

IPA MEDIA RELEASE

Institute of Public Affairs | Australia's leading free market think tank

Wednesday 3 September 2014

ABBOTT GOVERNMENT'S COPYRIGHT PROPOSAL IS AN INTERNET FILTER BY ANOTHER NAME

"The Abbott government's proposal to crack down on online copyright infringement will result in the implementation of a new mandatory internet filter that threatens free speech and digital liberty," said Simon Breheny, director of the Legal Rights Project at free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

The Abbott government released a discussion paper for public consultation in July 2014 entitled 'Online Copyright Infringement'. Mr Breheny, along with IPA Policy Director Chris Berg, is the co-author of a submission lodged with the government this week.

"The Coalition has proposed a new regime, which would give copyright holders the legal means to force internet service providers to block websites. The Coalition is proposing to introduce a massive new online censorship regime," said Mr Breheny.

"A new power to censor online material poses a significant threat to freedom of speech," said Mr Breheny.

"ISPs are not proxy regulatory enforcement bodies. But the government's proposal would turn ISPs into 'copyright cops.' This is completely inappropriate," said Mr Breheny.

"This policy is also unlikely to achieve its aims. The proposed regime is trivially easy to bypass. Ignoring the existence of easy-to-use tools such as virtual private networks and anonymising software is a recipe for failure."

In August 2010, Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull held a forum to discuss Labor's mandatory internet filter. He noted: "It was a really bad idea that could only have come up from people that actually didn't understand the internet."

"The Coalition proposes to introduce a regime that will mirror Labor's mandatory internet filter. Has the Communications Minister changed his mind?" said Mr Breheny.

A copy of the IPA's submission responding to the Australian government's discussion paper on online copyright infringement can be downloaded [here](#).

For further information and comment:

Simon Breheny, Director, Legal Rights Project, 0400 967 382, sbreheny@ipa.org.au