



Australian  
Library and  
Information  
Association

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### ALIA'S ten questions on censorship for Senator Stephen Conroy

On 31 December 2007, Senator Conroy made a statement about the mandatory ISP clean feed which is to be provided to all Australian domestic, school and library internet users. In response to this statement, ALIA has developed a set of questions and looks forward to the Government's response.

**1. What does "clean feed" mean?**

*Is there a definition of the term? Does it have the common meaning people understand? Does it mean what the UK and Canadian proponents mean?*

**2. What exactly will be filtered out?**

*Is there a definition or is this yet to be developed? The current language is vague and alarming – "inappropriate content", for example. We know child pornography and "violence" will be filtered out; what other "undesirable" content? Will the filter cover websites, chat rooms, blogs, game sites – or just some of these?*

**3. What rules will be used?**

*How will the filtered-out content relate to the Guidelines for the Classification of Publications (2005) and the National Classification Code? Will it be the same as "refused classification" material? Or will it also include X, 18+ and 15+ rated material or some combination?*

**4. Will the list of blacklisted sites be made publicly available?**

*The current list of sites which are banned is not made public. This makes it very difficult to argue that a mistake has been made.*

**5. Who will decide which specific sites are to be filtered out in the "clean feed"?**

*Will this be an administrative decision? Will it include any transparency requirements? Will there be any kind of appeal from decisions?*

**6. Who will know who has opted out of the clean feed?**

*Will there be any privacy provisions? What will they be?*

**7. How can we be sure this is not the thin end of a wedge?**

*What kinds of guarantee will Australians have that a policy which may initially have a narrow scope (e.g. child pornography) will not later be widened (e.g. to support and advocacy of terrorism). Will there be scope to extend the policy by administrative decision, or only by legislation?*

**8. Do Australians want internet filters?**

*In 2007 the then Government sent a brochure offering free filters to 8 million Australian households. We understand that only a very small percentage chose to take up this offer. Can we conclude that 98% of Australian households see no need for filters? What evidence is there to the contrary?*

**9. What happens next?**

*What process will be followed in Government plans to “work with the industry to ensure the filters do not affect the speed of the internet?” Is this a commitment to no loss of internet speed or response time? Is there a timeline?*

**10. What will it cost us?**

*What will the policy cost to implement – not just cost to government (though we want to know that), but cost to Australian internet users, industry and education.*

**ENDS**

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The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional association for the Australian library and information services sector. It seeks to empower the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support. ALIA represents the interest of 6,000 members, the profession and Australia's 12 million library users.

**<http://www.alia.org.au>**

Issued on behalf of

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