



# **Australian Government**

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## **Classification Review Board**

**Review Date: 26 September 2011**  
**23-33 MARY STREET**  
**SURRY HILLS, NSW**

**MEMBERS:** Ms Victoria Rubensohn AM (Convenor)  
Ms Ann Stark  
Dr Melissa de Zwart

**APPLICANT** Sega Australia

### **INTERESTED PARTIES**

**BUSINESS** To review the Classification Board's decision to classify the computer game, House of the Dead: Overkill Extended Cut, RC (Refused Classification).

## **DECISION AND REASONS FOR DECISION**

### **1. Decision**

The Classification Review Board (the Review Board) by unanimous decision determined that the computer game, House of the Dead: Overkill extended cut, should be classified MA15+ with the consumer advice 'strong horror violence, strong coarse language'.

### **2. Legislative provisions**

The *Classification (Publications, Film and Computer Games) Act 1995* (the Classification Act) governs the classification of computer games and the review of classification decisions. Section 9 provides that computer games are to be classified in accordance with the National Classification Code (the Code) and the *Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games* (the Guidelines).

Section 11 of the Classification Act requires that the matters to be taken into account in making a decision on the classification of a computer game include:

- (a) The standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults; and
- (b) The literary, artistic or educational merit (if any) of the computer game; and

- (c) The general character of the computer game, including whether it is of a medical, legal or scientific character; and
- (d) The persons or class of persons to or amongst whom it is published or is intended or likely to be published.

Three essential principles underlie the use of the Guidelines, determined under section 12 of the Classification Act:

- the importance of context
- the assessment of impact, and
- The six classifiable elements – themes, violence, sex, language, drug use and nudity.

### **3. Procedure**

A three member panel of the Review Board met on 26 September 2011 in response to the receipt of an application from Sega Australia dated 25 August 2011 to review the RC classification of the computer game, determined by the Classification Board. Those three members had previously determined that the application was a valid application.

The Review Board was assured that the computer game, the subject of the review application, was the same computer game as had been classified by the Classification Board.

The Review Board viewed and extensively played the computer game on 26 September 2011.

Darren Macbeth, Neroli Baird, Khiet Chu and Paul Hunt appeared on behalf of Sega Australia. They attended the Review Board to **further** demonstrate the game and to answer any questions from the Board.

The Review Board viewed various aspects of game play and play modes and then considered the matter.

### **4. Evidence and other material taken into account**

In reaching its decision the Review Board had regard to the following:

- (i) The application for review;
- (ii) the computer game, *House of the Dead: Overkill Extended Cut*;
- (iii) the relevant provisions in the Classification Act, the Code and the Guidelines; and
- (iv) the Classification Board's report.

### **5. Synopsis**

*The House of the Dead: Overkill Extended Cut* is a prequel to the action which is depicted in the earlier Sega arcade series of the same name. It is the same as *The House of the Dead: Overkill* game classified MA15+ in 2008 with some additional content and features and is the fourth game in this franchise. The game can also be

viewed in 3D mode. It is a first person 'shooter on rails' game that gives limited control to the player regarding how to proceed through the ten levels of the game, thus reducing overall interactivity. Players can only play as the predetermined characters for each level. It takes place in Bayou City, Louisiana, in the southern part of the US. The scenes are stylised, paying homage to the grind house film style of the fifties and sixties, reflecting the B grade schlock/horror genre. Settings include a plantation house, the Pink Pussycat night club, a fun fair, and a speeding train, with the action ending up in a hidden dungeon laboratory. Players aim to dispose of the zombies using a variety of weapons and collect money, used to purchase additional weapons, and other items (such as medi kits) throughout the game. There is also an opportunity to save civilian hostages from zombie attack.

