

# **A Few Thoughts About the Current Classification Scheme**

Hello to whoever is reading, hopefully those at the Department of Communications and the Arts. I wish to give my thoughts about the appropriate nature and criteria of classifying films and video games...

To set the scene, I will provide context of where my beliefs come from. At the time of writing, I am only a mere two months away from my 18th birthday. I am an avid film enthusiast, with a broad range from arthouse films to mainstream cinema. I have built a very high tolerance for content, and am willing to experience very unique and provocative expressions of art. I also believe in free will, that anyone is free to experience entertainment of their choosing. Even your current Classification Scheme Code shares that principle. Therefore, I ask you this simple question- why, in our day and age, there are still films and video games banned in our country, despite being works of art and expression? Furthermore, I also ask for the clearer and more consistent definition of what constitutes Moderate, Strong, and High Impact material.

(For the following, I will use examples of films and video games to illustrate and demonstrate points.)

A work of art, specifically films and video games, is a collaborative medium. Upon the creation of the work, everyone involved with the project consented to participating in the creation of such, and upon release, people consent themselves to go and experience it, with some form of knowledge of what they're about to experience beforehand. It is common knowledge that if a work is classified R18+, the content is high in impact, and therefore only adults should be able to experience the material. They are not forced to watch the program, and they are free to choose whatever they want to watch. Sometimes there are programs, despite being works of fiction, that are considered to be excessive for the tastes of the mainstream public. That does not mean everyone does not want to watch the program; Rather, there are still people who are willing to go and watch the program, with knowledge of what they are going to experience, and are prepared in doing so. Should these people be discouraged from the entertainment of their choosing? Should they be punished for their actions, despite no harm being done? Then why are they barred, sometimes even prosecuted for their choice in entertainment? For clarification, yes, I do believe that content such as child pornography and bestiality should be barred, as harm was involved in the creation of these works,

not to mention that said works are illegal in every part of the world. But with works of fiction, nothing in the work is 100% real, and all impact is a matter of personal taste. I should also mention that upon looking at lists of films currently banned in Australia, a number of them have cult followings, and therefore anyone watching these films would certainly have knowledge of them, and only really appeal to select audiences. I can guarantee that the general public would not come out in hordes to see films such as Pink Flamingos, Caligula, Nekromantik, and Ken Park. The audiences of these films would certainly be aware of the notoriety surrounding them, and are prepared for such. Therefore, in keeping with the idea that adults should be able to freely choose their entertainment, **I propose that currently banned films, since they are works of fiction, and that an adult can tell that they aren't reality, are to no longer be banned. If you are still in doubt over this decision, I suggest that these certain films are to be packaged and distributed in a way that anyone wishing to watch them is properly informed of what its contents are. Perhaps plain packaging a la cigarettes.**

I would also like to extend my viewpoint of films towards video games as well. Personally, I believe that the way video games are classified and handled is utterly shameful. Yes, video games have the aspect of interactivity, but likewise with films, **they are not real life.** Any adult who cannot separate the world of video games and films from reality is mentally unwell and is in need of proper help. In comparison to other countries and their attitudes towards video games, Australia is draconian and is backwards in the government level. Even the United Kingdom, which is arguably more conservative and uptight about the classification of programs compared to Australia, is more liberal with video games. Less than ten games have faced censorship issues in the United Kingdom. Over here? Well over **FORTY** games. And we didn't have the R18+ rating for video games until 2013, and even then we still have games being banned. **Again, I propose that currently banned video games, despite the level of interactivity, are still works of fiction and therefore are to no longer be banned. I also ask for a review of the guidelines for video games, and that specific areas such as Drugs and Sex linked to Incentives are no longer grounds for a Refused Classification.**

One final area I want to touch on is the basis for what content constitutes Moderate, Strong, and High Impact. With the current guidelines, any work that contains material of Moderate, Strong, and High Impact are classified as M, MA15+, and R18+ respectively. **I propose that we go back to the previous system of Low, Medium and High Impact in the specific classification.** There are many films that, while sharing the same classification, do not belong in the same level of impact. Such examples I can use

with the M rating are Avengers: Endgame, Shazam, Die Hard, and Terminator 2. The first two contains scenes of violence that are heavily stylised and have very little impact/intensity. The latter two contains scenes of violence that are objectively intense and are quite bloody and violent. And yet, all four share the same rating. In the case of Avengers: Endgame and Terminator 2, both contain the same indicator of “Violence”, not mentioning its intensity. While our current guidelines classify the violence of both as Moderate Impact, I respectfully disagree. I do not recall scenes of people being visibly impaled through the eye in Avengers: Endgame. By reverting back to the previous system, it allows for a more consistent guideline of what to expect in any film; Only mentioning “Violence” is vague on the level of violence. With the previous system, I’d personally classify Avengers: Endgame as M for “Low Level Stylised Violence”, and Terminator 2 as M for “High Level Action Violence”.

Hopefully, to the reader of this document, you’d be able to gain an insight to what I personally believe needs to change in our Classification Scheme. I feel there are areas in need of desperate revision, and that we need to create a classification system that is not only more open, but also more informative.

Sincerely,

Aidan W. Higginson.