Community attitudes to higher level media content
Community and Reference Group Forums conducted for the Australian Law Reform Commission

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urbis

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Urbis's Social Policy team has received ISO 20252 Certification
for the provision of social policy research and evaluation, social planning, community
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLES:

Executive Summary

In order to better inform itself of community standards towards classifiable media content, the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) commissioned Urbis to conduct a series of forums to assess community attitudes to the content which fall within higher-level classification categories. This involved recruiting participants for a one-day event where they would view and respond to content that ranged from MA 15+ material to material that is currently Refused Classification (RC) under Australian classification guidelines.

Four forums were conducted over October-November 2011. Two of these involved community participants and two involved stakeholder representatives and others with an interest in the classification field. The community group (CG) forums involved 30 participants, while the reference group (RG) forums involved 28 participants. The findings from the two community group forums were compared to the findings from the two Reference Group (RG) forums in order to obtain an assessment of how closely evaluations of content correlated within the framework of the prototype methodology.

The primary aim of this study was to develop and test a prototype methodology to determine broader community standards with regards to classifiable media content, including films, computer games, television programs and online content. The view was taken that findings from public submissions commenting on the National Classification Scheme would be usefully augmented by an empirical study that engaged a broad cross-section of the community with actual relevant content across classification categories (themes; sex; nudity; violence; drug use) and across media platforms.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Responses between the community groups and the reference groups were broadly comparable.** There was a high degree of consistency between the opinions of CG and RG participants in relation to the degree of offence taken to the material found to be most offensive and least offensive, as well as considerable agreement about whether particular material should be banned or restricted. This was despite the RG being comprised of people who in a number of cases were selected on the basis of known strong views on the current classification scheme, in contrast to the more randomised selection of community participants.

- **The content that registered the highest levels of offence included both scripted drama and material involving actual criminal activity.** The two items of content that registered the highest level of offence with both the community groups and the reference groups were a scene from the film *A Serbian Film* and a recorded online solicitation of a child for apparently sexual purposes.

- **The content that registered the lowest levels of offence included material involving drug use and graffiti.** Both the community groups and the reference groups viewed the items of content depicting drug use (both fictional and real) to be the least offensive and impactful. There was also a view among both CG and RG participants that material depicting graffiti activity was low impact, and should not be banned from public viewing.

- **Most of the screened violent material from computer games was not considered to be offensive.** In three of the four pieces of violent and/or sexual computer game material screened, a majority of both the CGs and the RGs found the material not to be offensive.

- **Responses to explicit sex and fetish material were broadly similar between the two groups, and varied according to the nature of the material.** Both the CGs and the RGs had varying responses to the explicit sex and fetish material that was shown based on the item in question, but their responses to each item were broadly similar. In particular, the greatest level of offense was registered towards material where some degree of coercion may have been implied.

- **A majority of participants in both groups found terrorism material offensive.** A majority in both the CGs and RGs found material promoting acts of terrorism to be offensive. Although opinions initially varied as to whether it should be banned, after further group discussion there were considerably more of the opinion that this content should be banned.

A detailed analysis of the findings is provided in the Full Report. A table of the six most offensive and least offensive forms of content shown is provided on page 60 of the report.

METHODOLOGY

A detailed discussion of the research methodology is provided in Section 2 of this report. This research study was qualitative in nature, involving consultations with a total of 58 participants across four forums.

Participants were recruited from across Australia, with a sampling methodology used for the community groups to ensure their representativeness of the broader community. The final sample of 40 community participants who formed the basis of the two CGs of 15, were selected from more than 1,000 applicants, who responded to newspaper advertisements placed by the ALRC throughout Australia, as well as notification through the Web or social media. Selection criteria used included demographic characteristics (gender, age, parental status), occupation, representation of all States and Territories, metropolitan, regional and rural representation, and attitudinal indicators nominated by applicants.

The 28 RG participants were recruited by the ALRC on the basis of people who were representative of a community group or advocacy organisation, people who have publicly engaged with classification issues, people representing a relevant industry sector, or have established experience or academic expertise in matters related to media classification and media audiences.

The forums were conducted at the Attorney-General's Department Classification Branch in Sydney and lasted around 6.5 hours. Material across the classification categories and across media platforms was shown to participants, who responded using coloured cards (modelled on 'traffic lights') to indicate offense, as well as completion of a survey instrument and small group discussions of the content. Participants were also asked whether the discussion had caused them to change their opinions on banning or restricting the material both of which were recorded on the survey questionnaire.

Participants were informed prior to involvement in the groups about the confronting and possibly offensive nature of the material that would be shown and that it would include RC material. Counsellors also provided a briefing to participants before the event and at its conclusion. Participants were also advised about the availability of post-forum counselling services available to them. Although the forums involved the screening of RC material, it was decided to exclude screening material that may have generated the highest levels of risk, such as child abuse material or abhorrent content.

The study was not an assessment of classification decisions made by the Classification Board or any other entity. Participants were not provided with information on classification guidelines in advance as the intention was not to "test" material against classification decisions. Rather, the purpose of the study was to gauge responses to particular items of content in terms of offence and potential impact, shown as short excerpts in many cases from larger forms of media content (for example films, television programs, computer games and online content). As a result, the findings of the study should not be viewed alongside classification decisions for the content when it was assessed by the Board or any other approved classifier, as this would give a misleading impression.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

The majority of participants expressed a positive view to the flow of proceedings and of content presented throughout the day. They felt that the forums had been well organised and executed. The view was also expressed that the grouping of like material had contributed to their ability to focus attention in one area at a time, which helped facilitate the overall process of working through the great variety of content.

A minority did express concern with the term 'offensive' questioning whether it was the most appropriate term to capture their responses to the content shown. Other suggestions by participants included words like 'confronting', 'alarming' or 'troubling'. A mix of the 'traffic lights' and a more detailed survey instrument were used, and future studies may wish to further consider how best to gauge participant responses to such media content.

There was also some criticism of the 'traffic light' metaphor and flash card methodology from a small minority of participants, whereas the majority indicated in response that they understood that it was a means to distinguish between an 'immediate' and a 'considered' response. On balance the 'traffic light'

did facilitate an immediate (right brain) response and was therefore purposeful. Some participants also commented on how this helped them formulate a more considered (left brain) response.

Some also expressed concern about the inability to view certain content relating to minors. That is, in those instances where content was described (i.e. read out), some found it difficult to obtain a true perspective of the context. Concern was also expressed about the perceived 'sanitising' of such content, which some felt was at odds with the purpose of the forums. Given the risk associated with showing people higher-level media content of types that they may never have previously seen – particularly in the RC category – some caution was exercised in exposure to material that would be potentially at the highest levels of offense or impact.

METHODOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

The prototype methodology developed for conducting community forums to help determine community standards with regards to classification categories would appear to have been effective in so far as the opinions of community participants very closely approximate those of the RG participants.

However, we would strongly recommend that any future forums be recruited via a professional recruitment organisation as opposed to recruiting participants from national newspaper advertisements. This would help to eliminate any possible 'opinion' bias occurring.

Acronyms

ALRC	Australian Law Reform Commission
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CG	Community Groups
MA 15+	Mature Accompanied – Material classified MA 15+ is considered unsuitable for persons under 15 years of age. It is a legally restricted category
R 18+	Restricted - A classification category that only applies to films. Material classified R 18+ is legally restricted to adults.
RC	Refused Classification
RG	Reference Groups

1   Background and key aims

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) contracted Urbis to develop a prototype methodology to determine broader community standards with regards to content in films, computer games and publications. As part of the development of this prototype methodology, Urbis conducted four forums to test this methodology and assess community standards in relation to the content permissible in certain higher-level classification categories for media content.

1.1   PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Key objectives of this project are:

- to develop and test a methodology for future research to determine community standards in relation to content in films, computer games and publications

- to conduct community forums to ascertain the type of content that may be permissible in higher level classification categories (MA 15+ and above, including the RC category).

It is important to note that the focus of the study is participants' views on specific higher level classification category **content**, and not their perspectives on classification categories themselves, nor was this exercise a Community Assessment Panel, where community members were asked to express a view using classification decision-making tools. Neither was the purpose to ascertain their views on the debates regarding media platforms and media convergence in the digital age.

Further detail on the National Classification Scheme Review can be found in Appendix E.

1.2   THIS DOCUMENT

This document provides an overview of the methodology and the key findings from the work carried out.

2 Development of a methodology

2.1 FORMAT OF THE COMMMUNITY FORUMS

Four community forums were held, each lasting a full day (from 10.00 -16.30).

Two community forums were conducted with 15 participants each (30 in total) who were selected to be representative of a broad cross section of the Australian community. These groups are referred to in the study as the Community Groups (CG).

Two of the forums were conducted with representative stakeholders invited by the ALRC (28 participants). These included representatives of organisations with an interest in the media and/or classification; academics; and government representatives. These groups are referred to in the study as the Reference Groups (RG).

2.2 THE PROCESS OF SELECTING PARTICIPANTS FOR THE COMMUNITY FORUMS

The first step in the process of selecting participants for the community forums was undertaken by the ALRC. This entailed running an advertisement seeking interest from members of the community to participate in the project. The advertisement was placed in national newspapers circulating in all States and Territories. The invitation noted that the pilot would consist of two focus groups of 15 adults each, who would represent 'a broad cross section of the Australian community'.[1]

On the basis of this invitation, more than 1,000 responses were received by the ALRC. The ALRC selected 115 of these as 'shortlisted' respondents, from which Urbis made the final selection. The selection process followed a pre-determined methodology discussed in more detail below.

In order to ensure that the desired 30 participants were present at the community forums, 40 participants were selected and invited, representing around one-third of the 115 ALRC-shortlisted participants. This was intended to accommodate late cancellations or unforseen impediments to participants attending the Sydney-based forums from various locations in the country.

The key consideration in the development of the sampling methodology for the recruitment of the community forums was to achieve a balance of responses from participants that fairly represents the broad spectrum of community opinions. To help achieve this, it was considered important to have as wide a mix of participants as possible on the basis of the following criteria:

- gender (as even as possible representation of men and women)

- age (spread of ages above 18 represented)

- State/Territory and metropolitan/regional (national representativeness)

- parental status (including non-parents and parents with children of various ages)

- varied career and labour market backgrounds

- representation of people from diverse communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] backgrounds)

- community involvement[2]

- identification of any possible bias[3].

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[1] ALRC (2011). *Classification Review: ALRC seeks volunteers for focus groups*, http://www.alrc.gov.au/focusgroups, accessed October 2011.

[2] Examples of community involvement may include member of community (precinct) action group, voluntary work for registered charities, provision of voluntary service to young people eg scouts, girl guides, provision of voluntary service to hospital/local health services or provision of voluntary care eg carer respite.

A description of the participants in the community forums, using the criteria above, is provided in Appendix C. Drawing from this summary (N=30):

- Sex: Male – 16; female – 14

- State/Territory: NSW – 8; Victoria – 5; Queensland – 4; WA – 4; SA – 3; Tas – 3; ACT – 2; NT – 1

- Metropolitan – 19; regional/rural – 11

- Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander – 1; CALD – 4

- People with children – 17; people with no children – 13

2.3   THE PROCESS OF SELECTING PARTICIPANTS FOR THE REFERENCE GROUP

In determining the participants for the reference group, considerations that were applied included:

- profile as an individual or representative of an advocacy organisation in relation to classification issues

- established experience in classification decision-making (eg as an industry classifier) or experience in a legal or policing area of classification

- academic expertise in fields related to media audience research or classification laws and guidelines; and engagement with relevant media and related industries.

A suitable representation based on gender, age and geographical location was also sought.

The names of people participating in the two reference group forums and the organisations represented are shown in Appendix D.

2.4   METHODOLOGY AND PROCESSES ADOPTED IN THE FORUMS

The forums, conducted at the offices of the Attorney-General's Department Classification Branch in Sydney, took the following form:

- An overall introduction was provided, including a supportive talk given by a counsellor to assist participants to prepare for possible reactions to the material they were to watch.

- Pre-briefing on the way the forums would be conducted, including:

  – that the material would be grouped into six categories (themes, sex and nudity, violence, drugs explicit sex and fetishes, and computer games)

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[3] Since the reference group (as described by the ALRC) specifically draws on Australians who are recognised participants in the debates on censorship (including academics and lobbyists), the aim was to select participants to the community forums that would avoid such potential bias or 'voice' altogether ie to aim for a sample of 'ordinary' Australians who do not have any vested interests in the topic. The sampling aim was therefore to have a group of participants that represented as accurately as possible the spectrum of the Australian population. There is a range of affiliations or interests that could serve as biases for the group participants; not all of these affiliations will be able to be accessed through self-reporting. These sources of bias may include:

- lobby group affiliation (eg pro- or anti- censorship)

- religious affiliation (at the lobbying level)

- academic affiliation

- media affiliation (professional, advisory)

- government or regulatory.

