



Australian Government

Attorney-General's Department

Civil Law Division

11/1728

11 April 2011

Dr Anna Dacre
Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Social Policy and Legal Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Dr Dacre

Questions on Notice - Inquiry into the Regulation of Billboard and Outdoor Advertising

The Attorney-General's Department attended a hearing of the Inquiry on 10 February 2011. I am writing to provide answers to the questions that the Department took on notice.

How many call-in notices for publications have been issued and how many have been complied with?

Under s 23 of the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* (the Classification Act), if the Classification Board deems a publication to be submittable and is published or will be published in the ACT, the Director has the power to call it in for classification. Similar powers are given to the Director under State and Territory classification enforcement legislation. Pursuant to s 5 of the Classification Act, a submittable publication is an unclassified publication that contains depictions or descriptions that are likely to cause the publication to be classified RC (Refused Classification), are likely to cause offence to a reasonable adult to the extent that the publication should not be sold or displayed as an unrestricted publication, or is unsuitable for a minor to see or read.

In the financial year 2009–10 the Director issued 49 call-in notices for publications. No responses were received in relation to the call in notices. In the current financial year to date, the Director has issued 7 call-in notices for publications. One call in has been complied with.

Failures to comply with call-in notices are referred to State and Territory enforcement agencies.

Has the publication Zoo Weekly been classified?

No issue of *Zoo Weekly* has been classified. Last year, the Classification Board made a pre-classification assessment of Issue 244 of *Zoo Weekly*, dated 1 November 2010. This publication

was not considered to be a submittable publication according to the definition in s 5 of the Classification Act.

Only publications which are a 'submittable publication' must be classified. Publications which are likely to be classified Unrestricted are not generally required to be classified. The 'Unrestricted' classification encompasses a wide range of material. Descriptions and depictions of classifiable elements may contain some detail but the impact must not be so strong as to require legal restriction. There are no restrictions on access to 'Unrestricted' publications.

Are Authorised Assessor training courses accredited?

Section 22D of the Classification Act provides that the Director of the Classification Board may authorise a person to prepare assessments of additional content pursuant to s 14(5). This includes the additional content for a previously classified film or exempt film; television series and series related content; and computer games. These are known as the Additional Content Assessor scheme (ACA); the Authorised Television Series Assessor scheme (ATSA); and the Authorised Assessor Computer Games scheme (AACG).

Section 31(3)(a) of the Classification Act provides for the authorisation of persons to make assessments of the likely classifications of unclassified films or computer games for advertising purposes. Part 2 of the *Classification (Advertising of Unclassified Films and Computer Games Scheme) Determination 2009* provides that the Director of the Classification Board may authorise such a person. This is the Authorised Advertising Assessor (AAA) scheme.

In order to become an authorised assessor, a person must complete the relevant training course. Courses are devised by the Attorney-General's Department in consultation with the Classification Board and must be approved by the Director. They are not accredited by any outside body or agency. Courses are conducted by training officers from the Attorney-General's Department experienced in assessing material and making classification recommendations to the Classification Board.

Once training has been satisfactorily completed, trainees receive a certificate signed by the Director granting them Authorised Assessor status.

The Department also runs courses for distributors of telecommunications media to become Trained Content Assessors as provided for under Schedule 7 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

What skills are assessed in Authorised Assessor training courses?

Various exercises are conducted throughout all the courses provided to ensure that participants have gained a thorough understanding of the classification process and are able to assess material pursuant to the Classification Act, National Classification Code and relevant Guidelines. In the case of the ATSA course, an assignment is given in which participants must submit a completed assessment report for an actual television series. The trainer assesses the report and provides feedback to the participant. Trainees are not granted Authorised Television Series Assessor status until the assignment is of an acceptable standard, to ensure that the participant is capable of producing high quality recommendation reports.

How long does an Authorised Assessor training course take?

Training is undertaken over one day commencing with a module on the specific scheme the candidate wishes to become authorised under. This is followed by content module. The Core Film

Module trains participants in assessing actual film content. The Core Computer Game Module trains participants in assessing actual computer game content.

Attendance at refresher courses is required to maintain authorisation. A refresher training course is required at the 12 month anniversary of initial training. After this, participants must attend refresher training every two years. This ensures that assessors are kept up to date with classification standards.

Are there any prerequisite qualifications for enrolling in an Authorised Assessor course?

There is no prerequisite for classification training courses. Anyone may attend a course by paying the required fee, though participants are almost always employees of companies who distribute entertainment media such as films and computer games.

What sort of person completes Authorised Assessor training? What is their average wage?

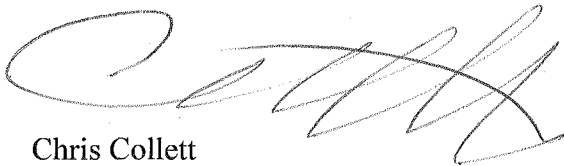
Authorised Assessors are typically employees at film and computer game distribution companies who are responsible for ensuring that their company's products are classified. Television network employees usually attend the Trained Content Assessor Course. The Attorney-General's Department cannot comment on the salaries paid to Authorised Assessors.

Family Voice submission on Sexpo billboard

I note that prior to the hearing being adjourned the Committee indicated that it had further questions related to the Family Voice submission to the Inquiry, specifically their comments on a Sexpo billboard. The Department is available to provide answers to any questions the Committee might have on this, or any other issue not dealt with before the hearing's adjournment.

The action officer for this matter is Wendy Banfield who can be contacted on (02) 6141 3113.

Yours sincerely



Chris Collett
Acting Assistant Secretary
Classification Branch

Telephone: (02) 9289 7185
Facsimile: (02) 9289 7101
E-mail: chris.collett@ag.gov.au