

Revision and Presentation of Potential Classification Changes

While the National Classification Code, Classification Guidelines for Films and Classification Guidelines for Computer Games have been a help for Australian citizens since the formation in 1995, the legislations aren't up to today's standards. The current system is open to judgements made regarding a person's emotions, this can be both a positive and a negative. It is also lacking the response regarding free games on various platforms, such as "Steam" by Valve Corporation®. The current system is also based off of standards that aren't contemporary, or don't align with the digital age society. Such decisions could improve the Australian entertainment and media industry (which supported \$35.47bn to Australia's total GDP (~2%)[1])

The ACB, the Modern Citizen and the RC Classification

First and foremost, the RC has been a classification used for only the most disturbing pieces of entertainment to Australians and has stopped some rather grotesque pieces of entertainment from entering Australia in the past couple of decades. However, that's just the issue in this day in age. In this new era, the newer generation mentality is that of individualism and freedom, rather than cohort-focused and conformed.

Newer generation of Aussies are more aware of what they pick and choose, and sometimes what they want isn't there. This can hurt the Australian entertainment industry somewhat, as it would cause Aussies to go a piracy site and search for the film/show/computer game via a Virtual Private Network (commonly referred to as a "VPN"). This can subsequently cause potential financial hurt for that specific piece of entertainment, as it could've earned the creator money, had it not been banned in Australia.

Producers and developers of games, films and shows have also encouraged fans to pirate to either keep up-to-date or if it isn't available. One such piece is Hotline Miami. That game has been a hit with gamers worldwide, including Australians. However, due to the game being banned, it has caused quite the upset. One comment on the Steam Community forums of Hotline Miami 2 saying:

(In response to "Anime Control"s: "why is hotline Miami 2 banned in australia?)"
"Good question. We have idiots in charge that come down on certain games inconsistently. The devs of this game are really cool though I think they made a statement saying to just pirate it." – Xen0tech (Steam tag)

Another such comment was made:

(In response to "zeno"s: "Though I honestly feel horrible, I might pirate it. I'll probably just buy it and gift it to a friend when i get out of here, because you know, i'd rather not play a masterpiece of a game and leave it without paying. Anyways, thanks for replying, might get a mod to lock this thread")
"If it makes you feel better, the devs have said they prefer aussies to pirate and play rather than not play^[2].

The developers of the game would rather Aussies to pirate the game and not send them money. The newer generation of Aussie gamers aren't too fussed about "sexual violence" or "too much violence" in games, as they recognised that they are FICTIONAL.

Many news media outlets have been providing this false narrative that gamers are psychopaths or many are being influenced to commit actions for playing games such as

the “Grand Theft Auto” franchise, “Doki Doki Literature Club”, “Call of Duty”, or for seeing films such as “Joker”, etc., despite no feasible scientific data to connect the two together. As a member of the newer generation, I would rather see a game, film, etc. that is extremely graphic (whether it be in terms of sex, violence, both, drug use, etc.) in stores and not buy it rather than have it be banned outright, as I know someone WILL enjoy that piece of entertainment. Banning entertainment hasn’t been healthy for the business nor for the consumers of the newer generation, as it restricts creativity.

The removal of the Refused Classification rating would do many benefits for the newer generation, as it allows for more creative freedom for independent filmmakers and game developers worldwide; will make the entertainment market more free than in the past; generate more revenue for businesses, game developers, publishers, film directors, producers, actors/actresses and more, which can lead to a more sustain lifestyle in the industry and will give the ACB a better reputation with Aussie Gamers, the entertainment industry and community as a whole. It will also loosen the strain of the Classification process as well, since it wouldn’t have to be implemented into a database that then has to be sent to various government departments, relevant private/public businesses and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Instead, either R18+ should be kept for only the most disgusting, brutal, vulgar, sexualized, drug-rampant, thematically controversial pieces of entertainment; or to replace the RC rating with a separate rating that can only be sold in certain stores (kinda like New Zealand’s, “Restricted” rating).

