

Response to an ACMA consultation paper relating to the establishment of restricted access arrangements for regulating access to MA15+ and R18+ content with an Australian connection which is accessed via convergent devices.

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The draft RAS Declaration has made provision for covered MA15+ content to be made available to persons:

- (i) 15, 16 or 17 years of age where their age can be verified; or
- (ii) 18 years or older where their age can be verified.

**Comment is invited on the inclusion of both options.**

I regard the internet as a necessary part of home life to allow children to actively participate in society. However, preventing 15 years olds instant access to M15+ material via the internet whether by convergent device or by other means, is in the best interests of the family and society. I believe that access to M15+ material via the internet should be restricted to 18 year olds and I support the inclusion of (ii).

Reasons

1. It is well known that children's brains are not fully developed and that they are not able to fully understand the consequences of their actions.
2. I have a realistic concern that my children (who are well supervised) and many other children (especially those not well supervised) will be exposed to graphic movies under the control of 15, 16 and 17 year olds. Children are too young to hold the responsibility for the well-being of other young children. I support the right of adults to obtain these movies, due to the higher level of maturity at this age and lower risk to children.
3. Unfortunately, my children have already been exposed to the sadistic details of the SAW movies through word of mouth at school. Where did these other children find out? Clearly, they have older siblings or parents who do not have the capacity to understand that children need emotional protection. The fact that my children are exposed to these types of stories shows that classification under the current system is not sufficient to protect children from content which society agrees is unsuitable. This example shows that the current classification and distribution system is not completely successful. However, I believe that placing control of M15+ material into the hands of children will promote the invasion of inappropriate material into the home and expose younger children to these movies. I believe that a person eighteen years or older is the appropriate person to access movies via the internet and decide availability to 15, 16 or 17 year old children. An adult is more likely to be a parent or respect the wishes of parents and have an insight into the suitability of movies.

4. Allowing older children direct access to M15+ material will place the burden of conflict on parents who wish to exercise their own judgement in what is appropriate viewing for their children. Parents need the support of the government and the community to enforce rules in the home that best supports the development of their particular children. The availability of this service will quickly be known amongst children and parents should not be placed in circumstances where the law says that a 15/16/17 year old is entitled to view any and every M15+ movie available 24 hours a day. This is strong message to children that parents have no right to control the content or viewing habits of children in their best interests. By providing control to parents in accessing M15+ movies, society is making a statement that a parent is the best person to make the decision as to what is appropriate and should have the power to protect children who may be highly vulnerable to negative influences.
5. In addition, availability of movies will promote poor viewing habits in many children who already have sleep issues related to the internet regards chatting. Giving movie viewing control to 15 year olds 24 hours a day will only compound this problem for our schools. Parents must have the control to limit activities that may occur without parent's knowledge such as downloading and sneaking late night movies. Watching of M15+ movies should not be the "norm" for our society and a right of young people. It is the parents right to influence children in the proper direction at school and as a member of society that is important.
6. Parents have a reasonable opportunity of material viewed when accessed via a picture theatre. There are benefits and protections to children in having movies with MA15+ content kept away from home. Some of these benefits are not obvious. For example, the fact that movies take place away from the home also usually incorporates an informal "debrief" with a parent collecting the children from the movies, during the drive home. It also sets the experience apart from the "norm" and daily availability. Similarly, access via Video Shops usually involves that transportation of children, parental supervision as to selection, negotiation as to agreed watching times at home, and a general openness and reduced accessibility that does not apply to the internet generally and particularly, to convergent devices. I believe that during these important years, parents and children need to have situations that promote communication on media content. Giving people over 18 access to movies at home, will promote communication regarding the appropriateness of the movie and content between parents and children.
7. To prevent the exposure of younger children of inappropriate material and avoid as far as possible the anti-social effect of excessive passive entertainment options on all children, is responsible action on our part. To help children need reverse the passive entertainment trend, with its many negative themes and influences, is the responsible course of action for our children and our society. Parents need to be informed of the influences that are shaping their children's lives and children need parents to be informed so that they can protect them.
8. The interests of parents and children must come first to corporate interests. Parents need and deserve a supportive environment to do the best for their children. As the saying goes, "It takes a village to raise a child" and the internet today is an important part of that village.