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THE PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Comments in response to the Public Hearing - Sydney 26 May, 1999

We believe the challenge of the new technologies is to convince those who control it that **the social imperatives are the most important issue**. A will and a way must be found. It is our opinion that if technologies can be created, they can, and must be utilised for the good of the community. At the moment there is no desire, in fact there is determined opposition on the part of the promoters to even attempt control.

Legislation is required to provide the impetus. We are all responsible not to do harm to other people. While there is "no law against it", the implication is that "it" is acceptable. The continued broadcasting of offensive or inappropriate material is making such talk or actions acceptable to increasing numbers of people. A whole generation now unashamedly uses the f... word and the expletives of the US films. "Jesus" and "Christ" are used freely. If "Budda" or "Allah" were used, there would be instant action to stop it and it would not occur again. After a skit about Moslems long ago, there was much publicised outrage, and rightly so. The problem ceased. It appears no one wants the responsibility for standards. Editing should be used again.

Australian Content is absolutely essential. American content at prime time is too great. Lack of action on standards now will allow Australian culture to be completely overwhelmed. Even Australian film makers are copying the US. Promiscuity, rebellion and violence are so often used as to be assumed normal. Australian program makers should be encouraged, by direction if necessary, to show Australian culture which we believe is unique and recognisable. We have much worth recording both in fact and fiction.

The present reliance on Sport cuts down culture and diversity for programs on Commercial television considerably. The prominence of violent sports, where many children's role models are increasingly undisciplined and careless, gives a behaviour pattern for younger football players. Increased sports injuries in children have prompted the Federal Health Minister to investigate the causes. We think it is copying heroes. Women's sport rates barely a mention on commercial TV. Football is a commercial project for Media owners.

Censorship is a reality evident in the decision of what or who is allowed to be seen and heard. This is quite apart from any Regulations. Media proprietors and/or managers or presenters choose the topics and the questions which influence public opinion. All News items are important.

For example: the few people who belong to the KKK in Australia did not warrant the Current Affairs item of Stan Grant interviewing a member of KKK. Such publicity is bound to encourage rather than stop people of like mind, just as it did with *One Nation*. We believe media attention magnifies and media silence would discourage extreme opinions. **All publicity promotes the cause with some section of the public. We all know advertising works.**

Another aspect of News broadcasts is details of violent or disturbing events in the 5pm-7.30pm timeslot when families are gathered for the evening meal. Even Warnings are irrelevant as people do not necessarily switch off. The details are then repeated each time the incident is referred to. *For example:* On Friday evening July 9, Channel 10 News gave details of parents who died from a heroin overdose and were found by the child of the household. This is not essential news and could wait until late evening..

Restraint is a scarce commodity. Professor Snape asked how we thought the Codes could be improved. We have endeavoured for other Inquiries to go through each Clause and the wording. We enclose our Committee's Paper on the Review of Commercial Broadcasting Standards.

THE PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Complaints follow up:

We would like to see an official Monitoring Agency set up so that individual complaints would not be the only means of influencing content. If there are Guidelines, they should be adhered to. The public has no real influence. Providers explain that they have complied with the Code, or "such language is widely used in the community" and send a pamphlet about *How to Complain*. By then, individuals will not go further. Members of our Association have not kept the replies and felt their complaints had been ignored.

Unfortunately I do not have in my files the reply I received from Channel 7 on November 11, 1994. My complaint concerned a Ray Bans Ad which was an inappropriate steamy black and white bed scene with no connection to Sun Glasses. The real trouble is that if complaints stop that ad. it does not mean that the same problem will not occur sometime later. Television Stations may provide the Commission with a copy of their usual reply and advise how many complaints are necessary for action to be taken. **The appointment of an Ombudsman would be an improvement, provided they have authority to make a ruling for the future.**

Australian Standards for Subscription Television should not be a matter of competing with videos from ACT or overseas Internet providers. We are hopeful that the Federal Government will legislate controls now on the Internet. Much of the material can be stopped. Legislation will never stop all of it - murder and fraud still occur, but the law remains and can be upheld. The immature of any age should not have easy access to offensive material. Most people do not seek it. But Court Records show there are people addicted to such material and there are those who will, and do, copy such activities.

Competition has done much for Australia, however, more is not necessarily better. Hopefully with some wise decisions we can find a balance which is beneficial. Of course we are all free, and should be free to speak our mind on many issues, but surely this must be tempered with commonsense. When films began it was realised that this medium had the potential to do social damage. The Agreement which bound the first film makers held until about the 1950s. When the first *Police Academy* film was made, it was apparently said that "the censors will not let this one through!!" But they did, and the boundaries have been pushed ever since. Americans of course cite the Constitutional "right to free speech". We do not believe Community Standards are a "freedom of speech" issue. It is a matter of what sort of community we wish to develop in the future.

Our Committee has concentrated on responding to Inquiries rather than letters of complaint because those we had sent were obviously ineffective - a committee is seen as a pressure group. Individual members do not appear to have kept the replies to their complaints. I had hoped to obtain some at our Conference on July 5.

A country branch wrote recently about a lack of programs to educate and inform the community on such an important National Day as Anzac Day. I am enclosing our letter and the reply from Channel 10. It is interesting that the TV Station mentions the influence of "*what our advertisers wish to support*" which can then be balanced against the reply from other Advertisers received some time ago which mentioned that they "*buy time and do not necessarily know what program (their) product is advertised with*".

Mrs Marion Smith, Convener

July 16, 1999





Presbyterian Women's Association of Australia
in the State of New South Wales



SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

June 1, 1999

The Manager
Channel 7
Mobbs Lane
EPPING NSW 2121

P.W.A. Office
Presbyterian Church Centre
Box 100 G.P.O.
SYDNEY 2001

Ph. (02) 319 2655

COPY

Dear Sir,

I am passing on to you a communication of concern from Muswellbrook members about the lack of suitable programming for Sunday April 25. The ABC did cover the Anzac Day March, but there was only brief reference to it in News segments on Channels 7 and 10. Even the films for that day were unrelated to the importance of Anzac Day. How will our young people and those who have come to this country be aware of the sacrifices which have made us free if they can turn to sport and trivia rather than think of it. Channel 9 had suitable films listed. The ABC had some items on the Monday, however the clashing times of times with Channel 9 and the non-recognition of 7 and 10 created a negative effect. Anzac Day would have been a non-event for too many people.

