

SUBMISSION TO DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Modernising-and-harmonising-classification-standards 2026

I write this submission from the perspectives of a former Convenor of the Classification Review Board (1994 -2001), and also as the founder and manager of the award -winning child-development-based movie review service *Know Before You Go* (2002- 2025).

From both perspectives, I submit that the National Classification Scheme (NCS) is failing in its obligation to protect minors from harm. This is due to the NCS not being evidence-based, and in regard to minors, particularly, does not incorporate well-established research on the differential impacts of screen content on children as they move through their stages of development.

The recommendations from the *Modernising and Harmonising Classification Standards Review* largely will not remedy this critical failing.

Perspectives from my Classification Review Board (CRB) experience

Most CRB reviews of classification decisions made by the Classification Board involved content that sat at the borders between classification categories. Some of the more difficult were those that involved a judgement of whether the content would harm or disturb a child (as per Code principle (b)).

- was the content and themes OK for all ? (G)
- would parental guidance mitigate harm or disturbance to a child (PG) ?
- was the content such that it couldn't be recommended for those under 15 years (M), or
- was it in fact unsuitable for those under 15 to the extent that it needed legal force to exclude them (MA15+).

These classification categories (G, PG, M and MA15+) are expected to protect children in any of the several different stages of development under 15 years, but don't incorporate established research on such impacts. The present classification categories, elements and criteria used by classifiers for each of the categories are not designed to make such judgments.

The failure of this Review to highlight this issue is a basic failure. Further, the recommendation to add in a PG13 classification just muddies the waters and would create classification clutter with PG13, M and MA15/16+ covering those years, while not remedying the big gaps under 13.

Perspectives from running [Know Before You Go](#) (KBYG)

KBYG was set up in 2002 by Children and Media Australia to supplement the NCS because of the above deficiencies: parents wanted more information that would help them make or to guide age-appropriate and healthy choices for their children.

KBYG has continued for 24 years, is free, has won several awards, and is much appreciated by parents Australia-wide, is added to movie reviews on [Flicks](#), and has a growing international audience.

KBYG recruits reviewers with child development expertise to review those movies expected to attract a child or adolescent audience. Their reviews provide detail about the story, and signal content that may harm, scare or otherwise disturb children of different ages, and enable parents to make informed choices of age-appropriate content that their children will enjoy.

Such advice should not be an optional extra provided at significant cost to a community organisation with very slim resources. It should be available to parents at the national classification level and supported by government.

To conclude

Children and parents really need a classification system that works for them and provides reliable advice for choosing age-appropriate, healthy and enjoyable viewing.

The present system does not do that. The present review does not recognise the basic failing outlined here.

A model of a research- and age- based classification system that is regularly reviewed and well used and liked is the Netherlands [Kijkwijzer](#) system, now used by several European countries. Australia would do well to study this.

Given it has taken so long for there to be an effective review of the NCS, this government needs to act now to remedy the failing outlined above. The

Australian community is resilient enough to embrace a modified set of classification categories, especially if they are actually useful and well used (as opposed to just well-recognised) by the community.

END

Barbara Biggins OAM CF
