

# Australia defends mandatory Internet filter

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The Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) on Friday listed [Australia](#), along with [South Korea](#), Turkey and Russia, as countries "under surveillance" in its "Internet Enemies" report.

While Australia does not rank alongside Iran or [North Korea](#) in terms of [censorship](#), its proposal to place a mandatory filter on the web to remove illegal and extreme material has raised concerns, RSF said.

Communications Minister Stephen Conroy wants Internet service providers (ISPs) to filter the web to bring the online world in line with censorship standards applied in Australia to material such as films, books and DVDs.

"The government does not support Refused Classification (RC) content being available on the Internet," a spokeswoman for the minister told AFP.

"This 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."

Under Australia's existing classification rules, this material is not available in news publications or libraries, and cannot be viewed at the cinema or on television and is not available on Australian-hosted websites.

"The government's proposal will bring the treatment of overseas-hosted content into line by requiring ISPs to block overseas content that has been identified as being RC-rated," she said.

"There are no plans to block any other material that is not RC," she added.

But Geordie Guy, spokesman for the online rights group Electronic Frontiers Australia, said the filter was still a bad idea.

"In the construction of a censorship system like this, Australia will be building the framework for a broader censorship system if this government, or any future government, sees that that is what they wish to do," he told AFP.

Guy said despite concerns about whether the filter will be possible to implement for technical reasons, from a rights perspective it was still a worrying development in an open and democratic country.

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