



## Australian Society of Authors

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February 26, 2007

Senator the Hon. Helen Coonan  
Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA NSW 2600

Dear Senator Coonan

### **Re: Communication Legislation (Content Services) Amendment Bill**

I write to express the concern of the ASA regarding the proposed Communication Legislation (Content Services) Amendment Bill.

As we understand it, the proposed legislative changes will require all material provided in *any medium* (hence, books, emails, blogs and online publications will be included) and produced by Australian businesses or entities that have a commercial interest in the content to be classified as to whether the content is suitable for general access, or should have access to it limited, or even be banned.

While we cannot imagine that the intention of the legislation is to do so, we believe that, if passed, this proposed amendment would bring about unprecedented censorship, prior to publication, on books, blogs and email newsletters. As a result of the legislation, the work of poets, cookery writers, literary authors, book illustrators and biographers, *inter alia*, will be subject to the same guidelines used to classify films and audio-visual content. We see this as an untenable position in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, nothing more than a reversion to the dark old days that saw such works as Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar*, Christina Stead's *Letty Fox, Her Luck* and D.H Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* made taboo for Australians. This would a truly massive attack on freedom of expression and the freedom to exchange ideas.

Further, the ASA was extremely disappointed to discover that the proposed legislation has been put forward with absolutely no consultation with us, despite the fact that we are a key organisation, in fact the peak professional body, representing literary creators in Australia.

We urge you to reconsider the proposed legislation. From our perspective it appears deeply flawed and we would be unable to support it in any way, shape or form.

Very best wishes  
Yours sincerely

Dr Jeremy Fisher  
*Executive Director*