- that the group as a whole would be divided into two smaller groups to enable focused discussion on the material

- that a regular process would be followed throughout the workshop (explained in greater detail below)

- that tea breaks and lunch breaks would be interspersed throughout the day, and any person would be free to 'opt out' if they felt that they needed to.

- Category handling of the material, involving the following principle steps:

  - brief introduction to the content by a representative from the Classification Board

  - showing footage from films, computer games and a publication or reading of a description of the material to be considered

  - participants provide immediate response using coloured 'traffic light' cards, where red=*'I found this content offensive'*; green=*'I did not find this content offensive'*; amber= *'I am unsure whether I found this content offensive or not'*

  - completion of first eight questions on each category on the questionnaire (see Appendix A)

  - the above continued until all material in the 'theme' was covered, then participants separated into two sub-groups for a 30-40 minute facilitated discussion of the material (see Appendix B)

  - completion of questions nine and ten on each segment (to reflect any possible changes that might have occurred as a consequence of the small group discussion

  - return to the main forum to repeat the process for each of the themes

  - Classification decision-making tools such as the criteria in the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games Act) 1995,* The National Classification Code and the classification guidelines were not used in the forums.

- Final gathering in the main forum with a post-viewing talk by the counsellor, and to give participants an opportunity to provide feedback on methodology and/or the material shown.

2.5   DATA ANALYSIS

Upon completion of the forums, the data from the participant questionnaires were entered into an Excel spread sheet to facilitate the data analysis. The data analysis compared the views of community participants to those of the reference group in order to determine the degree of correlation. The research team analysed and synthesised the qualitative responses to the open questions in the questionnaire and the open discussion recorded in order to provide important context to help understand participants' views.

Analysis and reporting focused on the outcomes from the forums from the perspective of what material was offensive, should be banned or restricted in whichever media format, and what it should be restricted to in terms of access and the reasons for this.

The findings from the forums are used to refine a methodology for possible use in further research that might be held to determine broader community standards with regards to content in films, computer games and publications.

3 Research findings

The research findings are presented in the following sections, grouped into the six themes:

- themes[4]

- sex and nudity

- violence

- drugs

- explicit sex and fetishes

- computer games.

Each is discussed in turn below.

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE TABLE FORMAT

The findings for each theme are presented in a table format structured as follows:

- Column 1 – description of the material context that was read out to participants
- Column 2 – data recording participants' personal responses, comparing community groups (CG) to the Reference Groups (RG)
- Column 3 – detailed findings from a combination of the survey responses and group discussions broken down into three sections:

  - Offense (Was any of this content offensive? If yes – which aspect and why was it offensive?) relating to the degree of offense immediately having viewed the material

  - Impact (What was most impactful about the content viewed?) relating to the degree of impact that the material has on participants

  - Banned/restricted (Should any of this content be banned? Why do you say that? Should minors be able to access any of this content?) relating to whether the material should be banned or restricted.

There is further detail on each piece of content after the relevant table.

Quotes from respondents are noted in italics throughout the report.

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[4] Themes within the Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games is defined as social issues such as crime, suicide, drug and alcohol dependency, death, serious illness, family breakdown and racism.

3.1.1   THEMES

TABLE 1 – DEPICTIONS OF VANDALISM

1. DEPICTIONS OF VANDALISM IN A SHORT FILM	
DESCRIPTION	**PERSONAL RESPONSE[5]**
The footage is of masked people, and others whose faces have been strategically blurred, vandalising trains in Australian cities. The footage went for two minutes. There is no commentary or explanation for what is being shown. The only audio is a soundtrack.	**Community Groups** 4 Yes, offensive 1 Unsure 25 No, not offensive **Reference Groups** 0 Yes, offensive 1 Unsure 27 No, not offensive

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[5] Each participant's immediate personal response was indicated by raising one of three cards immediately after the viewing of the footage and then recording this response in the questionnaire. Based on the metaphor of the traffic light, a red card implies *'yes, this content is offensive to me'*, a yellow card implies '*I'm unsure whether the content is offensive or not to me'* and a green card implies *'no, the content is not offensive to me'*.
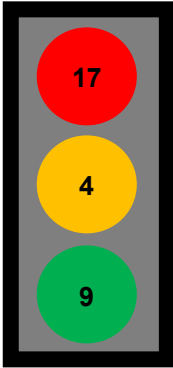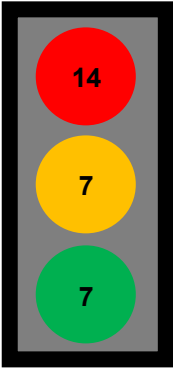
DEPICTIONS OF VANDALISM – DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned or restricted?
▪ The material was regarded by very few of the community participants as 'offensive'. Instead, the footage was described as 'stupid', 'silly', 'mischievous' and 'pointless'. ▪ Footage was described as annoying and 'a waste'. ▪ There were no major differences between the community groups (CG) and reference groups (RG), although discussion in the RG was more likely to focus on the criminality of the behaviour depicted ▪ It was mentioned that it would be offensive to a parent who had lost a child who had died while vandalising a train.	▪ The material was generally not regarded as being impactful to themselves and there were no major differences between the RG and CG participants in this regard. ▪ It was acknowledged that production qualities (especially the use of music and editing) could make the behaviour displayed in the footage attractive, to especially young men. ▪ The lack of commentary or the provision of a context may contribute to a sense of confusion for the viewer. There was discussion over whether the footage is simply describing what's going on, without casting judgment.	▪ The dominant view was that the material should not be banned but be restricted to PG. Some questioned whether restricting it would make any difference. ▪ There was a minority view in both CG and RG that it should be banned since it might glamorise and encourage illegal behaviour and also that the behaviour has a ripple effect on other people (e.g. train drivers). ▪ No major differences between the RG. ▪ There was support for a view that material should not be age restricted, since it could be used as an educational tool for young people to show them what not to do. ▪ There was a minority view that it should be banned, since such footage would encourage especially young males (including adults 28-30), driven by one-upmanship, to tag and give them information for how to do it

Discussion in the small groups focused particularly on the effects of such material on young people, including the impact on the developing brain. However, as noted above, there were differing views as to whether the material encouraged illegal and dangerous behaviour, or whether it could serve as a warning to young people not to engage in such behaviour. There was a mention that other similar films, for instance Trainspotting, did not result in an increase in graffiti, so there was doubt this one could have such an effect. This also influenced respondents' views as to whether the material should be age restricted. This discussion did not seem to alter the opinions of the few participants who would seek to have the material banned.

Amongst RG respondents, the footage engendered discussion about film genres that highlight extreme activities and civil disobedience, for instance other extreme sports and artists expressing unpopular views. There was a question about whether one would *'throw the baby out with the bathwater'* if one were to ban or restrict any material of this kind. The counter viewpoint was that its intent was to glorify illegal and dangerous behaviour and that ultimately the footage would be making money out of the proceeds of crime, i.e. that this was enough legal justification for banning the material. In short, the material appeared to encourage debate on the interactions between legislation pertaining to footage of illegal material and the portrayed activities themselves.

TABLE 2 – ONLINE MAGAZINE

2. ONLINE MAGAZINE

DESCRIPTION	PERSONAL RESPONSE	

	Community Groups	Reference Groups

A few example pages were shown from a magazine by a religious terrorist group. The magazine consists of 61 pages containing a variety of activity related to belonging to the movement. Example pages include:

- Text that states "we ask our brothers there to punish the Indonesian Government with swift terror for giving in to international pressure" in reference to the imprisonment of Abu Bakr Bashir.

- A six page article describing in detailed steps the "making of Acetone Peroxide". These steps include detailed instructions, measurements, materials, stills and procurement details. Acetone Peroxide is described as "a very popular explosive because it is easy to manufacture and its ingredients are widely available". The article reads "Many of the bombers in Palestine use acetone peroxide not as the primer but as the main charge for the explosion".

Community Groups

17	Yes, offensive
4	Unsure
9	No, not offensive

Reference Groups

14	Yes, offensive
7	Unsure
7	No, not offensive

ONLINE MAGAZINE – DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned or restricted?
▪ A majority of CG participants' were 'offended'. Terrorism had a strong call to action, which for some *'tipped the scales'* and gave it a different context. ▪ Some were not offended, with the material being dispassionately viewed as contents from a magazine/journal or *'just basic science'*. ▪ RG participants were less offended by the material than CG participants, although some were offended by the material's call to violence, and noted that it was *'glorifying terrorism'*.	▪ Overall impact was viewed as very mild. ▪ Amongst some the material was seen as impactful since, for example, it was *'chilling to think that people regard it as ok to instruct people in this way'*.	▪ Although the majority of CG participants' were offended by the content and the incitement of violence, some were unsure if banning it would limit access to it. ▪ Practically all RG participants would ban the material. ▪ CG participants initially were more nuanced in their views, but after discussion many were of the view that it should be banned.

Discussion by all groups on this footage often focused on the instructions for bomb-making, which were juxtaposed with discussions of the ideological slant expressed through the words. Some pointed out that the instructions for making bombs could be used by anyone, not only those motivated by ideological/religious incitement, e.g. *if it gets into the hands of my 14 year old, he'd have a go at it and launch a fridge over the back fence'.* In one RG group, a distinction was made on the illegality issue, with the suggestion that the *'actual content of the journal wasn't illegal – it provides information that tells you how to be illegal'.*

Discussion in relation to this material was linked to issues such as the limits of free speech, incitement to violence, and the accessing of material via the internet. With respect to each of these areas, the potential complexities of the situation were openly acknowledged. For example, one community member commented that *'I think it should be banned, and it struck me as odd that I feel this way – I'd come to think that adults should be able to view what they want'* while an RG participant noted that, if it were possible, the instruction to make a bomb should be banned, while the surrounding discussion (on the ideology and the movement) should not. Several community members and RG participants pointed out that the material would be accessible no matter what was done to prohibit it, but one community member added *'but it's not a reason to make it easy for people to access it- why make it convenient?'*

Comment on the high production quality evident in the publication also occurred, with some questioning whether the magazine was not specifically designed *'to create alarm in western society?'.*

TABLE 3 – SHORT FILM DEPICTING ABORTION

3. SHORT FILM DEPICTING ABORTION

DESCRIPTION	PERSONAL RESPONSE	

| The film contains an 8 minute video of gynaecological procedures for abortion resulting in the expulsion of an embryo or foetus juxtaposed with depictions of foetal hands and feet as well as various foetuses at different stages of development positioned on or beside an American coin (dime). There is no dialogue or narrative to validate the film as a documentary or educative program. The film consists only of visuals with a musical accompaniment. Only two minutes of the film was shown | Community Groups | Reference Groups |

Community Groups:
- 20 Yes, offensive
- 6 Unsure
- 4 No, not offensive

Reference Groups:
- 11 Yes, offensive
- 10 Unsure
- 7 No, not offensive

SHORT FILM DEPICTING ABORTION – DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?

- The majority of CG participants found the footage offensive and there was a strong view that the footage should have provided a context for the medical procedures being viewed.

- Some CG participants were concerned that the foetal age looked beyond the normal accepted time for an abortion.

- Instead of 'offensive', some participants would have used terms such as *'gross', 'grotesque'* or *'producing a visceral reaction'* that was shocking and confronting to describe their immediate reactions.

- Many RG participants were offended by the footage or unsure of their responses to it, and some remarked that they had been unable to continue viewing the 'bloody' footage after the first few scenes.

- Other reasons for being offended related to the nature of the production, including the use of music and the clear intention to '*promote a pro-life viewpoint'.*

Was the material impactful?

- The images were impactful to most participants, and there was discussion of the contribution of the music and the lack of commentary to the impact on the viewer.

- The legitimacy of the footage was questioned by those who worked in health.

- RG participants found the content 'confronting and 'upsetting' and pointed to the filming style with lingering shots as contributing to this.

Should the material be banned or restricted?

- Overall there was a sense that this content should not be available to minors.

- This feeling was echoed amongst the RG who felt that it should be restricted and not banned.

