

## Libraries' commitment to internet safety already evident

The Australian Library and Information Association has rejected the description of public library filtering efforts as an “abject failure” made by The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, the Hon Helen Coonan this morning in her announcement regarding new moves to enforce internet filtering through the ‘NetAlert - Protecting Australian Families Online’ program.

“The role of libraries, first and foremost, is to promote the free flow of information. This is a core value of libraries and librarians everywhere,” said Executive Director of the Australian Library and Information Association, Ms Sue Hutley.

“Libraries have a flexible strategy for dealing with undesirable online content because we have a diverse range of adult and child users. Australia’s public libraries already have detailed policies and guidelines for internet access. Many libraries are already using filtering software on public access terminals. We must remember that libraries are part of larger Council networks,” Ms Hutley said.

“During the past five years the Association has conducted a number of surveys regarding internet filtering in public libraries. Over that time we have seen a steady increase in the installation of filters, with the 2007 survey revealing 39% of Australian public libraries currently use filtering software on some or all of their public Internet access terminals – compared with 18% in 2002.

“The latest survey shows 69% of public libraries operating filtering software do it at server level rather than within the library itself. The surveys also reveal ongoing problems with unreliability and inaccuracy of filtering software in this more complex operating environment.

Past survey results are available to the public via the Association’s website at [www.alia.org.au/advocacy/internet.access/](http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/internet.access/)

“It’s also important to recognise that the Australian Library and Information Association is not the governing body of libraries. The Association cannot move to install filters in Australia’s libraries, as the Minister seems to suggest,” Ms Hutley said.

“This program should be about the choice of libraries and councils regarding internet filtering, not a case of mandatory enforcement.

ALIA is willing to work with the Australian Government on this issue within existing ALIA policies on internet filtering.

“The Association represents the interests of the profession and of the sector, which is why we have been calling for consultation between policy makers and public librarians and why we have also put significant effort into working with NetAlert and DCITA to raise awareness of the library environment over the past few years,” Ms Hutley said.

“We are also interested in the robustness of the products the Government plans to supply and keen to facilitate a process of consultation between vendors and the Association to enhance designers’ awareness of the public library environment.

“Filtering can never be the whole solution. Education is critical. Parents must play a role and we absolutely support the home-based filtering products as part of the PAFO program.

“Librarians – who are experts in training and advising on the use of the internet – are also a critical resource for children. What we don’t want to see is the entire community’s access to information compromised by ineffective filtering solutions for the public library environment.”

## **Ends**

## **INFORMATION FOR EDITORS**

### **Further information**

- Sue Hutley, Executive Director, Australian Library and Information Association  
02 6215 8215 or 0412 764 922
- Derek Whitehead, Vice President, Australian Library and Information Association and  
Chair, ALIA Online Content and Regulation Reference Group 0412 996 025

## **Resources**

Internet filtering in public libraries 2007 survey results:

[www.alia.org.au/advocacy/internet.access/](http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/internet.access/)

Australian Library and Information Association Online Content and Regulation policy and information:

[www.alia.org.au/advocacy/internet.access](http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/internet.access)

Australian Library and Information Association Policy Statement on Public Libraries

<http://www.alia.org.au/policies/public.library.services.html>

Australian Library and Information Association Policy Statement on Free Access to Information

<http://www.alia.org.au/policies/free.access.html>

NetAlert Kids online survey:

[www.netalert.net.au/02010-kidsonline@home---Internet-use-in-Australia-homes---April-2005.pdf](http://www.netalert.net.au/02010-kidsonline@home---Internet-use-in-Australia-homes---April-2005.pdf)

“Parents should monitor children’s web use: PM”:

[www.smh.com.au/news/web/parents-should-monitor-childrens-web-use-pm/2007/04/24/1177180631795.html](http://www.smh.com.au/news/web/parents-should-monitor-childrens-web-use-pm/2007/04/24/1177180631795.html)

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Issued on behalf of the Australian Library and Information Association

by

Porter Novelli (SA) Pty Ltd

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Australian  
Library and  
Information  
Association

## Objectives of the Australian Library and Information Association

1. To promote the free flow of information and ideas in the interest of all Australians and a thriving culture, economy and democracy;
2. To promote and improve the services provided by all kinds of library and information agencies;
3. To ensure the high standard of personnel engaged in information provision and foster their professional interests and aspirations;
4. To represent the interests of members to governments, other organisations and the community; and
5. To encourage people to contribute to the improvement of library and information services through support and membership of the association.

## The core values of the Association

- Promotion of the free flow of information and ideas through open access to recorded knowledge, information, and creative works.
- Connection of people to ideas.
- Commitment to literacy, information literacy and learning.
- Respect for the diversity and individuality of all people.
- Preservation of the human record.
- Excellence in professional service to our communities.
- Partnerships to advance these values.

### Further information:

- **Sue Hutley, Executive Director, Australian Library and Information Association**  
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