

Labor Senators' Additional Comment

1.1 Labor believes that action is needed to reduce current levels of online piracy in Australia. The enforcement of copyright law is vital to our creative industries. Piracy damages our economy and destroys Australian jobs.

1.2 We support reasonable measures to discourage piracy. This includes blocking, by court order, overseas websites which flout the law and operate as online havens for copyright infringement. Accordingly, Labor will support this Bill subject to the government accepting the committee's recommendations.

1.3 However, there is much more work to be done on updating Australia's copyright laws.

1.4 The measure implemented in this Bill was first proposed by the government on 14 February 2014 in a speech by the Attorney-General. The site-blocking measure was only a very small part of the law reform agenda sketched out by Senator Brandis, who promised that he would do nothing less than re-write the Copyright Act.

1.5 That Act, Senator Brandis said quite rightly, is 'overly long, unnecessarily complex, often comically outdated and all too often, in its administration, pointlessly bureaucratic'. Senator Brandis promised that he would conduct 'a thorough and exhaustive exercise in law reform' to remedy this.

1.6 Almost sixteen months later, there is no sign of such reform from the government.

1.7 The government has still not responded to the Australian Law Reform Commission's report on copyright in the digital economy, commissioned by the last Labor Government, which was provided to the current government in November 2013. Nor has there been any further action even on measures the government itself suggested, such as the extension of the safe harbour scheme endorsed by the government in its piracy discussion paper in July 2014.

1.8 Labor calls on the government to proceed with a broader reform of copyright law. It is certainly important to take action against piracy, but there is a clear need for much more sweeping reform to protect the interests of artists, industry and consumers alike.

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