



Australian  
Library and  
Information  
Association

# MEDIA RELEASE

29 July 2008

## Choking the flow of information?

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is concerned that proponents of the proposed Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) are rushing to finalise a treaty by the end of the year, without giving Australians much of a chance to comment on it or even see it.

In particular, ALIA is concerned that measures in the treaty may impede Australians' access to information and ideas, and lead to a surveillance culture in which the monitoring of ordinary citizens' information-seeking behaviour is undertaken more widely than is permitted now.

"We do not want to see an agreement that punishes ordinary consumers and hinders innovation and Australia's digital economy", said ALIA President, Derek Whitehead.

In alliance with the Australian Digital Alliance (ADA), CHOICE and the Internet Industry Association (IIA), ALIA urges the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to take the lead in ensuring that these six vital principles are not compromised:

1. **Transparency and accountability:** adequate opportunity to see and comment on text before it is concluded
2. **Presumption of innocence:** no enforcement, civil or criminal, without independent findings of infringement
3. **Proportionality:** legal enforcement must be proportionate to the infringement
4. **Consideration of impact on other treaties and laws:** no doubling up or inconsistency with Australia's existing obligations
5. **Avoiding the prescription of surveillance technologies for IP enforcement**
6. **Safeguards against liability** for intermediaries such as educational institutions, libraries and Internet Service Providers.

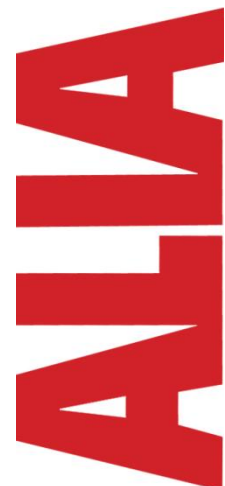
Next week, Australian negotiators will head to Washington DC for the next round of discussions. The ADA urges negotiators to demand a realistic timetable for the ACTA, to allow time for real consultation, and to ensure these principles are not compromised.

ALIA represents Australia's thousands of libraries, and therefore has a particular concern that intermediaries (such as libraries) not be made more liable for their customers' actions than they are currently. Libraries are seen by Australians as even-handed, neutral information providers. ALIA does not want to see the current careful balance in the flow of communications and information in Australia upset by ill-considered and heavy-handed changes to our laws.

Full text of principles available at: <http://www.digital.org.au/submission/ACTA.htm>

ENDS

**NOTE: Media contact information on page 2 of this release**



**INFORMATION FOR EDITORS:**

**Australian Library and Information Association:**

**Sue Hutley, ALIA Executive Director** 02 6215 8215 or 0412 764 922

**Derek Whitehead, ALIA President** 03 9214 8333 or 0412 996 025

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional association for the Australian library and information services sector. It seeks to empower the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support. ALIA represents the interests of 6,000 members, the profession and Australia's 12 million library users.

**<http://www.alia.org.au>**

Issued on behalf of

**Australian Library and Information Association**

**ALIA House, 9-11 Napier Close, Deakin ACT 2604**