



Australian Government

SCREEN
AUSTRALIA

Submission to the ALRC National Classification Scheme Review

ISSUED JULY 2011

National Classification Scheme Review

Screen Australia welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Australian Law Reform Commission's National Classification Scheme Review (Classification Review).

Screen Australia does not seek to provide a detailed response to the questions raised in the Issues Paper but rather to provide an overview of Screen Australia's focus and interest for the purpose of further consultation with the ALRC.

As the key Federal Government funding body for the Australian screen production industry, Screen Australia is charged with the support, promotion and development of a highly creative, innovative and commercially sustainable Australian screen industry.

The screen sector is in a period of radical transformation with distribution mechanisms converging and content access points fragmenting. The 2011 Convergence Review which is running concurrently with the Classification Review is a response to the changing media landscape and similarly seeks to interrogate the suitability of the current regulatory framework.

One of the principal challenges for the Convergence Review will be formulating an equitable regulatory response to increasingly divergent sources of content. This growing plurality of distribution platforms also has ramifications for the classification system. The Classification Review is therefore timely and welcomed.

Screen Australia has compiled researchⁱ using Roy Morgan Single Source data which identified changing patterns of participation in screen activities by audiences, the overwhelming trend being the addition by people of new screen activities to old.

Audiences, particularly those in a younger demographic, are for example increasingly consuming content from a range of sources. Convergence and the increasing availability of fast internet services via the Federal Government's NBN provide audiences with increasing choices about how, what, when and where screen content is consumed.

When over two thirds of people aged 14 years and over regularly consume screen content on screen access points such as cinema, video, streaming or downloading online video in addition to television, there is an increasing need for consistency of the classification of content across these different screen access points.

Screen Australia encourages the Classification Review to examine the feasibility of a national classification system that addresses this converged media landscape across all forms of screen access including cinema, free-to-air television, subscription television, narrowcast television, community television, video (DVD and Blu-ray), online and mobile.

A uniform approach to classification will provide clarity and certainty for audiences, content creators and content distributors alike.

Screen Australia would be pleased to provide further information including its research, as would be helpful to the ALRC.

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ⁱ Beyond The Box Office: Understanding Audiences in a Multi-Screen World
www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research/beyond_box_office.aspx