

## **INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY AND CHILDREN**

Family First acknowledges the role of parents in protecting children from exposure to harmful media. However Family First also acknowledges the difficulties even conscientious parents face in effectively carrying out this role in an age when media and internet are so pervasive. In the best interests of children, Government must take a more proactive role.

Family First will work to achieve Government commitment to establish a Mandatory Filtering Scheme at the ISP Server Level in this country. A combination of Government subsidy and industry contributions could be explored to fund set up of such a scheme. Family First believes that this cost is justified for the protection of vulnerable children within our community.

Family First will propose that once set up, this scheme will be funded through a levy system so as to spread ongoing costs equitably amongst all end users. This cost is a small price to pay to protect children.

Pornography has a very bad impact on children and adolescents.

There are many instances where children's disturbed, aggressive or sexualised behaviour can be traced back to the influence of exposure to pornography or extreme violence on the internet viewed in the home with or without parental supervision. Some children have been very disturbed by accidental exposures to this kind of material and various studies have come to the following conclusions:

- Children are more likely to consider sexual abuse as normal if exposed to pornography
- Children psycho -sexual development may be damaged
- The porn industry is unable to regulate itself as the incentive to profit is ultimately more attractive than child welfare.

- Some pornographic material is not even suitable to be classified as R or X classification.
- It is easy for children to accidentally stumble on this material. It is very easy for teenagers to access this material deliberately.

The present system of education and the promotion of end user filtering have clearly failed. Family First will insist upon mandatory filtering in Australia. Reliance on education and end use supervision and filtering take up fails to protect vulnerable children in dysfunctional households where there is neglect. It also fails to acknowledge that many parents lack the education or awareness to take up these kinds of filters. Many parents who are doing their best to supervise kids can still fail to stop this material getting through. Clearly, filtering at end user level is not always effective.

This is a clear mandate to go ahead with proposal to implement filtering at the ISP level. A News poll study commissioned by The **Australia Institute** found: 93% of parents of teenagers would support automatic filtering of Internet pornography going into homes.

As a society we have acknowledged the need to regulate other media and prevent porn peddlers from accessing children and adolescents. Family First believes that the Internet Industry should not be allowed to avoid their responsibilities on this important issue.