

Online piracy sites blocked in Australia crackdown

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An Australian court on Friday ordered internet providers to block more than 40 piracy websites after a successful case by leading film distributors, in a major ruling on online content sharing.

Australia is one of the world's top illegal downloaders of shows such as "Game of Thrones", and studios have launched legal action in recent years to block international websites offering access to such content.

Under the Federal Court ruling, telecommunication providers including the country's two biggest—Telstra and Optus—would have to block sites such as EZTV, Demonoid, Limetorrents and Putlocker.

"The infringement, or facilitation of infringement by the online locations, is flagrant and reflect a blatant disregard for the rights of copyright owners," Justice John Nicholas wrote in his judgement.

Nicholas's judgement followed his ruling in December that ordered the blocking of high-profile online file-sharing websites Pirate Bay, Torrentz, and IsoHunt.

Local pirates have been targeted by Canberra, with the parliament in 2015 passing laws that allow copyright holders to ask courts to order blocks on overseas websites which illegally share content.

The latest case was led by film distributor Village Roadshow, backed by other studios including Disney, Twentieth Century Fox, Paramount

Pictures, Columbia Pictures, Universal and Warner Bros.

Village Roadshow's co-executive chairman Graham Burke welcomed the ruling and added that "site-blocking has been very effectively implemented around the world and proven to reduce the theft of screen content".

"The thieves who run pirate sites contribute nothing to Australia—they employ no-one and pay no taxes here. Of the enormous profits they earn, not one cent goes back to the original creators of the [content](#)."

The entertainment industry has said such downloads cost them billions of dollars in revenue.

But consumer advocates have said blocking websites which host file-sharing links was shown to be ineffective, as users could circumvent restrictions through the use of [virtual private networks](#) (VPNs) and other means.

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