

CI 865 M Sharpe

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Q1:

A new framework. The current system no longer adequately reflects the way we consume classifiable material, nor the nature and breadth of media we have access to.

Q2:

Ensuring a clear, consistent approach to classification across all available media. Allowing industries to self regulate where appropriate, as already happens with TV and Radio. Oversight and the provision of guidelines for content creators, a clear framework for consumers and a process to handle disputed classification ratings.

Q3:

No. The goal of classification should be informing consumers and encouraging content creators to provide that in an honest and open manner is the best course of action. Violence is still violence if it's seen in a movie, on TV or over the internet.

Q4:

Any content that is the subject of a complaint should be subject to investigation and a possible adjustment of classification, if appropriate.

Any content that is for sale within Australia should be classified, either by our Classification Board, an industry supported classification system or a self-classification.

Q5:

No, the potential impact of content should play no part in deciding whether it should be classified. Having items available on store shelves with no classification information available could potentially confuse consumers.

Content designed for children should certainly be classified as it is adults who will typically be deciding what the children watch and they need the ratings advice to make an informed decision.

Q6:

No.

Q7:

All artwork should be classified. Nudity is still nudity, violent images are still violent, etc. Consumers can then decide for themselves.

Restricting access should only occur in extreme cases. Adults should be allowed to decide for themselves what they will view.

Q8:

Yes. We have warnings on movies for Coarse Language, why not sound recordings? It's the same words, it should be treated the same way.

Q9:

No.

Q10:

No.

Q11:

None.

Q12:

Parents/guardians can restrict access to content using a number of commercial or free services.

Adults can decide for themselves whether they want to see "restricted" material.

Material that it is against the law to possess or access - e.g. child pornography - is better dealt with at the source, not the destination. Shut the sources down, in cooperation with overseas authorities if necessary, and prosecute those found to be regularly accessing such material.

Trying to "control" access is like trying to use a sieve as a bucket. It doesn't work, so you spend money on a better sieve, which still doesn't work...

Q13:

There are many software packages designed specifically to deal with this problem that parents can use. Additionally, supervision and education is important. This isn't new technology anymore and the solutions are there for people who want to use them.

Q14:

Better education? If vendors are selling sexually explicit magazines to people under the age of 18 that suggests a problem with the vendor, not a problem with the controls in place. Institute random checks and penalties for outlets found in breach.

There's no need to further restrict access to such material, just consistent enforcement of the existing restrictions.

Q15:

If it has a classification at all, it should be required to display it, plainly. Where specific warnings or consumer advice are appropriate (violence, nudity, horror etc) they should be in clear printing alongside the classification marking.

Q16:

Government agencies should assume more of an advisory and enforcement role in classification, setting the guidelines for what content is appropriate at what level of the classification system and doing spot checks and consumer prompted reviews of material.

Industry bodies should be given the right to self regulate, with a stipulation that repeated or egregious breaches of expected behaviour will see that right revoked. This works well in North America with the ESRB system and in Europe with PEGI.

Users should have access to all content, regardless of classification or the means by which they access it. The goal should be for consumers to know what they're getting into and making a decision, rather than the Government saying no, you may not watch this.

Q17:

Yes. Industries are doing this in other, much larger, regions than Australia and are well aware of how to make this sort of system work well for everyone involved.

It is also a lot more practical, since content producers overseas can do all of their classification work in one location, should they choose, simply adjusting labels when necessary. Having to submit content to our Classification Board is a hurdle that results in some things just not coming here, or they get sold with no ratings advice whatsoever.

Q18:

All of it, whether it's obvious and straightforward or not.

Q19:

Assuming industry self-regulation of classifications there should not be a subsidy from the Government, have the industry itself contribute to any running costs. The Government's contribution is the development and maintenance of the guidelines and enforcement, where appropriate.

Q20:

M/MA 15+ causes confusion, but otherwise I believe the classification categories are well understood. The lack of an R18+ rating for videogames is not well understood, with many in the community assuming that such a rating already exists and that therefore any game that is refused classification must be outside even those bounds.

Q21:

M/MA15+ should either be merged or more clearly delineated, possibly by renaming one of them. All categories should also apply across all media. If movies and magazines rated R18+ are allowed there should be an equivalent rating for video games. It's what the community expects and would resolve a lot of tension surrounding certain games that push the limits of the MA15+ rating.

Q22:

Simply use the same markings, criteria and guidelines across all types of content, rather than using a different rule for certain content - like computer games. People will then always associate certain markings and warnings with specific kinds of material and know where they, personally, want to draw the line.

Q23:

Yes. If it's all in one place, you only need to check that one place.

Q24:

Prohibited? Anything that it is illegal to access, such as child pornography, should of course be prohibited. This is already the case.

Actively interfering with online access is another matter entirely. Murdering people is prohibited but we don't go around locking everyone up "just in case".

Q25:

No, there are topics such as the discussion of Euthanasia that can fall under RC that should not be prohibited from being discussed or read about. There are likely other examples where a community expectation of a right to free expression should also be respected.

Q26:

Consistency is extremely important. Nobody should be barred from accessing certain material because they live in one state rather than another. Nobody should be allowed to buy classified material in one state and then take it into a second state and be prosecuted. It's silly and more importantly it is confusing.

Have the same system nationwide and the same restrictions on purchases and possession.

Q27:

An industry regulated system, with Commonwealth - not State - oversight and cooperation.

Q28:

YES. The situation where one obstructionist Attorney-General from South Australia was allowed to dictate to the entire nation is unacceptable.

Q29:

When the new guidelines are being drafted, ask for community consultation on what THEY expect from certain classification thresholds. They're supposed to be there to assist us, in the main, so it makes sense to gauge where we actually stand.

Other comments:

I think the Classification System needs a complete overhaul and a shift away from Government regulation. The current system worked well in the past, when there wasn't as much content that required classification, but the emergence of the internet has shown that it is simply impractical to expect a Government body to shoulder the entire burden of processing it all.

And, for the most part, there's not really any reason for them to do so.

The various content creation industries don't really want to sell pornography or "hyper violence" to children. Self regulation in other countries has shown that it does work and doesn't lead to issues like that. If they're creating content for adults it's because they expect adults will buy it.

It's also well past time that computer games/videogames were treated as an entertainment medium that reaches well into adulthood. The lack of an R18+ "adult" rating puts us out of step with community expectations and with nations around the world... or even our neighbours, New Zealand. The bare minimum this review process should achieve is fixing that hole in our ratings system.