



The Coalition's plan for real action to
Protect Australian Families Online

**Stand up for Australia.
Stand up for real action.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Coalition is committed to real action to provide families with resources they can use to help protect their children from online threats.

We will ensure that parents are not given a false sense of security when it comes to the safety and wellbeing of their children.

Children will experience the internet in a range of situations: at home, at school, at a friend's home or at the library. There is also an increasing range of devices which now provide internet access such as mobile phones and iPads. Game consoles like the Wii and Xbox 360 can be set up to access the internet, to a limited degree.

The best protection parents can give children is guidance about appropriate internet usage and the dangers that can arise from inappropriate usage. The Coalition acknowledges that parents are best placed to provide children with ethical guidance about safe and appropriate internet usage.

More children are using the internet at a younger age. 93 percent of children and teenagers use the internet and 84 percent of children, some as young as eight years old, are linked to social networking sites every day.¹

The previous Coalition Government provided parents with free PC-based content filters so that parents could help protect their children from exposure to dangerous and inappropriate material on the internet. Labor cancelled the Howard Government's free PC-based filter and has not provided families with any other alternative.

Before the 2007 election, Labor promised to introduce a mandatory Internet Service Provider (ISP) – level filter that would cover '*any content that has been identified as prohibited by the Australian Communications and Media Authority*'.²

Yet after three years Labor has not been able to produce any legislation to implement its plan, and has now announced a further two year delay, highlighting the practical problems with its plan.

The Coalition's plan for real action to protect families online will:

- 1. Provide a free PC-based internet filter to families**

The Coalition will commit \$60 million to provide quality internet filtering technology free to Australian families.

- 2. Expand ACMA's successful Cybersafety Outreach Programme**

The Coalition will commit \$30 million to extend and expand the successful community Cybersafety outreach programmes which are currently booked out six months in advance. This

1. NAPCAN, 'Smart online Safe Online' at <www.napcan.org.au/programs/soso>.

2. 'Labor's Plan for Cybersafety' Australian Labor Party Policy (2007) 2 at <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/22093/20071124-0102/www.alp.org.au/download/now/labors_plan_for_cyber_safety.pdf>.

funding will also support the expansion of ACMA's current Cybersafety portal and establish a Cybersafety hotline.

3. Empower principals and introduce a new national education campaign to combat bullying and cyberbullying

The Coalition will provide \$10.5 million over four years to address the well-founded concerns parents have about the use of new social media sites.

4. Establish a new Ministerial Advisory Committee on Social Networking

The Coalition will establish a Ministerial Advisory Committee on Social Networking so that operators of sites like Facebook and Twitter work with government to limit the potential harm that inappropriate use of social networking can cause.

HOW LABOR HAS FAILED

After three years of Labor, Australia is heading down the wrong track.

Reckless spending, nearly \$90 billion of debt, a \$57 billion deficit – and Labor Government borrowings of more than \$100 million every day have put the Australian economy in a highly vulnerable position.

Australians cannot afford three more years of Labor over-promising and then failing to deliver improved online safety for families.

The Labor Government repeatedly promised to introduce a mandatory ISP filter to block a broad range of content, before limiting this to Refused Classification (RC) content.

The legislation to introduce Labor's filter has never materialised and it took the Minister for Communications, Stephen Conroy, two years to conduct and produce the results of the trial into its planned filter.

Senator Conroy has further deferred the implementation of the filter for another two years while he reviews the definition of RC content.

The Coalition did not implement a mandatory ISP level filter in government because it could not be shown to be workable or effective, offered a false sense of security to parents and would impact on internet speeds. For these reasons other democratic nations have also not implemented a mandatory filter.

The Safer Internet Group, representing Google, iiNet, Yahoo, the Internet Industry Association (IIA), the Internet Society of Australia and the Australian Council of State School Organisations has confirmed that the Labor Government's proposed filter will slow down internet speeds, will not work for high-volume sites and would be easy to bypass.³

The Labor Government has also acknowledged that even a workable mandatory filter would be powerless to stop people circumventing the filter via proxy networks and Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). A mandatory ISP filter cannot deal with illegal and inappropriate activity on Facebook, chat rooms, peer-to-peer networks or through email.

It is clear that the mandatory ISP filter will not be sufficient to protect families from dangerous online content and will only serve to give parents a false sense of security.

While Labor has fumbled around for three years trying to implement their unworkable plan, the only concrete decision Senator Conroy has taken was the cancellation of the Howard Government's practical program to protect Australian families online.

3. Safer Internet Group '7 Technical Reasons Mandatory Filtering Won't Deliver Real Child Safety' <<http://www.saferinternetgroup.org/pdfs/7reasons.pdf>>

THE COALITION'S PLAN FOR REAL ACTION TO PROTECT AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES ONLINE

The Coalition has a plan for real action to empower parents to protect their children from the dangers that may lurk in the online world.

This means providing parents with the best tools - supported by ongoing education.

The Coalition did not implement a mandatory ISP level filter when we were last in Government because it was not workable or effective. It offered parents a false sense of security.

A Coalition Government will not introduce a mandatory ISP level filter – we will instead implement practical and effective measures to enhance online safety and security including PC-based filters for families.

The Coalition will:

1. Provide a free PC-Based internet filter to families

The Coalition will provide \$60 million for free PC-based content filters – to be downloaded – or delivered.

This will provide parents with the choice of having a PC-based filter for installation on their home computer.

The mandatory ISP level filter proposed by Labor blocks access to a set list of sites – that is all it does.

