



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Internet Pornography Filters Fact Sheet

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt— ALP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: All of us who are parents of young children are concerned at the ease with which young children access pornography and dangerous information, such as bomb making, on the Internet. Children throughout the State have ready access to the Internet. They can access the Internet in schools, at the local library and at home. And while the Internet is a great educational tool, it also contains a great deal of information that we would rather shield from our children.

Unfortunately, many Queensland parents feel they have little control over the content of material being accessed by their children while surfing the net. We all know how curious children are and, if left to their own devices, they are bound to access information that adults would want them to avoid. As adults, we have a responsibility to protect our children and shield them from harmful images and ideas. For instance, young children who might like to access the Spice Girls web site could be surprised when the search engine reveals just how many extra band members there are, and I am told that some of them are not so posh. Even looking up Walt Disney is fraught with problems. A search just on "waltdisney" will reveal several other sites where children can access sexually explicit photos just by clicking on an Internet address.

Since becoming the Minister with responsibility for censorship, I am constantly approached by parents who are concerned with their children's Internet usage. Because the technological generation gap makes many parents feel bewildered and powerless, I instructed the Office of Fair Trading to prepare a special publication, *Understanding the Basics of Internet Pornography Filters*, which I launch today. This brochure provides parents with information on how the Internet works and how they can prevent their child from accessing inappropriate material, including pornography.

While the most effective way to monitor your child's Internet use is through supervision, this may not always be possible and parents need vital information on how to monitor and control Internet use. The brochure outlines what parents should consider when purchasing an Internet filtering system and urges parents to get on the Internet and research the issues themselves.

Unfortunately, the Office of Fair Trading can almost predict that consumers will not take advantage of this wonderful new fact sheet until after they and their child have had an unpleasant Internet experience. Our records reveal that consumers often do not access consumer information until it is too late. However, this is an opportunity for every Queensland parent to access information that will help them prevent the damage and trauma associated with inappropriate Internet usage.

It is important for all parents to understand that taking back control and becoming informed about the Internet and Internet systems puts them in the driving seat. Informed parents are not victims of the technological generation gap; they are people who know how to help their children look for information on the net, know what a suspicious Internet site looks like and are comfortable spending a Sunday afternoon surfing the net with their child.

The brochure will be widely distributed by the Office of Fair Trading and it will also take pride of place on our departmental web site. I take this opportunity to implore parents across the State to read this publication. It is designed to help them protect and shield their children from inappropriate material on the worldwide web.