

Legislation supports Australian authors and artists

The Copyright Agency | Viscopy welcomes the Government's new legislation targeting overseas websites whose main purpose is to allow people to steal creative works.

CEO of the Copyright Agency | Viscopy, Murray St Leger, says "We applaud both the major parties' support for the legislation to shut down these sites which facilitate massive online theft at the expense of creators. Online theft hurts Australian writers, visual artists, photographers, journalists and publishers."

A similar mechanism to block websites was recently granted to the British Publishers Association to take down infringing sites distributing millions of ebooks.

"These sites earn money for themselves through referral fees and advertising but the content creators earn nothing.

"It's not just the performing arts industries, such as film and music, that are hurt by online theft. In some book genres, online theft is eliminating opportunities for emerging authors to get published in Australia."

The average annual income for authors in Australia dropped from \$23,000 a year in 2001 to \$11,100 in 2008.

"Being even a successful author can be a struggle," St Leger says.

"For example, Sonya Hartnett, who has been shortlisted three times for the Miles Franklin Award (to be announced tonight), says she wrote 'for years and years and years before I was able to give up working at a bookshop and I was one of the extremely lucky ones. It's true you don't do it for the money because you can't do it for the money and I guess you write in order to be read, but if it's all free, then how do you eat? It's nearly impossible for anyone to survive now as a writer, let alone in ten years' time'."

"Consider too, that according to a 2012 study by UMR, 47% of online pirates themselves thought site blocking was a good idea.

"In other words a large number of online thieves themselves think stopping their habit is a good idea."

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About the Copyright Agency | Viscopy

The Copyright Agency | Viscopy connects users and creators of content, providing licences for the use of copyright material such as text, images, art and survey plans. We manage the educational and government copying licences for the use of text and images, as well as the resale royalty scheme for artists (by Government appointment). Our members include writers, artists, surveyors and publishers. Membership is free. www.copyright.com.au