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Meet our new Mayor

Jessica Wade

IN the real world, Peter Davis is the mayor of Port Lincoln.

In the virtual world, Mike Jameson from the United States of America is mayor.

An online virtual reality world at the website Weblo.com is where thousands of people spend real money to buy virtual cities, including Port Lincoln, as well as states, properties and celebrities.

In the internet game a virtual copy of every real city, state and property is up for sale.

The game was launched in December last year, and over 9000 cities have sold for real money, with the virtual mayors of these cities making money from all transactions in their territories.

Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane, Canberra and most major cities and towns in Australia have sold for real money.

Citizens of Weblo, known as "Weblonians" are represented by profile pages rather than animated characters like in other Internet virtual worlds such as Second Life.

Port Lincoln's virtual Mayor Mike Jameson is a real estate agent from Manchester, Connecticut in the USA, which is a town of 60,000 people.

In "real life" he has four kids, likes sports and lifting weights, but in the virtual world he is the mayor of 10 other locations in Australia.

He is now the virtual mayor of Port Lincoln after buying the town for US\$20 (\$A23). "I love it, it gives me connection to people all over the world," Mr Jameson said.

Weblo properties attract online visitors with updates of news, photos, video, and journal entries.

The site owners share in online advertising revenues that rise with the popularity of their virtual world pages.

Mr Jameson said in the virtual reality game people can look at the Port Lincoln site, view photos and post messages about the town.

"I've had people directly emailing me saying 'nice site I've been there (Port Lincoln) before'," he said.

"In reality it helps market the city."

Mr Jameson said he had never been to Australia but wants to come next year, and hopefully will get to visit Port Lincoln.

So what does our "real" mayor, Peter Davis think about having a counterpart in the virtual world?

"For \$20 he bought himself a bargain," Mr Davis said.

"He bought a place that's free from international terrorism, with all the fish he can eat."

Mr Davis said he would like to meet the "virtual mayor" if he ever came to visit the town.

Port Lincoln's Weblo profile can be found at http://www.weblo.com/property/city/Port_Lincoln/260797/ and if anyone has photos of Port Lincoln they would like to send to Mr Jameson they can send them to bucklandmall@aol.com

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