

Jive eXchange

That Ugly Word!

I have never conducted a study in this regard, but I would hasten to guess that there is innate aversion in all of us at being told what to do that starts from a very young age. With many obvious things when we were young like getting in the car with strangers, we eventually appreciate it is for our own good that our parents drum this into us. In terms of something like smoking, we eventually appreciate why it we were probably warned but as move into adulthood it becomes our responsibility to make an informed choice. However there are some aspects of our society that have never been nor will they ever be so definitive and this brings me to that ugly word, Censorship.

One parent will introduce their child to the concept of sex or homosexuality in primary school where as another might wait till the teenage years or post puberty to discuss the topic. While many individuals might consider profanity used on television or the media abhorrent, others see it as a portrayal of society at large and are totally comfortable with it. Similarly we all have different views politically as to how much Government should be involved in our lives, what tax rates should be, who should pay for health and education and the list goes on and on and the spectrum of views span from one extreme to other. Now with all this diversity in our society and all these different moral and ethical standards, how can we make legislation banning certain materials in this regard because a minority find it offensive. Of course, many pipe up at this point and say well what about things like child pornography, slanderous material about a person or depictions of extremely violent or cruel acts in the media and isn't censorship good in that regard.

Why I am discussing this topic? Well after extensive lobbying by a Tasmanian Liberal Senator a trial which will begin in a couple of months, applies a filter at the Internet Service Provider restricting the available content that an Internet user is able to access in regards to things like sex, violence, etc. Currently it is a voluntary trial but the Senator hopes it goes Australia wide soon with the view that it eventually become mandatory for every Internet Service Provider in the country.

Now we come back to the earlier discussion, how can one person's moral code be forcibly applied to another. This would be akin to a one politician stating just because I am of this religion, you must all be too. We live in a free society and we are also in a great enlightened Information Age whereby anybody has very easy and cheap access to any information the world over. Thus collectively we are a more knowledgeable group and as history has shown the greatest, happiest and wealthiest societies were the ones where individuals regardless of circumstance had a chance to prosper in a chosen endeavour. There are already criminal laws, and rightly so, to deal with people who exploit children, publish slander, etc. so the argument for censorship falls short in that regard. If censorship is required at all, it is for those who choose to deprive society at large for their own personal crusade.

Chris Jacob is a director of Jive eXchange (www.ctsbayside.com.au)