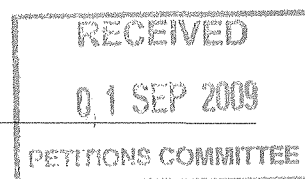




SENATOR THE HON STEPHEN CONROY

MINISTER FOR BROADBAND, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY  
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE



Ms Julia Irwin MP  
Member for Fowler  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Irwin *Julia*

**Petition concerning internet service provider (ISP) filtering**

Thank you for your letter dated 9 June 2009 forwarding a copy of a petition concerning internet service provider (ISP) filtering. I appreciate the petitioners' interest in this important issue.

I am aware that the issue of ISP filtering has attracted criticism from people who are concerned that it will lead to censorship of the internet.

Freedom of speech is fundamentally important in a democratic society. For many years however, most Australians have accepted that there is some material which is not acceptable, particularly for children.

The Government has committed \$125.8 million over four years in the 2008-09 Budget for a comprehensive range of cyber-safety measures that involve education, international co-operation, research, law enforcement and ISP filtering.

A part of the Government's plan is to examine the introduction of ISP level filtering for Refused Classification (RC) material. Content defined under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* as RC material includes child sexual abuse imagery, bestiality, sexual violence, detailed instruction in crime, violence or drug use and/or material that advocates the doing of a terrorist act.

The Government is also considering additional ISP content filtering options for those families who wish to have such a service provided by ISPs who wish to provide this as an option for customers.

The Government's policy is being developed through an informed and considered approach, including industry consultation and close examination of overseas models to assess their suitability for Australia.

A live ISP filtering pilot is being conducted to inform the Government's ISP filtering policy. The pilot is being conducted with the co-operation of ISPs and their customers, and is assessing many of the issues raised in this petition, including potential impacts of filtering solutions on internet speeds, accuracy, the ease of circumvention and costs.

The pilot is scheduled to conclude shortly and I intend to publicly release the report from the pilot.

I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Conroy  
Minister for Broadband,  
Communications and the Digital Economy