



**42nd MEETING  
7 March 2002**

**23-33 MARY STREET  
SURRY HILLS, NSW**

MEMBERS: Ms Maureen Shelley (Convenor),  
Ms Dawn Grassick  
Ms Jan Taylor

APPLICANT Roadshow Entertainment  
(Roslyn Wilson and Sharyne Waddell – Roadshow Entertainment  
Janine Burdeu – ABC)

**BUSINESS:**

To review the decision of the Classification Board to classify the film *Three Ballerinas* PG with the Consumer Advice “Low Level Coarse Language”.

**DECISION AND REASONS FOR DECISION**

**1. Decision**

The Classification Review Board (the Board) agreed to set aside the decision of the Classification Board and classified the video *Three Ballerinas* “G” – General. One member of the Board disagreed with this decision and believed the Classification Board’s decision should stand.

**2. Legislative provisions**

The *Classification (Publications, Film and Computer Games) Act 1995* (the Act) governs the classification of films and the review of classification decisions. The Act provides that films be classified in accordance with the National Classification Code (the Code) and the classification guidelines (the Guidelines).

**3. Procedure**

The Board received written application for review and a supporting statement from Roadshow Entertainment. Oral submissions from Ms Wilson and Ms Waddell –

Roadshow Entertainment and Ms Burdeu – ABC were heard. Ms Waddell and Ms Burdeu took the opportunity to stay during the screening of the video presentation.

The Board then met in camera to consider the matter.

#### **4. Matters taken into account**

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

- (i) The applicant's Application for Review (including oral and written submissions);
- (ii) The relevant provisions in the Act;
- (iii) The relevant provisions in the National Classification Code as amended in accordance with Section 6 of the Act; and
- (iv) The *Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Videotapes* determined under Section 12 of the Act.

#### **5. Findings on material questions of fact**

The video is a documentary of 52.03 minutes duration about three ballerinas. Marilyn Rowe, Marilyn Jones and Lucille Aldous were significant performers in Australian ballet from the 1950s through until the 1970s. The documentary uses historical footage, still photographs, contemporary video footage and voiceover to deliver the women's stories. It uses a mixture of colour and black and white film, music, lighting and editing techniques to give the main dance sections of the video a rich texture. This contrasts beautifully with the spare lighting and monochromatic footage of much of the contemporary "interview style" scenes where the dancers speak of their experiences.

The majority of the video is of ballet productions with some scenes of the ballerinas today and some scenes with them as teachers at the WA Ballet, the WA Academy for Performing Arts and at the Australian Ballet.

During the video coarse language is used. At 23 minutes one dancer quotes Rudolph Nureyev as saying "Look at the corps de ballet, they are sitting on their arses". On two other occasions a dancer uses the expression "absolute hell".

During the voiceover the ballerinas describe their experiences. One speaks of dancing in "absolute agony" and mentions cortisone injections, feet and ankle operations and the death of her husband. Another refers to the five operations she had so as to continue dancing.

#### **6. Reasons for the Decision**

The majority of the three-member panel believed that the use of the word "arse" was very mild coarse language and could be accommodated within the General classification. It was their opinion that given the delivery of the word (voiceover, not used aggressively nor as an expletive) and the context in which it was used that it would be unlikely to have impact on anyone viewing the video.

In the minority, one member believed that whilst the video had much artistic and educational merit and would be suitable for viewing for anyone over the age of eight, it contained references which may be confusing or upsetting to very young children. It was this member's opinion that as such the video should be classified PG.

It was this member's opinion that the video contained coarse language that was mild and infrequent and made reference to adult themes which were discreet and mild in impact.

The majority of the Board considered the references to death, injury and drug use to be very discreet and understated in the context of the story and, as such, did not constitute adult themes.

## **7. Summary**

The Board's decision is to set aside the decision of the Classification Board to classify *Three Ballerinas* "PG" with the Consumer Advice "Low Level Coarse Language" and to assign the classification "G" – General.

The decision is taken after full consideration of the Applicant's submission, and after considering the video against the relevant legislative criteria, including the Code and the Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Videotapes as determined under Section 12 of the Act.



Maureen Shelley  
Convenor

12 March 2002