

CI 1872 T Wakefield

First name: Tim

Last name: Wakefield

Q1:

Modifying the existing framework and applying it consistently will be sufficient.

Q2:

Providing appropriate information to consumers based upon the content, so that they may decide what content is appropriate for themselves and/or minors under their care. It should not be used to censor content that is otherwise legal.

Q3:

The whole point of a classification system is to provide consistent information to consumers about the content. If there are discrepancies and inconsistencies between film and television or between film and video games, then consumers will simply dismiss the ratings system as irrelevant - which is exactly what is happening now. This question is evaluating whether the internet should be classified - the answer to this is a resounding NO. The internet is a tool for communication and to ensure that freedom of speech and freedom of expression is guaranteed, it must remain free from government interference.

Q4:

Pre-empting or reacting to complaints should not be the basis of a classification system. If this was/is the case, the system is open to abuse by lobby or interest groups. No person has the right to go through life without being offended, and it is not government's role to protect citizens from offence. Controversial content should be the subject of intelligent and rational debate amongst citizens within the media and online, and not subject to knee-jerk reactions from government.

Q5:

This is really two separate, unrelated questions. If a film, video game etc. has an impact, it should be noted: eg. "High impact violence / coarse language". However, the impact alone should not alter the rating. If a film contains no violence apart from one high impact scene, and would otherwise be classified PG, it should stay that way, but with appropriate notation to prepare consumers.

If a piece of content has been designed for children, such as Teletubbies or The Wiggles, it is obviously for children and classifying it is unnecessary.

Q6:

If this was the case, the system is open to abuse by large producers and distributors, and implies that independent producers/distributors will be more strictly policed. The reach of the material does matter - it is for this reason that television, film and video games require classification, but books, music and online content should remain free from classification. The internet is something that has to be deliberately accessed - you cannot accidentally use the internet. If you encounter pornography or violence on the internet, it is due to deliberately seeking it by typing an address or clicking a link. It isn't the same as changing the channel on the TV to a station and being surprised by a violent movie you didn't know was on.

Q7:

"Artwork" is a subjective term; personally I consider some forms of short films, documentaries and video games to be art. The more generally held definition of "artwork" encompasses sculpture, painting, photography and such. There should be a line dividing 'artwork' and 'media', and only 'media' should be rated. Classifying art will lead to censorship, and censorship of art must not be allowed to happen. If an artist is forced to change a creation in order for it to be shown, their integrity is being compromised, and creativity and originality will be stifled. This will lead to sanitised creations and controversial artists being ostracised by galleries, museums etc for not conforming to imposed standards, to the detriment of art and culture. Media is widely available; art is not. Special effort is required to view art; effort is not required to consume media. You can accidentally consume media that you find inappropriate if information is not available, and it is on precisely this concept that a classification system should be founded. It must not be used to stifle creativity and limit freedom of speech and freedom of expression.

Q8:

No. Music falls into the same category as paintings, sculptures, photography etc. Personally, I find manufactured pop music to be more offensive than hard rock music that uses so-called explicit language. Radio stations police themselves regarding music that is commonly deemed to be offensive - listeners will change stations if the music is not to their liking, and advertisers will abandon the station, encouraging self-regulation. Regarding CDs or digital downloads: realistically a person will only purchase music to their tastes. It strikes me as odd that a person would purchase music that they had not previously heard or that they find offensive.

Q9:

Size shouldn't, but composition should. As mentioned before, if a piece of content is designed for children, like The Wiggles, Sesame Street etc, there is no need to classify it - it is obviously designed for consumption by children. If something is designed for adults, it should be treated as though it was designed for adults, and not as though it was designed for children - on this, video games are particularly singled out.

Q10:

The rating should be based on the content, regardless of whether it is to be viewed in public or at home.

Q11:

No comment.

Q12:

There should be NO control of access to online content. The internet is not like film or television. It is a communications device, more like a telephone than the aforementioned examples, and this is precisely how it should be treated. If particular pieces of content violate other laws, such as child pornography, then the creators and distributors of that should be prosecuted under existing legislation. Otherwise protection of freedom of speech and freedom of expression should be the dominant factor.

Classifying internet content is virtually a waste of time - the volume of content on the internet is such (and constantly growing) that it is impossible for anyone to check and approve everything. On top of this, controlling access to the internet, or rather introducing infrastructure that allows a government to control the internet, has dangerous implications for freedom of speech: this type of control is open to

abuse by government. China is a notorious example of what can happen when a government has too much control over the internet. This type of suggested control is wasteful (of taxpayers' money and time) and harmful to freedom and democracy.

