Media statement—classification history of the game *Dayz*

13 August 2019

Dayz is a survival computer game set in the fictional post-Soviet Republic of Chernarus, where a mysterious plague has turned most of the population into zombies. The game is set in 1st and 3rd person where, as a survivor, the player must scavenge the land for food, water, weapons and medicine while killing or avoiding the "infected".

Dayz was initially put through the IARC (International Age Rating Coalition) Tool (the IARC Tool). A computer game developer answers an online questionnaire and the IARC Tool generates a rating and consumer advice which is consistent with current Australian classification guidelines. Based on the information provided by Bohemia Interactive in relation to drug use when completing the IARC questionnaire, the IARC Tool generated an MA 15+ classification with consumer advice of 'Strong violence, online interactivity' for the digital version of *Dayz*. The IARC Tool produces classifications for digitally delivered games for Australia.

When Five Star Games Pty Ltd applied to the Classification Board for a classification for an upcoming PlayStation 4 release of the game in Australia, they advised that drug use in the game included cannabis. The aim of *Dayz* is to stay alive and healthy during the conditions of the outbreak and the player's health is measured by vital statistics. Throughout general gameplay, the player is able to collect and use a variety of equipment, supplies and weaponry, with one option to restore the player's health being a marijuana joint, labelled "cannabis," which is denoted by a cannabis bud in the player's inventory. The player is able to select and use it when their vital statistics are low. When the player smokes the cannabis, their vital statistics of food and water increase and their temperature decreases. Therefore, in the opinion of the Classification Board, cannabis use during the game acts as an incentive or reward to boost overall health and survivability. The Board noted that there was no instance of intoxication resulting from this drug use depicted within the game.

The *Guidelines for the Classification of Computer Games 2012* (the Games Guidelines) state "*interactive illicit or proscribed drug use is **not** permitted*" within the G, PG, M or MA 15+ classification. The Guidelines further state, "*drug use is permitted*" within the R 18+ classification, **provided** any "*interactive illicit or proscribed drug use*" is **not** "*detailed or realistic*". Pursuant to the Games Guidelines, "drug use related to incentives and rewards is **not** permitted" at *any* classification level.

Accordingly, on 4 June 2019, the Classification Board had to classify the computer game, *Dayz,* **RC (Refused Classification)**. The RC category is commonly referred to as being 'banned'. This means that the game cannot be sold, hired, advertised, or legally imported into Australia. The IARC Tool classification has been updated to RC (Refused Classification).

The Board noted that *if* the use of cannabis within the context of this game did *not* act as an incentive or reward, its impact could have been accommodated within the R 18+ classification.

Further, *if* this instance of drug use was *absent* from the game, then *Dayz* would be able to be accommodated within the MA 15+ classification.

On 28 June 2019, the Council of Attorneys-General agreed that the Australian Government will coordinate a public consultation process on reviewing the Games Guidelines to ensure they reflect contemporary Australian community values. The review will be undertaken by the Department of Communications and the Arts.

Margaret Anderson
Director
Classification Board