

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: Natasha Diana Cowan

Email address*: [Personal details omitted]

Gender*: Female

Street Address*: [Personal details omitted]

State/Postcode*: South Australia, 5162

Country of Residence*: Australia

Age range*: under 18/ 18-24/ 25-34/35-44/ 45-54/55-64/ 65+

Do you play computer or video games?* yes no

How frequently do you play?

Daily Weekly Fortnightly Monthly Other.....

How long do you play in an average session?

0-15minutes 15-30 minutes 30-60mins 1-2 hours 2+ hours

(Note: fields marked * are mandatory fields)

THE QUESTION

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

NO

YES

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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)

In the summary of key arguments, the NCS aim is to “strike a balance between allowing adults to be free to read, hear and see what they want and community concerns about depictions that condone or incite violence” and that “minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them”.

While the arguments against an R18+ rating for videogames provides a moral argument, some rebuttal is needed. On the issues of inciting aggression in gamers, the cited article of Anderson & Gentile (2008) reported increased short-term aggression and arousal from all media violence, not just video games, and the only longitudinal study refers to aggression long term in 3rd and 5th grader children, not adults. Greater vigilance and responsibility must be adopted to limit minor’s access to all (incl. M & MA15+) violent media.

The risk that minors access the R18+ material must address WHY this may happen: due to parental fault, retailers fault or access to the material online. All three require greater vigilance and responsibility by parents, guardians and retailers, and a more clear NCS (including R18+ labeling) would facilitate this, as well as penalties for the sale of prohibited material to minors. Regarding indigenous and non-English speaking peoples, greater community wide education is needed. Page 8 refers to “no demonstrated practical need” of R18+ classification, but the sale of R18+ games in the vague M & MA15+ categories is clearly a practical need for a more stringent classification, to assist parents and retailers to protect minors from unwanted content.