The Broadcasting Services Act sets out "to promote the role of broadcasting services in developing and reflecting a sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity".
Diversity surely does not mean every other culture except our once strong Australian culture.

It seems between US films and "sit-coms", Sport, murder mysteries and advertising, there is precious little cultural about Australia. The overwhelming amount of sport, particularly football, is promoting a lack of culture in young men especially (half of prime time News is devoted to Sport on every Station). They all need to know what our young men did 50 years ago and honour their memory. This remembrance should be a priority for our community if we wish to remain free. Surely Advertisers would back this material, if indeed they had any say in what was shown.

If there is to be a national event warranting a public holiday we feel all the television stations should be sensitive to the occasion and recognise it accordingly.

I would be pleased to have your remarks on this.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Marion Smith, Convener



N E T W O R K T E N

17 June 1999

Mrs Marion Smith
Convener
Presbyterian Women's Association of Australia
PO Box 100 GPO
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mrs Smith

Thank you for your letter dated June 1 regarding our ANZAC DAY schedule.

I appreciate your concerns regarding the lack of appropriate programming on Anzac Day. As I am sure you will appreciate, we walk a fine line between what we feel our viewers wish to see, what our competitors are scheduling, and what our advertisers wish to support. It is with these factors in mind that we schedule our programs.

I have made a note of your concerns and will certainly keep these in mind when scheduling future programs, in particular during specials days such as Anzac Day.

Kind regards



DAVID MOTT
General Manager Network Programming



ALL CORRESPONDENCE SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO
GENERAL MANAGER
P.O. BOX 1308, NORTH SYDNEY N.S.W. 2059
TELEPHONE (02) 959 7811

Our Ref: TCN - 23127
Contact Officer: Debbie Bianco

5 July 1991

Mrs Marion Smith
40 Makinson Street
GLADESVILLE NSW 2111

Dear Mrs Smith

Thank you for your letter of 14 June 1991 concerning your objection to an item about TOPLESS HARDWARE ASSISTANTS which was included in A CURRENT AFFAIR recently. You also state your objections as to the poor quality of programming generally.

In relation to the Hardware item on A CURRENT AFFAIR, the matter is receiving consideration and the station has been contacted in this regard. I shall write to you again as soon as I can usefully do so.

Concerning your opinion of the state of television generally, your comments have been noted, however, it is the responsibility of individual station licensees to ensure that the material they transmit is broadcast in accordance with the Tribunal's Television Program Standards. A copy of these standards is enclosed for your information.

Provided stations comply with the provisions of the Tribunal's Television Program Standards, which address such matters as the suitability of material for its time of transmission, it does not interfere in their day to day programming arrangements. Individual station licensees are regarded as being in the best position to gauge the needs and requirements of the community they are licensed to serve. These can, and do of course, change from time to time.

Notwithstanding the above, licensees are required, at licence renewal, to give an undertaking to provide an adequate and comprehensive service to the community they are licensed to serve. At licence renewal the Tribunal reviews the station's performance in this area and has regard to public comment received about the programming arrangements of the station.

I hope the above information clarifies the position for you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gordana Marin".

Gordana Marin
for General Manager

*no action
no further contact
nothing has changed
md*

THE PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA IN NSW
Submission to the
REVIEW OF THE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION GUIDELINES 1996

Section 1: Closed captioning is very helpful and we hope that it will continue to be extended.

Section 2: MA and MAV - Two Classifications are not necessary.

The Cabinet decision allowed for the MA rating so that more violent films among those already allowed, could be screened later. The idea was not to allow even more violent films, however, that is the progression which the extra rating has created. This probably explains the large number of complaints about promotions, rather than films. Warnings do not reduce harm, only cut down complaints about the film.

Clause 2.1.3 provides that nothing is permitted in these classifications which was not permitted in the former "AO" classification. There should be a prohibition on all films classified R by the OFLC. The "Not Suitable for Television" guidelines should be applied more diligently to those films which have been classified M by the OFLC. Many of the themes are not suitable even if certain offending parts have been removed.

Section 3: G and PG Promotions only should be allowed in those programs where a substantial number of children are likely to be watching, including sporting programs.

We do not agree that program line-ups which include MA and MAV films should be exempted from this ruling and therefore allowed during G and PG films or until after 8.30pm. The rating and title is enough to intrigue some children.

Section 4: News and Current Affairs should be treated with great care. Children are affected by what they hear on the News as they understand it is real. We believe that there is good reason to leave all disturbing matter until the late News unless it is of vital and immediate public interest. We were very relieved to see that news of the Dunblane disaster was treated in this way, with children very much in mind.

This principle should apply to the gory details of the "Back Packers" evidence and other tragedies. These should not be discussed or reported on the early evening News when the family is likely to be gathered. None of this detail, very often already widely circulated in newspapers and television should need to be repeated in detail. We are creating a climate of distress and fear in susceptible people and the young are becoming depressed without need. There is an emphasis on the worst aspects of news. The other way in which News is socially distressing is the tendency to immediately publicise the opposite opinion or impute dire consequences when any decision is taken by Government. Children are encouraged by teachers to watch the News so that they become informed. They are too often becoming cynical and/or hopeless or distrustful of our democratic heritage.

Section 5: Non Program matter - We support retaining the restrictions.

If restrictions were removed it seems more than likely that "infomercials" and "shopping guides" would no longer be typically shown late at night and daytime zones.

