

Division/Agency: DIV - Online Safety Media and Platforms

Hansard Reference: Spoken (20 February 2023)

Topic: Current classification framework - Child exploitation

Senator Helen Polley asked:

1. How does the current classification framework account for interaction with other players in online games, such as in private chat rooms? If it does not, why not?
2. In broad terms, what changes would be needed to require classification decisions about online games to account for a player's actual experience, other players' conduct, or similar?
 - (a) Are there barriers to implementing a change of this kind?
 - (b) What are the potential benefits or risks involved in applying the classification framework in this way?

Answer:

1. Under the current classification framework, the Classification Board provides consumer advice of 'online interactivity' to alert players and parents when a game allows interaction with others online or when user-generated content can be uploaded.

These features do not currently affect the classification rating of a game.

2. The Government is currently considering changes that may be required to the Classification framework based on recommendations made in the 2020 Review of Australian Classification Regulation (Stevens Review). This review was never released by the former Government, and the Albanese Government is now beginning the important work of updating Australia's outdated classification scheme to make it fit for the digital world.

Australians look to the classification framework to make informed choices. The classification framework currently alerts players and parents of the possibility of interactivity through the consumer advice of 'online interactivity'. This approach empowers Australians to make informed choices for themselves and children under their care. That said, the classification framework alone is not well suited to addressing concerns about interactions between children and others while gaming online.

Parents who are concerned about their children interacting with others while gaming are also able to use parental controls available on gaming platforms which can disable or restrict player interaction. Resources for parents and carers on controls in social media, games and apps are also available through the eSafety Commissioner's website at [eSafety.gov.au](https://www.esafety.gov.au).

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Committee Inquiries Question on Notice

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement

Inquiry into law enforcement capabilities in relation to child exploitation

IQ23-000005

Division/Agency: DIV - Online Safety Media and Platforms

Hansard Reference: Written, (20 February 2023)

Topic: Metaverse - Changes to the classification framework

Senator Helen Polley asked:

What work is underway regarding potential changes to the classification framework to account for emerging technologies, such as such as immersive environments like the metaverse?

Answer:

The Minister for Communications, the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, has indicated publicly that the Government is currently considering classification reforms, as part of its broader media reform agenda.

A key objective of reform will be to ensure our regulatory framework can achieve key policy objectives – including that the classification framework enables consumers to access consistent, reliable classification information – with the flexibility to accommodate new and emerging services and technologies.