

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

***Inquiry into the Classification (Publications, Films & Computer Game) Amendment (R 18+ Computer Games) 2012***

Thank you for the invitation of 2 March 2012 to make a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal & Constitutional Affairs regarding the *Classification (Publications, Films & Computer Game) Amendment (R 18+ Computer Games) 2012*.

The Committee's inquiry comes after extensive public consultation by the Australian Law Reform Commission, documented in the Commission's nuanced and practical *Classification – Content Regulation and Convergent Media* report (ALRC Report 118) that has received support from industry, civil society advocates and academia.

The inquiry follows the Committee's examination of the *Classification (Publications, Films & Computer Games) Amendment (Online Games) Bill 2011*, which was informed by a separate, more detailed submission from myself highlighting issues such as technological neutrality, potential harms and economic impact.

There is increasing recognition in government (including agencies concerned with child protection, family support and policing) and in the community that computer games – irrespective of whether they are accessed on a game-specific device, a desktop computer, a tablet, mobile phone or other device – are of interest to a wide demographic (“kindies to QCs”) rather than being of concern only to a small group of consumers and an economically or cultural insignificant group of producers. There is also recognition, based on several generations of independent research, that hyperbole about pervasive harms supposedly attributable to computer games cannot be substantiated.

The current Bill is ‘reality based’. It does not open regulatory floodgates. It is consistent with the ALRC's analysis. It does not impose an inappropriate burden on industry or introduce unacceptable risks for the care of minors and other vulnerable people. Instead it brings games classification into line with film classification (important given the convergence of those genres and parent/child interpretation of classification tags such as ‘R 18+’). It provides usable information for minors and adults.

I suggest that the Bill should be endorsed by the Committee on that basis.

Bruce Arnold  
Lecturer, Canberra Law School  
University of Canberra

9 March 2012