



WATCH ON CENSORSHIP

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Classification Review
Attorney-General's Department

Email: classificationreview@ag.gov.au

Re: R18+ Classification for Computer Games - Public Consultation

Watch on Censorship Inc ("WOC") is a community organisation with the goal of protecting and promoting the rights of adult Australians to freedom of speech and expression in all media.

WOC makes the following submission in response to the Government's R18+ Classification for Computer Games - Public Consultation

THE QUESTION

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

YES

ARGUMENTS

Watch On Censorship (WOC) submits that there is little to need for yet another inquiry as to whether there is community support for R18+ Games Classification as this issue is already well settled. There have been a number of review of films and computer games Classification and guidelines. These inquiries have found that there was strong community support for an R18+ rating.

see http://www.ema.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/Classificationpolicy_Research

In particular WOC refers to Review of the Classification Guidelines for Films and Computer Games – 8 March 2002 which states in part:

"Considerable volume was created in the body of submissions supporting an "R" (*sic for Computer Games*) classification by the online petition of 637 individuals"

"It is recommended that the review process proceed in developing a consistent set of classification symbols and categories, incorporating adequate and informative age-related categories; certainly including the "G8" classification for film and the "R" classification for computer games".

The Government seems to have relied upon a lack of unanimity on this issue within the Standing Committee of Attorneys General. WOC submits that this is not any basis to reject or to delay introduction of an R18+ Classification for Computer Games. Despite there being only a minority of Censorship Ministers/Attorneys General on the Standing

Committee who supported it, the Federal Government enacted Section 9A of the the Classification Act in 2007 extending the breadth of RC outside of the Code and Guidelines.

WOC submits that the absence of an R18+ Classification for Computer Games fails to properly apply the National Classification Code.

Classification decisions are required to give effect to the following principles which are set out in the Code:

- a. adults should be able to read, hear and see what they want
- b. minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them

By not having an R18+ Classification for Games the Code fails to meet its own requirement. It should be up to a Classification *decision* based on the Guidelines to determine whether a Computer Game is suitable for an adult or a child. That process of decision is currently denied adults in Australia.

WOC submits that the lack of an R18+ Classification is arguably in breach of the human right to freedom of expression (including "freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice") protected by Art. 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which the Australian government has acceded.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Harmon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Watch On Censorship Inc
Public Officer