Political Advertising: Political Ads should be covered with the same restrictions as other advertising so that they could not denigrate other candidates or parties and should only discuss their own policies and aims. Advertising campaigns of promotions and/or misleading

matter should not be allowed. This would preclude scare campaigns as we have seen in the past. Advertising is probably not the best description for political information. The need to report the hourly commercial content during election periods to FACTS for public release would encourage exactness. Such timing is not something that can easily be monitored by the public.

Section 6: Classification and placement of commercials.

Alcoholic Drinks: In view of the effect of alcohol on every aspect of life - domestic violence, traffic accidents, teenage binge drinking, and high rate of violence among young men, we believe advertising of alcohol should cease. The vision of our "sporting heroes" dribbling beer or spraying champagne is quite revolting and a very bad example to the many young men who aspire to copy them. The Beer advertisements shown during the VFL Grand Final on Channel 7 at 5.25pm were during an event when a large number of children would be watching. This should not be allowed. It is time alcohol was treated in the same way as tobacco. It is responsible for as much, or more harm to the whole community.

Commercials relating to Betting and Gambling. The sight of advertisements showing young people happily playing at the Casino, and winning!! in advertisements on Channel 7 this week at 5.25pm was distressing. Young people should not be encouraged to think that this is what can make them happy or entertained. The reality is that they are unlikely to win. We believe all gambling advertising should be prohibited until after 8.30pm if at all.

A restriction could be placed on the number of ads, including over-the-counter "scratchie" or lotto tickets shown in any hour. Advertising at present is excessive.

The community problems now surfacing in regard to Casinos are devastating many families. **Endorsements of Products in Programs directed to Children:** We are pleased there will be regulation of "host selling" in G classified children's programs. We also agree that only G and PG commercials should appear in G and PG programs and that such restrictions last until 10.30pm in the case of live sport or long movies. That should also preclude alcohol and betting advertising.

Section 7: Advising complainants of their right to make a formal complaint. We would like all oral complaints recorded and treated as part of the data. Since the results of telephone Surveys by Stations are given media credence, if people take the trouble to phone a complaint it should at least be recorded and some notice taken of it. That would be as reliable as surveys.

The Advisory Notes

The Portrayal of Women and Men as suggested would preclude such inappropriate advertisements as the "Rio" Ad where the girl shows her underwear to a complete stranger. This demeans women and men. The Advisory Notes have been used for some time, however, women are not taken notice of when they have the temerity to complain. Advertising should have to follow these guidelines. It has paid little attention to respect for persons - sex sells so advertising demeans both sexes now.

The portrayal of **Cultural Diversity** is interesting, and could be helpful if followed. "Poms", the Scots and the Irish should also be included in ethnic groups. English speaking people are not homogenous. **Point 4**, covering religious and cultural beliefs and practices, would cause some consternation if actually followed.

" The religious or cultural beliefs and practices of NESP or minority racial backgrounds should receive no less respect than those of the . . . majority."

Very often the Christian religion is treated with contempt in "adult" humour and even more often in "soapie" character stereotypes. When other cultures and religions have been treated in this way there has been justifiable protest and immediate action. Our protests are dismissed as irrelevant. The most obvious of these instances is skits in "Adult" comedy, and in the way "Jesus", "Christ", and "God" are used as expletives in many programs. Such language adds nothing to the story. It does offend Christians of all ethnic origins. Children very quickly learn attitudes of disrespect. We recommend the Advisory note include "that the majority religion should receive the same respect as minority religions".

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are comprehensively considered. We hope that the principles can be followed.

Respect for local social protocols and codes of behaviour is very important. Many of the present social difficulties affecting children and young people, have occurred because Australia's once strong moral codes have been gradually undermined by the pervasive culture conveyed by film and television. It is a pity that the social protocols, expectations and codes of behaviour which once provided an orderly community have not been respected in the Australian/US mass media. For twenty years now respect for women and marriage has been progressively reduced by ridicule and/or immoral entertainment. Another aspect is, whether you wish to support a Republic or not, the Queen is due respect, as are other public figures. On Channel 10 a recent Pepsi ad is highly disrespectful to the Queen. The Dalai Lama would not be treated so. Lack of respect is influencing the uninformed and those who do not know or appreciate the history of our freedom which so many wish to share.

Comments on Ratings

G rating: Nudity - Sexual nudity should not be shown. The phrase "outside sexual nudity" should be removed from this guideline. Films should respect the natural reserve which older children should have to being undressed in company. The anguish expressed in the media about child sexual abuse is hollow when there is such a casual attitude to sexual contact/nudity. Children are now at risk from older children who wish to experiment.

Drug Use - should not be depicted. Any story containing it should not be G rated. Casual reference to drugs makes them acceptable and ordinary or else interesting. **Supernatural or horror themes and dangerous playthings, should be refused.** These films are supposed to be suitable for children without a parent present.

PG rating: Nudity: Once more "outside sexual nudity" is quite unacceptable. Parents have little chance of convincing children that this is not how to behave when the evidence before them is that "everyone does it". **Horror etc. also not appropriate.**

Drug Use: Should not be permitted unless it is actively taught against. Not just "not promoted". Children too easily see it as "part of life" and acceptable.

M Rating: Suicide - Methods should not be depicted at all. There is evidence to show that people do copy what they see and hear. Youth suicide is a big problem in Australia.

MA and MAV Ratings: These two ratings are almost identical. We see no reason for MAV. The wording of both closely follows the R rating and will make it inevitable that R rated films will go on television if they have not been already.

The original intention of MA films was to make AO violent films later, not to allow more violent films to be shown - this is what appears to have already occurred. The proposed changes to the guidelines may give television access to many more films, however it will not do the community any good.

Conclusion

We attach for your information an address by Dr George Miller, film maker, as reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, 12.9.96. Though we disagree with his conclusions, his observations confirm our opinion that the pervasive influence of violent films will affect the behaviour of susceptible people, not only children. We believe that Television, which is so easily accessed, should continue to be regarded differently than films which must be sought out.