- For those that would not ban it, the general age restriction would be 16, although some pointed out that 'age is not the point' in the case of this footage.

- A minority point of view was to put an age restriction of 12 on the material.

Responses to the abortion-related footage were explicitly nuanced on the basis of participants' views on issues such as:

- their personal views on abortion

- recognition that the footage was projecting and promoting an anti-abortion stance

- having just recently had a child (with those recently becoming parents finding the images very difficult to view)

- the production values of the clip itself (e.g. that it was 'old footage' and made use of an 'invasive' style of filming).

Similarly, there was some discussion in the RG about the 'politics' of the footage and its effect on the viewer, and a strong sense that this understanding coloured perceptions of the offensiveness and/or impact of the footage, e.g. *'I can't separate the content from the intent'*. There was the view of some that it might have been the intent of the film-maker *'to damage people, especially women who have had an abortion'*. There was also the view that while such a film could be harmful to women who have had an abortion, with one participant commenting: *'it's not the role of the Classification Board to micro-manage such situations'*.

TABLE 4 – SHORT FILM DEPICTING MINORS HAVING SEX

4. SHORT FILM DEPICTING MINORS HAVING SEX	
DESCRIPTION	PERSONAL RESPONSE

The footage from this film was not shown to participants[6]; however they were read a description of the content within the film.

There are images of people who are between the ages of 15 and 17 engaged in actual sexual activity such as digital masturbation, digital penetration and vaginal penetration.

Community Groups

12 Yes, offensive

16 Unsure

2 No, not offensive

Reference Groups

9 Yes, offensive

9 Unsure

10 No, not offensive

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[6] The ALRC decided that material that has been refused classification for Item 1 (b) of the National Classification Code would not be shown to participants. Item 1(b) for films and computer games provides that material that would 'describe or depict in a way that is likely to cause offence to a reasonable adult, a person who is, or appears to be, a child under 18 (whether the person is engaged in sexual activity or not) is refused classification.

SHORT FILM DEPICTING MINORS HAVING SEX - DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned or restricted?
▪ It is difficult to discern a trend in participants' responses to this (unseen) material with slightly more unsure as those who believed the content to be offensive. ▪ Many CG participants were 'unsure' about whether the material was offensive, and put this uncertainty down to acceptance of the age of consent and that adolescents have sex. ▪ Most RG participants' were not offended, and didn't have an issue with adolescents having sex. Some had more concern with the thought of older people watching adolescents having sex. It was more about the audience and access to the content and ensuring minors were not being exploited.	▪ The level of impact varied across participant groups. ▪ For those that found the content offensive, impact scores were evenly spread across the very/fairly impactful and moderately impactful responses. ▪ It was pointed out that the absence of viewing the material made it difficult to comment on the degree of impact of the content.	▪ RG participants generally agreed that the material should not be banned and that it would be practically impossible to block such material on the internet. One noted that '*trying to block material on the internet is like trying to repeal the laws of gravity*'. ▪ Some CG participants intimated that they wouldn't condone the content but if it is an illegal act, then it should be illegal to be shown. ▪ And yet others noted that it should be illegal if it were filmed as a commercial venture.

The content under discussion raised the issue of the appropriateness of the concept 'offensive' in the classification system. Some participants noted that, while the activity may be illegal, it may not be offensive. Others noted that it was not the content that offended them, e.g. they were not offended by minors having sex with each other, but if adults obtained the material, that could raise issues of offense. Others further noted that more context would be necessary to make any judgments and, in particular, *'who's filming it and for what purpose'*. Nonetheless, there was the strong view that their attitudes to the material would change if they knew who had filmed it and for what purpose.

The material raised broader questions about the legal status of the minors and the age of consent. Participants noted that it may be *'important to consider what structures and laws alleviate or compound difficulties for teenagers concerning sexuality'*.

In both the CG and RG forums, the intention of the filming of the activity was questioned and it led into a discussion on 'sexting' between teenagers[7]. The general view was that teenage 'sexting' was unstoppable, but that it became an offensive issue if adults got hold of the material. There was the strong view that such footage shouldn't be on the internet, but also that it was not right to label teenagers who are sexting 'paedophiles'.

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[7] There is as yet no uniformly accepted definition for 'sexting', but it generally refers to the digital dissemination of sexually explicit texts and pictures. As was the case in the group discussion, there is legal debate as to whether 'sexting' and 'self-produced child pornography' should be treated in the same way [see Leary, MG (2010). Sexting or self-produced child pornography? The dialog continues – Structured prosecutorial discretion within a multidisciplinary response. *Journal of Social Policy & the Law*, vol 17, Issue 3, pp 486-566.].

TABLE 5 – ONLINE SOLICITATION OF A CHILD

5. ONLINE SOLICITATION OF A CHILD		
DESCRIPTION	**PERSONAL RESPONSE**	
The footage from this piece of material was not shown to participants; however they were read a description of the content. [8] Participants were read the following: "The next item is a nine minute recording of a conversation between an adult male and a boy aged eight. They are chatting as they play a computer game. There is no film footage. Example of the text read out includes: ▪ The male speaker uses a device to distort his voice so that it resembles a Darth Vader type character. ▪ The adult male speaks to the child using sexual terms which appear to confuse the child. He asks the child what elementary school he goes to. He describes sexual activity he and the child can engage in, and invites the child to join him and his friends for a party when they finish playing the game. ▪ The child responds by saying "I'm a boy, I'm eight - I don't understand what you are saying."	Community Groups **29** Yes, offensive **1** Unsure **0** No, not offensive	Reference Groups **24** Yes, offensive **4** Unsure **0** No, not offensive

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[8] See footnote 6.

ONLINE SOLICITATION OF A CHILD - Detailed Analysis

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned or restricted?
▪ There was practically no disagreement between CG and RG members on the material – the vast majority in all groups found it very offensive. ▪ This was based on the 'predatory' nature of the content.	▪ Some participants noted that it was difficult to make a judgment on the impact of material that was itself not viewed. ▪ Many RG participants' made specific reference to the content as an illegal act that should be banned. ▪ Those that were able to make a judgement of the impact were of the opinion that the content as described had a very/fairly high impact.	▪ Generally in favour of banning the material, although there was discussion about how to 'ban' a conversation that was taking place during an internet game ▪ There was recognition that the medium itself (i.e. the internet game) was not to be blamed for possibly provoking solicitation. ▪ There was consensus that if they had the means, they would ban the conversation.

This material was possibly the least divisive, in terms of participants' views of all the material in all of the groups. There was short discussion of how an internet chat would be made available to a wider audience. One RG participant noted that it could be used in a documentary to make a point, but that it has no place as a stand-alone piece of material. Another would not ban the material if it was a 'storyline' in a crime novel, since the context would be different, and *'most likely people wouldn't have a problem with it'*.

3.1.2   SEX AND NUDITY

TABLE 6 – UNDERBELLY

6. SHORT EXTRACT FROM UNDERBELLY		
DESCRIPTION	**PERSONAL RESPONSE**	
A scene from the Australian crime drama 'UNDERBELLY' was shown. The footage goes for one minute. During the scene two male characters engage in group sex with two women. The scene is a series of brief, fast-cut visuals and includes images of implied rear-entry sex, cunnilingus and other positions of sexual activity.	Community Groups **1** Yes, offensive **6** Unsure **23** No, not offensive	Reference Groups **3** Yes, offensive **3** Unsure **22** No, not offensive

UNDERBELLY – DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned/ or restricted?
▪ The majority of community participants regarded the material as not offensive primarily because the action depicted fitted into the context of the story and it appeared simulated with no explicit focus on genitals.	▪ There was a view amongst CG participants (due to knowledge of the television show in question) that it had *'pushed the boundaries'* and that *'it was a ratings grab for the TV network'*.	▪ Nobody thought it should be banned, but many wanted clear program warnings about what was going to be in the particular episode.
▪ It was also acknowledged that the content showed all consenting adults, was not explicitly graphic and was filmed *'showing quick cuts'* so as to not be offensive.	▪ At a personal level the majority of participants believed the content had low or mild impact.	▪ The majority felt that the material should be restricted to 15 years and above, and more control exerted to ensure the content is appropriate to the time of broadcast.
▪ A minority view was that the footage was offensive because it depicted *'group sex'*, and that it *'associated sex with a criminal lifestyle'*	▪ RG participants generally did not regard the footage as impactful.	
Slightly more RG participants were offended[9], but the majority viewed the footage as not offensive.		

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[9] Issues of offence to RG participants included issues such as the content's airing on prime time television, concerns with the apparent *'male gaze'* of the activity depicted, concern about the *'trivialising and commodification of sex, which should be an act of intimacy'* and concern that it really was *'age restricted material that was being shown as part of a regular program'*.

Since most participants were aware of the television series, the discussion tended not to be characterised by their immediate responses to the footage, but rather based on their preconceived views of the material and the program as a whole. A range of issues were raised.

There was some discussion about the timeslot for the program and a general agreement, particularly from participants with children, that attempting to control viewing by putting shows on after certain times doesn't necessarily work. It was noted that children nowadays tend to stay up as long as they like, so an 8.30 'barrier' would make no difference. Minors should not be given direct access, but *'how do you stop them from seeing it'*?. There was also acknowledgement that some unsavoury, unacceptable or challenging things would go *'straight over their heads'*.

Participants discussed whether it made a difference if the sexual activity depicted on film was simulated or not, with views including:

- *'it doesn't really matter'*

- *'knowing it's not real puts up an extra barrier for the viewer'*

- *'sometimes simulation is more impactful than real'*

- *'a young person might not make the distinction'*.

A question raised by RG participants was whether 'seeing genitals was real or simulated'.

There were differing views on whether having an awareness of the context of the footage was important or not, for example:

- *'it's what those people in the underworld did – but it's still a sexual act'*

- *'the context can't justify seeing this group sexual activity'*

- context matters *'up to a point, but doesn't justify going into explicit content'*

- recognition that the show evokes certain images (of a lifestyle in a criminal underworld) and that this action is a part of it.

TABLE 7 – SHORTBUS

7. SHORT EXTRACT FROM SHORTBUS

DESCRIPTION	PERSONAL RESPONSE	

Footage from the film 'Shortbus' is shown. The film follows the lives of New Yorkers as they navigate the comic/tragic interactions between sex and love. In one scene a male and a female are having sex, depicting a very brief and partially obscured instance of vaginal penetration while she is astride him on a piano bench supporting herself with her hands on the piano. This is followed by her stroking his penis. Within a montage of very brief visuals, a male appears to ejaculate over his mouth, shot from side view at eye level. There is another very brief image of a male depicted ejaculating on his chest.

Participants were shown two minutes of footage.

Community Groups

4	Yes, offensive
7	Unsure
19	No, not offensive

Reference Groups

5	Yes, offensive
0	Unsure
23	No, not offensive

SHORTBUS – DETAILED ANALYSIS		
Was the material offensive? ▪ The majority of participants did not find this material offensive, pointed to the humour in it, and regarded the 'realness' of the characters as a positive. ▪ Some CG participants were unsure whether the content was offensive[10], ▪ Similarly, most RG participants did not find the material offensive, although some had concerns with fetish activity, domination and voyeurism.	**Was the material impactful?** ▪ CG participants generally did not find the material 'impactful', except if they had found it funny. The impact tended to be a pleasant one. ▪ RG participants rated the material as having mild or no impact.	**Should the material be banned or restricted?** ▪ Most CG participants felt that the material didn't cross the line to be banned but would agree to an 18+ age restriction with some suggesting a 15+ restriction would suffice. ▪ None of the RG participants would ban the film, and the majority would support an 18+ age restriction and some a 15+ restriction.

The key impact on the group discussion in relation to this footage appeared to be whether participants began their discussion of the footage on the basis of the impact of its evident humour on the viewer, or if discussion moved straight into the sexual activities that were illustrated. When humour was noted, this took away from the potential offensiveness of the material. Those who had seen the film were far more approving of it and recognised the basic humour and depictions of 'real people' of the story, which others could also recognise even from the short footage shown.

Amongst RG participants, there was a wide range of responses in reaction to the footage, ranging from *'I don't find consensual sex between adults offensive'* to *'the beautiful is trivialised, what place does it have in a civil society?'*. Nonetheless, most RG participants did not find the material offensive and suggested that the material *'achieves the purpose of exploring sexuality in many forms' and explains characters through their sexuality'*.

