

ALP response

Australian Council on Children and the Media

The Gillard Labor Government believes that governments have a responsibility to put in place measures that ensure Australians, in particular children, have a safe online and media experience.

Federal Labor has a comprehensive Cyber-Safety Plan which includes education, law enforcement, research and mandatory Internet Service Provider (ISP) filtering of Refused Classification content.

We will introduce mandatory ISP level filtering of content that is rated Refused Classification (RC) and have also introduced a grants program to encourage ISP's to offer additional filtering services to householder who want them.

Federal Labor welcomes the decision of three of our largest Internet Service Providers to voluntarily block, at the ISP level, a list of child abuse URLs compiled and maintained by the independent regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

Federal Labor has expanded the Australian Federal Police Child Protection Unit by 91 staff. We are funding education programs which have reached 144,000 parents, teachers and students through the delivery of the Australian Federal Police Outreach program.

Following completion of a live pilot of ISP level filtering, the Government announced enhancements to its Cyber-Safety Plan including the introduction of mandatory ISP level filtering of content that is rated Refused Classification (RC). Refused Classification (RC) content includes child sexual abuse imagery, bestiality, sexual violence, detailed instruction in crime, violence or drug use and/or material that advocates the doing of a terrorist act. We have also introduced a grants program to encourage ISPs to offer additional level filtering services to households who want them.

Under Australia's existing classification regulations refused classification (RC) material is not available in newsagencies, it is not on library shelves, you cannot watch it on a DVD or at the cinema and it is not shown on television. Moreover, refused classification (RC) material is not available on Australian hosted websites.

Federal Labor considers that the current classification system for movies and tv programs provides a valuable guide to Australians.

The National Classification Scheme is designed to provide consumers and parents with information about publications, films and computer games to allow them to make informed decisions about appropriate entertainment material for themselves and their children. The Scheme is intended to reflect community values and Classification Ministers are keen to

make sure it continues to do so.

A Gillard Labor Government would work with States and Territories to ensure our classification system keeps pace with technological change to maintain the community's confidence.

Regarding the legalisation of R18+ level computer games, computer and video games are regulated in Australia under the National Classification Scheme, which is a cooperative scheme with all State and Territory governments.

The Gillard Labor Government has sought public input on the issues of an R18+ classification for computer games by releasing a discussion paper *'Should the Australian National Classification Scheme include an R 18+ classification category for computer games?'* More than 60,000 people provided submissions to this discussion paper.

A status report on the results of this consultation process was provided to Classification Ministers at their biannual meeting earlier this year. A copy of the report is available at www.ag.gov.au/gamesclassifications

While no decision has yet been made about whether there should be an R18+ Classification for games, the responsible Ministers will continue discussing this issue at future ministerial meetings and have requested further analysis of community and expert views to better understand the arguments on each side. Any significant changes to classification policy, such as the introduction of an R18+ classification for computer games, must be unanimously agreed by the Federal, State and Territory Classification Ministers.

In relation to the marketing of unhealthy foods to children, a number of changes are currently being achieved relating to exposure of children to marketing nutrient-poor foods and beverages through a combination of Government regulation, industry self-regulation and new television initiatives.

Federal Labor has provided funding to the ABC and SBS to support a dedicated advertising free children's channel. Further, the industry has implemented a number of voluntary measures with Government encouragement. The food industry has developed two codes which aim to reduce exposure of children to the advertising of food which is high in salt, fat or sugar.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will monitor these measures and take further action if necessary.

Kind Regards
ALP Campaign Unit