

CI 1817 T Giokas

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Q1:

A new framework for classification is required. The current system is broken and unworkable. One example that evidences such is the attempt to classify materials available on the internet; a task that is physically impossible given the amount of media currently available online and the rate at which it is being produced.

Q2:

A national classification scheme's objective should not be to protect the sensibilities of individuals from offense. It should not be a form of censorship. It should not allow the government to restrict freedom of speech on sensitive political topics such as drug use and euthanasia. The primary objective of a national classification scheme should be to empower consumers by giving them greater information when deciding whether or not they wish to view the contents of the classified media. Classification should provide information on what is available, not decide it.

Q3:

The technology or platform should not affect whether the content should be classified for the simple reason that it does not change the content of the subject matter. As the content is unchanged then the classification should be unchanged. As stated above: the goal of classification should be to provide information to the consumer on the content of the subject media so the consumer can make an informed decision about whether or not to engage with it. The form or platform that carries the media is irrelevant, whether it be in print, video, audio or interactive, the information about what is contained within the media should be consistent.

Q4:

The answer to the question is: Yes, however there should also be an optional self-classification system in place. Our current system requires mandatory external classification of media material. A more logical and efficient system would allow the creator of the content to classify the material. Whether the material is a short film or a lengthy 100+ hour video game, the one best suited to know and declare what is contained within the media is the creator. It is impractical to require an independent body to classify such material as a video game; for example the Grand Theft Auto 'sandbox' style games are open-world and can take over 100 hours to complete (and even then, there are infinite permutations of actions). The creators of the game (Rockstar) have the best working knowledge about what is contained within the game and what actions are possible, and it is logical for them to self-classify the game.

Contrast this with a group of independent and uninterested classifiers who have limited time and resources to classify a game; classifiers can make mistakes which lead to complaints by the public and a game being reclassified: "Child porn' Nintendo game gets PG rating" (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/06/01/3232865.htm>) and then "Dead Or Alive: Dimensions Accepted In Australia With 'M' Rating" (

[http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/35395/Dead\\_Or\\_Alive\\_Dimensions\\_Accepted\\_In\\_Australia\\_With\\_M\\_Rating.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/35395/Dead_Or_Alive_Dimensions_Accepted_In_Australia_With_M_Rating.php) ) or banned on review: "Video game banned over sex scenes" ( <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2005/07/29/1425967.htm> ). These are only a couple of occasions when the classifiers have made decisions for which there has been complaint from the public, evidencing that classifiers can make mistakes during classification as they cannot be as fully aware of the contents of the media.

The counter-argument is that video game companies will act out of self interest and classify their own games at lower ratings in order to reach a wider market and make more sales. This argument is easily countered by providing a mechanism by which the public can make a complaint about the classification of content, which could lead to a formal review by an independent classification board (as we currently have). It is in this way that content should only be reviewed and classified if it has been the subject of a complaint. It is in the company's best interest to maintain a solid reputation for providing its customers with an accurate classification, and any errors can be corrected by an independent board.

Q5:

Yes, providing the classification is designed to empower consumers (in the case of parents buying for children); again, classification should not be a method of censorship. Adults should not be restricted to view only material that is suitable for children.

Q6:

Yes; as stated above in question 4, the content producer should be the one to classify the material according to specified guidelines. However a small content producer should not be subjected to the costs of a formal review by an independent board (as stated in question 4)

Q7:

Only for providing consumer advice; restricting access is a form of censorship and should not be an objective.

Q8:

There is no reason why it shouldn't be classified in the same way as other content, providing that there are no restrictions and classification is used to empower consumers in decision-making rather than for the purposes of censorship.

Q9:

If media is available for sale then it should be self-classified, otherwise it would be impractical to classify media that is meant for a small audience or personal use.

Q10:

It should make no difference, as the content is constant no matter where it is accessed.

Q11:

If it is to be sold to the public at large or reproduced on a large scale

Q12:

Legal content should not be 'restricted'; access should not be 'controlled'. Freedom of expression and freedom of information are paramount to democracy. If a 'National Classification Scheme' is designed to restrict freedom of expression and information then it is being subverted to be used as a form of censorship. If material is illegal (such as child pornography, snuff videos etc.) then it should be

removed and the creator arrested; it is a matter for the police, not for the classification board. There is no good reason to censor the internet, not is it possible to classify it.

