



Australian Government

Classification Review Board

12 September 2009
23-33 MARY STREET
SURRY HILLS, NSW

MEMBERS: Ms Victoria Rubensohn (Convenor)
The Hon Trevor Griffin (Deputy Convenor)
Ms Ann Stark

APPLICANT Sony Pictures Releasing

INTERESTED PARTIES None

BUSINESS To review the Classification Board's decision to classify the film *Julie & Julia* M with the consumer advice 'Infrequent coarse language'.

DECISION AND REASONS FOR DECISION

1. Decision

The Classification Review Board (the Review Board) classified the film PG, with the consumer advice 'Infrequent coarse language'.

2. Legislative provisions

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

Relevantly, the Code in paragraph 5 of the table under the heading 'Films' provides that:

Films (except RC films, X 18+ films, R 18+ films, MA 15+ films and M films) that cannot be recommended for viewing by persons who are under 15 without the guidance of their parents or guardians are to be classified 'PG', and

Films (except RC films, X 18+ films, R 18+ films and MA 15+ films) that cannot be recommended for viewing by persons who are under 15 are to be classified M.

The Code also sets out various principles to which classification decisions should give effect, as far as possible.

Section 11 of the Act requires that the matters to be taken into account in making a decision on the classification of a film 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 film; and
- (c) the general character of the film, 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 for the Classification of Films and Computer Games 2005* (the Guidelines), determined under s 12 of the 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 Saturday, 12 September 2009 in response to the receipt of an application from Sony Pictures Releasing on 1 September 2009 to conduct the review.

The Review Board viewed the film on 12 September 2009.

The Review Board heard an oral submission from Mr Stephen Basil-Jones and Mr John Dickie representing the applicant. This was made in addition to a written submission from the applicant.

The Review Board 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) Sony Pictures' application for review
- (ii) Sony Pictures' written and oral submissions
- (iii) A written submission received from Young Media Australia
- (iv) the film, *Julie & Julia*

- (v) the relevant provisions in the Classification Act, the Code and the Guidelines, and
- (vi) the Classification Board's report.

5. Synopsis

The film intertwines the lives of two women: chef Julia Child during the early years in her culinary career, with Julie Powell, a modern day blogger, who aspires to cook, in a year, all 524 recipes from Child's famed cookbook *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, reflecting on this experience in her daily blog.

6. Findings on material questions of fact

The Review Board found that the film contains aspects or scenes of importance under various classifiable elements:

- (a) Themes – There are no significant themes in the film and no themes which could not be accommodated under a PG classification
- (b) Violence – There is no real violence in the film but at 1 hour 09 minutes there is a scene showing blood on a chicken. This impact is mild and can be accommodated under a PG rating.
- (c) Language – At 51 minutes and 1 hour 20 minutes the expression “shit” is used as an exclamation, the first when Julie spills the beef jelly. Its use is infrequent and its impact mild. At 1.48 the expression “fuck them” is used by Julia Child's husband as an expression of frustration and support for Julia who has received another publishing rejection. The expression is used once and its impact is mild. The Review Board is of the view that the language, being mild and infrequent and justified by context, can be accommodated under a PG classification.

At 1 hour 20 minutes, Julia's husband exclaims that 'it makes me feel like an arsehole', but the Review Board is of the view that this is mild and justified by context. Both of the noted exclamations by Julia Child's husband, Paul, are mild and expressive of concern and frustration, rather than of the aggressive nature that might be assumed by reading the account of this language in the text.

- (d) Sex – At approximately 25 mins and again at 1.48 mins there are scenes of implied sex. It is discreet and the impact is mild and can be accommodated under a PG classification.
- (e) Drug Use – There is no drug use in the film.
- (f) Nudity – There is no nudity in the film.

7. Reasons for the decision

The Review Board is of the view that all classifiable elements in the film, including language, can be accommodated under the PG classification. The expression “shit” is

used twice in the film as an exclamation. Its use is infrequent and its impact mild. The expression “fuck them” is used once in a two hour film, as an expression of frustration and support, and almost slips by. The use of the expression, as a passing phrase, is not aggressive, abusive or threatening and its impact is mild.

8. Summary

The Review Board determined that the film should be classified PG with the consumer advice ‘Infrequent coarse language’.