Of course the Bible and Shakespeare are in some parts very violent, but their violence has moral consequences and are not in film detail which leaves nothing to the imagination. When they are filmed, they are obviously from another time and still have the moral theme. With the written word, the images which are created tend to be limited by the person's experience. However where the action is on film, to be absorbed from someone else's imagination and special effects, what is seen has an impact five times as powerful as print (reportedly a BBC theory). Dr Miller is quoted:

"You are a disaffected white male, seething with free-floating resentmentsyou lose yourself there in the world on the screen - a world which has little or no moral complexity. Just the rudimentary notion that guns, guns, guns are the answer to almost any problem. Then one day you're de-inhibited by some mind altering chemical, by alcohol, or by some other reality perception problem. This is not too long a bow to draw to Port Arthur and Dunblane".

The other point from Dr Miller's address which we find convincing, is that people with strong cultures are not so much affected by violent entertainment. We believe Australia and the western world has had so much freedom that a significant minority now have no stable culture. This is why individuals capable of the various atrocities, are being thrown up so regularly. When violence is seen to be contemporary, indiscriminate, celebrated in graphic detail and without consequences, it becomes the culture of those who know no other. It also explains why pornography and the portrayal of women, whether sexually violent, non-violent or in advertising, does no service to the community. Large numbers of men have now adopted the culture of violent films, violent sports, alcohol and sex. Suffer the women and children!

Those of us with strong cultures, who are not attracted to worthless films will never be affected by those which we may happen to see, but we should realise that we and our children must live in a community where increasing numbers of people are alienated and "cultureless". We need to be much more concerned for the personal welfare of such people and aim to give them good examples to follow on film rather than allow vested interests to cling mindlessly to an outdated right for us to "see whatever we want in our own homes". It is also enlightened self-interest to moderate and direct what is being taught by such a powerful medium as film.

Unless we, as a community decide to say "enough of these films", and we are listened to by those who make the decisions, things can only get worse. We believe that only action at a national level will convince producers and directors that graphic violence and immorality are not so marketable. **A beginning would be the Ratings and their interpretation.**

Social Issues Committee

September 30, 1996

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA IN NEW SOUTH WALES
Submission to the Office of Film and Literature Classification
Review of Guidelines for the Classification of Publications - 1998

We were interested in the History of Classification on page 4. It is recorded in detail in the opening pages of Vol 1 of the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Video Material 1989. The evidence to this Committee is well worth reading again, especially the dissenting Report at the end of Vol 1. On pages 15-17 the memos from the then Attorney General to his Department and the replies given, show how the end of Censorship was instituted with the full knowledge that the majority of the Australian people and particularly the Parliaments would not approve. All those involved knew that what they planned would open up Australia to unsavoury material in the name of "individual freedom" to see and hear whatever they wanted.

The advice from his Department to the Attorney General was that legislation framed as he had requested would probably not be passed. If it got through the House of Representatives, the Senate would not approve. The way to do it was little by little, by administrative direction. In the event, this is how it was achieved. As new members of the Censorship Board were appointed and the name of the Board changed, Customs Rules were not actually changed, but the Officers were advised not to confiscate material as in the past. People were entitled to see or hear whatever they wanted. This troubled the conscience of Customs officers who had sworn to uphold the law. When people were charged, no action was taken. By 1984, the law was changed to allow officially what had become established practice. Personal possession of pornography was legal. The damage done.

The Parliament was not consulted, and indeed was never consulted about the gradual removal of censorship. The Parliament was not consulted (? 1989) when the Censorship Ministers, after a public outcry, requested that something be done about controlling unsuitable material. Cabinet rejected any approach to Parliament about Censorship and the status quo was still maintained against advice of the Censorship Ministers.

The cleverest means to end censorship was the Code itself which is still in place more than twenty years later. It has a prominent place in your Discussion Paper:

"(a) adults should be able to read, hear and see what they want;"

WE RECOMMEND that this one sentence should be removed from the Code. We believe it sets up the Classification System to allow whatever the producers and distributors of pornographic and/or violent material wish to impose on the public, not necessarily what the public wants to see. Once it is classified it can be marketed and demand is created. One rule of Marketing is that one cannot assume a demand, it must be created.

The Australian public has had to accept this state of affairs. Adults who appreciate such material are unlikely to be responsible in the way it is used. Unfortunately the majority of people who are reasonable and detest such inappropriate entertainment must live in the community with the minority who do. The Video Material Report makes it quite clear that the public then was known not to be in favour of the freedom to distribute whatever came into the country. We believe that reasonable people still do not want pornographic and/or violent material easily available in the shops, even, or especially, "adult" shops. At the last Federal election the Government was given a mandate to do something positive about restoring adequate Censorship. It was a promise not yet achieved.

Presbyterian Women's Association - Literature Classification Review

This material appeals to those who behave as if women are disposable. It is not only violence which is damaging. Non-violent erotica promotes an illusion that "No" really means "Yes" and women actually will be, or should be willing to be promiscuous or to take part in anal and oral sexual acts. "Reasonable" people know such behaviour is damaging to health and respect for both men and women. Such explicit material should not be circulating in the community with the apparent community approval of "Classification" of any kind.

The fact that, theoretically, Restricted material should not go to those under 18 does not help. It is a matter of record that children do obtain this information through pictorial and written instruction in magazines and other media. Increasing sexual violence to young children by older children, usually boys, is a factor of great concern according to police sources at a recent Conference on Paedophilia. Children are obtaining graphic instruction one way or another. Our members have found pornographic magazines, apparently left on bus seats for children to pick up. Even articles in "Cleo" or "Dolly" and similar magazines can be destructive of respect for one's own person or for other people. (Dec. 1994 'Safe Sex Guide' Supplement in "Cleo", is one example) In too many instances the young people at whom the magazines are directed, are influenced to think promiscuity and deviate sex can be "safe" and exciting.

