Wednesday 10th December 2014

THE COALITION IS REVIVING LABOR'S INTERNET FILTER WITH ITS COPYRIGHT WEBSITE BLOCKING SCHEME: IPA

"The government's proposal to block websites that infringe copyright is an internet filter and a threat to free speech," says Chris Berg, Senior Fellow with the Institute of Public Affairs.

Today, Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Attorney General George Brandis announced they intend to amend the *Copyright Act* to allow copyright owners to apply for a court order which would block access to websites that host copyright infringing material.

"This is nothing more than an internet filter, of the sort which the Coalition proudly opposed when it was proposed by the Rudd and Gillard governments," says Mr Berg.

"There is no reason to believe that this will reduce copyright infringement in any material way."

"It is trivially easy to set up a personal virtual private network (VPN) which would render any government website blocking pointless."

"In fact, the technical skills required to set up a VPN are less than the technical skills required to download copyright infringing material."

"Experience has shown us that Australian governments cannot be trusted to block only the sites they intend to block."

"The Australian Securities and Investment Commission has been accidentally blocking hundreds of thousands of websites due to their lack of technological knowledge. Furthermore, the Labor government's proposed internet filter was found to capture many sites which it had not intended to block."

"A copyright internet filter is likely to be similarly abused. Parliament should not go ahead with it," says Mr Berg.

Mr Berg and IPA Legal Rights Director Simon Breheny wrote a submission in response to the government's discussion paper on copyright infringement penalties in September 2014. The submission is available here.

For media and comment: Chris Berg, Senior Fellow, on 0402 257 681 or cberg@ipa.org.au