

Australia to crack down on online pirates

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Australia outlines plans to tackle online piracy as it moves to end the country's position as one of the world's top illegal downloaders of television shows

Australia's government Wednesday outlined plans to tackle online piracy as it moves to end the country's position as one of the world's top illegal downloaders of television shows such as "Game of Thrones".

Copyright holders will be able to apply for court orders requiring

internet service providers (ISPs) to block access to websites outside the country that give access to infringing content, according to the proposed amendments to the Copyright Act.

ISPs have also been given 120 days to develop an industry code that includes issuing warnings to consumers who breach copyright laws. Otherwise, providers will be hit with binding rules imposed by the [government](#).

"The rapid growth of the internet has brought significant challenges to the protection of copyright, due to the ease with which material can be digitally copied and shared, at little or no cost," Attorney-General George Brandis said in a joint statement with Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

"The Government has sought the least burdensome and most flexible way of responding to concerns about online [copyright infringement](#)."

The announcement came a week after a French court ordered the country's main ISPs to block notorious file-sharing website The Pirate Bay, amid estimates that the online sharing of movie and music content cost billions in lost revenue each year.

Australia led the globe for illegal downloads of hit HBO show "Game of Thrones", earlier this year, making up 11.6 percent of [internet protocol](#) (IP) addresses that were sampled, according to file-sharing monitor TorrentFreak.



Internet piracy and the rise of Netflix has seen traditional media outlets and pay-TV provider Foxtel scramble to cut prices

Australian ISP iiNet and other providers are currently battling the owners of the "Dallas Buyers Club" in court. The owners are seeking the IP addresses of customers who shared the Hollywood film online.

Internet piracy and the rise of streaming sites such as Netflix, which is due to launch in Australia in March, has seen [traditional media outlets](#) and pay-TV provider Foxtel scramble to cut prices or offer similar services.

Consumer lobby group Choice said it was disappointed with the government decision, which would "open the way for significant and disproportionate penalties for consumers".

Choice spokeswoman Erin Turner told AFP that blocking websites which host file-sharing links had been shown to be ineffective, with users able to circumvent restrictions through the use of virtual private networks (VPNs) and other means.

"In the research we did this week, we found that Australian pirates were more likely to pay for content on iTunes, were more likely to have a (streaming service) Quickflix account and were significantly more likely to go to the movies than people who don't pirate," Turner said.

"They want to pay for content. You need to give it to them at the right price and in the right way."

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