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Texts get last rites

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TEXT messaging will die within three to five years, a technology blog predicted this week.

The Next Web, which gets almost four million visits a month, cited the huge growth of internet-connected smartphones as part of the demise.

It noted many recent rioters in London were using BlackBerrys to update their status on Twitter and Facebook, and to send private messages on its closed secure BBM network, rather than texting.

Now, with a new Facebook messenger app on the drawing board to simplify connecting with friends, the end for the SMS could be close.

But even if that app failed to take off, something else would, The Next Web said.

"The notion of paying for SMS will seem completely alien in about three years time," it predicted. "There is some serious fragmentation between apps and the various platforms (now) and it will take one player to unify the whole experience ... it's a question of when, and not if, at this stage."

A Nielsen poll for Telstra last month found a big jump in smartphone ownership in Australia – from 36 per cent of mobiles last year to 46 per cent now. And next year it tips a 60 per cent figure.

Even so, Tama Leaver, internet studies lecturer at Curtin University, believes

the "death of SMS is over-exaggerated".

"I don't think we will hit a critical mass point where smartphones are sufficiently widespread that we can cut out people who are not on smartphones," Dr Leaver said.

"SMS is something that works whether you've got a phone that's five years old or a phone that's just come off the production line from the (Apple founder) Steve Jobs dream factory," he said.

"Until there's a comparable level of ubiquity in any other application tool or technology, I don't see SMS going away.

"And can you see your bank sending its confirmation across Facebook or Twitter? I would hope not. I want that to come across SMS."