

CI 2121 D Williams

Dear ALRC,

Here is my Classification online submission. I had difficulties with the online form, so I have attached and pasted into the email below.

Yours,  
Dale J Williams.

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#### Approach to the Inquiry

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 existing framework for classification has some ratings that cause confusion and inconsistency between media formats. Starting from scratch with clearer definitions may be advantageous. Also, classification itself should be revised to allow for a barrier for entry for low price, low distribution productions (independent movies, independent games).

Why classify and regulate content?

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

Consistency between formats. Games, television and movies should be rated on the same scale. The various ratings should be named with clear, concise language. For example M and MA are often confused. M (mature) should be renamed T (teen). An R rating should be carried across the board. Classification enforcement should only be applied to publicly displayed products.

What content should be classified and regulated?

Question 3. Should the technology or platform used to access content affect whether content should be classified, and, if so, why?

Online television and/or video doesn't carry official classification yet retail video does. Mobile games can be bought without classification, yet retail and downloadable console games can not. This seems to be inconsistent. As distribution moves online, the library available to consumers, on all formats, grows considerably. A system to allow self-regulation that works in a more reactionary capacity is more fitting.

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

All content should be self-classified up until a complaint or public display.

Question 5. Should the potential impact of content affect whether it should be classified? Should content designed for children be classified across all media?

All classified content should be classified to the same standards and guidelines, whether it be the Classification board or self classification.

Question 6. Should the size or market position of particular content producers and distributors, or the potential mass market reach of the material, affect whether content should be classified?

Yes. Smaller studios, whose films or games do not appear in public should not require classification.

Question 7. Should some artworks be required to be classified before exhibition for the purpose of restricting access or providing consumer advice?

Artwork classification should be advised, not enforced.

Question 8. Should music and other sound recordings (such as audio books) be classified or regulated in the same way as other content?

Content that is not visible should have lessened classification requirements.

Question 9. Should the potential size and composition of the audience affect whether content should be classified?

The size of an audience will likely reflect the amount of advertising, but the regulation should not be focused on it.

Question 10. Should the fact that content is accessed in public or at home affect whether it should be classified?

Yes. Content that is displayed in public should be classified.

Question 11. In addition to the factors considered above, what other factors should influence whether content should be classified?

Content not displayed in public should be given a recommendation only.

How should access to content be controlled?

Question 12. What are the most effective methods of controlling access to online content, access to which would be restricted under the National Classification Scheme?

No global methods. Parental access control should be local and opt-in.

Question 13. How can children's access to potentially inappropriate content be better controlled online?

Locally - parents should be able to filter themselves, perhaps the filtering facilities should be advertised more. This is an issue for parents, not government departments.

Question 14. How can access to restricted offline content, such as sexually explicit magazines, be better controlled?

This question seems to imply access is a problem. It should not. This is an issue for parents, not government departments.

Question 15. When should content be required to display classification markings, warnings or consumer advice?

On retail display or in product descriptions.

Who should classify and regulate content?

Question 16. What should be the respective roles of government agencies, industry bodies and users in the regulation of content?

Government agencies should monitor an industry regulated body, which classifies content that is displayed publicly. Content that is not displayed publicly should be self-classified.

Question 17. Would co-regulatory models under which industry itself is responsible for classifying content, and government works with industry on a suitable code, be more effective and practical than current arrangements?

Yes.

Question 18. What content, if any, should industry classify because the likely classification is obvious and straightforward?

Anything and everything - the board should monitor this, encourage the industry to act responsibly.

Classification fees

Question 19. In what circumstances should the Government subsidise the classification of content? For example, should the classification of small independent films be subsidised?

Classification of small independent films and games should not be required.

Classification categories and criteria

Question 20. Are the existing classification categories understood in the community? Which classification categories, if any, cause confusion?

With the exception of the difference between M and MA, yes - though that is a glaring fault.

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?

Yes - if only to provided clearer language and adult access:

G - general

PG - parental guidance

T - teen  
MA - mature audience  
R - restricted

Question 22. How can classification markings, criteria and guidelines be made more consistent across different types of content in order to recognise greater convergence between media formats?

The classification advice should be the same. The way the content is consumed should have no bearing on classification.

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?

Yes.

Refused Classification (RC) category

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

None.

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

No. Whilst the consumption of some material should be illegal and policed, the prevention of it should not be enforced via technological means.

Reform of the cooperative scheme

Question 26. Is consistency of state and territory classification laws important, and, if so, how should it be promoted?

Yes. Australia isn't big enough for media companies to have to deliver different products to individual states, also the policing of online purchasing of material will be impossible between states.

Question 27. If the current Commonwealth, state and territory cooperative scheme for classification should be replaced, what legislative scheme should be introduced?

A national scheme. Consistency is key.

Question 28. Should the states refer powers to the Commonwealth to enable the introduction of legislation establishing a new framework for the classification of media content in Australia?

Yes.

Other issues

Question 29. In what other ways might the framework for the classification of media content in Australia be improved?

Classification needs to be less enforced. Recommendation and encouragement for self-classification and parental involvement in access to material is preferable to a controlling body and enforced laws.