



New computer games legislation

Censorship Ministers throughout Australia have agreed on proposals to classify all video and computer games for sale or hire. At a meeting on 4 November the Ministers considered draft proposals and instructed officials to prepare legislation as quickly as possible along the lines of the approved policies.

The games will be placed in age categories and labelled with consumer advice. The classifications will be based on the categories for film and video but will be more restricted in all categories.

Games which are played in arcades will also need to be classified and clearly labelled for appropriate age groups and the material will be more restricted than for videos and games for sale or hire.

The Ministers discussed the difficulties of accessing material on bulletin boards for classification purposes and

requested coordination with communications authorities. They will consider a report on this issue at their next meeting.

The Ministers said the strongest material would be banned, some material would be restricted to adults as appropriate, there would be categories for mature audiences both for sale/hire and for arcades, and there would be two categories for those under 15. The Ministers said there would be particular attention paid to material aimed at children under eight years of age.

The new categories will be

- 'G' for general audiences, recommended for all ages
- 'G8' recommended for children 8 years and over
- 'M' for mature audiences, recommended for persons aged 15 years and over
- 'MA' restricted to those aged 15 years and over, not available in arcades

'R' restricted to those aged 18 years and over

'X' restricted to those aged 18 years and over.

Material in the X rated video category is not currently available except in the Northern Territory and the ACT. Individual States and Territories will decide whether the same practice will apply to computer games.

The classification of the computer games and images will be carried out by the Office of Film and Literature Classification which already classifies films, videos and publications.

A further draft set of guidelines has been released for public comment. Submissions from the public about these guidelines are being coordinated by the Office of Film and Literature Classification.