

Network identity player saves up for US move

Karen Dearne – The Australian IT Today

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Security

NETWORK security developer Blue Reef is building a \$1 million war chest to fund move into the lucrative US education and enterprise markets.

Business adviser BSI will today announce a \$250,000 injection by its subsidiary, Australian Distributed Incubator, to support Blue Reef's strategy over the next year or so. A local startup, Blue Reef has come up with new "identity enforcement" technology designed to allow organisations to securely open their networks to users and business partners. The platform, called Sonar, is the first on the market to enable secure collaboration and commerce over open networks, according to Blue Reef chief executive, Robert Smyth. The technology has been deployed in more than 200 sites across Australia, mainly in private and independent schools, giving Blue Reef a turnover of almost \$1 million in the past year.

"Sonar synchronises with existing identity management infrastructure to push policy down into our enforcement devices.

Essentially, anybody who enters or leaves the network is an identity, and we can then build and apply policy rules around those individual users."

Schools use the system to dynamically manage a student's access rights throughout the day, depending on the individual's work timetable.

For example, a student may have access to email services and games before school or while in the library, and access to restricted URLs only during a maths or English class.

After school, students can log back into the network from home, using a single sign-on system based on identities borrowed from existing ID authentication infrastructure.

The system automatically manages bandwidth and download limits across the network.

While Blue Reef hopes to gain a share of the same market in the US, it is also looking at the enterprise space.

"There's a real trend away from machine-based networks to organism or chaotic-type networks, driven by business needs for more mobile workforces, remote access and B2B activities," he said. "This requires a change from traditional fortress-style security that sits on the perimeter to keep the good guys in the bad guys out."

"When it comes to opening up networks, you can't have a firewall on the edge that keeps the good guys out."

The only way to secure deperimeterised networks is through automated enforcement of identity-based access policies, Mr Smyth said. "Think in terms of applying access management policies around individuals or identities, rather than the blanket approach imposed by a perimeter fire wall," he said.

"It's a new trust model, where everyone in the network can be trusted."

Mr Smyth said Blue Reef and its mentors would have a chance to pitch to potential investors, distributors and customers from around the world at an exhibition at UCLA in December.