

HOW TO MAKE A SUBMISSION

To participate in this consultation, you need to answer the question:

Should the Australian National Classification Scheme include an R 18+ classification category for computer games?

Submissions can be sent by email in Word format without embedded images. Submissions can also be posted or faxed. You are also encouraged to keep any commentary short and succinct.

Unless you clearly request confidentiality, **submissions are public documents** and may be accessed by any member of the public, may be published on a website and quoted in further review papers. If you do not want your submission to be published, or you would like to request anonymity, you must clearly request this in your submission.

Submissions must be received by **28 February 2010**. Submissions received after this date may not be able to be considered.

Submissions should be sent to:

Email: classificationreview@ag.gov.au
Fax: 02 6141 3488
Post: Classification Review
Attorney-General's Department
3 -5 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600

TEMPLATE FOR MAKING SUBMISSIONS

PERSONAL INFORMATION¹:

Name: TELSTRA CORPORATION

Email address:* n/a

Gender:* n/a

Street Address:* n/a

State/Postcode:* n/a

Country of Residence:* n/a

Age range:* n/a

*Do you play computer or video games?** n/a

(Note: fields marked * are mandatory fields)

Please direct any questions about this submission to:

**Ivan Cook
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Sydney 2000
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THE QUESTION

Should the Australian National Classification Scheme include an R18+ classification category for computer games?

YES

¹ Unless you clearly request confidentiality, **submissions are public documents** and may be accessed by any member of the public, may be published on the website and quoted in further review papers. If you do not want your submission to be published, or you would like to request anonymity, you must clearly request this is your submission.

ARGUMENTS

To help us understand your reasons for your answer, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following arguments:

- ***Adults should not be prevented from playing R 18+ level computer games simply because they are unsuitable for minors***
1) strongly disagree — 2) disagree — 3) do not know — 4) agree — 5) strongly agree
- ***The R 18+ classification category sends a clear, unambiguous message to parents that the game material is unsuitable for minors***
1) strongly disagree — 2) disagree — 3) do not know — 4) agree — 5) strongly agree
- ***Consistent classification categories for films and computer games are easier to understand***
1) strongly disagree — 2) disagree — 3) do not know — 4) agree — 5) strongly agree
- ***A new classification will supplement technological controls on minors' access to age-inappropriate computer games***
1) strongly disagree — 2) disagree — 3) do not know — 4) agree — 5) strongly agree
- ***Comparable classification systems internationally have an adult rating for computer games - international parity is desirable***
1) strongly disagree — 2) disagree — 3) do not know — 4) agree — 5) strongly agree
- ***Consumers access games which would be R 18+ illegally – it would be better if they were legally available with appropriate restrictions***
1) strongly disagree — 2) disagree — 3) do not know — 4) agree — 5) strongly agree
- ***Computer games should be treated differently from films given the specific, negative effects of interactivity on players, particularly their participation in violent and aggressive content.***
1) strongly disagree — 2) disagree — 3) do not know — 4) agree — 5) strongly agree
- ***It would be difficult for parents to enforce age restrictions for computer games.***
1) strongly disagree — 2) disagree — 3) do not know — 4) agree — 5) strongly agree
- ***Minors would be more likely to be exposed to computer games that are unsuitable for them.***
1) strongly disagree — 2) disagree — 3) do not know — 4) agree — 5) strongly agree

- ***An R 18+ for computer games would exacerbate problems associated with access to high level material in Indigenous communities and by other non-English speaking people***

1) ~~strongly disagree~~ 2) ~~disagree~~ 3) do not know 4) ~~agree~~ 5) ~~strongly agree~~

- ***There is no demonstrated need to change existing restrictions.***

1) ~~strongly disagree~~ 2) ~~disagree~~ 3) ~~do not know~~ 4) ~~agree~~ 5) ~~strongly agree~~

Comments (Optional - up to 250 words)

Telstra supports the introduction of an R18+ classification for computer games because it will align the classification regimes for games and films. Supported by a community education program, alignment will assist parents to choose age-appropriate material for their children. It will also reduce the incentives for adults to source unregulated R18+ games directly from overseas.

Aligning the classification regimes for games and films, including regulation of the display and advertising of R18+ content, will make it easier for parents and carers to assess the nature of gaming content by using their existing knowledge of film classification. With an R18+ rating in place, parents who are unfamiliar with computer games will have greater peace of mind about the choices they make for their children. Parents will also be better able to use the family setting on their console (where available) to filter content which they deem inappropriate. To ensure that the positive effects of alignment are fully realised it should be supported by a community education program. The extent to which interactive content affects different groups of users differently from passive content should be judged and accounted for within an aligned classification process based on continuing research.

Telstra supports the refused classification of content that is clearly inappropriate for sale. However, we recognise that the bulk of game-players in Australia are adults capable of making their own decisions about whether to play games with an R18+ rating. According to research conducted at Bond University, the average age of game-players in Australia is 30, and more than half of all players are at least 26 years old. The current regime, which refuses classification to any game that exceeds the MA15+ rating, merely encourages adult players to source from overseas games that would otherwise be classified R18+ in Australia and could therefore be sold here.