There was some discussion about the potential differences on the viewer of 'real' or 'simulated' sexual activity, with no clear trends, i.e. that it makes a difference, or it doesn't make a difference or *'sometimes simulation is more impactful than real'* or *'you can't easily draw the line between actual and simulated sex'.* In short, the discussion suggests there may be no easy agreement on the impact of the 'realness' of sexual activity on viewers' responses to footage depicting sexual activity.

A participant in one CG raised a point with regard to this clip that has potential bearing on other people and on the other footage as well. He noted that he felt somewhat uneasy because he was *'sitting in a room with strangers, and my response to it would be different if I was viewing it with my wife'*.

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[10] Factors leading to offense included the voyeur camera character, the whip scene and shots of genitalia or *'I'm not even sure why I'm unsure'*.

TABLE 8 – CHILDREN AT A NUDIST CAMP

8. CHILDREN AT A NUDIST CAMP	
DESCRIPTION	**PERSONAL RESPONSE**

DESCRIPTION	Community Groups	Reference Groups
The footage from this piece of material was not shown to participants; however they were read a description of the content. [11] This was a 30 minute film and shows three boys playing at a nudist summer camp. There are shots of full frontal nudity as children walk towards the camera. Much of the footage focuses on a boy as he plays on a jungle jump. As he climbs, somersaults and hangs from the bar his genitals are seen.	**11** Yes, offensive **12** Unsure **7** No, not offensive	**6** Yes, offensive **14** Unsure **8** No, not offensive

[11] Viewing of material prohibited due to RC (1b) classification. In one of the community forums, there was discussion of participants not being allowed to view the material. Some shared the view that it was *'a form of censorship'* that they weren't shown it or able to comment on the actual footage. The group questioned that their responses might be different if they had actually seen the footage.

CHILDREN AT A NUDIST CAMP – DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?

- There were mixed responses to this (unseen) material, although participants agreed that any child perceived in a sexualised manner is offensive and that children don't realise what will happen as they grow older and how they might feel if the material became publicly available.

- Some participants found the material offensive due to pre-existing concerns about the over-sexualisation of children.

- RG members were generally unsure with a minority either offended or not offended, with a clear dilemma between viewing images of naked children in themselves as not problematic, but the distribution of filmed material as potentially problematic.

- Those RG participants who found the content offensive based this on the fact that children as young as nine or ten are in no position to give consent to be filmed. They also found the focus of the filming on one boy and the filming of his genitals to be offensive and in bad taste.

Was the material impactful?

- Participants noted that the level of impact was influenced by not knowing what the context of the footage was (e.g. documentary, being acted out or parents filming a family holiday video).

- RG participants expressed 'low impact', although some noted that in the current cultural context such images would be impactful.

Should the material be banned or restricted?

- Most CG participants felt that the content should not be banned but restricted, e.g.– *'it's a restricted image for our culture'*.

- Others mentioned concern over what might happen to the image, despite its intentions.

- Opinions of RG participants were more polarised with some feeling that it should be controlled, whilst others felt that it was fine for minors to see.

Discussion in CG and RG focused on some of the repercussions of the societal (and legal) focus on images of children. One view was that it was dangerous for society to have gone the way it has in criminalising anything to do with childhood nudity and teenage sexuality, i.e. that it's gone too far and *'we shouldn't equate nudity with exploitation'*. This was countered by the view that society needs to *'err on the side of caution with regard to children'*, that there was *'always the potential for things to be misinterpreted'* and that *'the children could not have given informed consent'.* The point was also made by several participants that material that might have been innocuous in previous decades was potentially no longer so in the digital age and, for example, that children don't understand what use such material may be put to on the internet, and may feel violated and regretful when older

With regard to the particular material under discussion, there was the suggestion that it could have been filmed in a way that presents the nudist camp without showing full frontal nudity of individuals. Particularly among RG participants, there was the view that nudists should have freedom regarding their lifestyle, but that the filming and distribution of such material took the issue into a different realm altogether. There was also the view that if the material had been covertly filmed, then viewers' reactions to it would be clearly different, i.e. they would be offended and opposed to it.

3.1.3   VIOLENCE

TABLE 9 – THE DEPARTED
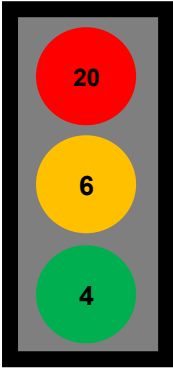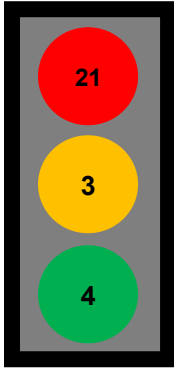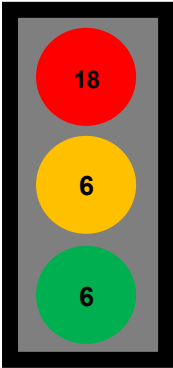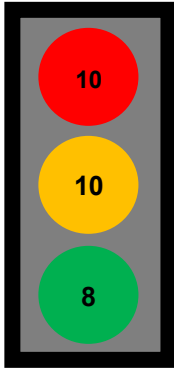
9. SHORT EXTRACT FROM THE DEPARTED	
DESCRIPTION	**PERSONAL RESPONSE**

This footage is taken from the film The Departed, a drama about two men who are undercover with the Boston State Police Department and the Irish mafia. One character is shot in the head as the elevator doors open. Blood splatters onto the wall of the lift. Another policeman is shot in the head with a blood burst bullet wound by the same man. The lead character then shoots the shooter in the side of the head with a blood burst bullet wound. Blood pools around the three bodies.

Participants were shown two minutes of footage.

Community Groups

3	Yes, offensive
7	Unsure
20	No, not offensive

Reference Groups

2	Yes, offensive
2	Unsure
24	No, not offensive

THE DEPARTED - DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned or restricted?
▪ The footage was considered *'confronting'* rather than *'offensive'*, and this was often reported as being due to the shock factor of the sudden shooting and for some, the language used. ▪ A few CG participants found it offensive because it was *'just like that, violence without a point'* and that *'it was all about death, gratuitous violence for the titivation of the audience'* ▪ RG participants generally found it not to be offensive since the killing was quick and clean, or *'not horrendous'*. ▪ It was noted by a number of participants that their reaction to the content was tempered due to it containing very well-known Hollywood actors.	▪ Overall, impact was very/fairly mild and typical of what was expected in *'Hollywood Movies"*, with the lack of close-ups and less gore. ▪ Mild impact, with a suspense film level of blood and stylised violence. ▪ For those where impact was higher, this was due to the suddenness of the shooting eg *'it makes you sit up and notice'* ▪ For the majority of participants there was little impact, this was because it clearly had a story line and the level of impact was associated with the story line.	▪ Neither the community nor the RG participants would ban the film but would restrict it. ▪ There was little agreement on the preferred age restriction, with ages ranging from 15 to 18 years.

Discussion of this footage in all of the groups was influenced by whether participants had seen the film from which it came – many had. Whether having seen it or not, there was general recognition that it gave the sense of being a 'typical' Hollywood movie with well-known actors, a plot and stylised dialogue, settings and action. In this respect, the violence was 'typical' too. The feeling that this genre of film-making had 'desensitised' people to violence was raised by a few RG participants.

TABLE 10 – HOSTEL

10. SHORT EXTRACT FROM HOSTEL

DESCRIPTION	PERSONAL RESPONSE

Footage from the horror film 'Hostel' was shown. The primary plot of the film is the torture of young tourists by wealthy customers who pay thousands of dollars to abuse and kill them.

In two excerpts from the film, the lead character hears the tortured screams of a victim and goes back to save her. Her eye is gouged out. He shoots her torturer and cuts the eyeball which is hanging down her face.

In the next scene, the lead character sees one of the torturers at a railway station. He traps him in a toilet, cuts off his fingers, drowns him in the toilet bowl and slashes his throat.

Participants were shown around 4 minutes of footage.

Community Groups

Eyeball:

- 20 — Yes, offensive
- 6 — Unsure
- 4 — No, not offensive

Finger:

- 18 — Yes, offensive
- 6 — Unsure
- 6 — No, not offensive

Reference Groups

Eyeball:

- 21 — Yes, offensive
- 3 — Unsure
- 4 — No, not offensive

Finger:

- 10 — Yes, offensive
- 10 — Unsure
- 8 — No, not offensive

HOSTEL - DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned or restricted?
▪ Participants indicated that they were more likely to find the material 'offensive' but then used descriptions such as *'felt queasy watching it'*, *'the amount of gore'*, *'it was gruesome'*, *'strong yuk factor'*, and *'disturbing'* to describe their reactions. ▪ Some RG participants questioned the use of the concept 'offensive' to describe their reactions to the footage, and rather noted that they felt 'shocked' at the gratuitous nature of the violence or that the special effects detracted from engendering a feeling of real offensiveness. ▪ Some were more clearly 'offended' due especially to the extreme violence, cruelty and torture of another person.	▪ There was concern that the gratuitous violence went on for too long: *'why it was happening? – I can understand that other people might choose to watch material like this but not me'*. ▪ Also amongst RG participants there were lower levels of offence with respect to 'finger' and higher levels of unsure. Some participants stated that the level of offence was lower due to the revenge or retribution element mentioned in the discussions. ▪ High impact, with a few participants noting that they didn't want to continue looking at it. ▪ For some, the impact of the footage was diminished due to the 'unreality' of the story and images. ▪ Generally 'finger' was seen as more confronting and therefore a greater impact than 'eyeball' which they felt was more fake.	▪ Although CG participants thought it was violent and that they personally might not watch it, they would not ban the material but felt that an age restriction ranging from 15-18 was appropriate. ▪ Similarly RG participants would generally not ban the film but felt that it should be restricted to 15+ or even 18+. ▪ In support of the 15+ restriction some RG participants noted that it was precisely the 15-16 year old demographic that was attracted to films of this nature.

There was some discussion amongst participants about somewhat different reactions to the two pieces of footage s from the film. The general sense was that the torture scene (young woman with a blowtorch to the eye) was more difficult to watch than the finger/retribution scene, partly also because the motive for the violence in the latter was retribution.

CG participants discussed the 'desensitising effects' of violence on the screen, including the internet, and the potential harm this poses to young people. RG participants discussed the issue of the why people go to see horror films in the first place, and that the engendering of a feeling of 'fear' or *'titivation tinged with horror'* was the express purpose for doing so. Therefore, it was felt that there should be an acceptance that film-makers would find ways of responding to these desires.

TABLE 11 – A SERBIAN FILM

11. SHORT EXTRACT FROM 'A SERBIAN FILM'

DESCRIPTION	PERSONAL RESPONSE	

DESCRIPTION

This footage came from the film "A Serbian Film", which is a psychological horror that tells the story of a retired porn star who accepts a role in a film where he finds himself involved in nightmarish scenarios that threaten his wife, his child and himself. In the footage that is shown, a fully nude female is led to a bed and, spreadeagled on her belly, is forcibly cuffed by her wrists and ankles. The lead character, implicitly drug-affected, engages in realistically simulated rear-entry sexual intercourse with her. Through his earpiece, he hears a command: *'Hit the bitch!'*. He thrusts aggressively while explicitly slapping, and then forcefully punching, the female's back. Bruising appears on the female's back in immediate post action visuals. He is handed a machete and, through a succession of detailed depictions, implicitly hacks the female's head off. Blood and gore noted. He continues thrusting vigorously behind the headless female's corpse before being pulled away by two males. The footage shown to participants went for 2.5 minutes.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

Community Groups

29 — Yes, offensive
0 — Unsure
1 — No, not offensive

Reference Groups

26 — Yes, offensive
1 — Unsure
1 — No, not offensive

A SERBIAN FILM – DETAILED ANALYSIS		
Was the material offensive? ▪ The overwhelming feeling amongst all participants was that the material had been very offensive to watch. ▪ Specific offensive elements mentioned included the rape scene which most felt was disgusting, as well as the extreme violence towards and degradation of women. ▪ Strong words were used by participants in all groups to describe their reactions to the content, including *'grossed out', 'horrendous', 'disturbing', 'absolute sexual violence', 'the most confronting footage of the day'.*	**Was the material impactful?** ▪ Community and RG participants generally found the material highly impactful. ▪ The material was noted by some as being impactful *'right from the start',* with the woman being sexually violated.	**Should the material be banned or restricted?** ▪ There was strong support amongst community participants that the film should be banned, although some were unsure. ▪ While the majority of RG participants would ban the film a minority were unsure. ▪ Those who would not ban the film would restrict it to 18+. ▪ There was an overall sense in the groups that it would be better for material of this nature not to be seen.