Q13:

Through responsible parenting. More information could be provided to parents about what products provide access to the internet (ie. iPhone, Playstation etc.) and how better to monitor and engage with children when they use those technologies. Parents can also install a software filter on a child's PC, blocking adult content, however education and effective parenting is the best solution - technology cannot replace good parenting.

Q14:

It is already well controlled, as far as I am aware.

Q15:

When it is required to be classified.

Q16:

I refer to my answer to question 4; the company/individual/business producing content should classify their own product/work. They should do this in line with guidelines set by an industry body. If users take issue with the classification set by the producer, then they should have recourse to complain to the government agency responsible. The agency then reviews the classification set and decides whether or not it is in accordance with the guidelines, and may change it if it finds that it does not accurately reflect the classification deserved by the media. They might then penalize the producer if they decide it was an intentionally incorrect classification.

Q17:

Yes, this is what I've suggested.

Q18:

All content, for reasons stated above.

Q19:

There should be no need, if self-classification/industry-classification is straightforward and easily done by the creator of the content. Any review should be paid for by the creator, or subsidised by government for small/independent studios.

Q20:

M, M15+, and MA cause confusion. They should all be replaced by MA15+. Furthermore our system should be standardised with the UK and/or the US, as globalization has created a world market, and import of media from overseas is rife. This is particularly so with the UK, with whom we share a Blu-ray and video game region. Many people import from the UK as it is cheaper than purchasing locally, they share our region for media, and it is possible to circumvent our classification system and import restricted games from the UK.

Q21:

R18+ should be created for video games. MA15+ should merge with the other M categories, as stated above in Q20.

Q22:

They should all be standardized, to reduce confusion and give consumers more information and greater choice.

Q23:

Yes, to reduce confusion and give consumers more information and greater choice.

Q24:

No content should be prohibited. If content is illegal to view then it is a matter that should be dealt with by the police.

Q25:

There is no need for a RC category; illegal material (snuff videos, child porn etc.) should be taken down & dealt with by the police, not the classification board. There should be no blurring of the lines between classification and law enforcement, otherwise there will be censorship creep.

Q26:

Yes, as media ignores borders. The states should enact a "federal" code that is mirrored in all Australian jurisdictions, to create consistency.

Q27:

A national scheme that is consistent and identical in all Australian jurisdictions that provides a guideline for self-classification of works, designed to empower consumer choice and provide redress to consumers for content producers abusing the system by mis-classifying their product. The redress would be in the form of an independent, government review body that is paid for by large content producers, and subsidized by the government for small content producers.

Q28:

Ideally yes, however a mirroring system would also suffice (such as what we have with the new Australian Consumer Law).

Q29:

By ensuring that the focus of classification is on the empowerment of consumers with information, not the censoring of media to placate the sensibilities of the socially conservative. This should be an overarching goal. No media (that is legal) should be refused classification. The baseline assumption should be that adults have the right to view whatever they so choose in the privacy of their own homes, without the intervention of the government seeking to impose its interpretation of social standards.

Other comments:

I wouldn't have heard about this submission if not for:

<http://www.abc.net.au/technology/articles/2011/07/08/3264583.htm>

Furthermore, everything it says is correct:

"They (gamers) said that they already felt disenfranchised by the government which had repeatedly ignored and dismissed their widely-supported views in favour of family groups who claimed to speak for the greater Australian public. This was in the wake of hundreds of thousands of votes in polls against the introduction of an internet filter - Senator Conroy instead said that there was widespread support for the filter and cited a small and controversial McNair poll which claimed 80 per cent of the population wanted a filter.

This was followed with the dismissal by Australia's Attorney's General and Minister for Home Affairs, Brendan O'Conner, of some 60,000 Federal Government sponsored public consultation submissions on game classification in which 99.8 per cent of respondents were in favour of having the new classification. In the subsequent SCAG meeting no decision was made and concerns were voiced as

to why two non-gaming representatives were asked to represent Australian community views - the Australian Christian Lobby's Jim Wallace and Professor Elizabeth Handsley of the Australian Council for Children and the Media group - both of whom were leading critics of the proposal."

I agree with these statements wholeheartedly. I really do hope that this submission will do some good.