

What Other Countries Do

The proposed mandatory filtering regime is changing the way the world views Australia. Yet the international environment also shows us what works and what doesn't in protecting Australian families from harmful online content. Here is how.

Australia's proposed filtering regime will force ISPs to filter private Internet connections in each home to remove all content deemed inappropriate by the government of the day.

This would make Australia unique amongst Western democracies.

If the plan goes through Australia will join a group of countries which mandatorily censor internet content according to the demands of the political leadership of the day, such as China, Myanmar (Burma), Iran and Tajikistan.

The governments of the United Kingdom, Canada and the Scandinavian countries have opted for voluntary filtering regimes, where ISPs, government and social groups work together to stamp out harmful or illegal content online. These countries have opted for voluntary or restricted mandatory filtering because they know that mandatory ISP level filtering does not work as intended.

It generates increased costs which are passed on to consumers, it can slow the internet down and it is easy to bypass, providing a false sense of security to families.

The government's plans to push for mandatory ISP level filtering could see Australia join a list of countries deemed enemies of the internet.

These are countries which prevent Internet users from obtaining news seen as 'undesirable'. All of these countries mark themselves out for their capacity to censor news and information online.

The Government's broad approach means that it will block websites that appear on the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) blacklist – websites deemed by the government of the day to contain Restricted Content (RC). Only 32% of websites on the ACMA blacklist are related to child pornography.

That means the 68% of websites to be banned under the Government's plan could include sites intended for mature audiences (what on television would be rated MA 15+ and above), social and political commentary deemed to be unacceptable by the government and a range of unspecified categories.

What this means is that the potential for 'content creep' – that is, widening the scope of content to be filtered from the internet under the mandatory filtering regime – is considerable.

Reporters Without Borders (RWB) has put Australia on a watch list because of the government's plan to force all service providers to filter private Internet connections for 'inappropriate' content. Australia is the only developed country on the list.

If Australia pursues the Mandatory Internet Filter without adequate protections on content being put in place, it could join a list of countries that filter social and political content according to the demands of the political leadership.

These countries include (listed on right)

COUNTRY	FILTERING
Iran	✓
Yemen	✓
Tajikistan	✓
Azerbaijan	✓
China	✓
Libya	✓
Myanmar	✓
Pakistan	✓
Saudi Arabia	✓
Sudan	✓
Syria	✓
Tunisia	✓
United Arab Emirates	✓
Uzbekistan	✓