

# After scrabbling around, I get Facebook

**I** HAVE an embarrassing confession: my wife's an internet gambler.

Well, not a gambler because money doesn't change hands, but she's every bit as addicted to the rush of a win. She plays Scrabble. For hours.

I'm sorry if this offends anybody, but I've always imagined people who spend too much time on the net have one too many happy coats in their cupboard.

Show me a high-use internet surfer and I'll show you a serial self-abuser.

You simply cannot spend hours each day playing *Dungeons & Dragons*, Ma.

And so it was with some alarm when these school holidays I found the love of my life spending increasing amounts of time at her terminal. She works, bless her, so long hours on a computer aren't unusual.

She has Facebook and Twitter and Lord knows what else.



**SHANE DOHERTY**

She signed me up for Facebook too, but try as I might I just don't get it.

Is there a bigger time-waster?

"Glenda can't face the thought of doing the ironing," someone will write. "Go Parra," writes another.

And then people will send irritating electronic quizzes that ask "Which Character From *Dirty Dancing* Are You?"

I turned out to be the chick who got knocked up and left Johnny to face the big dance-off alone.

The door was closed, the computer was on and my wife was tapping away on the keyboard like crazy.

It turned out one of the features of Facebook is Scrabble.

Click in the right spot and the wonders of the worldwide web will hook you up with someone else on the planet desperate for a game. You see their picture and

have a chat between goes and it all seems fairly above board.

Sometimes, my wife says, "there'll be a happy coat-wearer on the other end".

You can tell because they can only make four-letter words, but you simply hang up on them and within seconds there'll be another game to join.

What a boon to the lonely, I thought. And what a relief for their partners who hate word games.

And so I thought I'd give the net another go. If my darling bride was on it, the users couldn't all be deranged.

I checked my Facebook site and there was a friend request from someone I hadn't seen in 20 years. And pictures of her. And her two preemie babies.

Within a day or so she was able to send me a message telling me how she'd been working in Timor when things started going wrong. All the planes to

Australia were booked out for weeks, filled with pilgrims to the Papal visit.

Just when matters seemed most grim, a seat opened up and she made the dash to Brisbane. Hubby would come later.

And her little girls were born and put in their doll-sized disposable nappies.

One was weaker than the other. They rented a house while my friend nursed one girl and made the trips back to the hospital every day to hold the other one's hand through plastic and latex.

I stared at those photographs. Those tiny hands and feet.

What do you know? The years melted. And the distances. A couple of old friends were close once again.

So, now I get it. I take back every nasty thing I've ever said about people spending their time on the web.

Besides. I kind of like my wife in her new happy coat.