

Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment Act 2004

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Computer games will now have the same classification scheme as the well-known and understood film classifications. This has come about by the passing in Parliament last month of the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment Bill 2004 (the *Classification Act*). The *Classification Act* renames the classifications but does not affect the criteria used to classify films and computer games. The new classification scheme applies to computer games and films and not to publications.

The new classification scheme also applies to material on the internet. This legislation is welcomed by ALIA as it has been actively lobbying for a system that treats access to online and offline information equally. Also, through its previous submissions to NSW and SA Parliamentary committees, ALIA has consistently called for a uniform classification system across all Australian jurisdictions.

The *Classification Act* will commence by the end of May 2005 or at an earlier date by proclamation. This later commencement is to allow sufficient time for complementary amendments to state

and territory classification enforcement legislation to be enacted.

The *Classification Act* creates a more-effective distinction between those classification types that are advisory in nature (G, PG and M) and those to which enforceable restrictions apply (MA15+, R18+ and X18+). This is achieved by the removal of age references from the unrestricted classification types and the use of age references for the restricted classification types.

The legislation specifies that all films and computer games classified from the

date of commencement are required to display the new classification markings. However, library users and consumers need to be aware that those films and computer games classified prior to the commencement of the legislation may still display the old markings.

Renaming the computer games classifications to mirror the well-known film classifications will assist parents in choosing computer games for their children as well as assisting parents and library users when accessing these games on the internet. ■

Comparison of the existing and new classification types

Existing film classification types	Existing computer games classification types	New film and computer game classification types
G (General)	G (General)	G General
PG (Parental Guidance)	G (8+) (General)	PG Parental Guidance
M (Mature)	M (15+) (Mature)	M Mature
MA (Mature Accompanied)	MA (15+) (Mature Restricted)	MA15+ Mature Accompanied
R (Restricted)		R18+ Restricted <i>(this category applies to films only)</i>
X (Restricted)		X18+ Restricted <i>(this category applies to films only)</i>
RC (Refused Classification)	RC (Refused Classification)	RC (Refused Classification)



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