Q13:

By parents monitoring their children's usage, and by better education of children of the issues, the content and the consequences. A child should not be allowed unmonitored access to the internet, but it is the responsibility of parents, not the government, to ensure this happens.

Q14:

I believe the measures currently in place are sufficient. Access to sexually explicit magazines is restricted by retailers, who are required to check identification before purchase.

Q15:

In the case of films, DVDs and video games the current markings are sufficient. All trailers bear the rating, and all packaging of the DVDs and games are clearly marked.

Q16:

I believe that government should have as little involvement as possible. As an adult, I am capable of making decisions on what is appropriate for me. For my children, I am capable of making decisions on what is appropriate for them by finding information on films and television programmes on the internet. I do accept that some people do not possess the skills to do this, and for this reason the classification system should exist - but it should not be used as a censorship tool.

Q17:

Industry, as a stakeholder, needs to have a say on this process. When creating a film or a television programme, the producer has a target audience in mind and knows what is appropriate for that demographic and will self-regulate accordingly. Generally self-regulation is sufficient, and government does not need to get involved.

Q18:

If the content is obvious, no classification is necessary. i.e. sport, children's film and programmes.

Q19:

Independent films should be subsidised to encourage diversity, creativity and originality amongst film makers. The same applies to small, independent software developers - Australia severely lags behind the rest of the world in this market.

Q20:

I believe they are fairly well understood. If there is any confusion it would lie between the M and MA15+ ratings.

Q21:

Most definitely yes - there needs to be an R18+ category for video games to prevent children from accessing inappropriate games: Bioshock 2, Modern Warfare 2, and Aliens vs Predator were all classified as R18+ in Europe and the US as they were designed for adults, but have been inappropriately classified in Australia as MA15+ because there is no R18+ category, and to ban these games from sale would have lead to an outcry (and indeed did with AvP) and show the inadequacy of the existing system. The same applies to Left 4 Dead 2, another game that was designed for adults, but was gratuitously sanitised to try and make it suitable for children. Mortal Kombat is another example, recently banned because it was unsuitable for children, although it was designed for adults.

However, unedited imported versions of both are freely available on the internet, rendering the classification board's decision irrelevant. All of this indicates that the existing system, when applied to video games, is not fit for purpose and requires alteration. The age of the average gamer in Australia is 30 years old, and as such, should not be treated like a child and allowed to make their own decisions. The mentality amongst older Australians and regulators that video games are created solely for children needs to be abandoned.

The 'Refused Classification' category should be replaced by a 'Not Classified' category, with appropriate warnings that the content may be offensive to some consumers. Censorship is abhorrent in a vibrant and healthy democracy, and individuals should be allowed to make their own decisions on what they view. Something that violates other legislation law should be dealt with accordingly.

Q22:

These classifications should only apply to film, television and video games. Classifications should be consistently applied to film, television and video games, with each one treated the same as the other, which is not what is currently happening. The current markings are appropriate.

Q23:

If this is asking whether films and video games are classified under the same code, then I agree. Without knowing the documentation in depth, I cannot give a more detailed answer.

Q24:

No content should be prohibited online. To ensure a healthy and vibrant democracy, the internet needs to remain free from controls. Any content that violates other laws, such as child pornography or 'snuff' films, should be prosecuted in accordance with relevant legislation.

Q25:

The 'Refused Classification' category is a massive, sweeping category that applies to everything that hasn't been through the administrative process. The sheer volume of content on the internet prevents everything from being classified, and to imply that it is government's responsibility to classify everything implies a degree of hubris. It also implies a degree of distrust that we, as free-thinking adults, are incapable of making decisions as to what is appropriate for us, and appropriate for our children. There should be nothing that is refused classification (i.e. censored) - the category should be changed to 'Not Classified', and a warning stating that the content is potentially offensive, and left up to the individual to decide whether that content is appropriate for him/herself.

Q26:

Yes, all states and territories within Australia should use the same system, but should retain the power to dissent.

Q27:

No comment.

Q28:

Decentralisation is preferable: the states should always retain the power to override the Commonwealth should it wish to do so.

Q29:

By involving government as little as possible.

Other comments:

In conclusion:

- 'Classification' should only apply to film, television and video games, as these are so widely pervasive of our modern culture that information is required for those people who are unable to obtain the information independently as to what is suitable for them and their children. Across these types of media, classification should be consistent, and an R18+ category is imperative for all of these.
- Books, music, paintings and sculptures are forms of artwork and should remain free from classification.
- The internet is a device for communication, and ensuring it remains free from control is necessary to ensuring freedom of speech and freedom of expression. Government control of the internet is open to abuse, as has been demonstrated in Iran, China, Egypt and Libya.