However, don’t get the wrong idea. Seeing a real person being filmed ACTUALLY getting stabbed, raped, or brutalized in any other way, isn’t what the overwhelming majority of people wanna see. However, there are already State and Federal laws that prevent this from legally happening. This can also be used as evidence in the courts.

Whilst initial backlash will occur, this will be from the older generations who were conformed to the past generation ways, or the overwhelming minority of the newer generation who’re too sensitive (or rather, they have nothing better to do with their lives and just want to watch other people suffer). They will also attempt to bring their younger offsprings, family members, friends, other children, etc. to try and enforce a stigma. However, even then those people would have pieces of entertainment that they would like to see... if they weren’t banned.

Gambling Accessibilities in Games.

Games have been around for many years, such as in-browser games that you can find on Newgrounds.com, Kongregate.com such as the “Rebuild” series, even the games found on Facebook like “Farmville”, even other forms of entertainment, such as the critically-acclaimed fourth-wall-breaking, psychological horror visual novel, “Doki Doki Literature Club” by Team Salvato (which received quite the cult following). Many of these games have been made out of passion and genuine desire to showcase a particular message (such as other forms of entertainment) and not intended to make a profit. And have been kept up-to-date in good-faith. However, there’s also the other side of the spectrum, such as Fortnite, Apex Legends, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (“CS:GO”) and, more recently, many Electronic Arts (EA) published and/or developed games. These latter listed games have all one thing in common, “Lootcrates”, or “microtransactions”.

Lootcrates and microtransactions have been rather controversial and, unfortunately, a commonplace in video games. Both paid and free. Most of these microtransactions, you have to purchase from the in-game store with either in-game credits (which you have to purchase with real life currency) or with real life currency. These microtransactions then generate completely random items, leaving what you get up to chance, you could end up

with a “Rare” knife skin, a “Legendary” character outfit, a “common” décor of anything for a lot of things in-game. Sometimes, they even put necessary items in these, forcing gamers to pay more money to continue with a product they already paid for (if they paid at all). These microtransactions have been a major talking point. Some countries even stating that these can be considered: “gambling”. While this wouldn’t be too much of a problem (as some games have always had gambling aspects), the fact is nowadays, these microtransactions are in games which don’t have an age restriction, or an age restriction that isn’t R18+, in Australia (such as Fortnite and CS:GO). Apex Legends, League of Legends, Battlefield 4, Battlefield 1, have similar systems but with the exception being these crates can also be earned from completing online matches via a “drop”. These drops, more-or-less, occur when someone levels up or acquire achievements of some kind. Whilst CS:GO also has this in their game system (to a degree), they do it much less frequently (sometimes even completely random).

Whilst the removal of the RC classification would do wonders, it would benefit the newer generation to ensure that they know that a game that they’ll buy either contains gambling content that involves actual currency, or to create legislation that limits those kinds game systems to be classified 18+ (to ensure consistency with national, state and local legislations).

Summarisation

Whilst classification shouldn’t be outright lenient, the particular aspects of the National Classification Code (and it’s relevant legislations) needs to be updated to fit the contemporary societal structure and overall public mentality of individualism and freedom. The replacement or termination of the Refused Classification Rating will ensure more creative freedom, a positive public perception to the classification board and the benefit of capitalising on the incentives such content will provide to the approximate 2% that the Australian entertainment and media industry is currently supporting to Australia’s GDP. Also, the strict enforcement of Australia’s Gambling Laws should also be used in games that deal with a system in games that encourage, force and/or provide the opportunity for consumers to give actual currency for randomly generated in-game items.

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[1]<https://www.statista.com/statistics/237783/value-of-the-entertainment-and-media-market-in-australia/>

[2]https://www.reddit.com/r/pcmasterrace/comments/2si0b2/i_contacted_jonatan_s%C3%B6derstr%C3%B6m_hotline_miami_2/