



MEDIA RELEASE

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ALIA rejects internet filtering

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) has again raised concerns about internet filtering following the Government's announcement yesterday that they will proceed with plans to implement mandatory ISP level filtering. While supporting the moves to resource education and fight cyber-bullying, the Association still has questions about broader access issues for public libraries and censorship.

"Since the proposal to filter the internet was first presented by the Government, we have been calling for clarification of some of the issues arising from putting such a policy in place," Executive Director Sue Hutley said.

"According to the *Untangling the Net* report released by the University of NSW, Edith Cowan University and CCI today, the proposal to use the current RC classification as a basis for blacklisting sites is very likely to result in a significant amount of legally acceptable material being banned on the Web," Ms Hutley said.

"For libraries, this is a very serious concern," she said. "We have always been strongly opposed to censorship."

"Our public libraries are a vital source of information for all Australians. Almost 80,000 people use a computer in a public library to access the internet every week."

ALIA put a series of questions to Senator Conroy about internet filtering in January 2008. Some of these remain unanswered.

"We asked what content, exactly, would be filtered and how could the Australian public be reassured that this policy will not later widen from child pornography to sites that deal with other controversial issues that could be the subject of legitimate research, such as terrorism, drug use and other health issues.

"We asked whether the scope of the policy would be an administrative matter or would require legislation to be altered or broadened.

"These questions remain unanswered by Senator Conroy's announcement yesterday." Ms Hutley said.

ALIA remains concerned that legitimate sources of information about politically sensitive issues, like abortion or euthanasia, or that have controversial keywords, like breast cancer or a teen suicide hotline, will be blacklisted with no transparency or recourse for owners or users.

“We will be reviewing the report and consultation papers in more detail and will work closely with the Internet Industry Association and other relevant agencies to ensure these issues receive scrutiny and consideration,” she said.

ALIA, on behalf of its members and the Australian library community, will be making a submission to the review of accountability and transparency for Refused Classification material by 12 February 2010.

ENDS

- ALIA's position: <http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/internet.access/>
- The Internet Industry Association: <http://www.ii.net.au/>
- Untangling the Net: http://www.ecu.edu.au/pr/downloads/Untangling_The_Net.pdf

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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 interest of 6,000 members, the profession and Australia's 12 million library users.

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

Issued on behalf of

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