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MEDIA RELEASE

Classification: time to replace sensibility with sense

“Australia’s classification system needs a radical overhaul”, says Australia’s leading media and children advocacy group.

Vice President of the Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM), Flinders University Law Professor Elizabeth Handsley said today “The system is based on last century notions of what is offensive to the sensibilities, rather than on evidence of what is actually harmful to children’s development. We need to use knowledge gained from years of research and apply it with commonsense, so that children’s interests are actually taken into account”.

Professor Handsley, who will be delivering a paper on this and related themes at the *Growing up fast and furious* conference in Sydney on March 19, said that “the ongoing controversy over whether Australia should legalise R18+ level computer games had highlighted some of the difficulties in ensuring that one of the basic principles of the classification system, i.e. “minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them”, was addressed as strongly as adult freedom to read, hear and see what they wish.”

ACCM Board member and psychologist Dr C. Glenn Cupit added “The age of 15 years, on which most classification categories are based, does not fit with any recognised levels of development of children. Parents of children (aged under 8 years in particular) often have to seek information additional to the present categories of G, PG and M to determine if a movie or game is suitable for their child. “As a consequence, the Council has provided a movie review service “Know before you go”, designed to supplement the classification system with expert information about content and age recommendations. This service has been funded by the SA Attorney General, Michael Atkinson for some years”

Professor Handsley concluded “Lets scrap the current system, and start again from a child based perspective” She urged those concerned with issues regarding classification of movies and computer games to hear the latest research in Sydney on March 19 at the “Growing up fast and furious conference” www.childrenandmedia.org.au

ACCM is a unique national community which strives for a media environment that supports the health, safety and wellbeing of Australian children. It is committed to promoting healthy choices and stronger voices in children’s media. Parents, caregivers and the general community can access information and advice about the impact of the media on children by calling the Children and Media Helpline (1800 700 357, national, freecall, 24/7) or visiting the ACCM Website (www.childrenandmedia.org.au).

*For more information or to arrange an interview, please call
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