The best protection parents can give children is guidance about appropriate internet usage and the dangers that can arise from inappropriate usage. The Coalition acknowledges that parents are best placed to provide children with ethical guidance about safe and appropriate internet usage.

No filter can be perfect. However, PC-based filters are much more dynamic and can assess a wider range of content than a static ISP level filter. They are increasingly easy to use, so that with the right technical support, parents can take control of their family's Internet use.

PC-based filters can monitor a range of online behaviour that parents might be concerned about which an ISP level filter can't.

The range of PC-based filters on the market provides a range of services including:

- keyword blocking, site blacklisting, age appropriate settings;
- blocking sites based on skin tones; and
- blocking more than just web sites, eg: Peer-to-Peer downloading networks, chat rooms, instant messages, FTP sites, online Forums and email.⁴

4. For a summary of current filter capabilities see: <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/>.

There are even PC-based filters that can provide email or SMS alerts to parents of potential cyberbullying or the approach of online predators in instant messaging or on social media.⁵ Other filters enable parents to set time limits for the use of the Internet, and enable parents to remotely adjust settings.⁶

The Coalition will provide grants to ISPs to fund the entire cost of providing the filters. Details of these arrangements will be established in discussion with the industry.

We will work with the industry to ensure that the codes of practice explicitly require ISPs to make their customers aware of the option of a free filter when a new subscriber signs up to an Internet service, or when an existing customer renews or extends their contract.

We believe that leveraging the existing customer relationship that ISPs have with their customers will improve the awareness and administration of the scheme.

Using additional funding under the Cybersafety initiative, the Coalition will also task the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to advise Government on the most appropriate PC-based filter technology to provide to Australians under this programme.

2. Expand ACMA's successful Cybersafety Outreach Programme

The Coalition will commit **\$30 million of additional funding** to extend and expand the successful community Cybersafety Outreach programme.

ACMA's Cybersafety Outreach programme provides free, live presentations to students, parents and teachers. Presentations include teacher professional development, internet safety awareness programmes for teachers, students and parents; and the recently launched pre-service teacher training programme.

In 2009-2010 ACMA received an additional \$21 million over five years for Cybersmart, its cybersafety education initiative. Cybersafety Outreach is having difficulty keeping up with demand. According to ACMA:

*'There is a high level of demand for Cybersafety Outreach events with presentations and workshops booked six months in advance. Further, demand for the program continues to grow with 20,000 students, parents and teachers participating in an Outreach event in May 2010 compared to 5,000 in May the previous year.'*⁷

In the last 18 months over 5,100 teachers have participated in the professional development workshops and 131,902 teachers, students and parents have attended the internet safety programme and 2,366 schools have participated in Cybersafety Outreach across Australia.⁸

5. http://www.netnanny.com/features/cell_phone_alerts.

6. <http://www.netnanny.com/products/netnanny/detail/technical>.

7. Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Cybersafety, July 2010, (Australian Communications and Media Authority) 22 at < http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jssc/subs/sub_80.pdf>.

8. Ibid.

The Coalition will expand the Cybersafety Outreach programme to ensure it is not limited to protecting families from offensive and illegal content, identity theft and privacy loss.

The Coalition understands many children are more net savvy than their parents. Part of the funding for the Cybersafety programme will go towards an advice line so parents have a first point of call when they have technical questions about cybersafety. The advice line will provide parents with support to help them answer questions and provide factual information to equip them to deal with the challenges of teaching their children about the safe use of emerging technology.

3. Empower principals and introduce a new national education campaign to combat bullying and cyberbullying

Cyberbullying and privacy breaches also cannot be addressed through a filter. Families require education and support programs to deal with these issues.

As previously announced the Coalition will provide \$10.5 million to:

- empower school principals to deal effectively with cyberbullying issues in schools;
- establish a National Cyberbullying Taskforce comprising representatives from the internet industry, education stakeholders, parents and students. This Taskforce will develop a Code for social networking sites and recommend a universal system for children to report cyberbullying and refer offensive material. The purpose of the Taskforce is to secure commitment from organisations engaged in social networking that they will be proactive in their approach to tackling bullying;
- develop national reporting requirements for all schools in relation to bullying in schools – both on and off campus; and
- expand existing research into cyberbullying to better understand what it is and how to combat it.

4. Establish a new Ministerial Advisory Committee on Social Networking

The Coalition will establish a Ministerial Advisory Committee on Social Networking so that operators of sites like Facebook and Twitter work with government to limit the potential harm that can occur on these social networking sites.

In recent years, there have been homicides where the victim initially met their killer on, or as a result of, a social networking site.

There have been a range of recent cases where tribute pages on Facebook have been defaced with inappropriate materials which are offensive to the family of the deceased.

Because the Australian presence of social networking companies is small, it is often difficult to have offensive sites taken down in a timely way.

A Ministerial Advisory Committee on Social Networking will assist policy decision making in this area. It will also encourage international social networking companies to establish a regulatory presence in Australia and demonstrate a commitment to ethical corporate governance.

COSTINGS

The Coalition will commit \$100.5 million over the forward estimates towards these measures to help families protect their children from online threats.

This funding will be provided from more than \$26 billion in recurrent savings that have been identified by the Coalition over the forward estimates.

These savings are a result of cutting Labor's waste and mismanagement and redirecting funding from inefficient and poor performing Labor Government programmes.

	2010-11 \$M	2011-12 \$M	2012-13 \$M	2013-14 \$M	TOTAL \$M
PC Based Internet Filter	10	20	15	15	60
Education campaign	5	10	10	5	30
Anti-bullying campaign	2.5	3	3	2	10.5

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