

# Censoring web access 'too hard'

**VALERINA CHANGARATHIL**

**THE** Federal Government's plan to censor internet access in Australia has been dismissed as unworkable by computer experts.

The Government says mandatory ISP filtering - in which internet service providers are forced to automatically provide a "clean" feed of the net, devoid of pornography and violence - will protect children.

Adults could opt out to receive a non-filtered feed.

But internet analysts have warned the plan will simply create an administrative nightmare that leads to more expensive internet access and significantly slower speeds.

The idea also raises ethical and moral concerns regarding freedom of speech and the right of the Government to control what its citizens can see and read.

ISPs are concerned about the increased costs related to new software and equipment, administrative overheads and staffing if Communications Minister Senator Stephen Conroy proceeds with his pledge to introduce mandatory ISP filtering.

SA's Adam Internet has about 75,000 customers visiting an average

of 15 to 20 websites a day and managing director Scott Hicks said it would be a nightmare to monitor 1.5 million websites every day.

"Making us so-called content editors makes our life very difficult," Mr Hicks said.

Senator Conroy said the proposal would be implemented in consultation with the industry. The Australian Communications and Media Authority will prepare a "blacklist" of unsuitable sites to be blocked by ISPs - even though hundreds of new sites go online every day.

Young Media Australia president Jane Roberts said the wellbeing of children must come before what adults want.

"As a society that is concerned about its kids, this is one way to promote safety for our children and young people," she said.

However, Australian Privacy Foundation chairman Roger Clark said internet access should be the responsibility of parents, not the Government.

Analysts argue the probability of ensuring 100 per cent clean content is next to nil, with one British ISP firm already reported to have failed in implementing such a scheme.

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