AMENDED Question No: 73

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: NetAlert Filter Program

Senator Minchin asked:

1. Under the NetAlert free filter program, which closed on 31 December 2008, 163 000 filter licences were said to be licensed, but departmental advice given to the Minister's office was that 29 000 were still in use. How did the department arrive at the lesser figure of 26 000?
2. Was consideration given to the likelihood that originally provided filters are still in use on PC's around Australia but have not been recently updated?
3. How much of the Net Alert budget had been re-allocated to support the government ISP-level filtering policy?
4. What resources have been allocated to support existing licence holders of Net Alert filters?

Answer:

1. The National Filter Scheme provided people residing in Australia with access to free PC filters until 31 December 2008 (six months earlier than originally planned). The number of ongoing users of PC filters obtained under the National Filter Scheme varies over time as new users installed and used a filter, or as some ongoing users discontinue use of a filter.

2. All PC filters provided under the National Filter Scheme continue to receive automatic updates whenever the user connects to the internet and the filter is switched on. In accordance with their contracts, the PC filter vendors continue to be responsible for the provision of automatic PC filter updates and associated technical support to existing users until 30 June 2010 (as originally planned).

3. $188.7 million was allocated to the NetAlert-Protecting Australian Families Online (PAFO) program, including funding to the then Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts for ISP and PC based filtering. **$39.6** million was spent in 2006-07 and 2007-08:
   - $11.5 million was spent on the National Filter Scheme including PC filters, website and call centre;
   - $14.3 million was spent for the information campaign ; and
   - $13.8 million was allocated to the Australian Communications and Media Authority, the Australian Federal Police and the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.

   $125.8 million from 2008-09 to 2011-12 was reallocated to the Cyber-Safety initiative in the 2008-09 Budget. This included $44.5 million for filtering ($7.0 million for PC filtering and $37.5 million for ISP filtering).

4. In accordance with their contracts and as originally planned, PC filter vendors continue to be responsible for the provision of free technical support to existing users until 30 June 2010. Existing users can access this support by calling the Cybersafety helpline on 1800 880 176 (open 8am – 10pm, seven days per week in all Australian time zones), or by submitting a request for technical support via the NetAlert website (http://www.netalert.gov.au/) enquiries and feedback form.