New internet codes of practice

New industry codes of practice to assist families to manage their internet use and to assist in the regulation of content on mobile phones were introduced on 26 May 2005.

Under the federal government's Online Content Co-regulatory Scheme, established under Schedule 5 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*, the internet industry is regulated through codes of practice. The revised codes were developed by the Internet Industry Association (IIA), following wide community consultation, and are registered for the internet industry by the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA). The codes are available at http://www.iia.net.au.

The new codes require internet service providers (ISPs) to display prominently on their home page a link to internet safety information and to provide customers with regular updates on filtering options. The codes do not impose any requirements for ISPs to engage in universal blocking of content that the ABA deems prohibited.

The codes also introduce measures for content delivered to multimedia-enabled mobile phones. The new provisions include a content assessment scheme for mobile devices to ensure that mobile carriers and content providers take steps to protect minors from unsuitable content. A procedure for complaints about mobile content has been introduced, which has the support of all five mobile operators in Australia.

The IIA's approach recognises the enormous benefits that the internet can bring to Australians as an information and educational tool and also recognises that the internet can bring some content to which end-users may not wish to be exposed. The IIA also agrees with ALIA's view that it is impractical and ineffective to filter all internet content; however, filtering technologies can be utilised by end-users to manage content to some extent.

The codes support end-user empowerment as one of the most effective strategies to manage internet content issues. They support the provision of information about content issues to end-users, including strategies for managing children's and minors' use of the internet, as well as the availability of end-user filtering products and other tools which responsible adults can choose to use to manage access by their families.

ALIA provided comment on the draft codes and believes that the codes are appropriate for the environment in which they are required to operate. The principles of the codes are in line with ALIA's policy approach as expressed in the Association's statement on online content regulation. ALIA provides extensive information and resources on the regulation of online content, especially as it relates to public-access internet services in libraries. ALIA's policy statements, guidelines and research reports on internet services can be found at http://alia.org.au/advocacy/internet.access/. ∎