It is an abdication of responsibility for elected representatives to avoid making "moral" judgments. The whole business of government is to make moral decisions of one kind or another. Why is the protection of women one area where suddenly morality does not matter. If it does not matter, why is there such anxiety when we hear of domestic violence. Of course morality is the business of governments and those appointed to make decisions on behalf of the community. There are increasing problems now in the whole community, where the second generation of a significant section of the population are incapable of normal relationships and the subsequent changing of partners puts children at risk. Both children and adults become addicted to inappropriate books and films and although these are not the cause of all social ills, they are one influence which can be moderated by restriction of what is circulating legally in the community.

All the Guidelines' fine words designed by an expert will not alter the effect of this material on those who seek (solicit) it if, as seems obvious, Classification is going to be the same system which has prevailed for the last 20 years. There was a case for broadening the Guidelines on Censorship in 1970, however, what has happened since is disastrous.

The test of the "reasonable person" or "discreet" material depends on opinion. There is an ideological stand which has prevailed in the Classification Board, which says all censorship is wrong. The very existence of the Refused category shows that some censorship is necessary. There is also an unofficial form of censorship operating at the News level. Thinking people are aware that we are only being told what some people wish us to know. We therefore cannot see why censorship of the treatment of women, sex or violent themes is unacceptable. Visual aids and books are important educators and their influence does not stop because they are classed as entertainment.

The confidence of the Code in the wisdom of Adults is touching. We do not believe perverts are entitled to see whatever they want. Restricted material is very likely to be perverted even with these Guidelines. No one would want their daughter, son or wife or indeed themselves to be seen like that. We should not allow others to be, whether they consent or not is irrelevant.

Presbyterian Women's Association - Literature Classification Review

The publication or importation of literature should be much further restricted and Standards raised in the Magazines which are allowed to be distributed in the News Agents. If the Guidelines refused to allow them to circulate it would quickly have a salutary effect on the content, especially of Australian Magazines. Our young people of any age, even over 18, do not need the salacious material and "adult" services which can be found easily in much that is readily available. Magazines aimed at the "blue collar" men's market and at the executive market, do nothing to enhance the status of women in the community. These men would not want to read the magazines if they respected women. No wonder there is sexual harassment in the workplace when, from the circulation numbers, so many men now regard women as 'fair game'. The expectation of deviant sex is destructive of physical and mental health in both men and women and certainly does not lead to rewarding relationships. It is only a small concession to mention that minors should not be portrayed - presumably after 18 it is open season.

The tendency of unstable people to dwell on explicit or violent material is borne out in Court Records time and again. The books and videos found in the possession of people convicted of violent sexual crime, child molestation and mass shootings are an indication of their impact. Many of these people would lack the initiative to think up the plot or to go "underground" to obtain the material in the first place. We are of the opinion that it would not hurt for such material to go back "underground". It would not be so easily obtained as at present. It is an acknowledged deterrent to make a law against any unacceptable practice - otherwise why would Parliament be so busy. Of course such Law cannot always be enforced in the public arena, but when detected it can carry a financial and social penalty.

If the amount of material circulating in the community which reinforces antisocial behaviours were to be reduced, it should lead to a reduction in community problems at many levels. In the US where some States have moved to do just this, within 5 years the Sexual Assault rates have much reduced. Those who are causing problems are seldom under 18 (eg. Martin Bryant of Port Arthur fame, and many others), they are usually adults, loners and social misfits, often with the mentality of children. These are the individuals whom reasonable people should be keen to protect from attitudes and ideas to copy - and copy they do.. Individual freedom should not over ride community protection.

Sex is probably the most emotive and important aspect of all people's lives and is the cause of much of the distress in the community from divorce, domestic violence, sexual abuse and dangers to children in abusive families and in institutions. The Department of Community Services is powerless to influence the condition of children where there is no respect of adults for each other or for children. The present level of Social turmoil cannot be blamed on poverty. The poor in this country do receive help. Poverty in the Great Depression did not produce the sort of domestic violence being reported at the moment. We believe that the type of entertainment freely available has contributed, in those who watch, to a mindset which condones violence and immorality. This is not the Australian culture which the wider community has known or which migrants to this country expect.

UNRESTRICTED CATEGORY - PROPOSED GUIDELINES:

COVER: Should not be misleading as to contents- either milder or stronger.

Course Language: is completely unnecessary in unrestricted matter.

Violence and Sex: Much depends on what is considered "discreet". Written references to sexual violence as an encouragement to buy the magazine is always gratuitous.

Drug Use should not be on the cover or inside.

Presbyterian Women's Association - Literature Classification Review

CONTENTS:

Violence: We see no difference between stylised and other forms of violence. None should be frequent in the Unrestricted category.

Sex: Descriptions and stylised depictions of sexual activity and photographs should not be treated differently. We believe depictions of sexual activity and descriptions which link violence with sex should not be allowed in the Unrestricted category. Consent or not, is immaterial. Sex has been exploited for too long and should be very limited in Unrestricted magazines particularly.

Adult themes: Depictions and descriptions of products and services which are restricted to adults should not be allowed in unrestricted material.

Nudity: "Publications which emphasise nudity should not be exploitive" page 9
Like sex, it can hardly avoid being exploitive. These are contradictory claims.

Coarse Language: Coarse language that is strong, aggressive or sexually detailed always has high impact and should not be Unrestricted. Language is very important and is a problem for self discipline in the community. Offices and many other workplaces are stressful just because of the bad language heard continually. If this was removed or limited as it once was, we believe there would be a correlated reduction in the community over time.

Drug Use: Drug use, even discreetly shown, which does not have a definite educative role in discrediting drug use, should not be allowed. Mere uncritical acceptance of drug use is promoting or encouraging it, no matter how discreet.

UNRESTRICTED M should be better described and separately defined. Much of what is presently Unrestricted M should go into Category 1.

CATEGORY 1 AND 2 RESTRICTED

Drug use: should only be included when it is definitely teaching against drug use. Where drugs are mentioned without consequences or value judgments such references are indeed endorsements.

