



For immediate release:

Computer games: call them AO or R18+, it won't help protect our kids.

The Australian Council on Children and Media is strongly critical of the Federal Government's support for the legalisation of R18+ level computer games.

Council President Prof Elizabeth Handsley said today that it was evident many of the public rightly wanted greater protections for children from the impacts of very violent computer games. However, she said "The public have been misled as to what it means to create an R18+ classification for games. Doing so is not the answer to children's need for greater protection".

She said, "The real problem lies with levels of strong violence allowed in the MA15+ category. There has been a widespread belief that somehow, the more violent games presently in the MA15+ category will migrate to a new R18+ classification. But no convincing evidence has been put forward to support these claims."

She continued "The addition of a higher classification will not change the classification of material into MA15+. If some very violent games meet MA15+ now, they will do so in the future, unless the whole classification system is reviewed, and the criteria and guidelines changes for all levels. There have been no proposals on the table for these kinds of changes. But without them, adding even higher-impact violence to the sale and hire system via the legalisation of R18+ level games will increase, not decrease, parents' difficulties in preventing their children's access to very violent games."

The Council is also critical of the reliance by the Minister on the results of two recent surveys.. Prof Handsley said "The Literature Review prepared by the Minister's Department chose to downplay the results of research showing harmful effects of violent media, while emphasising the claim that there is widespread confusion about the interpretation of the vast literature on media violence. This is in strong contrast to the recent statement on video game violence presented to the US Supreme Court, prepared by 13 internationally recognised and reputable international scholars and supported by close to 100 researchers in countries from Spain to Australia."

Further, she said, "The telephone survey relied on by the Minister found the majority of respondents agreed it would be difficult for parents to stop children playing R18+ games, that these should be classified differently because you play, not watch, and that playing violent games results in real life violence. Many who hold such views have been misled into thinking that an R18+ is the answer."

"The State and Territory Ministers meeting to discuss these issues on Friday need to consider carefully whether it is really possible to protect children, while serving an adult civil liberties agenda."

The Australian Council on Children and the Media is a national not for profit community organisation whose mission is to support families, industry and decision makers in building and maintaining a media environment that fosters the health, safety and wellbeing of Australian children.

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