## 6. Findings on material questions of fact

- (a) **Themes** – The theme of the game is zombie horror, which is a common theme in contemporary horror films and games. The Review Board concluded that this theme could be readily accommodated within a MA15+ rating.
- (b) **Violence** – The game is a zombie 'rail shooter' game, with the aim to destroy zombies and to save hostages and Bayou City, and therefore contains frequent violence featuring shooting, melee and hand to hand combat. The violence occurs between the four human protagonists and the zombies and mutants (including three 'mini mutants'). The game has various modes (including 'hardcore' and 'classic' mode) and there are nine levels available. As the game is a 'rail shooter' game, players have little choice over the path taken in play or over camera angles. The presentation of the game itself is not graphically sharp and features generally dark or muted/faded colours. The violence in the game is stylised, relatively graphically unsophisticated and the vast majority of attacks do not occur in close up. The close up scenes using knives to perform finishing moves on a mutant are infrequent and repetitive in their imagery, thus decreasing their impact. The zombies and mutants are graphically homogeneous and stylised with very few exceptions. The mini mutants are grotesque smaller creatures parodying babies by wearing nappies. However, they do not appear as human babies. Blood and gore are depicted unrealistically (a range of colours), are not graphically detailed and disappear from the game within seconds. Various weapons are available to a player for a cost and grenades may be picked up during play and used. Projectiles thrown at players by zombies may be shot in the air. The nature of the game as a fast-paced rail shooter precludes lingering over victims, who vanish after being eliminated by a range of methods, including shooting with guns or crossbows, using knives or with grenades, which may cause explosion and consequent dismemberment on impact. The game contains an 'extra mutants' mode which increases the number of mutants attacking but not by a large number. This mode, which is available in the original game, does not change the weapons or modes of elimination available. The impact of the violence in the game is strong and is justified by the horror context of the game. This element can be accommodated in the MA15+ category.
- (c) **Language** – The game contains frequent strong coarse language, used in a conversational style which is not aggressive. The coarse language occurs in the cut scenes and in game play, and is used as a game feature in the "shoot

the sh\*t' mode, where the player can shoot swear words as a competition feature and replace them with blips or replace swear words with animal and other random sounds. This element can be accommodated in the MA15+ category.

- (d) **Sex** – There is no sex in the game. Any sexual references are humorous. This element could be accommodated in a lower category than MA15+.
- (e) **Drug Use** – There is no real drug use in the game, nor are there references to real drugs. In a hospital setting in the game there are needles containing toxins which are to be injected into mutants. One character, Jasper, is turned into a mutant after being injected with a toxin. This is portrayed in a stylised comic-horror manner rather than a realistic manner. This element could be accommodated in a lower category than MA15+.
- (f) **Nudity** – There is no realistic nudity in the game. Nurses are scantily dressed and other mutants appear in bikinis in a strip club scenario. Two large female mutants are depicted with grotesque and unrealistic breasts revealed. This unrealistic nudity is infrequent and is not sexualised. This element can be easily accommodated in the MA15+ or lower categories.

## **7. Reasons for the decision**

It is the view of the Review Board that the violence in this computer game, occurring in a familiar fighting game format, is stylised, unrealistic and graphically relatively unsophisticated compared to other computer games available in the Australian market. Given the fantasy theme of zombie horror and the characteristics of that genre, the violence, although frequent, is justified by context. The zombies and mutants themselves and most of the combat action involving them is lacking in realistic detail and occurs at a distance rather than in close up. The zombies and mutants are visually homogeneous and with a couple of exceptions that are individually grotesque, are not humanised. Victims and blood and gore disappear within seconds from the game. The settings in Bayou City are stylised and not realistic. It is therefore the opinion of the Review Board that the cumulative impact of the violence in the game is no higher than strong and as noted above, is justified by the fantasy zombie horror, 'rail shooter' context.

In addition, the game contains frequent strong, coarse language which is not aggressive and is used conversationally. The cumulative impact of this language is no higher than strong.

As the impact of both the violence and the language in House of the Dead: Overkill Extended Cut is strong, the game is not suitable for persons under the age of 15.

Pursuant to the Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games, this computer game is classified MA15+.

## **8. Summary**

The Review Board determined that the computer game, House of the Dead: Overkill Extended Cut, is classified MA15+ with the consumer advice of 'strong horror violence, strong coarse language'.