Coarse language: "... that is strong, aggressive or sexually detailed" does have high impact and it is exploitive.

One factor which we believe offends at least 66% of the population who are Christian, is the continual use of "Jesus" and "Christ" as expletives. Other faiths are not so abused. Offensive language has become common usage in many instances because of media use. Some of the literature offered for study in schools has contained language which most families would not allow in their homes. Classification should make this impossible. The fact that these words can now be heard in schools is not a reason to reinforce them in literature.

Our culture has been effectively undermined for too long. Those who have been elected or appointed to protect the public interest have chosen instead to impose their own standards. The media of every form is so all pervasive that everyone is influenced one way or another. We ask yet again that a real move be made to slow the traffic of inappropriate information being poured into our communities. The whole concept of just classifying material and letting it into the community is an evasion of responsibility. We believe this issue is not a matter of individual rights, but of the greater good of the whole community.

Presbyterian Women's Association of Australia in NSW

OFFICE OF FILM AND LITERATURE CLASSIFICATION - DRAFT REVIEW

Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Videotapes

We are pleased to have this opportunity to contribute to the framing of Legislation and Guidelines for the classification of films and videotapes.

At the outset we would question the usefulness of (d) in Section 11 of the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) No.7. 1995

"...the persons or class of persons to or amongst whom it is published or is intended or likely to be published."

We believe it is now apparent that video and computer games and publications cannot be restricted to a section of the community. It is known that children do have access to many items they should not. Parents and distributors are not always responsible. All technologies should be treated as though access will be obtained by people who may be harmed by their content. This has been proven time and again in court cases where such film or other medium has proved to be influential in triggering or scripting serious crime.

We should be concerned for the many vulnerable people who are adults in the community. Even in institutions, patients have been heard to say - "I could do that!" - while listening to the News. Such a well known "teaching aid" as film, literature or computer cannot be assumed not to teach if entertaining.

We understand the classification system was intended to protect people so that:

- (a) adults should be able to read, hear and see what they want;
- (b) minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them;
- (c) everyone should be protected from exposure to unsolicited material that they find offensive;

Families have not been adequately protected for many years. The public and professional evidence on record in the Senate Committee on Community Standards was clear in that very many people do not want to see or hear much of what passes for entertainment today. That may be the reason "big box office" films are mostly G rated. The recommendations of the Senate Committee should be closely studied and followed in the public interest.

It seems to us that there has been more consideration given to the right of film makers to show whatever they produce, than to the community concern about ever increasing violence and demeaning portrayal of persons. The real pressure groups are the distributors. Many of the themes of violent and explicit films would be better left untold. Those who believe they are not affected by such outside influences should forego the pleasure of such titillating film for the benefit of society. Even the making of many films, especially pornography, is demeaning for actors and should not be allowed.

We believe the provision for literary or artistic merit has been demonstrated to allow obscene and harmful material through. The providers only had to appeal again and again. The borders of decency have been continually stretched. We believe the result of this is reflected the changed state of respect for women in a significant section of the community.

Presbyterian Women's Association of Australia in NSW

The following has been prepared for your consideration.
Recommendations for classifications in the Proposed Guidelines

GENERAL (suitable for all ages) G:

Parents should feel confident that children may view material in this classification without supervision, knowing that no distress or harm is likely to be caused.

The following are permissible:

Violence: Only mild and infrequent references or suggestions allowed.

Sex: Very discreet sexual references or implications only.

Language: No coarse language should be used.
(eg. "bloody", "bastard", "arse", "piss" should not be allowed).

The draft guidelines for G unfortunately contain the same words as the PG in regard to Sex in the present guidelines. The idea was to "tighten" the guidelines. There should be a return to standards which protect children from coarse words and sexual overtones at a young age. The increasing decline in standards of speech and behaviour in private and in public, particularly of school children, could be reduced by less exposure of young people to such unnecessary coarse words.

We admit that children may hear and/or be exposed to these influences in family and community. Films etc. are not the only element. However, we believe they are one element about which something can be done. If the guidelines stated clearly that such content was not allowed, Producers would be encouraged to improve their standards for economic reasons if not for the sake of the children.

PARENTAL GUIDANCE - PG (parental guidance recommended for persons under 15 years):
While adult themes can be used, they should be handled in a way that would not cause distress to children in a family viewing situation.

Violence: Must only be discreetly suggested, and of mild impact. Threat or menace should not be a sustained theme.

Sex: Implied sexual activity, verbal or visual reference will not be permitted.

Language: No coarse language to be permitted for family viewing.
(eg. "shit" used repeatedly at all levels of film is unnecessary.)

Adult themes: Nudity must not be full frontal or have sexual connotations.

Offending words should once more be removed from the films. In Bette Midler's film 'Beaches', if the word "fuck" had been removed we believe, if it was a good film, that would not have altered the understanding of the dialogue. Words once uttered are remembered and cannot be withdrawn. The Board has a primary responsibility to the community. The increase in community and children's peer usage of abusive language is evident. It is very obvious to anyone travelling at the same time as school children that the most unpleasant of swear words come very easily and without any thought that they are offensive. Children have been allowed to think "everyone says it" so it is alright.

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We agree parents have the primary duty of influencing their children and they do. However when the words that offend are used in entertainment, in public, and also at school in their peer group, the influence of the home is hard to sustain. Children are also a community responsibility, and our social environment is not improving with the increasing use of obscenities and abuse, reinforced on film.

MATURE - M 15 + - (mature audience 15 years and over)

Violence: mild violence only, infrequent and not detailed. Mental and emotional impact should not be high or show bodily harm and bloody depictions.

Sex: No implied depiction or suggestion of sexual violence - normal sexual activity (male - female) may be discreetly referred to but not depicted (oral and anal sex and cross generational sex must not be depicted or implied).

Coarse Language: must not be permitted. (words such as "fuck" do not enlighten or entertain those who hear and should be removed from this category).

