



March 13, 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 our submission of 7 March 2012 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**).

If appropriate, we would like to draw your attention to a key finding in the Australian Law Reform Commission's *Classification – Content Regulation and Media Convergence Final Report*¹, specifically their pilot study into community attitudes to higher-level media content.

To cite the report in part:

11.98 In order to better inform itself about community standards relevant to classification, the ALRC commissioned Urbis Pty Ltd to conduct a series of forums to assess community attitudes to content that falls within higher-level classification categories. This involved recruiting participants for a one-day forum where they would view and respond to content that ranged from MA 15+ to RC.

[...]

11.107 Material from across the classification categories and across media platforms (films, television programs, computer games and online content) was shown to participants, who responded using coloured cards or 'traffic lights' to indicate offence, in addition to completing a survey instrument and engaging in small group discussions of the content. Participants were also asked whether the discussion had caused them to change their opinions on banning or restricting the material both which were recorded on the survey questionnaire.

[...]

11.109 The primary aim of this study was to develop and test a prototype methodology to determine broader community standards with regards to classifiable media content, including films, computer games, television programs and online content. The view was taken that findings from public submissions commenting on the National Classification Scheme would be usefully augmented by an empirical study that engaged a broad

¹ Available at <http://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/classification-content-regulation-and-convergent-media-alrc-report-118>

cross-section of the community with actual relevant content across classification categories (themes; sex; nudity; violence; drug use; coarse language) and across media platforms.

11.110 The study was not an assessment of classification decisions made by the Classification Board or any other entity. Participants were not provided with information on classification guidelines in advance as the intention was not to 'test' material against classification criteria. Rather, the purpose of the study was to gauge responses to particular items of content in terms of offence and potential impact.

11.111 Some of the key findings arising out of the pilot study were:

- **Most of the screened violent material from computer games was not considered to be offensive.** In three of the four items of violent and/or sexual computer game material screened, a majority of both CG and RG participants found the material not to be offensive.

We would recommend that the committee make themselves familiar with this section of the ALRC's final report, along with the final report on community attitudes: *Community Attitudes to Higher Level Media Content: Community and Reference Group Forums Conducted for the Australian Law Reform Commission*, which can be accessed from the ALRC website.

Yours sincerely,

Ron Curry
Chief Executive Officer

