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Q1:

It should improve key elements of the existing framework, namely to bring the standards of video game classification up to those seen by other forms of media, primarily film.

Q2:

The primary objective of a national classification scheme should be to inform citizens and parents of the impact of various content. It should not seek out to ban content from intelligent and educated adults on the grounds that some material might not be appropriate for children. Information should be provided to parents so that they may make an educated decision on whether they should go to any lengths to restrict content to their children based on the parents' ideas and morals, not the government's.

Q3:

In short, no. The content itself is what should be addressed. Whether a violent film is available at a cinema, video store, or on the internet makes no difference to the impact of the media itself upon whoever consumes it.

Q4:

All content should be required to go through an independent classification process before being made available to the general public through brick and mortar outlets (retail stores, cinemas, arcades, public television). This process should be completely objective and free of any bias, be it social, religious, sexual, or other.

Content available digitally should still be classified, but no attempt to censor, ban, or make illegal content which can be seen through digital channels.

Content should not be at the mercy of public interest groups who do not (and very rarely do) hold the opinions of the majority of Australian citizens.

Q5:

Content designed for children should perhaps be looked at with more scrutiny than content designed for adults. It should all go through some classification process to ensure that the material is age appropriate and a valuable resource for childhood learning or entertainment.

Q6:

No. Independent content producers should receive the same opportunity and treatment of large producers to have their material classified.

Q7:

A system should not be built on preferential treatment of some works. Either all artwork or none at all should be required to go through a classification process. It should be encouraged that exhibitors of artworks use educated judgement of the work they are showing, and provide information about the content in an area outside of the main exhibition to provide individuals and families comprehensive information about what they may see.

Q8:

In the case of audio books, they should receive the same classification and treatment of their printed versions. The current format for classifying music seems quite valuable, with only an advisory sticker/label and no restrictions on sale. It is the duty of a parent to understand the material their children are listening to (when possible) and make a judgement based on an educated opinion as to whether the content is suitable for their children.

Q9:

No. Independent content producers should receive the same opportunity and treatment of large producers to have their material classified.

Q10:

No. Classification should be across the board. It is the content which is being looked at, not specific to any audience or exhibition.

It is another matter though whether certain ratings should be allowed in a public setting, where anyone may encounter it.

Q11:

Q12:

Due to the ever changing nature of technology, it is wasteful and practically impossible to control access to online media without implementing draconian and overbearing censorship systems.

These types of national/ISP-level filters are terribly inefficient for several reasons:

- There are many ways around such filters for those determined enough to view content
- It arouses suspicions of transparency if a list of blocked content is not made available to the public. Which has the double-sided effect of advertising objectionable content for anyone who seeks it out.
- It is expensive and does not provide nearly enough coverage to match the speed at which content is distributed throughout the internet.
- False positives are abundant and many perfectly acceptable websites can become blacklisted, with little room for appeal and at detrimental cost to the website owner/s.

Q13:

The only effective method of controlling access to online content comes through basic parental responsibilities. Taking an interest on their child's online activities and being engaged in the kind of content they seek out, along with being educated in the contents of such media (as provided by a National Classification Scheme) is the best method of controlling and guiding a minor through potentially volatile or objectionable content. Made available to parents should be easy to find information about digital media and how to block specific websites on their home network.

Q14:

Once media content has left a storefront, it cannot be effectively controlled by anyone except for parents. Offline content that is restricted should only be made available to purchase with the presence and identification of a parent or legal guardian.

Q15:

Content should always display some form of ratings label. For offline media it should be displayed clearly on the case or physical product. For online media, ratings information should be embedded into the metadata of a file to be read by media playing software, or displayed for approximately 5 seconds at the beginning of the media.

Q16:

Regulation of content should come primarily by independent bodies within the appropriate industry. These bodies should be observed by the government to ensure that they are not compromised by funding from special interest groups or industry heavyweights and that they are applying ratings objectively and fairly based upon their own guidelines.

At the end of the chain, the user should by now have been provided with trustworthy information regarding the media they are about to consume, and are able to make an educated judgement on whether the content is appropriate for themselves or whomever they show it to.

Q17:

I am not intimately familiar with the current arrangements, but the industry should be responsible for classifying its content, with guidelines provided by the government.

Q18:

Ideally, all content should be looked at with the same scrutiny and attention. However I think it is fair to say that legal pornography (defined as depictions of sexual behavior between one or more consenting adults, specifically excluding sexual violence such as child abuse or real rape) is very easy to classify under the X18+ rating and requires only minimal analysis.

Q19:

In the likely outcome that larger media producers receive more attention from classification boards. There should be a system in which to provide smaller/independent content a fair opportunity to have their material classified in a fair time frame. This could come in the form of a government subsidy to allocate resources to ensure smaller media is classified, and thus encourage independent producers to create more and help develop local industry.

Q20:

The current classification categories are quite well understood in the community. The few that could be focused on to improve clarity may be the MA15+ versus the M Mature category, as well as the RC Refused Classification category. Information should be available for any title under the RC label as to why it received that rating.

Q21:

There is most certainly a need for a new classification in video games for an R18+ rating. Video games are not a type of media enjoyed only by those under 15. The ESA (The USA's video game industry body) has done studies to show the average age of a video game player is now 37 (<http://www.theesa.com/facts/gameplayer.asp>).

Perhaps the M Mature and MA15+ ratings for film could be merged together. A film suggesting parental guidance should already be covered under the PG rating, or any content which is too high impact for a PG rating should be discouraged from children under 15. With that said, with an accompanying parent or guardian, an MA15+ film should not be restricted from anyone under 15.

Q22:

Using a unified color scheme for Ratings labels which fall under similar restrictions (ie, PG for film and PG for video games) will provide the most consistency across different content.

It would be impossible to rely on more consistency between different media formats as by their nature they trigger different emotional responses. For example, music holds a much different impact than a book and it would be a disservice to try and pigeon-hole either media format into a single classification.

Q23:

Yes. There should be a single point of reference for classification standards for all types of media, to be updated whenever technology brings a new form of media.

Q24:

No content should be prohibited entirely online. It is not the duty of the government to decide what is appropriate material for an educated and informed adult. Prohibiting content only makes that content more sought out and desirable.

In the example of child pornography, instead of banning and criminalizing the viewing of such material, more efforts should be made to educate the public on the dangers of child abuse, and more resources allocated to tracking down the original producers of the content (as production of media containing child abuse - both physically and sexually - is illegal as it should be).

The nature of current technology means that any innocent citizen can accidentally see child pornography online, which becomes automatically saved in temporary data on the computer without the knowledge of the user. This in effect, turns them into criminals and is out of their control. Likewise, someone may be attacked online and have child pornography mailed or injected to their computer.

Q25:

No. Primarily because in the case of media such as video games and the absence of an R18+ rating category, material which can be easily classified in film suddenly becomes restricted from an audience who is mature enough to deal with such material.

There is also some cause of concern over this phrase:

"...that they offend against the standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults to the extent that they should not be classified."

The government should make no judgement on the standards of morality of the public when these can change wildly between individuals, families or groups. They should only have grounds for refusing classification to material in which Australian law which was broken (such as real depictions of sexual violence) as part of its production.

Q26:

Yes. Classification should be consistent across all of Australia.

Q27:

I am not familiar enough with the scheme to offer a valuable opinion on this matter.

Q28:

Yes, classification on a governmental level should be handled by the federal government and offer a single point of centralization and transparency. The actual handling of classification matters though should be handled by independent industry bodies.

Q29:

Other comments: