prompt trial where the evidence can be heard by a jury. It's unclear whether the Court of Appeals will grant Microsoft a hearing or send it back to the original Judge who can schedule a trial date", Robertson added.

Lindows.com will retain its corporate name, but its corporate website will change to <http://www.lindowsinc.com>. The URL <http://www.lindows.com> will automatically divert users to <http://www.linspire.com>. Current users of LindowsOS do not need to update immediately and will be able to use the Linspire CNR without problems.

And so the war continues.

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SUN WORKING WITH MICROSOFT – NO JOKE!

On April 1 I told you that Microsoft were going to release a Linux distribution. That was a joke, but the recent announcement that they were going to work more closely with a company that sells servers running Linux, wasn't!

Microsoft has agreed to pay Sun Microsystems \$1.6 billion to settle patent and antitrust issues. The two companies will pay royalties for using each other's technology and Sun has also agreed to sign a licence for the Windows operating system communications protocol.

Microsoft will continue support for its version of the Java Virtual Machine, which had previously announced it would no longer support, and certify Sun's Xeon servers. The two companies have also agreed to work together on Java and .Net technologies, and not to sue each other with respect to all past patent claims while entering into negotiations for cross-licence patents. The lawsuit between the firms in the US will also be settled. Sun said it was happy that the agreements reached satisfied the objectives it was pursuing against Microsoft in Europe.

Scott McNealy, chairman and chief executive of Sun, said, "This agreement launches a new agreement between Sun and Microsoft. We look forward to this opportunity - it provides a framework for co-operation between Sun and Microsoft." He added that the agreement would benefit both Sun and Microsoft and stimulate demand for new server products.

Microsoft chief executive Steve Ballmer said in a statement: "Our companies will continue to compete hard, but this agreement creates a new basis for co-operation. This is a positive step forward for both Sun and Microsoft."

Analysts are divided on whether Sun, which has been losing money, will benefit from the deal in the long term. Despite the cash injection from the settlement, Sun is shedding 3300 jobs and has given its management a shake-up.

The settlement with Sun seems to be part of deliberate attempt by Microsoft to put an end to years of litigation over patents and technology, clearing the way for what it wants to do in future. Other recent settlements include \$USD440 to InterTrust Technology, a Silicon Valley company with broad patents covering technology for handling rights to online music and video. Last month Microsoft also settled a patent lawsuit with AT&T and last May settled an antitrust suit involving Time-Warner and Netscape Communications. That settlement was \$USD750 million. But there are still more legal questions to be addressed, so watch for more settlements and court decisions.

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AX GETS A DOMAIN NAME

On 13 February 2004, the Aland Islands, located between Sweden and Finland, became an official country apparently without any fanfare. As an official country it has been granted its own, new, top-level Internet domain, .ax. by the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO). "The Islands of Peace", as they designate themselves, have been autonomous for 50 years and have had their own parliament, courtesy of the League of Nations, since 1921.

Such was the impact of the momentous occasion that the official "home page of the province" has yet to be updated, being content with describing the islands as a Swedish speaking province of Finland. However, tourism-oriented sites were quicker of the mark.

As they have issued their own stamps since 1984, philatelists may have heard of them.

Try <http://www.goaland.net/index.asp?lang=en> for further information on this fascinating new nation.

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STAROFFICE 7 ON THE A LIST

Australian PC Authority rates *StarOffice 7.0* as the leading office suite in their May 2004 issue. They claim it is more stable than the *OpenOffice.org* version on which it is based. "Great," I thought on reading this. "They've finally discovered what I have been saying for ages! What perception! What a wonderful magazine!"

Then I turned the page and found that *Eudora* didn't even rate a mention in their listing of top email clients. "Don't know what they're talking about! Lousy magazine! Who would want to buy it?" Funny how perceptions change, isn't it?

If you want to know what else has made their *A list*, look for the May 2004 issue at your friendly newsagent now.

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OE BACKUP

I think I've mentioned before that Outlook Express messages, rules and accounts information can be difficult to back up. If you insist on using OE, then you need the May 2004, *Australian PC World*. On its cover disc, you will find *OE Backup 2.8* and your problems should be over. On the same disc is a utility, called *SolidConverter PDF* to convert PDF files to Word files. It doesn't handle vector graphics but it does a good job of text, even columned text. Once the file is converted you can edit the text. Then with the aid of one of the free PDF file makers that abound these days, you can convert them back to PDF files.

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NAB AND WESTPAC LOOK AT LINUX DESKTOPS

According to a report in *The Australian* (20 April 2004), both the National and Westpac are looking seriously at Linux and open source. However, the CBA is staying with Microsoft and ANZ aren't showing any signs of budging from the market leader. ANZ's former IT chief is reported as saying that Linux is a good, but immature operating system and that the cost savings that might be achieved by deploying it were limited.

Nonetheless, that two of our four major banks are looking closely at Linux desktops shows how rapidly Linux is developing and how cost sensitive the market for office productivity suites is becoming. Microsoft's changed definition of who is eligible to purchase so-called "Academic" editions of its wares is further evidence.

Stay tuned for more developments. They won't be long in coming and, if they force price reductions and real improvements, we all benefit.

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SPAM BEACONS

You only previewed the message about discount pharmaceuticals and deleted it, but the spammer who sent it knows that you received it and is preparing to bombard you with more dubious offers. How is that possible?

According to email filtering firm MX Logic nearly half of all spam is bugged with so-called "spam beacons" for tracking users who open junk mail. This is done by embedding hidden HTML code in the message. When you open or even preview a message containing a spam beacon, it signals the spammer, telling them that the address is live and ready to receive more spam. Another way that this can be done is for the code to download an invisible graphic from the spammer's website.

"Millions of users are unaware that spammers have the ability to track when they view and open their email," said Scott Chasin, the chief technology officer of MX Logic, in a statement. "This reinforces the fact that spammers are using increasingly deceptive tools to invade end users' privacy and harvest valid email addresses."

Take all of the following measures if you can to prevent the beacon from notifying the spammer. Use a firewall to prevent unauthorised outgoing messages. Set your email software so that it does not run embedded HTML code. Have your anti-spam software treat emails that download external graphics as likely spam. And turn off the preview panel in your email program.

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GOOD BUY

Peter Campbell (Ph: 62344691) still has an HP 690C printer for sale. What offer? Salamanca Systems still had some 15 inch monitors at \$45 last time I looked as well as cheap demo notebooks. Pop in and see them sometime. Could be just what you need.

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