

CI 1183 G C Phillips

Mr G. & Mrs C.V. Phillips

Submission to ALRC on the National Classification Scheme Review
By Graham and Carol Phillips

To ALRC members,

We wish to present some of our views, albeit briefly, since we will only be able to answer, in this short time-frame, some of the many questions addressed in the Review.

It is our opinion, having had extensive years of experience in the complaints process for classification, and having raised a family in a worsening toxic culture of pervasive filth and violence, that this Review Inquiry is well and truly long overdue.

Review Questions:

Question 1. In this Inquiry, should the ALRC focus on developing a new framework for classification, or improving key elements of the existing framework?

The current classification process needs a major overhaul. We realise the difficulty of such an approach, but it is imperative that the classification process achieves what it is intended to achieve.

The guidelines must be **tighter**, they must be **adhered to more rigorously**, and those who complain must have their views and sensibilities taken into account. They do not complain for the fun of it. There is usually **something genuinely offensive to complain about**.

Question 2. What should be the primary objectives of a national classification scheme?

The interests of **minors** should always come first. Their protection, and the maintenance of their innocence for as long as possible (while being largely in the hands of their parents), must be aided externally by efficient and effective Government classification of the media. This is the primary purpose of the classification system.

The public has a right to be protected from offensive or obscene material. All public places should be free of offensive material (including offensive language) and always be suitable for general exhibition. In addition, blasphemous material, offensive (perhaps only) to those of a religious persuasion, should also be removed from the public sphere.

The principle of so-called 'rights' of adults to see exactly what they want, is flawed. Adults do not have rights to view perverted or criminal material. While we cannot 'police' private behaviour, society clearly condemns paedophilia and other abhorrent predilections towards abuse and torture. Ergo, adults do not have any 'right' to this degrading material.

Question 4. Should some content only be required to be classified if the content has been the subject of a complaint?

The current complaints process is badly flawed. Some highly-offensive material can easily pass the classification process (a disgrace in itself), but only be available in the public sphere much later. By the time the complaints start coming in, it is far too late.

The very premise of this question is problematic. Imagine the type of material that could enter our country weeks, or even months, before someone complains. To classify based on complaints lodged is clearly ludicrous.

Furthermore, standards of basic decency have been flouted in so many areas of the media, and complaints from concerned individuals and groups have been repeatedly ignored. This is despite the fact that one complaint received may represent many people who were offended, but who did not complain.

We have made complaints to various bodies on numerous occasions. Despite many (i.e. dozens of) complaints being lodged, only one or two of them were actually upheld. This is **insulting** and, in some ways, intimidating. We are at the stage where we no longer bother making complaints, despite the fact that we see offensive and some highly offensive material (particularly on television, since this is our main media contact) on a daily basis. **We know that it makes no difference.** Nobody is listening, and nobody cares, either about us, what offends us, or about our children.

Question 21. Is there a need for new classification categories and, if so, what are they? Should any existing classification categories be removed or merged?

Any convergence of categories should only serve to make the classification system more easily understood, and should not allow for an R-rating for computer games.

Question 23. Should the classification criteria in the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995 (Cth)*, National Classification Code, Guidelines for the Classification of Publications and Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games be consolidated?

Under no circumstances should there be an R-classification for computer games. If material is so reprehensible as to require an R classification, then it should be refused classification.

Nor should 'adult' content be permitted into a lower category (M or MA), simply because there is no R-classification. If the material doesn't fit classification guidelines, then it should simply be refused classification.

Furthermore, the nature of computer games, where they are interactive, and addictive, means that they automatically have a much, much, higher impact than other media. We are also aware of the fact that interactive software is used for flight simulators, for training pilots. They are also used by the Military Forces, in order to train soldiers to be efficient killers. Therefore, the more violent the computer game, the more training that will take place for violence.

Question 24. Access to what content, if any, should be entirely prohibited online?

All material of a criminal nature should be entirely prohibited online. This must include abhorrent sexual violence, and pornography, paedophilia, bestiality, torture, etc. etc. The depths of human depravity know no bounds, and our classification system should be protecting us all, and most importantly, minors, from these depredations.

Question 25. Does the current scope of the Refused Classification (RC) category reflect the content that should be prohibited online?

Much more material needs to be refused classification. While the RC category may very well reflect the content that should be prohibited online, the fact that too much obscene and otherwise reprehensible material is online, and in other media areas, means that far too much is being allowed through. The classification process must be tightened.

Conclusions

We have struggled for a long time with the offensive content of the media. We have seen the standards of decency deteriorate beyond belief. We have made complaints that have constantly fallen on deaf ears. We have seen self-regulatory bodies and other vested interests take control of what our children see, hear and experience. We have further seen the most pernicious results of this toxic, violent, disrespectful, and highly sexualised culture, in the abuse of children and their innocence, and the deconstruction of society and its values.

The government can make some difference in turning back this tide. It may be far too late, in some respects, but there is a responsibility to try.

Thank you for your attention to our submission.

Yours sincerely,