CG and RG participants often questioned the value of a film of this kind as a work of art e.g. *'that there are people who pay to see stuff like this, make collections of it, that's the true horror for me'* and *'no story justifies the level of violence shown'*. There was the view that an understanding of the broad plot of the movie wouldn't help to mitigate the actions and those of others in the scene, i.e. that the context didn't really matter. As one CG participant noted, *'A good director would have filmed it differently, here it was all on highlighting the violence graphically. It was the way it was filmed that was offensive, not the storyline'*.

Similarly, discussion amongst RG participants included questions as to why such a film would be made in the first place, why people would want to watch it at all, and whether there may not actually be harm to some people who do watch it. A few pointed to the potential harms to the actors involved, and whether it could be regarded as clear-cut that actors would provide their 'consent' to participate in such scenes (i.e. that there may be a level of coercion involved). A few pointed to the potential impact of films of this type on some people, i.e. that it may encourage them or *'serve as a trigger'* for them to engage in such violence.

Those RG participants who did not support banning the film made reference to the freedom of choice and the need to preserve this.

TABLE 12 – ACTUAL EXECUTIONS IN A FILM

12. ACTUAL EXECUTIONS IN A FILM

DESCRIPTION	PERSONAL RESPONSE	

	Community Groups	Reference Groups
The footage came from a film and shows actual violence: the public execution of two males in Guatemala, who are tied up and blindfolded. The screen is pixelated as they are shot. The males are then seen to be still moving, obviously not dead from the shooting. An officer is seen putting his gun to one of the male's heads', the screen pixilating (digitally blurring) as he shoots him at point blank range. This is repeated with the second male. The film is supposedly a documentary but there is limited information provided. Participants were shown two minutes of footage.	**13** Yes, offensive **4** Unsure **13** No, not offensive	**12** Yes, offensive **12** Unsure **4** No, not offensive

ACTUAL EXECUTIONS IN A FILM – DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned or restricted?
▪ Responses to this footage were very mixed. There were as many CG participants who were offended as not offended.	▪ Participants noted that it had a moderate impact but that this was impacted by its juxtaposition with some of the previous material they had just viewed.	▪ The general consensus was that if it were a news report, it should be banned; if it were a documentary, it should not.
▪ RG participants were evenly split with as many who felt offended as those who felt unsure.	▪ The pixllations and the documentary nature of the film also contributed to a more moderate level of impact as was the fact that the event took place in another country far away.	▪ CG participants felt a restriction of 18+ was appropriate.
▪ For some, it was not offensive due to its 'documentary' nature i.e. being a report on a matter of fact. For others, it was offensive because the viewer was observing the death of real people.	▪ The impact was reduced for others because the people being executed were criminals who had committed murder and rape.	▪ Age restriction recommendations by RG participants ranged from 12 (since it could encourage debate about what occurs in other countries) to 18+ (due to the graphic nature depicted and the death of real people.
▪ The use of pixilations at the moment of impact did make it easier to watch, but not for all.		

The footage raised issues of capital punishment as a whole, and there was some acceptance that responses to the content would be influenced by views concerning capital punishment. In the RG groups, there was discussion of the importance of having an understanding of context of the filming itself in the responses that could be given to material such as this. Consequently, responses might differ based on whether the footage represented a filming the execution so as to make a commercial profit from it versus filming it in order to explain what is happening in the world.

For older participants in more than one group (whether CG or RG), memories were raised of a Vietnam War public shooting that had been captured on camera and broadcast worldwide during that period, and the impact that material had had on public attitudes to execution.

The impact of the broader discussion on capital punishment and the importance of knowing what was occurring in different countries is evidenced by the fact that some participants consciously changed their attitudes towards the footage following the small group discussion.

3.1.4   DRUG USE

TABLE 13 – SPIRAL

13. DRUG USE IN A FRENCH DRAMA TV SERIES - 'SPIRAL'		
DESCRIPTION	**PERSONAL RESPONSE**	
The footage is from a French police series called "Spiral". A man and woman in an intimate relationship use heroin. The man has an apparent overdose and the woman flees from the flat, calling for help. Participants were shown two minutes of footage.	Community Groups	Reference Groups
	1 — Yes, offensive	0 — Yes, offensive
	3 — Unsure	1 — Unsure
	26 — No, not offensive	27 — No, not offensive

DRUG USE IN A FRENCH DRAMA TV SERIES - SPIRAL – DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned or restricted?
▪ There was a general view that the footage was not offensive.	▪ Some regarded the footage as having a moderate **positive** impact since the consequences of drug use were shown.	▪ None would ban the material
▪ A minority were unsure, being concerned about the linking of drug use to sex (Note: there was no sex in the footage but the couple were clearly intimate) and the explicit showing of how to inject intravenously.	▪ The explicit showing of the preparation and use of 'hard' drugs was seen by some as impactful. This included images of 'needles in arms'.	▪ There was support for age restrictions ranging from 15 to 18 with a few RG participants having a concern that this type of content could possibly glamorise drug taking amongst younger teenagers.
▪ RG participants generally did not find the material offensive.		

The concept 'offensive' was critically discussed in a number of the groups as being inadequate to reflect participants' responses to this footage as well as the other pieces of footage focusing on drug use. Due to the nature of the footage (no glamorisation of drug use, but rather a focus on unintended, negative consequences) there was instead discussion on the possible value of the material as a deterrent to young people in respect of drug use, e.g. *'it could be a great conversation starter with teens'*. Conversely, others pointed out that before one could consider this, one would need to better understand *'how kids' brains work'*.

A few participants objected to footage such as the one shown providing graphic images for how to use drugs. This point was discussed as being potentially relevant in affecting viewers' responses to the material. In the discussion this view was challenged by the observation that *'if you're at the stage of getting drugs, you know how to use it'*.

TABLE 14 – WILFRED – THERE IS A DOG

14. DRUG USE IN AN AUSTRALIAN COMEDY TV SERIES

DESCRIPTION	▪ PERSONAL RESPONSE	
This material is from a series called "Wilfred – There is a Dog", and is about the relationship between a woman, her boyfriend and a 'dog' (a male character dressed and acting as though he were a dog). During the scene, the dog and a male chat and share a bong. The footage was around two minutes in length.	**Community Groups** **0** Yes, offensive **2** Unsure **28** No, not offensive	**Reference Groups** **0** Yes, offensive **1** Unsure **27** No, not offensive

WILFRED – THERE IS A DOG - DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned or restricted?
▪ None of the CG or RG participants found this content offensive. ▪ The material was more described in terms such as *'comical'*, *'pathetic'*, or *'bordering on ridiculous'*.	▪ Generally regarded by participants as being the least impactful of the drug-related footage, not only due to the humour (man acting as dog) but also due to the fact that the drug being consumed was marijuana. ▪ The humour generated by the content was the single most impactful element and even this was regarded as very mild.	▪ Participants would generally not ban it, but age restrict it to older teenagers, i.e. 15 years and above. ▪ Every age restriction possibility was mentioned and discussed by participants, from 14, 15, 16 and 17, to 18 year olds, reflecting possibly the complexities of responses to material focusing on drugs.

The participants generally viewed this content in a different light to the two other drug-related footages. The focus in the discussion was often on the humour or the 'unreality' of the situation presented. At the same time, this in itself was criticised by some, e.g. *'in a comedy series there should be no drugs'*. There was also the question of whether responses to the material would have been different if the drug being consumed was alcohol, rather than marijuana.

TABLE 15 – LIFE IN LOOPS

15. ACTUAL DRUG USE IN A DOCUMENTARY

DESCRIPTION	PERSONAL RESPONSE	
	Community Groups	Reference Groups

This material was from a documentary called "Life in Loops" and shows footage of a drug addict and his friends, injecting heroin and reciting aspects of his life. The footage goes for two minutes.

Community Groups

0	Yes, offensive
5	Unsure
25	No, not offensive

Reference Groups

0	Yes, offensive
1	Unsure
27	No, not offensive

LIFE IN LOOPS – DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned or restricted?
▪ None of the participants found this material offensive. ▪ Some RG respondents regarded the material as legitimately telling real life stories.	▪ Of the three drug-related materials, this one was seen as being most emotive and by implication the most impactful. This was based on the misery portrayed and a sense of 'pity' expressed by participants for the parties involved. ▪ Some participants found the material impactful in the sense that it was 'pathetic'.	▪ Participants would not ban the material ▪ CG participants discussed whether it would be suitable for high school children or only those aged 18 years and older. ▪ RG participants would recommend an age restriction ranging from 15 to 18 years.

The documentary nature of this footage was a key focus in the discussions in all of the groups, and for many this made the footage the most impactful of the three dealing with drug use. Many found the characters 'pitiful' or 'miserable' and for some this strengthened their view that the footage was potentially not harmful to young people, but could serve as deterrence. There was disagreement as to whether it was suitable for younger, middle or older teenagers, with different motivations put forward for these viewpoints, e.g. *'it could also be PG, depending on the rest of the footage'*. Some participants also noted that discussion of drugs had become far more common in schools, and this could also influence their attitudes towards this particular content, i.e. that it may be regarded as suitable in a drug education curriculum, thus suggesting a lower age of restriction.

3.1.5 EXPLICIT SEX AND FETISHES

TABLE 16 – SEX EDUCATION MATERIAL OF AN EXPLICIT NATURE

16. SEX EDUCATION MATERIAL OF AN EXPLICIT NATURE		
DESCRIPTION	▪ **PERSONAL RESPONSE**	
Educational material of a sexually explicit nature is depicted. Depictions include close-up shots of a male manipulating a female's genitalia. The footage was two minutes in length.	**Community Groups** 0 Yes, offensive 0 Unsure 30 No, not offensive	**Reference Groups** 1 Yes, offensive 3 Unsure 24 No, not offensive

SEX EDUCATION MATERIAL OF AN EXPLICIT NATURE – DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned or restricted?
▪ CG and RG participants generally did not regard this material as offensive. ▪ In comparison to some of the other content focusing on explicit sex, there was little controversy by comparison. ▪ Some CG participants expressed a view that some of the content went a little beyond what would have seemed reasonable in a documentary, e.g. 'lingering too long' in several of the shots. This tended to undermine its bona fides as a strict documentary.	▪ The material was overwhelmingly not considered impactful by either CG or RG participants. ▪ Numbers of participants commented on the obvious display of the wedding rings on the couple in the footage, and that this contributed to its greater acceptance as educational material. ▪ The opposite was also true, amongst a small minority who felt that wedding rings seemed only to legitimise the practice of sex within marriage.	▪ None of the CG participants would ban it. They would have an age restriction, either 15 or 16 years - the relevant age of consent. ▪ RG participants generally would not ban the material. ▪ RG participants generally would take the age of consent as the restriction or failing that 15 years and above.
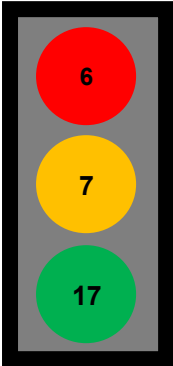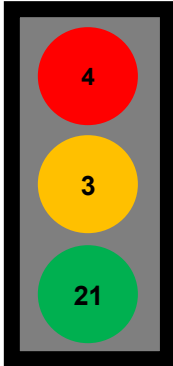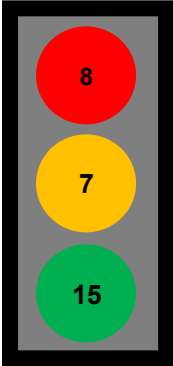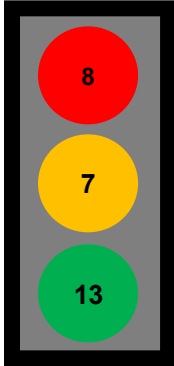
There was support amongst CG participants for making this material available to teenagers in a controlled setting (e.g. sex education class), and several expressed support for the footage because it was showing men how to be better partners. In considering for what age the material might be suitable (with general support for it to be restricted to the age of consent), there was also some discussion of the different levels of maturity of teenagers who are the same age. In a similar vein, in the RG groups there was some discussion of the potential value of showing material of this nature to adolescents younger than the age of consent, with the view that there may be value in educating young people before they engage in sexual activity.

In short, this material engendered a broader discussion about the age of consent, which is relevant to the forum discussions only inasmuch as it might have an impact on participants' views as to which age to restrict the material.

