

In reference to Terms of Reference “the classification of publications, films and computer games”

The Classification Branch effectively censors all this content by refusing classification, meaning it can't be bought, hired or sold. In reality unless there is content which is illegal (e.g. child abuse, in which case it should be referred to Police) there should be no refusal of classification. Adults are capable of making decisions about what they read, see and play.

Content refused classification is simply obtained overseas resulting in lost sales, jobs and taxes. Sometimes even artists lose as it's downloaded illegally.

Most ratings (G, PG, M, MA15+) are targeting adults to determine what is appropriate for their children. Of course the presumption is in the absence of such a system, parents would not be competent to choose appropriate content for their children OR no such alternative system would exist.

Both these are false. Parents are perfectly capable of looking at reviews online, but they won't need to because most content is either from US/UK/EU where it has a rating similar to ours or is rated by one of these jurisdictions, so with no Australian rating, we would almost certainly see the foreign rating to avoid losing sales to concerned parents, especially given the cost of displaying the image is zero.

Multiple systems may be too complex, but this will likely be resolved with the US rating becoming the de-facto standard, but we could also transition by allowing US/UK/other ratings to show an “Australian Equivalent” like so:

AU Rating	G	PG	M	MA15+	R18+
US Rating	G	PG	PG13	R	NC17
UK Rating	U	PG and 12/12A	15	15	18 and R18

This would save millions in fees (Classification Branch recovered \$7.636 million from applicants in 2011-2013) [2] and means these fees aren't then passed on to Australians who see this content, many of which didn't ask for the content to have an Australian rating in addition to the US, UK and other ratings already received by the content.

Allowing foreign ratings would also speed up the process of content coming from foreign jurisdictions to Australia reducing the need for people to download it illegally from foreign sources.

Even Australian content is often rated overseas so it can be exported so is not needed to be rated by the Classification Board and supports Australian content by reducing their fees.

Finally for Australian only content, this could either be submitted to either foreign classification boards for the benefit of parents or simply be unclassified if they choose. It would be up to the content makers to convince parents that the content is appropriate for their children, and I'm sure they will take appropriate steps to use an established ratings system (likely adopting a popular system such as the US's G/PG style) to do so.

In conclusion the Classification Branch should be abolished as it is an expensive and accomplishes nothing that the content makers and market can't already deliver.

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motion_picture_rating_system#United_Kingdom

[2] Page 31 of <http://www.classification.gov.au/About/Documents/Classification%20Fees%20Cost%20Recovery%20Impact%20Statement%202011-13%20final.pdf>