



March 7, 2012

Ms Julie Dennett
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Legal & Constitutional Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 3600

via email: LegCon.Sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Dennett,

Inquiry into the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment (R 18+ Computer Games) Bill 2012

We refer to your email dated 2 March 2012 inviting the Interactive Games and Entertainment Association (the **iGEA**) to submit to the Standing Committee of Legal and Constitutional Affairs' (the **Committee's**) parliamentary inquiry into the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment (R 18+ Computer Games) Bill 2012* (the **Bill**).

We understand that the reasons for referral of the Bill to the Committee, or the principal issues for consideration are:

- (a) the extent of material currently Refused Classification that would be permissible under the new regime; and
- (b) the likely guidelines for R18+ and MA15+.

The iGEA supports the introduction of an R18+ classification for computer games. In particular, we refer to the following reasons that were set out in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs' Advisory Report on the Bill tabled on 29 February 2012:

- (a) extensive public consultation on the introduction of an R18+ category of computer games legally restricted to adults has been undertaken since 2009;
- (b) more than 58 000 submissions were received by the Attorney General's Department throughout its public consultation on the topic, and more than 2 000 people were surveyed via telephone polling. 98% of the submissions received supported the introduction of the R18+ classification, and 80% of the telephone poll respondents supported the introduction of the R18+ classification;
- (c) the evidence demonstrates overwhelming support for an R18+ classification for computer games; and
- (d) the introduction of the Bill will align the existing classification system for computer games with the system that applies to films.

Currently Refused Classification Games and the New Regime

Since the final (revised) classification guidelines for computer games have not been decided, or at least made public, the iGEA is unable to comment on the extent of material that is currently Refused Classification that would be permissible under the new regime. The iGEA is willing to assist the Committee to address this issue once the classification guidelines have been determined.

Likely Guidelines for R18+ and MA15+

As stated, the iGEA has not been provided with a copy of the final (revised) classification guidelines and therefore we are unable to provide any detailed comments. However, when considering the likely guidelines, we suggest that the Committee reviews the Government's Literature Review on the Impact of Playing Violent Video Games on Aggression dated September 2010 which indicates that:

- (a) there is no conclusive evidence that violent computer games have a greater impact on players than other violent media, such as movies or music videos;
- (b) there is stronger evidence of short-term effects from violent computer games, than long-term effects; and
- (c) some research finds that violent computer games are a small risk factor in aggressive behaviour over the short term, but these studies do not thoroughly explore other factors such as aggressive personality, family and peer influence and socio-economic status.

For the above reasons, we suggest that the guidelines developed for MA15+ and R18+ computer games avoid placing a significant emphasis on the interactive nature of computer games.

We are willing to participate in any hearings that may be necessary to finalise the classification guidelines for computer games.

Yours sincerely,

Ron Curry
Chief Executive Officer