TABLE 17 – RANGE OF EXPLICIT SEX AND FETISHES

17. RANGE OF EXPLICIT SEX AND FETISHES (AS PORNOGRAPHY)

DESCRIPTION	PERSONAL RESPONSE	

DESCRIPTION

A series of brief scenes is shown, depicting a range of actual sexual activity among consenting adults:

- Chocolate – a piece of chocolate is inserted into the anus of a female and then expelled and eaten by another female

- Gagging fellatio between several men and women causing gagging, coughing, flowing of tears from the eyes and retching which, during the course of the vignettes, covers the faces of two women

- Vomit – two females vomit on each other in a sexually explicit film

- Urine - urinating onto another person during actual sexual activity

- Bondage - a bondage/discipline scene occurring in a toilet

- Milk – milk is expelled from the anuses of various sexual partners in an 'enema fetish'

- Group sex – one female having sexual intercourse with several male sexual partners.

The footage went for around eight minutes.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

Community Groups

Chocolate

15 Yes, offensive

3 Unsure

12 No, not offensive

Reference Groups

Chocolate

18 Yes, offensive

4 Unsure

6 No, not offensive

Gagging

18	Yes, offensive
5	Unsure
7	No, not offensive

Gagging

15	Yes, offensive
9	Unsure
4	No, not offensive

Vomit

16	Yes, offensive
6	Unsure
8	No, not offensive

Vomit

12	Yes, offensive
6	Unsure
10	No, not offensive

Urine

6	Yes, offensive
7	Unsure
17	No, not offensive

Urine

4	Yes, offensive
3	Unsure
21	No, not offensive

Bondage

8	Yes, offensive
7	Unsure
15	No, not offensive

Bondage

8	Yes, offensive
7	Unsure
13	No, not offensive

Milk

12	Yes, offensive
8	Unsure
10	No, not offensive

Milk

5	Yes, offensive
7	Unsure
16	No, not offensive

Group Sex

8	Yes, offensive
7	Unsure
15	No, not offensive

Group Sex

8	Yes, offensive
7	Unsure
13	No, not offensive

RANGE OF EXPLICIT SEX AND FETISHES (AS PORNOGRAPHY) – DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?

- Respondents reacted in different ways to the various sexual activities portrayed in the fetish montage, and found individual content more or less offensive for various reasons.

- Issues raised included the apparent unhygienic nature of some of the activities, the consensual nature of some of the scenes, the degradation of women, difficulties with group sex, and the filming near a toilet (in the bondage scene).

- Other participants acknowledged that all actors were consenting adults and whilst finding some of the content disgusting, they did not find it to be offensive.

- Separately in two groups (one CG, one RG) the issue was raised of the 'anorexic look' of the participants engaging in the vomit scene and what issues this might raise.

- Some were altogether unoffended, and gave comments such as *'nothing of it floats my boat but it's a personal choice for people to watch it'* and *'everyone has something that lights their candle'.*

Was the material impactful?

- The majority of respondents indicated the material was either 'not very impactful 'or felt that it had a 'mild to moderate impact'.

- The 'gagging' content was generally regarded as most confronting and therefore the most impactful, largely due to the seeming coercion and lack of enjoyment displayed by the female actors.

- The 'bondage' content was also identified as impactful with great concern expressed about the ropes around the actor's mouth

Should the material be banned or restricted?

- The majority would not ban the material, but would restrict it to people 18+ or 16+ , some argued that *'if you can legally have sex you should be able to view this material').*

- A minority would restrict the material to those aged 21+ and a few would ban it, e.g. *'even though you can't stop people doing it, you can stop people watching someone else doing it'.*

- There were wide differences of opinion towards the level of restrictions most appropriate in the RG groups.

CG and RG participants engaged in considerable discussion about the banning of such material. There was a range of views, with some participants noting that the banning of material may make it more desirable and that it may not be the most effective means to *'make something go away'*. There was recognition of the freer access of such material to people due to the internet. Some questioned the motive for banning anything of this nature – *'Why not just go and watch other stuff if you don't like it?'* Others noted that while they may have found the material offensive or would not watch it, they disagreed that was cause to completely ban this material from public access.

In one of the RG groups, participants noted they were changing their attitudes towards the various pieces of material shown, after listening to the opinion put forward by one of the other participants who (among others) commented that *'we need to take a moral line – children are more important than the libertarian views of some adults. We shouldn't make it easier for people to find it.'*

Discussion in the group sessions (CG and RG) touched on the issue of the 'consent' given by particularly female actors in pornographic films. Views were raised, also drawing on apparent research findings, that *'many actors are actually coerced'* and that *'porn stars are damaged'*. As noted by one of the RG participants, *'it doesn't offend that people choose to do these activities or that they film it – what's unclear is the power relations between the actual people involved'*. A different view was that *'not banning it gives opportunity to work better with porno industry. There's agitation in the industry for outreach programs that will provide them with skills and information to protect themselves better'*.

3.1.6   COMPUTER GAMES

TABLE 18 – MORTAL KOMBAT, F.E.A.R 2, CALL OF DUTY

18. VIOLENCE IN COMPUTER GAMES		
DESCRIPTION	**PERSONAL RESPONSE**	
Brief footage was shown from three computer games: ▪ Mortal Kombat: the aim of the game is to beat an opponent using a variety of violent moves, sometimes with weapons, including slicing bodies with chainsaws . ▪ F.E.A.R 2: Project Origin: the aim of the game is to engage in war moves to combat an enemy. Harm is caused by using a variety of weapons including guns, rocket launchers, hand grenades and nail guns. ▪ Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: in this game you are an undercover operative with a terrorist group. The activity occurs in an airport lounge. Passengers in the lounge are fired upon with machine gun fire.	Community Groups Fighter **8** Yes, offensive **6** Unsure **16** No, not offensive	Reference Groups Fighter **3** Yes, offensive **2** Unsure **22** No, not offensive

Lift well

5	Yes, offensive
9	Unsure
16	No, not offensive

Lift well

4	Yes, offensive
3	Unsure
21	No, not offensive

Airport

15	Yes, offensive
2	Unsure
13	No, not offensive

Airport

16	Yes, offensive
7	Unsure
5	No, not offensive

VIOLENCE IN COMPUTER GAMES – DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?

- CG participants were generally unsure or not offended by the material, with comments such as *'one expects a level of blood and gore', 'it's all fantastical',* and *'it's comic book material'.*

- A minority found the footage offensive and noted that *'it was unacceptable that it's becoming acceptable'* and that *'internet gaming assists in making violence so acceptable'.* One commented that the more she was thinking about it, the more offended she was getting: *'If it had been real people* (e.g. in a movie) *I would have been instantly offended'.*

- The airport content in Call of Duty was identified as the most offensive, generally noted as being due to it portraying violence directed at innocent people, e.g. *'it's too close to reality'.* One participant noted the potentially negative effect of such violence particularly on refugee children.

- RG participants often questioned the validity of the term 'offensive' to describe their reactions to the video game material.

- RG respondents who were clearly offended by the material pointed to issues such as the fact that the player is actually carrying out the actions, which possibly made it more disturbing than an acted out scene in a film.

Was the material impactful?

- CG and RG participants generally found the airport scene in Call of Duty to be more impactful than the others, due to the random nature of the shooting of innocent people.

- There was recognition from some participants that computer games may have a more serious impact than what people generally think or give them credit for, and that *'it can be the tipping point* (i.e. inciting violence) *for some people'.*

Should the material be banned or restricted?

- CG and RG participants would generally not ban the material, although some felt that 'killing people' in games should be banned.

- Participants would age restrict it – suggested age ranges from 15 to 18 - but at the same time there was acceptance by some participants that *'the more you restrict things the more people watch it'.*

- There was a view that the most vulnerable to such material may be children aged between 10 and 13, and as such a restriction 15+ was probably appropriate.

- The content regarded by most participants as being unsuitable for games included content that has a superfluous role in the story, sexual violence, and graphic scenes of torture.

CG participants with a gaming background introduced into the discussion the point that *'artists search for the craziest way to finish off someone'*, and that it's the creativity of the designer that gamers focus on, not necessarily the violence being portrayed. They also noted that gamers are able to 'skip' certain footage of the game, but that *'gamers often don't choose this option because then they miss out on the artistry'*. The dexterity required of players to perform certain of the actions was also highlighted. It should also be noted that numbers of participants indicated that they had never played computer games before. There was also an admission by many CG participants who were parents that more often than not, very little attention was given the supervision of the computer games their children played.

Several participants from particularly the RG groups made the point that they were viewing the content solely from an adult perspective, and that this was a separate issue from their equally important view that the content was not suitable for children. CG participants also struggled to separate their own opinions from their concerns about children – as one noted, *'I've got 8 and 11 year old grandchildren so I find it difficult to separate my views from what would be suitable for them'.*

There was strong debate amongst some RG participants on the importance of the **context** of the games (including what the purpose was, the understanding of the characters, and the overall objective for the player), ranging from the view that the context of the game makes the violence more acceptable (e.g. *'context is critical to determine if violence is gratuitous or not'*) to the sense of offence actually increasing due to the context the player was placed in (e.g. *'needing to shoot innocent people at the airport'*) to the view that they had only been asked to rate their responses to the extracts of content, not to consider contextual issues. Some RG participants (who were not gamers) indicated that they felt they could change their attitudes toward the material on the basis of arguments made about the context, i.e. that the context could be critical in determining whether the violence was gratuitous or not, but this sentiment was by no means uniform.

TABLE 19 – GRAND THEFT AUTO: THE BALLAD OF GAY TONY

18. SEXUAL ACTIVITY IN A COMPUTER GAME	
DESCRIPTION	**PERSONAL RESPONSE**
In this game, *Grand Theft Auto: the Ballad of Gay Tony*, the player is a bodyguard who protects a nightclub owner. The footage, depicting sexual activity, is a non-interactive part of the game, included to develop the plot. Participants were shown one minute of footage.	**Community Groups** — Night club - body guard 🔴 5 Yes, offensive 🟡 9 Unsure 🟢 16 No, not offensive **Reference Groups** — Night club - body guard 🔴 6 Yes, offensive 🟡 4 Unsure 🟢 18 No, not offensive

SEXUAL ACTIVITY IN A COMPUTER GAME– DETAILED ANALYSIS

Was the material offensive?	Was the material impactful?	Should the material be banned or restricted?
▪ There was a wide spread of responses as to the offensiveness of the material, but with a trend amongst CG and RG respondents for it to be regarded as not offensive. ▪ Some CG participants commented that they were not expecting to see sexual acts in the game. ▪ Some RG participants felt the idea of '*powerful men versus women as sex objects and gratuitous sex*' was offensive.	▪ The material was generally regarded as not impactful.	▪ Most would not ban, but restrict the games to18+ with a few indicating a 15+ would be appropriate. ▪ There was the concern about '*what happens once a game leaves a shop – it can go anywhere – it's an unrealistic boundary*'.

Discussion by CG participants on this footage ranged widely on issues such as whether the woman had given her consent to the sexual activity, possible racial stereotyping, that the footage was 'a non-event', and that it was badly animated. The view was expressed that there was possibly not enough concrete evidence regarding the impact of computer games on children to draw firm conclusions around what to do with material such as this.

4 Other findings

4.1 DEGREE TO WHICH OPINIONS CHANGED AFTER OPEN DISCUSSION

There was some evidence of opinions changing after the open discussion but only in half a dozen or so instances. These mainly applied to participants who felt that some content should be made illegal to purchase in the shops and/or blocked on the internet.

Examples of content where participants changed their viewpoints to ban or block material included Short film depicting abortion, Short film depicting minors having sex, Online solicitation of a child, Children at a nudist camp and Depiction of vandalism (although this excluded blocking this particular content on the internet).

A change of opinion also worked in reverse, where there were three examples of content where participants changed their viewpoints to unban the sale in the shops and unblock material on the internet; this was the case for Underbelly, Shortbus and Actual Executions in a film.

Another interesting finding was the change in participants' viewpoints of Hostel, with half moving to ban its sale in shops and block it on the internet and half moving to the opposite viewpoint of unbanning and unblocking the content.

There was also some evidence, although to a lesser extent, of a change in some participants' viewpoints in relation to computer games with contrasting views between the sale of the content and access to it on the internet. For three of the materials shown – Mortal Kombat, Call of Duty and F.E.A.R.2 – viewpoints changed to make this content legal for sale in shops. For this same content opinions were divided about whether it should be blocked on the internet with as many agreeing it should with those who felt unsure. This represented a line of thought amongst participants that the material is easier to control at the point of sale than it is on the internet.

