



Australian Government

Classification Review Board

13 December 2013

23-33 MARY STREET
SURRY HILLS, NSW

MEMBERS: Victoria Rubensohn (Convenor)
Peter Attard
Melissa de Zwart

APPLICANT Minister for Justice (the Minister) as requested by the South
Australian Attorney-General

INTERESTED PARTIES

BUSINESS To review the Classification Board's (the Board) decision to
classify the film *Rampage* MA 15+ (Mature Accompanied)
with the consumer advice 'Strong violence'.

DECISION AND REASONS FOR DECISION

1. Decision

The Classification Review Board (the Review Board) unanimously classified the film MA 15+, with the consumer advice 'Strong violence'.

2. Legislative provisions

The *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* (Cth) (the Classification Act) governs the classification of films and the review of classification decisions.

The Review Board

Part 5 of the Classification Act outlines the provisions relevant to the Review Board and its procedures.

Section 42 of the Classification Act sets out the persons who may apply for review of a decision:

- (a) the Minister
- (b) the applicant for classification of the film, or the likely classification of the film under section 33
- (c) the publisher of the film, or
- (d) a person aggrieved by the decision.

Section 42(2) provides that if a participating Minister asks the Minister, in writing, to apply for a review of a decision, the Minister must do so.

Section 43 sets out the conditions regarding the manner and form of applications for review, including time limits. Under section 44, the Review Board must deal with an application for review in the same way that the Board deals with an application for classification of a film.

Classification of Films under the Classification Act

Section 9, subject to section 9A, provides that films are to be classified in accordance with the National Classification Code (the Code) and the classification guidelines. Section 9A states that a film that advocates the doing of a terrorist act must be classified RC.

Section 11 of the Classification 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.

The National Classification Code

Relevantly, the Films Table of the Code in paragraph 4 provides that:

Films (except RC films, X 18+ films and R 18+ films) that depict, express or otherwise deal with sex, violence or coarse language in such a manner as to be unsuitable for viewing by persons under 15 are to be classified MA 15+.

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

- (a) adults should be able to read, hear, see and play what they want;
- (b) minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them;
- (c) everyone should be protected from exposure to unsolicited material that they find offensive;
- (d) the need to take account of community concerns about:

- (i) depictions that condone or incite violence, particularly sexual violence;
and
- (ii) the portrayal of persons in a demeaning manner.

The Guidelines

Three essential principles underlie the use of the *Guidelines for the Classification of Films 2012* (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

Three members of the Review Board met on 13 December 2013 in response to the receipt of an application from the Minister for Justice on 10 December 2013 to conduct the review of the film *Rampage*, which had previously been classified MA 15+ by the Classification Board. The Review Board determined that the application was a valid application.

The Review Board viewed the film.

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) the Minister's application for review
- (ii) the film, *Rampage*
- (iii) the relevant provisions in the Classification Act, the Code and the guidelines, and
- (iv) the Classification Board's report.

5. Synopsis

Bill Williamson, who lives with his parents, plans and executes a killing spree in his home town. The film documents his preparation of a Kevlar suit and ammunition and uses brief flash forwards to depict his growing frustration and rage. He goes on a killing spree, shooting people in the streets and in shops, as well as exploding a car bomb inside the local police station. Bill kills the local sheriff and his friend Evan, setting him up for Bill's crimes.

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 – The film deals with the frustration, disillusionment and alienation of a young man, with the pressures of modern society. The impact of these themes is strong and can be accommodated at the MA15+ level.

(b) Violence – The main classifiable element of the film is violence. The film contains violence that is strong in impact and justified by context. The film contains numerous violent scenes including:

A remote controlled van is driven by Bill into the police station full of explosives, which is then detonated, causing a massive shock wave. Bodies are thrown into the air and several police officers are impliedly killed.

Bill, dressed in his homemade Kevlar suit, walks along the main street and shoots random pedestrians and people in cars with two automatic weapons.

Bill enters a hairdressing salon and rounds up the women, instructing them to line up against the wall. He talks to them and then leaves and the women believe they have survived. Bill then returns, lines them up against the wall and shoots them with his automatic weapons. The women are shown cowering amidst a spray of bullets, extensive blood spray and impact wounds are shown. A post action visual reveals a pile of bodies covered in a large amount of blood.

Bill executes a number of individuals: one woman in the street is shot up against the wall, generating blood spray; a man is shot up against the window, splattering blood against the window; a waitress is shot through the chest and again blood spray is shown in long shot and the café worker is shot from a distance in the back, producing blood spray. Bill also shoots a number of people in the bank and slashes the throat of a bank employee who attempts to restrain him. Blood seeps down the employee's neck and he is heard gurgling as he dies.

A number of sheriff deputies are impliedly killed by a car explosion triggered by Bill remotely. One officer is shown with serious burns to the head.

Bill executes the sheriff with a blade, generating copious blood flow and the Sheriff is shown bleeding out.

Bill kills Evan with a head shot, but little detail is visible.

There is no sexual violence in the film.

(c) Sex – There is no sex in the film.

(d) Language – There is repeated use of coarse language in the film that can be accommodated within the MA15+ level.

(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 unanimously decided that the film should be classified MA15+. The main classifiable element is violence. The film deals with a disturbed young man on a deliberate and calculated rampage of killing. The film contains frequent scenes of strong violence which are justified by context.

8. Summary

The Review Board classified the film MA15+ with the consumer advice 'strong violence'.

