



**Australian Government**  

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**Classification Review Board**

**17 October 2007**  
**23-33 MARY STREET**  
**SURRY HILLS, NSW**

<b>MEMBERS</b>	Ms Maureen Shelley (Convenor) Ms Kathryn Smith Ms Ann Stark
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Icon Film Distribution
<b>INTERESTED PARTIES</b>	None
<b>BUSINESS</b>	To review the Classification Board's decision to classify the film <i>30 Days of Night</i> R 18+ with the consumer advice 'Horror violence, Blood and gore'.

**DECISION AND REASONS FOR DECISION**

**1. Decision**

The Classification Review Board (the Review Board) classified the film *30 Days of Night* MA 15+ with the consumer advice 'Strong horror violence, Blood and gore'.

**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. 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 the 'Films' table provides that:

"Films (except RC films and X 18+ films) that are unsuitable for a minor to see" are to be classified R 18+, and

“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.

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**

The Review Board met on 17 October 2007 in response to the receipt of an application from Icon Film Distribution on 9 October 2007 to determine its validity.

Three members of the Review Board viewed *30 Days of Night* on 17 October 2007.

The applicant made a written submission. The Review Board also heard oral submissions from the following persons representing the applicant:

- Mr John Dickie – Consultant, Icon Film Distribution
- Mr Greg Denning – General Manager Theatrical, Icon Film Distribution
- Mr Greg Hughes – General Manager Home Entertainment, Icon Film Distribution
- Ms Lisa Garner – Group Marketing Director, Icon Film Distribution

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) Icon Film Distribution’s application for review
- (ii) Icon Film Distribution’s written and oral submissions
- (iii) The film, *30 Days of Night*

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

## **5. Synopsis**

As a secluded Alaskan town is plunged into darkness for thirty consecutive days and nights through the onset of midwinter, the inhabitants are attacked by a bloodthirsty gang of vampires. The only hope for the town is the leadership of the Sheriff and Deputy, a husband and wife team, estranged in their personal relationship, who are torn between their own survival and saving the town they love.

## **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 themes of divorce, separation, death and loss are all examined in this film. However, they can be accommodated at the MA15+ classification.
- (b) Violence – There are a number of scenes of violence and of blood and to a lesser extent gore. Two scenes in particular are detailed.

At 66 minutes, the Sheriff, Stella and some residents come across a female child grazing on a disfigured dead body. She turns to the group displaying her face and mouth covered with blood. The girl screams and attacks the Sheriff who decapitates her (implicitly).

Between 91 and 94 minutes, a young man is attacked by a vampire. The Sheriff hits the vampire with an axe, and the creature is thrown into machinery that crushes him. Blood bursts from the arm of the young man where his hand has been severed. The young man turns into a vampire and there is some blood spray. The Sheriff swings an axe to decapitate the young man/vampire. Blood spatters onto the Sheriff's face. At 98 minutes there is a close-up of the man/vampire's body on the floor with the Sheriff extracting his blood.

- (c) Language – There is some use of coarse language but not such as to require a higher classification than MA 15+.
- (d) Sex – Whilst there are some sexual references in this film, they can be accommodated at the MA 15+ classification.
- (e) Drug Use – There are some alcohol and drug references but these are insufficient to require a higher classification than MA 15+.
- (f) Nudity – There is little or no nudity in this film.

## **7. Reasons for the decision**

The film is of the vampire/horror genre and has a number of fantastical elements. The audience for such a film is well aware of the techniques and characteristics of such films before they enter the cinema. The extensive use of “blood” is one such characteristic. In this film the blood is, for the most part, black rather than red.

The very nature of a vampire film is such that viewers suspend the accepted view of reality to enjoy the “entertainment”. Slashings, decapitations, blood spatter and to some extent gore are all standard characteristics of the vampire film.

Given that the action takes place in the dark, the film-makers have used this to increase the anticipation of “vampire action” whilst simultaneously reducing its impact. Whilst there are several scenes of bloodied bodies or gory injuries, their impact is reduced by the low levels of lighting, such scenes are not generally prolonged, on many occasions the “blood” is black rather than red, and most scenes lack detail that would increase their impact.

## **8. Summary**

Given the anticipated audience for the film, the Review Board did not consider the impact of the film to be higher than strong and, while requiring a mature perspective, this could be accommodated in the legally restricted category of MA 15+.

It also considered that while some scenes may be strong in impact, given the intended or likely audience, the stylised treatment of the violence and the reduced impact due to the low levels of lighting, the violence was both justified in the context of the storyline and genre and characterisation and tone of the film.

The Review Board determined that *30 Days of Night* be classified MA 15+ with the consumer advice ‘Strong horror violence, Blood and gore’.