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MEDIA RELEASE
FILTERING NOT EFFECTIVE FOR CYBERSAFETY

The Internet society of Australia (ISOC-AU) does not support the Government's proposed mandatory blocking of Refused Classification (RC) material on the Internet. Placing a requirement on ISPs to block RC content hosted overseas will be inefficient and may damage the operation and development of the Internet, particularly if users are unaware of the reason why a given URL is not working. 'The Internet is based on the transfer of packets of data, said ISOC-AU President Tony Hill', 'and there is no content in existence in the hands of an ISP whose only role is the passage of those packets according to Internet standards'.

ISOC-AU also believes that blocking RC material will not be effective in preventing the public, particularly children, from exposure to harmful or illegal material', Mr Hill said. He also questioned whether the Government's test results demonstrate that ISP blocking will achieve its policy aims in real world circumstances. The Government's filtering trials' report conceded that it is not feasible to filter traffic accessed through HTTPS, peer-to-peer, instant messaging, or mechanisms other than simple web traffic, including any sites using dynamic database-driven content where the URL varies with each access. The filtering trials also did not test for scalable high traffic levels and the results do not show how each solution might vary due to large amounts of traffic and a high rate of URLs per second.

ISOC-AU also questions the use of the RC classification category for blocking Internet content. 'ISOC-AU agrees that any agreed community standard on harmful and/or illegal material should apply equally online as it does off line', Mr Hill said, ' but there is some material which may be classified as RC, but is the subject of open, legitimate public debate and should not be blocked.' 'Government resources are far better spent on education for both parents and kids on how to use the Internet.'

If the Government does proceed with its filtering proposal, ISOC-AU calls on the Government to review the use of RC classification as the basis of blocking URLs. ISOC-AU also calls for notification to both the site owner and user if a site is found to contain RC material, and for an independent and efficient review process to review the classification of any blocked material based on agreed community standards.

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16 February 2010