

29 FEB 2010

THE OLDER GAMERS

5 Emmerson Lane
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www.theoldergamers.com

February 21, 2010

Dear Sir or Madam,

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

As the representative and founder of the computer and video Games community known as "The Older Gamers" (TOG) I would like to provide feedback on the discussion paper related to the introduction of an R18+ classification for computer and video games in Australia on behalf of the TOG community.

The Older Gamers

- Is a community of people aged 25 years and over, many of whom are parents;
- people from all walks of life and professions that enjoy games;
- has existed for over 6 years;
- has 40,251 members and time of writing and growing daily;
- has its roots in Australia and therefore largely consists of AU based members; and
- over 95% of our members support the introduction of an R18+ classification for video games.

Our members

- Are aware of the existence of mature content in games;
- monitor their children's exposure to video games;
- are gamers themselves and have grown up with video games as entertainment; and
- are able to make informed decisions on content exposure for themselves and their children.

The Classification Board's role

We believe the Classification Boards role is:

- **inform and educate** the population in the nature of the content that is made available to them; and
- provide a classification system that is consistent across all forms of media.

We strongly disagree with the current double standard, where one type of content can be seen in movies or read in books but cannot be played in a game. We also disagree with the refusal of classification of what is otherwise completely legal content for adults.

Current Classification system

We consider to be flawed for the following reasons:

- An increasing amount of titles are RC in Australia due to the lack of the R18;
- there is no consistency in how the rules are interpreted and applied;
- treats computer games as a form of entertainment that is enjoyed by no persons over 15 years of age;
- disempowers parents and adults alike as the government makes the decision on the content available to our children and us for us;
- censorship decisions are made through a system that is fundamentally undemocratic when it comes to deciding on the type of content to be censored and allow for a bias based on personal values rather than the values of society; and
- reasons for opposing the introduction of an R18+ classification are not backed up by any solid evidence, merely opinion and assumption which should not be used to justify the extent of censorship currently forced upon computer games.

Australia cannot afford to ban popular game titles that are setting records for revenue in the entertainment industry. As a result, games are shoehorned into a less advisable classification.

A correct and consistent classification system

Our views of a correct and consistent classification system to be beneficial would be:

- based on the rating provided by the classification board, parents can make an **informed and educated decision** about the suitability of games for their children;
- provide parents with the ability to decide for their children what entertainment they feel comfortable exposing them to;
- R18+ category will help parents make these decisions responsibly;
- allow for more appropriate classification for games currently rated as M15+;
- provide rating consistency alongside other forms of media; and
- provide parents with the ability to use parental controls built into today's technology more correctly and confidently.

Final Thoughts

We as adult gamers are **not** advocating more access to "adult games" by minors, but in fact the opposite. We are arguing that minors should have **less** access to "adult games" by classifying all games appropriately and consistently (compared to other forms of media)

I would like to address the “adult games” topic that is so often taken out of context. The word **adult** is almost becoming a dirty word if associated with any form of entertainment nowadays.

The reality is that adult gamers whom simply enjoy immersing themselves in a type of entertainment that is mature in its content does not mean that these adults somehow desire excessive violence, sexual content or drug use. **“Mature topics are no less appropriate in video games than they are in film, books, or television.”** Playing a violent video game, accepting violence as a way of entertainment does not mean that we condone these as real life activities. We as adult gamers will still support the refusal of classifying games that incite sexual violence for example. Banning and censoring things that could possibly harm children must be done with common sense.

I would also like to quote the “National Classification Principals”:

*“Adults should be able to read, see and hear what they want”
“Minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them”*

An R18 rating is precisely what will accommodate both principals!

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully,



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