Adult themes: Suicide, domestic violence, incest, drug use, horror not permitted.

We believe "recommended for a mature audience 15+" is not appropriate. This word gives a misleading message to parents who may consider this film will be acceptable for their child to attend with a friend. This could certainly not be assumed under present guidelines.

The M rating will be seen by children. There is no real effort made to check the age of people attending cinemas. M rated films are also widely advertised as suitable holiday viewing for school children in cinemas. Many films presently M rated should be MA or R rated. Films such as "Bloodmoon", rated M was filled with grisly images. The film even dared you to walk out! It is no wonder there is a problem for boys and violence. These films are watched by teenage boys particularly.

As parents and responsible adults, we are appalled at the implications of viewing violent film. That this may be the children's choice is irrelevant. We should understand that these messages are destructive and act to remove this danger as we would for other types of harmful activity. This film is only one of many. If there is the desired reduction in harmful content, there should be a re-classifying program to take the worst films out of circulation and change the rating of others. The Board's records should enable that to be done and the onus should be on the distributors to change the jacket.

MATURE ACCOMPANIED - MA 15 + - Restrictions apply to persons under 15*
Children under 15 will not be permitted to cinemas unless accompanied by a parent or guardian; video material not permitted to be sold/hired to persons under 15

We believe this is unenforced and probably unenforceable. Many young people go to cinemas with other people who are not responsible for their welfare. Even so, when it is already known that all parents are not responsible, this provision permits adults to take their or other people's 15+ year olds to an MA film. Rarely is any check made in the theatre or any action taken. Box Office questions can be avoided. Many films presently MA should be R restricted. MA was begun to reduce violence, but in effect, we believe it has opened up the media to ever more violent or offensive film, particularly on television after 9pm.

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Our Recommendation for MA:

- Violence:** depictions with a considerable (not high) degree of visual, mental or emotional impact must be justified by the narrative, not detailed and relished. Horror films should not be included. Sexual violence may be discreetly implied only if strongly justified by narrative.
- Sex:** Normal sexual activity may be implied, not detailed (not anal or oral-genital). Verbal references should be minimal and not explicit. discreet non-sexual nudity only, not full frontal.
- Coarse Language:** Frequent coarse language should not be used. Strongly aggressive language should be prohibited.
- Adult themes:** Drug use must be only discreetly implied but not demonstrated or the story line impress or encourage to copy. Horror not to be included in this category. Incest should not be depicted or implied.

We believe a clear indication that the community does not approve of violence or sexual exploitation is desperately needed. It is not good enough to say that this is artistically or theatrically justified by the story. **Does the story need to be told?**

Supernatural and horror should be greatly reduced and discouraged. There is quite enough distress and horror on the news without concocting fiction. It is one thing to tell ghost stories, but quite another for it to be made real on film. We agree fairy tales were pretty gruesome at times, however, they relied on the child's own experience to do the mental graphics, not adults dreaming up ever more gruesome special effects. Many MA movies should be on the R category. In the last few months there have been a stream of films like "Basic Instinct" on Television. It is known children watch television until late at night and have access to videos. Many are not adequately supervised. Revenge and violence is reinforced for young people as a solution to jealousy, when it is justified by the story line.

RESTRICTED - audiences over 18 - R

- Violence:** Realistic depictions but not relished or cruel. Sexual violence implied only.
- Sex:** May be realistically implied or simulated. Verbal references should not be exploitative. **No simulated, implied oral or anal sex.**
- Coarse language:** Strong language should be infrequent and not be exploitative.
- Adult themes:** Films should not be detailed or exploitive of strong mental or emotional impact.
- Drug Use:** may be shown, but should not be detailed or promote use.
- Nudity:** discreet nudity of a non-sexual context is permissible.

We believe this sentence in the Draft "no theme is refused" should be removed.

It will give support to any appeal for X and RC rated films to be reclassified. The Board should be able to say this theme is not appropriate. At the moment X rated film can be given an R rating when a few "explicit" frames are removed. The theme is still exploitive of women. This should not be allowed. "Salo" was given an R rating after many appeals. Appeals should not be available for X and RC ratings and all other ratings should be allowed one Appeal only. Standards should not be allowed to continually be reduced over time.

The freedom of producers to make films which "push the boundaries" should not be allowed to come before the good of the community. If there are strong guidelines which are enforced, the producers will begin to choose more interesting and worthwhile subjects.

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X RATED FILM CONTAINS SEXUALLY EXPLICIT MATERIAL (restricted to adults 18 years and over) **ALL FILMS IN THIS CATEGORY SHOULD BE BANNED** as requested by all the States in the Censorship Minister's Meeting in 1989. Production and Importation should also be banned. We believe the spread of these films in the community over the last 10 years has contributed to the increasing public and domestic violence against women.

The refusal of the government to ban X rated films has allowed a huge pool of offensive and socially destructive material to influence a significant minority of men to expect that women will consent to offensive and medically dangerous acts as they do on film. Their partner's refusal to consent generates domestic violence, particularly when combined with alcohol.

This effect has been reported in the Aboriginal community where pornographic films have influenced men to do things that had never been part of their culture. (Senate Select Committee on Community Standards 25.3.94 Hansard p.633). To our knowledge, these acts have not been significant part of the Australian culture either until the last ten years. The depiction of consent to unhealthy and distressing sexual deviations represent, when translated into personal lives, a continuing abuse of women. In fact the effect could be much greater than that of reported domestic violence.

The depictions of the joys of casual sex and of prostitution as a non-violent and pleasurable practice, damages the self esteem of women who watch (Video Material Report 1988, Chapter 3). These images also damage men's perceptions of what women can be expected to consent to. Most Australian women are well educated and will not "consent" to anal, oral or casual sex.

The expectation that they will have sex with anyone and allow these offensive acts becomes a cause of great confusion to young men who have been exposed X rated films. This could explain the apparent high incidence of harassment claims and breakdown in marriages and de-facto relationships and even office working relationships.

