

# US concerned by Australian Internet filter plan

March 29 2010, By ROD McGUIRK , Associated Press Writer

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(AP) -- The United States has raised concerns with Australia about the impact of a proposed Internet filter that would place restrictions on Web content, an official said Monday.

The concerns of Australia's most important security ally further undermine plans that would make [Australia](#) one of the strictest Internet regulators among the world's democracies.

"Our main message of course is that we remain committed to advancing the free flow of information which we view as vital to economic prosperity and preserving open societies globally," a U.S. State Department spokesman Michael Tran told The Associated Press by telephone from Washington.

Tran declined to say when or at what level the U.S. State Department raised its concerns with Australia and declined to detail those concerns.

"We don't discuss the details of specific diplomatic exchanges, but I can say that in the context of that ongoing relationship, we have raised our concerns on this matter with Australian officials," he added.

Internet giants [Google](#) and Yahoo have condemned the proposal as a heavy-handed measure that could restrict access to legal information.

The plan needs the support of Parliament to become law later this year.

Australian Communications Minister Stephen Conroy says the filter would block access to sites that include child pornography, sexual violence and detailed instructions in crime or drug use. The list of banned sites could be constantly updated based on public complaints. If adopted into law, the screening system would make Australia one of the strictest Internet regulators among the world's democracies.

Conroy declined to comment on the U.S. concerns.

"The Australian and U.S. governments liaise regularly on a broad range of issues. It would be inappropriate to discuss the details of these consultations," said his spokeswoman, Suzie Brady.

Some critics of Australia's filter have said it puts the nation in the same [censorship](#) league as China.

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