![Australian Government Classification Board]

Media release—Classification of the game *We Happy Few*

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We Happy Few is a psychedelic, single-player, action-adventure game set in 1964, after England has lost World War II, where the population of the fictional dystopian town, Wellington Wells, consume a drug called 'Joy' that causes memory loss, mandated by the government.

On 21 May 2018, the Classification Board (the Board) classified the computer game *We Happy Few* **RC (Refused Classification)**. The RC category is commonly referred to as being 'banned'. This means that the game cannot be sold, hired, advertised, or imported into Australia.

In making this decision, the Classification Board had to apply the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995*, the *National Classification Code* and the *Guidelines for the Classification of Computer Games 2012* (the Games Guidelines).

The Games Guidelines explain the different classification categories, and the scope and limits of material suitable for each category. They are revised from time to time, with extensive community input.

The Games Guidelines state for all classification levels from G up to, and including, R 18+ that: *Drug use related to incentives and rewards is not permitted*. 'Incentives' or 'rewards' may include, but are not limited to: the awarding of additional points; achievement unlocks; new skills or increases in attributes such as strength; making tasks easier to accomplish; accumulating rare forms of game equipment; plot animations and pictures as rewards following an event/action.

When assessing the computer game *We Happy Few* the Board sought clarification from the applicant, Gearbox Publishing LLC, regarding drug use for incentives or rewards.

Based on the information from the applicant, the Board noted:

> *Players have the option to conform with NPCs and take Joy pills when exploring the Village or Parade District areas of the game. If a player has not taken Joy, NPCs become hostile towards the player if they perform behaviours including running, jumping and staring. An NPC character called the Doctor can detect when the player has not taken Joy and will subsequently raise an alarm. A player who takes Joy can reduce gameplay difficulty, therefore receiving an incentive by progressing through the game quickly. Although there are alternative methods to complete the game, gameplay requires the player to take Joy to progress.*

In the Board's opinion, the game's drug-use mechanism of making game progression less difficult, constituted an incentive or reward for drug-use. Therefore, the game exceeded the R 18+ classification because of the drug use related to incentives and rewards. The Games Guidelines state that, *Computer games that exceed the R 18+ classification category will be Refused Classification.* If the Games Guidelines did not contain this restriction in its current form, then *We Happy Few* would have received an MA 15+ classification.

Margaret Anderson
Acting Director
Classification Board