Small sample sizes preclude any meaningful analysis of differences between community participants and RG participants changing their minds after discussing the content.

4.2 COMPARISON BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND RG PARTICIPANT FINDINGS

4.2.1 MOST AND LEAST OFFENSIVE CONTENT

A comparison of the immediate responses of CG participants versus RG participants shows a high degree of consistency when examining the most offensive (i.e. highest number of red lights) and the least offensive (highest number of green lights). The only exception to note is Abortion which did rate in the top six most offensive amongst CG participants and the computer game Airport Undercover which did rate in the top six most offensive for RG participants. In terms of least offensive the only difference of note was Underbelly which did rate in the least offensive top six amongst community participants and The Departed which did rate in the top six least offensive amongst RG participants.

TABLE 20 – COMPARISON OF TOP SIX MOST OFFENSIVE AND LEAST OFFENSIVE CONTENT

		COMMUNITY GROUPS		REFERENCE GROUPS
Most offensive: 'Red light'	1	A Serbian film (29)	1	A Serbian film (26)
	2	Online solicitation of a child (29)	2	Online solicitation of a child (24)
	3	Short film showing Abortion (20)	3	Hostel – 'Eyeball' (21)
	4	Hostel – 'Eyeball' (20)	4	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (16)
	5	Hostel – 'Finger' (18)	5	Fetish – Gagging (15)
	6	Fetish – Gagging (18)	6	Online magazine (terrorism) (14)
Least offensive: 'Green light'	1	Explicit sex education (30)	1	Spiral (27)
	2	Wilfred - There is a dog (28)	2	Wilfred- There is a dog (27)
	3	Spiral (26)	3	Life in loops (27)
	4	Life in loops (25)	4	Depiction of vandalism (27)
	5	Depiction of vandalism (25)	5	The Departed (24)
	6	Underbelly (23)	6	Explicit sex education (24)

4.2.2 DEGREE OF OFFENSIVENESS

A comparison of the median scores of CG and RG participants show no significant differences in the degree of offensiveness of the different content viewed, with at most a variation of one across the 1-5 semantic scale used in this question. This suggests a high degree of correlation in the opinions of CG participants and the opinions of RG participants that took part in the forums.

There were only two instances where the levels of offensiveness trended marginally lower (NOT significantly so) amongst CG participants versus RG participants and these were for the Fetish montage (for six out of the seven pieces of content viewed) and Underbelly. For the former this is indicative of a slightly more liberal acceptance of the practice of this type of sexual activity amongst CG compared to RG participants who found one or two of the scenes particularly offensive and degrading to women. For the latter this is perhaps indicative of a more accommodating attitude amongst community of using this type of content to help establish a storyline or a particular character in a modern day TV drama.

Similarly there were only two instances where the levels of offensiveness trended marginally higher amongst CG participants versus RG participants and these were for Short film depicting abortion and Children at a nudist camp. In reference to the former, there were some CG participants who found the content very offensive using words like 'nauseating' and 'upsetting' whose scores may have influenced the overall level of offensiveness recorded. The question of the legitimacy of content was also a lot stronger amongst a number of RG participants.

4.2.3   DEGREE OF IMPACT

A comparison of the median scores of CG and RG participants similarly show no significant differences in the degree of impact of the different content viewed, with at most a variation of one across the 1-5 semantic scale used in this question. This again demonstrates a high degree of correlation between the opinions of CG participants and the opinions of RG participants. As you might expect, these results also correlate with the median scores attributed to the level of offence i.e. the more offensive the content the more it is likely to have had a bigger impact.

There were only two instances where the levels of impact trended marginally lower amongst CG participants versus RG participants and these were for Drugs (all three pieces of content) and for Hostel (both Eyeball and Finger). With regards to drugs, as one CG participant pointed out that it is perhaps an indictment on society that drug taking is no longer regarded as offensive.

Similarly there were only two instances where the levels of impact trended marginally higher amongst CG participants versus RG participants and these were for Terrorism and Children at a nudist camp. This may be due to the slightly different approach given these subjects by participants. CG participants are most likely to have approached this content from a personal point of view, particularly those with families. In comparison some RG participants approached the content from a less than personal approach. For example, one participant felt that any banning of written content whether it be in magazines or books would be untenable.

5 Conclusions and validity of the methodology

5.1 CONCLUSION

5.1.1 ACCEPTANCE OF COMPLEXITIES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Complexities with regard to the accessing and/or restricting of material in the digital age were generally accepted as a given in the discussions, and there was no difference between CG and RG participants in this regard.

There were differing attitudes towards the reach and power of the internet, with comments including *'we're afraid of the internet because it's so invasive'* and *'it may be better to block material [on the internet] because people find it more confronting to buy something in a shop'*. At the same time, participants questioned the means by which material on the internet could be 'blocked', and recognised that even if material were 'blocked' in one country, it could be accessed via another. In this connection, they pointed out that *'trying to block material on the internet is like trying to repeal the laws of gravity'* and that *'if kids wanted to find the material on the internet, they would'* (speaking of sexually explicit material).

The prevailing attitude was that the internet operated under a different set of rules with many of the opinion that people should be free to access whatever content they wished online and not be restricted. This view was more pronounced amongst younger participants.

5.1.2 KNOWLEDGE OF CONTROL MEASURES

Forum participants made a link between knowledge of how the authorities would be able to restrict or ban material and how they would be likely to consider the material. There was the understanding that understanding of the methodology of restriction/control may have an impact on the viewers' opinions about whether the material should be refused classification, made illegal or restricted.

5.1.3 CONCERN FOR ACTORS

Although it moved somewhat beyond the discussion focus established for the forums, some film content engendered debate on the film industry itself. In more than one discussion, concern was raised about whether actors freely give their consent to their participation in some scenes. There was also discussion of the 'real' or 'simulated' nature of, for example, sexual activity, and to what extent this made a difference to the actors themselves.

In short, many participants displayed an understanding that there were real people in each piece of content, and expressed the view that this also had an impact on the responses they had towards the material. This was particularly true when actors were placed in demeaning situations or seemed to be suffering distress.

5.1.4 IMPACT OF FILM PRODUCTION VALUES

Related to the above point, several of the pieces of footage engendered discussion on the production that was evident in the footage, such as the use of music, editing and long/delayed shots. Participants would often comment on issues such as these, although they were not directly linked to the questions under discussion, and made the strong point that these 'production' values may also have an impact on viewers, for example making it more difficult for them to provide comments only on the basis of brief excerpts.

5.1.5 VALIDITY OF THE METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the major points that arose in the course of conducting the community forums concerning the methodology.

5.1.6 REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE COMMUNITY

The methodology adopted for the recruitment of CG participants from the list of people who responded to the advertisement, resulted in a balanced sample representative of all States and Territories and

demography including gender, age, family status, job type, as well representative of metropolitan, regional and remote areas. Participants were often heard to remark on how representative the people attending were of the Australian population.

However, it could be argued that 'opinion' bias is likely to have been introduced into the methodology through the process of advertising for participants. This is based on the known fact that those most likely to have responded are those with polarised viewpoints, often seeking opportunities to express them. The high degree of correlation between the CG views and the views of the RG participants is evidence that this may have been a contributing factor.

To eliminate any possible 'opinion' bias, it is recommended that future forums be recruited through professional recruitment organisations who are skilled in the process of recruiting random samples of people representative of the community.

5.1.7   METHOD AND PROCESSES

Throughout the conduct of the forums and just before the close especially, participants were encouraged to provide their feedback as to how well the forums had run. Participant feedback is provided under a number of different headings.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK:

There was general support for the planning and organisation of the forums and some positive feedback provided to the organisers (e.g. *'it was well organised and executed'*). Positive feedback was provided on the 'flow' of the day as well as the 'flow' of the material. The grouping of the material appeared to facilitate the process of viewing material of a similar nature.

COMBINING MATERIAL FOR REVIEW:

Participants often expressed difficulty in summarising their immediate responses to material whenever more than one piece of footage was shown. This was noted after the first forum and led to the refinement of the methodology and the questionnaire for the subsequent three forums. This refinement occurred by creating 'traffic lights' for participants to complete for each *piece* of footage shown. In the instances where there was more than one piece of footage for the material (e.g. Hostel) participants voted for each piece of footage and then answered the questionnaire considering the combined footage.

DIFFICULTIES WITH THE CONCEPT 'OFFENSIVE':

Difficulties were raised with the use of the word 'offensive' in terms of whether it was the most appropriate term to capture participants' responses to content shown. Some also questioned the value of the term at all in relation to the classification of material[12] noting, for example that people's emotional response to material doesn't or shouldn't lead to action to ban it.

As described in the body of this report, many participants would have chosen other words (such as *'confronting', 'alarming', 'troubling' 'visceral'* or *'gross'*) to describe their reactions. A few noted that it was very difficult to answer the question as to what 'most Australians' would find offensive.

An alternative word may be considered for use in future forums and its suitableness determined by the objectives of the research.

USE OF 'TRAFFIC LIGHT' METAPHOR:

There was criticism of the 'traffic light' metaphor and flash card methodology from a small minority of participants, whereas the majority indicated in response that they understood that it was a means to distinguish between an 'immediate' and a 'considered' response. It was noted as 'interesting' that people would red-light something but not seek to have it banned. Some participants found that making a choice among three possible answers was too restricting and they would have wanted more categories.

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[12] In keeping with this point, an RG participant pointed out that New Zealand had recently removed the word 'offensive' from its classification code.

On balance the 'traffic light' cards did facilitate an immediate (right brain) response and was therefore purposeful. Some participants also commented on how this helped them formulate a more considered (left brain) response.

CONTENT AND CONTEXT:

Although participants understood that they had only been shown short footage of larger pieces of content and that they had only been asked to provide responses on what they had seen, some continued to be drawn into debates on the 'context' of the material. In the course of these discussions, some participants continued to question the value or indeed the possibility of focusing only on what was viewed, and made the point that content cannot be separated from context if someone is to provide a judgment on a piece of content.

Many participants expressed a strong view in regards to the substitution of content about minors with verbal descriptions of the film content. This not only presented the difficulty of fully understanding the context and substance of the content but also left participants feeling that the content had already been sanitised.

The view was also expressed, particularly by female RG participants that the content selected for evaluation *'portrayed women as a service station for men'*. A more even balance of content should be aimed for in any future forums.

CONCERN FOR MINORS:

Similar to the point above, participants explicitly noted that they occasionally found it difficult to provide their own reactions to the material while at the same time separating this from their concerns about the potential impact of the material on other viewers. This was particularly true in respect of their concerns for minors, but also in certain situations for young men.

Recognition of this difficulty led to sometimes lengthy discussions which were possibly somewhat off-target to the purpose of the forums. Participants had no difficulty in making it clear that they would wish to restrict material that was inappropriate for children, even if they personally found it acceptable and consequently struggled with or didn't wish to provide a response that was not filtered through the 'concern for minors' lens.

There was strong support for the view that *'parents need consistent guidance, education and support in making decisions about what's appropriate for their children'* and that this should be reflected in the information or warnings regarding violence, language and/or sex that were provided about viewing material.

It is possible that it would be very difficult to avoid discussions of this issue in any similar forum, even though it may not be the focus of the discussion.

GROUP CONTEXT:

The public nature of the viewing of the material (in a room with strangers) has a potential impact on participants' responses to the material. Non-verbal reactions during the viewing of the material (often observed as dispassionate, focused, and subdued) could also have been influenced by this context. A few participants made the point that they might have felt differently about some of the material (e.g. material of a sexual nature) if they had been viewing it alone or with their sexual partner.

At the same time, overwhelmingly positive feedback was provided on the discussion that had taken place in the smaller groups. Participants generally felt that the smaller 'breakout' groups created an environment more conducive to the sharing of attitudes and opinions particularly on some of the more coarse material content.

Appendix A Questionnaire: Basic structure

Content X (Title/broad theme of stimulus material)

1. Do you find this content offensive?

Yes, offensive	
Unsure	
No, not offensive	

2. How offensive was this content? Please rate, where 5 is very offensive, and 1 is not offensive at all.

	Very Offensive		Moderately Offensive		Not offensive at all
TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX	5 ☐	4 ☐	3 ☐	2 ☐	1 ☐

3. Do you think most adult Australians would find this content offensive?

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No
3 ☐ Unsure

4. How would you rate the impact of watching this content on you personally? Please rate, where 5 is very high impact and 1 is no impact.