In the light of Hepatitis ABCDE, HIV, STDs and domestic turmoil, it seems prudent for those responsible for influencing public policy, to consider what effect the increasing circulation of teaching aids advocating unhealthy practices will have on good order and community health. Safe Sex education programs can't compete for attention with X rated film.

Failing the complete banning and recall of these films, we suggest the replacement of clause (a) in the description of X ratings on the Code Schedule p37 as follows:

"(a) depict consenting sexual activity between adults;
it does not include depictions of anal, oral-genital sex and group sex".

IN ADDITION on each video jacket or promotion should go the warning:
"ANAL, ORAL and PROMISCUOUS SEX ARE A HEALTH HAZARD"

If it can be done with a cigarette packet, it can be done on a VIDEO

The transfer of viruses from person to person, and from the alimentary tract to the genital tract is quite inevitable. The risk of damage to the lining of the rectum from anal sex is high for both men and women. This allows the transfer of viruses directly into the blood. The vagina has a thick lining which is designed by nature for the purpose of sex and does not tear easily.

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Recommended Classification guidelines for X rating:

This classification is a special and legally restricted category which only contains sexually explicit material depicting sex between consenting adults.

(a) It does not contain oral-genital sex, anal sex or group sex. Such material will be refused classification.

(b) It does not contain any depictions of sexual violence, sexualised violence or coercion, or exploitative depictions. Such material will be refused classification.

In the Draft, the addition of "grossly" before "exploitative" reduces the impact inappropriately.

If the community is really serious about containing communicable diseases, education must be improved. Where people believe they are being entertained, the message would be more easily transferred. We are sure that the medical profession would collaborate on this educational undertaking. In the long term such targeted teaching, if it was undertaken, would reduce the public health bill and improve community safety for many women. Those people who do not watch X rated films, on the whole, do not need this teaching, they already know the risks involved. It would be more economical than AIDS education.

The Pornography Lobby claim that those who want "censorship" do not worry about violence, and are unnecessarily concerned with sex. We believe sex, and the irresponsible use of its powerful emotions, is the trigger for most community anguish (eg. shooting of two policemen on the Central Coast when called to a "domestic"). This applies to domestic violence, child abuse, and the poverty of women and children (mainly caused by divorce which involves sex). The economic cost to the community of such destructive behaviour is huge.

The damage done by promoting the view that people are entitled to do (or view) whatever they please in their own homes, and that women will consent to unnatural sex, must be recognised. The perception that women are sexually available and disposable is implied violence to both men and women, but particularly to children who depend for their sustenance on the good will of both.

REFUSED CLASSIFICATION - RC

We consider this guideline should also apply to Computer Games and information.

The draft is very broad, and we believe it would be clearer if set out as other guidelines. The addition of "unduly" to "detailed" qualifies the words that follow. We submit the following.

Classification will be refused if the film contains the following:

Violence: Detailed, relished or cruel acts of considerable violence, including deliberate infliction of pain, bondage, horror and murder; exploitative depictions of or portrayal of sexual violence to any person, man, woman or child.

Sex: (a) Child pornography, and any depiction of incest or incest fantasies or cross generational sex, including any sexually orientated representation of adult dressed as child;
(b) Sexual activity including explicit penetration, masturbation, ejaculation, fellatio, cunnilingus, insertion of objects in orifices, urolagnia, necrophilia, coprophilia, sado-masochism, and group sex;
(c) implicit or explicit bestiality.

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Coarse Language: Indecent, blasphemous and obscene words.

Adult themes: (a) Denigrate religious faith or belief (not genuine discussion);
(b) which instruct, encourage, clarify, demonstrate methods of crime or exploitative depictions which denigrate law enforcement officers or the law;
(c) where the storyline draws sympathy for the terrorist, racist, criminal or where the hero, being more violent than the criminal justifies violent solutions.
(d) disrespect for the sanctity of life or death.

Drug use: Drug taking depiction, reference that instructs or encourages proscribed drug use, proscribed drug abuse; petrol or other drug sniffing.

The draft guidelines (f) qualified "incest" with the word "exploitative". Is there any other kind? We believe this word should be removed from the final document. There is very great public concern about this very issue.

We have heard it said that the public pressure to restore censorship of offensive material is a reaction prompted and sustained by unrepresentative "pressure groups". We consider that the various media groups, film makers and distributors are economic pressure groups. Media "opinion leaders" exercise ad hoc censorship in when they select which items to let the public know about. This is very evident at all levels, not just in this present reference. This form of censorship is uncontrolled and much more insidious than Guidelines drawn up to reduce offensive material. There is proliferation of harmful and violent images and continual emphasis on whatever is extreme, offensive, destructive, or sensational in news, adult humour and films. This emphasis leaves little time for what is pure or admirable. Good news is not News.

Computer games and printed Publications should also be subject to similar restrictions to those we have outlined here for film and video. The schedule for Computer Games should be restricted further for M+ and MA, and G or it will not protect children as it should. All Computer Games should not be harmful for children. Games will get into children's hands just as videos do. Primary school children often know about the latest R rated films. Computers will be no different.

We are appalled at the contents of magazines such as "People" and "Cleo" which are available to any school child in the local Newsagent. The enclosed copy of a page from "People" would we believe, offend large numbers of reasonable adults, particularly women. It would impress any young person exposed to it. These magazines are targeted, "Cleo" at teenage girls, and "People" at "blue collar" young men. No wonder women are at risk. "Cleo" even published a Federal Health Department sponsored booklet in December 1994, with pornographic articles in it. Perhaps it was not submitted to the Board for classification as it was "Safe Sex Education"!

We do not believe what we have asked for is extreme, although such provisions may challenge Producers to put a little more thought into what is being filmed. We support the findings of the Senate Select Committee on Community Standards which researched both community and professional evidence and came to a very considered conclusion. We urge the Government and the Board to act on their Recommendations.

Social Issues Committee

November 21, 1995