

Inquiry into the Harm being done to Australian children through Access to Pornography on the Internet.

As a mother of 2 teenagers and a wife, I am well aware of the grave harm that is being done to Australian children who are exposed to pornography through the accessible gateway of the internet.

A lot of children under 16 have easy access to pornography through unfiltered websites and being left "unguarded" whilst on computers, iPads, tablets, mobiles and other devices.

There is evidence of harm which can be demonstrated through the personality changes of children exposed to pornography and their heightened level of promiscuity. Further dangers are the early sexualisation of children and exposure to other forms of sexuality, well before their understanding of who they are themselves.

I know of a mother who was divorced with 2 sons from 2 different fathers. The older son was with his father one weekend and as the father was deeply into pornography, he encouraged his son (early teens) to have a look at these explicit sites, mainly unattended on the internet. The boy's mother gradually noticed a change in her son's behaviour i.e. secretive, obsessed with being alone on the internet and overall "a darkness" about his personality. When the mother found out that he had been exposed to pornography on the internet, she approached her ex-husband who said some flippant remark that it won't affect their son and that he needs to know about sex anyway. As a result, the mother had to protect her younger son from his older brother's influence and eventually the brothers became separated, with the older son living with his father and the younger son with their mother. So children can be harmed and families can be destroyed through access to pornography on the internet.

I know there are filters to help try and prevent access to porn websites, but there needs to be far better means of closing the easy access "gateway" to pornographic websites and hide porn advertising (spam).

I know pornography is a high revenue earning industry and that the Australian government receives disclosed GDT from this, but it is critical that there are effective methods of regulation and control of pornography on the internet with hefty fines and sentences for those who manage to be go undetected.

We see numerous accounts on the news and tv documentary programs of young girls and boys being manipulated by online chatting and sadly being taken and killed, all because of access to the internet and heightened awareness of the availability of pornography via magazines, books, DVD's and internet.

I propose the following action (which may require legislation):

1. All regional, national and international pornographic websites to be placed on a Federal Govt register with access to AFP and the police in states/territories, with specific details of all company names, trading names, subsidiary names etc. with fully disclosed company or private addresses (not PO Box no's) and ABN details. If a pornographic website is not on the register, then they will be blocked by highly effective firewalls across all internet users in Australia.
2. All websites selling sex aid products and pornographic DVD's etc. and have "back door" access to pornography websites, are to be included on the govt register.

3. In order for pornographic websites to be accessed by legally aged users, the particular pornographic company must disclose their revenue, annually to a "linked" ATO dept. on this govt register, thereby ensuring legitimate company tax is being paid and monitored.
4. All legally aged users of internet pornography must also be registered on a separate confidential govt register and be given a clearance check i.e. download their driver's licence to verify their identity, age and address before being allowed to view and pay for internet pornography.
5. All registered users of pornography to have filters automatically added to their computers and associated devices (Wi-Fi) in order to detect unlawful access of pornography by children under the age of 16.
6. For anyone attempting to access pornographic material on the internet (who is not a registered legally aged user), then internet providers/ carriers are to automatically block access with a warning that if a further attempt is made, their ISP address will be recorded with details being forwarded onto the police authority for unlawful / unregistered access of pornographic material.

I know the Australian govt wants to prevent harm to children who are sadly able to access pornography on the internet. So I hope this 9 month long inquiry will ultimately birth good and wholesome measures and controls, to help protect Australian children and families and possibly lead to helping other countries across the world.