	Very high impact		Moderate impact		Very mild or no impact
TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX	5 ☐	4 ☐	3 ☐	2 ☐	1 ☐

5. Should this content be illegal to sell in shops?

1 ☐ Yes – should be illegal
2 ☐ No – should not be illegal
3 ☐ Unsure

6. Should this content be blocked on the internet?

1 ☐ Yes – should be blocked
2 ☐ No – should not be blocked
3 ☐ Unsure

7. Do you think this content might harm the people who watch it?

      1 ☐ Yes

      2 ☐ No

      3 ☐ Unsure

8. If this content was not banned, should access be restricted to people over a certain age?

      1 ☐ Yes – should be restricted to people over the age of …..   (*PLEASE COMPLETE*)

      2 ☐ No – access should not be restricted at all

AFTER THE GROUP DISCUSSION PLEASE COMPLETE Q9 and Q10

9. Having had an opportunity to hear other peoples' views on this content, would you change your answers about whether this content should be illegal to sell in shops?

      1 ☐ Yes – how? ***RECORD YOUR CHANGE BELOW***

      2 ☐ No

      If yes, please record why

      _____

      _____

      _____

10. Having had an opportunity to hear other peoples' views on this content, would you change your answers about whether this content should be blocked on the internet?

      1 ☐ Yes – how? ***RECORD YOUR CHANGE BELOW***

      2 ☐ No

      If yes, please record why

      _____

      _____

      _____

Appendix B   Group Discussion Guide

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Welcome and warm up

Welcome to this break out group.

The main purpose of meeting in a smaller group like this is to facilitate a discussion on how you viewed the content as a smaller number of people will give each of you the opportunity to have 'your say'.

Before we start discussing the material, can we begin by briefly introducing ourselves and relating a short anecdote about something noteworthy that happened on the way to this community forum this morning?

Session 1 – Themes & Underage (Content A, B, C)

- *Having viewed the material and filled in the questionnaire earlier, what are your thoughts on the content viewed (A,B,C – Graffiti/Terrorism / Abortion / Underage/Darth Vader)?*

- *Was any of this content offensive? If yes - establish which and why they say that?*

- *What was most impactful about the content viewed?*

- *Should any of this content be banned? Why do you say that?*

- *Should minors be able to access any of this content?*

A: Graffiti & Inspiring terrorism

  o *Should content that promotes crime and violence be banned? Does it matter what types of crimes are promoted?*

B: Abortion

  o *Does the context of this content matter? What contexts would be acceptable and unacceptable?*

C: Underage/Darth Vader

  o *Is this offensive? If so, why? (Probe - nudity, poses, culmination of images, text)?*

NOW PLEASE TURN TO YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE AND ANSWER A9/10, B9/10, C9/10

Session 1 – Sex & Nudity (Content D, E, F)

- *Having viewed the material and filled in the questionnaire earlier, what are your thoughts on the content viewed (D,E,F – Underbelly / Shortbus / Children at nudist camp)*

- *Was any of this content offensive? If yes establish which and why do they say that?*

- *What was most impactful about the content viewed?*

- *Should any of this content be banned? Why do you say that?*

- *Should minors be able to access any of this content?*

D: From *Underbelly*

  o *This content appeared in a program with a story line. Does that context affect what you think of the content?*

E: From the film *Shortbus*

o *Does it matter if the sex is real or simulated?*

F: Children at a nudist camp

o *Does it matter why this was being filmed and who was filming?*

NOW PLEASE TURN TO YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE AND ANSWER D9/10, E9/10, F9/10

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE FIRST BREAK OUT SESSION.

PLEASE RETURN TO THE LOUNGE FOR SOME FOOD AND REFRESHMENTS

Session 2 – Violence (Content G, H, I, J)

- *Having viewed the material and filled in the questionnaire earlier, what are your thoughts on the last four pieces of content viewed (G,H,I,J – Lift / Eyeball / Sexual violence / Execution)?*

- *Was any of this content offensive? If yes establish which and why they say that?*

- *What was most impactful about the content viewed?*

- *Should any of this content be banned? Why do you say that?*

- *Should minors be able to access any of this content?*

G: Film *The Departed*

o *What was most impactful about this scene? What did you think of the coarse language?*

H &I: *Film clips Hostel & Serbian Film*

o *These clips were from films with a plot or story line. Does that affect what you think of the content?*

J: Real life executions

o *Did the pixelations at the moments of shooting affect what you thought of this clip?*

NOW PLEASE TURN TO YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE AND ANSWER G9/10, H9/10, I9/10 & J9/10

Session 2 – Drug Use (Content Kx3)

- *Having viewed the material and filled in the questionnaire earlier, what are your thoughts on the content viewed?*

- *Was any of this content offensive? If yes establish which and why they say that?*

- *What was most impactful about the content viewed?*

- *Should any of this content be banned? Why do you say that?*

- *Should minors be able to access any of this content?*

K: Drug use (x3)

- *Does the fact that this shows real not simulated drug taking make any difference?*

NOW PLEASE TURN TO YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE AND ANSWER K9/10

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS BREAK OUT SESSION.

PLEASE RETURN TO THE LOUNGE FOR AFTERNOON TEA

Session 3 – Explicit sex & Fetishes (Content Lx7, M)

- *Having viewed the material and filled in the questionnaire earlier, what are your thoughts on the content viewed?*

- *Was any of this content offensive? If yes establish which and why they say that?*

- *What was most impactful about the content viewed?*

- *Should any of this content be banned? Why do you say that?*

- *Should minors be able to access any of this content?*

L: Fetish (1 + Montage)

  o *Should adults be able to watch this type of content if they wish? Is there any harm or injury to participants? Is this a demeaning depiction?*

M: Explicit Education – No questions

NOW PLEASE TURN TO YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE AND ANSWER L9/10, M9/10

Session 3 – Computer Games (Content Nx4)

- *Having viewed the material and filled in the questionnaire earlier, what are your thoughts on the content viewed (4 x Computer games)?*

- *Was any of this content offensive? If yes establish which and why they say that?*

- *What was most impactful about the content viewed?*

- *Should any of this content be banned? Why do you say that?*

- *Should minors be able to access any of this content?*

N: Computer games x 4

  o *What level of violence might make you think something should be banned (slicing bodies with chainsaws, bodies exploding, close range shooting in public spaces, sexual activity as non-interactive part of game)?*

NOW PLEASE TURN TO YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE AND ANSWER N9/10

WRAP-UP:

Before we return to the main forum, I'd just like to obtain some feedback on how you feel today's forum has run?

Probe – *how well the process worked.*

And what about the questionnaire? AND discussion groups?

Probe – *could anything have been done better?*

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS FINAL BREAK OUT SESSION.

PLEASE RETURN TO THE MAIN FORUM FOR A FINAL WRAP-UP

Appendix C Community Forum Participants: Demographic characteristics

NSW	QLD	WA/SA	VIC	TAS/ACT/NT	METROPOLITAN	REGION/RURAL	<25	25-45	46-65	65+	NO CHILDREN	CHILDREN <12	CHILDREN 13-18	CHILDREN 18+	JOB	×ATSI
×					×					×				×	Travel industry	
		×			×			×			×				Criminal Justice	×
×					×				×					×	Professional	
			×			×		×			×				Educational	
			×			×		×			×				Professional	
		×WA			×				×		×				Professional	
				×		×			×			×	×		Civil servant, was actor	
				×		×			×	×				×	Teacher	
	×				×			×						×	Nurse	
×					×			×				×			Professional	
		×SA			×			×				×	×		Nurse	
			×		×			×				×			Massage therapist	
	×					×			×					×	Retired	
×						×			×			×			Arts/Media etc	
				×	×					×				×	Retired divorce lawyer	
				×	×			×				×			Public service	
		×WA			×		×				×				Student	
		×SA			×			×				×			Police Detective	
×					×				×		×				Train driver	
×					×				×				×		Trades	
				×	×				×			×	×		Other	
			×			×			×		×				Retired principal	
				×NT		×	×				×				Other	
		×SA			×				×				×	×	Trades	
	×				×		×					×			Lawyer and IT	
		×WA			×			×			×				Arts/Media etc	
×					×			×			×				Arts/Media etc	

NSW	QLD	WA /SA	VIC	TAS/ACT/NT	METROPOLITAN	REGION/RURAL	<25	25-45	46-65	65+	NO CHILDREN	CHILDREN <12	CHILDREN 13-18	CHILDREN 18+	JOB	xATSI
	×					×	×				×				IT	
×					×			×			×				Other	
			×			×			×				×		Stay at home dad	
8	**4**	**7**	**5**	**6**	**19**	**11**	**4**	**12**	**11**	**3**	**13**	**9**	**6**	**7**	**N/A**	**1**

Appendix D Reference group participants

REFERENCE GROUP

The principal reason for conducting a forum with invited stakeholders was to provide a 'benchmark' against which to compare responses from the community forums. The organisations represented by these 'reference group (RG) participants are listed below:

- Associate Professor Katharine Albury, Academic Coordinator, Master of Journalism and Communication, University of New South Wales

- Liz Alexander, Classifier, Network Ten

- Martin Bibby, NSW Council for Civil Liberties

- Peter Black, Faculty of Law, Queensland University of Technology

- Saxon Booth, Censorship Officer, Acting Executive Officer, Standing Council on Law and Justice

- Simon Bush, CEO, Australian Home Entertainment Distributors Association (AHEDA)

- Ron Curry, CEO, Interactive Games and Entertainment Association

- Simon Curtis, Policy and Regulatory Affairs Manager, Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association

- Catherine Deveny, freelance journalist and commentator

- Associate Professor Grant Devilly, School of Psychology, Griffith University

- Professor Elizabeth Handsley, Faculty of law, Flinders University; President, Australian Council on Children and the Media

- Anne Hurley, CEO, Internet Industry Association

- Tilda Hum, Legal Policy Officer, Civil Law Policy, Department of Justice, Government of Victoria

- Alan Isherwood, Electronic Frontiers Australia

- Cath James, Project Officer, Justice and International Mission Unit, Uniting Church of Australia

- John Kerletac, Sex Crimes Unit, NSW Police

- Annie le Cavallier, Executive Director, Vibewire Youth Inc

- Susan McLean, Cyber Safety Solutions, Australian Government

- Clare O'Neil, Manager, Media Policy and Regulatory Affairs, Free TV Australia

- Fiona Patten, CEO, Eros Association

- Helen Pringle, School of Social Sciences and International Studies, University of New South Wales

- Randolph Ramsay, Associate Editor, Gamespot Australia

- Caitlin Roper, Collective Shout

- Andy Ruddock, School of English, Communications and Performance Studies, Monash University

- Lyle Shelton, Chief of Staff, Australian Christian Lobby

- Collett Smart, child and adolescent psychologist (attended on behalf of kids Free 2B Kids)

- Jim Stewart, Director, Community Protection, Trade Policy & Regulation Branch, Australian Customs & Border Protection Service

- Marcus Westbury, broadcaster, writer and festival director; Director, International Symposium on Electronic Arts (ISEA) 2013

Appendix E   Further detail on National Classification Scheme Review

NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION SCHEME REVIEW

The study forms part of a review of the National Classification Scheme, which is being conducted by the ALRC. The impetus for this review has been provided by a range of factors[13], with the Terms of Reference[14] for this review listed below:

- it being twenty years since the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) was last given a reference relating to Censorship and Classification

- the rapid pace of technological change in media available to, and consumed by, the Australian community

- the needs of the community in this evolving technological environment

- the need to improve classification information available to the community and enhance public understanding of the content that is regulated

- the desirability of a strong content and distribution industry in Australia, and minimising the regulatory burden

- the impact of media on children and the increased exposure of children to a wider variety of media including television, music and advertising as well as films and computer games

- the size of the industries that generate potentially classifiable content and potential for growth

- a communications convergence review, and

- a statutory review of Schedule 7 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* and other sections relevant to the classification of content.

The ALRC has embarked on a process of national consultation and released a Discussion Paper, on the basis of which individuals and organisations were invited to make submissions in response to the specific proposals and questions to help advance the reform process[15].

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[13] Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) (2011). *National Classification Scheme Review: Discussion Summary Paper*. ALRC, Sydney, pp 2-3.

[14] http://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/national-classification-scheme-review-dp-77/terms-reference

[15] Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) (2011). *National Classification Scheme Review: Discussion Paper*. ALRC, Sydney.