

26<sup>th</sup> November 2003

## News release

---

Contact Michael Flood

02 6249 6221 (bh)

# New study highlights dangers of kids' access to internet porn

The results of a new study released today by the National Child Protection Clearinghouse provide the first concrete evidence of the link between children's exposure to internet pornography and sexual violence in Australia.

"This new study by the National Child Protection Clearinghouse is a wake-up call to Australian politicians", said Dr Michael Flood, Australia Institute Research Fellow and co-author of *Youth and Pornography in Australia*.

Earlier this year the Australia Institute found that three quarters of children had seen explicit pornography on the internet.

"When we released our report in March the response by many in the Government and Internet industry was 'so what?'. What we have now is concrete evidence that Australian children are being harmed by exposure to violent and extreme internet pornography.

"Children who regularly see violent pornography are more likely to be sexually aggressive and to believe that sexual abuse is normal," Dr Michael Flood said.

"While the existing system of Internet regulation was designed to restrict children's exposure to pornography, the fact is the majority of Australian children have no difficulty in viewing such material. And they are exposed to violent and extreme materials which it is illegal even for adults to see on video."

"Given the new evidence of the potential harm to children of exposure to violent pornography the Government must act urgently. As a first step they should require Australian Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to filter the material they distribute, stepping up protections for children while allowing adults access to X-rated content. The Government must also fund community education for parents and school curricula for children, to minimise children's exposure to violent pornography and lessen the harm of this exposure when it does occur."

"Access to the internet, and access to quality information about sexuality and relationships, are important for the development of Australian children. However, the Australian Government has a vital role to play in ensuring that children can gain the benefits of the internet without being exposed to harmful content."