



**On 10 May 2002, the ABA registered replacement codes of practice for the Internet industry, setting out the responsibilities of Internet service providers (ISPs) and Internet content hosts (ICHs) in relation to offensive and illegal content.**

# New codes of practice for Internet industry

The ABA has registered replacement codes of practice for the Internet industry, setting out the responsibilities of Internet service providers (ISPs) and Internet content hosts (ICHs) in relation to offensive and illegal Internet content.

The new codes were developed by the Internet Industry Association (IIA) and replace those originally registered by the ABA in December 1999. They reflect the outcome of a review of the codes conducted by the IIA during 2001.

While content codes 1 and 3 remain the same, content code 2 has been modified to require ISPs to provide users with an Internet filter software product or service at a cost that does not exceed the cost to the ISP of obtaining, providing, supporting and maintaining the software.

Professor David Flint, ABA Chairman, stated that the replacement codes would further enhance the effectiveness of the co-regulatory scheme. 'Effective codes of practice are critical to the success of a co-regulatory

scheme, and the IIA has worked to ensure that the codes continue to address community concerns about illegal and offensive Internet content, while not imposing unreasonable burdens on the Internet industry,' he said.

Many Internet users, particularly families with children, consider Internet filter software to be useful in helping to restrict access to illegal and offensive material, while also being aware of the limitations existing products. 'Filter software is not yet 100 per cent effective, but it remains a useful tool to be used in conjunction with household rules and parental supervision. The new code helps to ensure that users are not discouraged from taking up this software because of cost,' he said.

Professor Flint noted that the software also plays an important role in the ABA's complaint handling mechanism, which has received some 1200 complaints since 1 January 2000. The makers and distributors of such software are notified of overseas-hosted content that has been the subject of a

complaint and found to be prohibited.

The codes apply to all ISPs and ICHs, and the ABA may direct an ISP or ICH to comply with them. Failure to comply with such a direction may amount to an offence under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (the Act).

## Background

The ABA administers Australia's co-regulatory scheme for Internet content, established under Schedule 5 of the Act. The scheme commenced operation on 1 January 2000 and has three main components:

- the establishment of an ABA complaints hotline that provides a means for addressing community concerns about Internet content;
- the development of industry codes of practice by the Internet industry; and
- a range of support activities including community education, research and international liaison.

## Related links

Copies of the codes are available on the ABA's website at [www.aba.gov.au/internet/industry/codes/index.htm](http://www.aba.gov.au/internet/industry/codes/index.htm) and on the IIA's website at [www.iaa.net.au](http://www.iaa.net.au).

General information about the scheme can be found at [www.aba.gov.au/internet/](http://www.aba.gov.au/internet/).

Information about the effectiveness of Internet filter software can be found at [www.aba.gov.au/internet/research/filtering/index.htm](http://www.aba.gov.au/internet/research/filtering/index.htm).

A report of the ABA's research on Internet usage in Australian homes is available at [www.aba.gov.au/internet/research/home/index.htm](http://www.aba.gov.au/internet/research/home/index.htm).

Internet safety tips are available on the ABA's website for families at [www.cybersmartkids.com.au](http://www.cybersmartkids.com.au).

