



Child safety and consumer protection on agenda at Sydney hearing

The need to balance personal freedom and community protection on the internet will be examined at a public hearing in Sydney on Friday, as part of an Inquiry into the use of section 313 of the *Telecommunications Act 1997*.

The House Standing Committee on Communications will hear evidence from representatives of the telecommunications industry, consumer groups, academics and community organisations, covering a wide range of views regarding use of section 313, which gives powers to government agencies to disrupt illegal online activity.

In its submission, the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania of the Uniting Church in Australia strongly supports the use of s.313 by the Australian Federal Police to disrupt access to child sexual abuse material online.

While supporting the use of the section to limit access to child exploitation material, the Communications Alliance and AMTA are concerned that the section is being used to disrupt other online services and recommends that its use be confined to law enforcement and security agencies.

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights argues that only online services involved in serious crimes, or that directly incite serious crimes, should be covered by s.313 and that it should be established before a court or tribunal that a service is in breach of Australian law before any further action is taken.

Committee Chairman, Jane Prentice said, "Friday's hearing will be an important opportunity for the committee to test the views of a significant cross section of stakeholders and experts. The hearing will address many of the issues surrounding the use of section 313, including child protection, consumer protection, questions of law and the technical limits of disruption."

Details of the hearing are as follows:

- Date:** Friday, 6 March 2015
- Time:** 9:00 am–3.00 pm
- Venue:** Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney

9:00am	Internet Society of Australia
9:40am	Communications Alliance & AMTA
10:30am	Cyberspace Law and Policy Community, UNSW
11.10am	Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
11:50am	Associate Professor Katina Michael UOW
1:00pm	Uniting Church of Australia
1.40pm	Dr Rob Nicholls UNSW
2.20pm	Australian Lawyers for Human Rights

Further information on the Inquiry, including the full terms of reference and how to prepare a submission can be obtained from the Committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/section313 or from the Secretariat on (02) 6277 2352.

For media comment: please contact the Committee Chairman, (02) 6277 4426 or (07) 3378 1599

Further information: contact the Inquiry Secretary (02) 6277 2352, email ic.reps@aph.gov.au or visit the Committee's webpage at www.aph.gov.au/section313