

It is readily acknowledged that the video games industry is growing at a rapid rate. It accounts for more than half of the entertainment market and is bigger than music and video combined. Therefore, a review of the guidelines for classification of computer games is well and truly overdue in order to modernise and stay relevant with changing community standards and expectations.

There is an inherent and incorrect belief that video gaming is a hobby exclusively enjoyed by the young. As generations have grown up with games, the average age is increasing. In 2018 a US study revealed that nearly 80% of gamers are aged 18 or more. US demographics are very similar to our own. So, it can be argued a more “adult” approach to gaming classification is required.

I submit that the current RC classification for films should be used verbatim for computer games. No decent society wants to promote sexual violence, paedophilia etc. So the current film RC classifications are appropriate. Why are they not appropriate for the gaming industry? Let us look at the current differences in the RC classifications:

#### Crime or Violence

Virtually the same, except gaming bans “implied sexual violence related to incentive or reward”. The indicates that films can contain implied sexual violence. Surely, the characters in these films would be receiving some incentive or reward for these implied actions. The viewer of a film experiences vicarious emotions based on their interaction with film characters.

In other words, there is interaction. Perhaps more implicit than video games but interaction all the same. In fact, the interaction in games allows players to abstain from such behaviours whereas film is uncontrollable.

In summary, substantial interaction is present in both mediums but is actually controllable in gaming. Therefore, “implied sexual violence related to incentive or reward” should be removed from the gaming RC classification.

#### Sex

Under film classification, sexual activity may be realistically simulated and receive a R18+ classification. Computer games can receive a RC for “depictions of actual sexual activity” and “depictions of simulated activity that are explicit and realistic”. A depiction in a computer game of actual sexual activity is, in fact, not real sexual activity at all. It is perhaps a realistic simulation but there is no actual sexual activity in a game. Thus, a R18+, as in films which allow realistic simulations would be sufficient.

Anyway, with current technology, simulated sex in film is much more graphic than simulated sex in a game.

#### Drug use

Computer games but not film can receive a RC if they contain drug use related to incentive or reward or realistic interactive drug use. As previously mentioned, Film provides characters with drug incentives or rewards and we, the viewer, have interaction with these characters. The only difference is that a computer game character can be controlled whereas a film character is uncontrollable. It is inconsistent that a film can depict graphic and realistic drug use but an unrealistic (due to technology) computer game depiction that is used in order to advance in a game is outlawed.

In summation, the RC classification requirements of film and computer games are currently subjected to double standards. This is in a world where gaming is no longer a young persons domain and is the premier entertainment medium. For sure, violence, sex and drugs have abhorrent elements but should rules be different for delivery vehicles that both have interactivity elements. Further, lines are blurring, (e.g. Bandersnatch) and we are moving into realms where films are

overtly interactive. Rules should be consistently applied to both film and computer games to ensure future proofing of the system as a whole.