

# FACT SHEET

## WHY COMPULSORY INTERNET FILTERING IS A BAD IDEA

### 1. There are plenty of alternatives already available

There is software available for free download from the government's website<sup>1</sup> that will do this job, and there are many others that can be purchased both online and in retail stores.

### 2. Australians have already demonstrated that they do not want it

The Howard Government made the software mentioned above available for free to all Australians in August 2007 and estimated that in the first 12 months 2.5 million households would download it. Despite a huge marketing campaign, by February 2008 only 144,088 had been downloaded and it was estimated that of those only about 29,000 were still in use<sup>2</sup>. This clearly demonstrated that the vast majority of Australians were not interested in having their internet content filtered.

### 3. There has been no demonstrated need for the filter

It is rare for anyone to accidentally stumble upon the type of website that is being targeted by this scheme – one must usually search specifically for them.

### 4. It will degrade internet speeds and drive up the cost of broadband

Tests of a number of filtering products<sup>3,4</sup> have shown that they will degrade internet speeds by an average of 30% with the one product reducing it by 75%. ISPs will be burdened with the task of installing and running the infrastructure required to do the filtering, and the cost of this will of course be passed on to the consumer who ends up paying more for less.

### 5. Filters are not accurate

No product tested proved to be 100% accurate, and all of them failed to block some sites that should have been blocked, and at the same time blocked some legitimate sites<sup>3,4</sup>. Additionally, chat rooms (where stalking and cyber-bullying is common) and file sharing networks (where information about child pornography is disseminated) - will not be filtered<sup>5</sup>.

### 6. It is easily circumvented

Anyone can circumvent this filter (with no technical skill required) by the use of anonymous proxies, thousands of which already exist on the internet<sup>3,4</sup>.

## NOTES

1. <http://www.netalert.gov.au/>

2. <http://www.smh.com.au/news/web/web-porn-software-filter-a-dud/2008/02/16/1203190635858.html>

3. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/24/2399876.htm>

4. <http://www.zdnet.com.au/insight/communications/soa/ISP-level-content-filtering-won-t-work/0,139023754,339292158,00.htm>

5. [http://www.archive.dbcde.gov.au/2008/01/frequently\\_asked\\_questions#Effect](http://www.archive.dbcde.gov.au/2008/01/frequently_asked_questions#Effect)

## OTHER READING

<http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,24573877-13360,00.html>

<http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,24570880-27197,00.html>

<http://www.australianit.news.com.au/story/0,24897,24571118-15306,00.html>

<http://www.computerworld.com.au/index.php/id;1399635276>

<http://nocleanfeed.com/>

<http://www.keepyourfilteroffourinternet.com/>

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=43233359691>