

Part three of Senate Committee report released

Part Three of the Senate Select Committee on Community Standards Relevant to the Supply of Services Utilising Electronic Technologies' report on the regulation of computer on-line services was released on 24 June 1997.

The majority report has recommended several broad responses to on-line services, particularly making it an offence to transmit, obtain possession of or request material which would either fall into a restricted or refused classification under the Office of Film and Literature Classification guidelines.

Other recommendations made by the majority report included:

- the development and implementation of codes of conduct;
- fines of up to \$100 000 for breaches of those codes;
- that the OFLC designs a scheme for labelling on-line content;
- proof of age and age verification procedures be adopted by the industry to prevent children from accessing objectionable material;
- that police conduct random audits of on-line material for illegal activities;

- service providers be required to give their customers information on blocking and filtering software;
- community education campaigns be conducted to communicate both the benefits and limitations of blocking and filtering software; and
- conduct an education campaign to inform current on-line users of existing legislation and their current legal obligations.

Minority reports were provided by the two Labor Senators and by Senator Stott Despoja of the Australian Democrats. Both reports rejected recommendations for restrictions on content, other than on material refused classification, on financial penalties for non-compliance to codes of conduct and on police monitoring of the Internet.

Senator Stott Despoja has argued that the Committee should be disbanded, that investigation be refocused on the broader issues which intersect with on-line services and that there should be a move away from the current narrow and negative focus on censorship.

The Association is continuing to monitor the impact of the Committee's

report and is awaiting the Government's response to the recommendations. A complete copy of the report can be obtained via the Internet at <http://senate.aph.gov.au/committee/comstand/online/>

United States of America Supreme Court declares *Communications Decency Act* unconstitutional

The Supreme Court of the United States of America has declared the communications decency amendments to the *Telecommunications Act 1995* as unconstitutional on the grounds that they directly interfere with first amendment rights guaranteeing freedom of expression. The decision is a win for civil liberties groups in the United States, including the American Library Association, who had been seeking to have the sections of the Act found unconstitutional. The Act was designed to prevent the transmission of 'obscene, lewd and lascivious' material over communications networks, but had been criticised on the grounds that it was overly broad and so vaguely worded that it could subject librarians and other members of the public to criminal prosecution for posting materials on-line that are legal in other media. ■

Calling all one-person library workers

Do you work in a one person library/information service? If so, Kerry Smith would like to hear from you.

Kerry has started the work on her studies of one person libraries/librarianship in Australia. A preliminary outlook of the context and the issues will be delivered in a paper at *On the edge*: the 7th Asian Pacific, Specials, Health and Law librarians conference in Perth in October this year.

In order to advance the study beyond the realm of 'specials' Kerry would like to hear from those of you who are working in a one person library/information service

environment as soon as possible, please.

Please either phone, fax, e-mail or snail-mail her at: Department of Information Studies, Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box U1987, Perth WA 6845, phone (08) 9266 7217; fax: (08) 9266 3152, e-mail: kerry@biblio.curtin.edu.au

Please send her your name, your job title, where you work, your contact information (postal and e-mail addresses, phone and fax numbers). She will keep a register of your interest and will contact you in due course regarding further phases of the work. ■

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