

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

**Output 1.3**

**Question No. 59**

**Senator Fifield asked the following question at the hearing on 20 October 2008:**

The Committee refers to the report of the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts inquiry into the effectiveness of the broadcasting codes of practice and the relevant extract below:

**Electronic games**

6.6 An issue raised by the Young Liberal Movement Victoria, and supported by the NSW Council for Civil Liberties, is the lack of a classification scale 'for adults only' for electronic games:

Currently both television and film have classifications for adults only content. This ensures that this category of media is accessible for those in the appropriate age bracket (over 18).

In the case of television this requires responsible parental supervision and in the case of film, adherence to legal requirements by cinemas and DVD hirers and sellers.

No such adults only classification scale exists for electronic games.

Instead, electronic games deemed to contain adults only content are banned from sale in Australia. As a result, game studios are forced to either modify their products and release edited versions or decide to not release their product in Australia at all.

The irony is that these games are fairly accessible online.<sup>1</sup>

6.7 The Committee notes the inconsistency of the current situation but is aware that the matter is under review by the Attorney-General's Department.

- a) What is the current status of the review into the classification of electronic games and the introduction of an 'R 18+' classification?
- b) What consultation has the Department undertaken with the Australian electronic games industry on this matter, particularly the Interactive Entertainment Association of Australia?
- c) When is the review expected to be completed?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

a) In March this year, the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (Censorship) agreed in principle to conduct broad consultation seeking community views on whether an R 18+ classification should be introduced for computer games. On 6 November 2008, Censorship Ministers agreed to further consider the content of a discussion paper with a view to releasing it early next year. Victoria is the lead jurisdiction on the development of the Discussion Paper.

b) The Attorney-General's Department is in regular contact with the IEAA on classification issues and has received information from the IEAA regarding its views about an R 18+ classification for computer games.

c) Timeframes for the completion of the consultation process are yet to be agreed by Censorship Ministers.