



Australian Government

Classification Review Board

4 June 2012
23-33 MARY STREET
SURRY HILLS, NSW

MEMBERS: Ms Victoria Rubensohn AM (Convenor)
Ms Fiona Jolly (Deputy Convenor)
Ms Helena Blundell
Ms Jane Smith
Mr Peter Attard

APPLICANT 20th Century Fox Film Distributors

INTERESTED PARTIES

BUSINESS To review the Classification Board's decision to classify the 3D version of the film *Prometheus* MA 15+ (Mature Accompanied) with the consumer advice 'strong science fiction violence'.

DECISION AND REASONS FOR DECISION

1. Decision

The Classification Review Board (the Review Board) unanimously classified the 3D version of the film M, with the consumer advice "moderate science fiction violence and a medical procedure".

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 and MA 15+ films) that cannot be recommended for viewing by persons who are under 15 are to be classified M, and

All other films are to be classified G.

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 4 June 2012 in response to the receipt of an application from 20th Century Fox Film Distributors dated 25 May 2012 to conduct the review.

Five members of the Review Board viewed the 3D version of the film on 4 June 2012.

The Review Board heard an oral submission from Marc Wooldridge, Managing Director, Twentieth Century Fox Film Distributors and John Dickie, Advisor to Twentieth Century Fox Film Distributors. This was provided in addition to a written submission.

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) 20th Century Fox Film Distributors application for review
- (ii) 20th Century Fox Film Distributors written and oral submission
- (iii) the film, *Prometheus (3D)*
- (iv) the relevant provisions in the Classification Act, the Code and the Guidelines, and
- (v) the Classification Board's report

5. Synopsis

Prometheus is a science fiction feature set in 2093. The space ship "Prometheus" travels to a planet in deep space searching for the origins of humanity. The mission is privately funded by the Weyland Corporation and they are exploring clues from ancient civilizations. What they actually find turns out to be startlingly different to their expectations.

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 contains Science Fiction themes of space exploration and hostile alien encounters which have a moderate sense of threat or menace that are justified by the context of the film, which is in the nature of a prequel to the film "Alien".

Included in these themes are scenes where following a sexual encounter with her scientist boyfriend Dr Holloway (who unknown to her has been infected by alien matter) Dr Shaw discovers she has an alien pregnancy, which she wishes to terminate. At approximately 81 minutes she is shown climbing into a medical pod where she commences a self-controlled robotic surgical procedure to remove the alien from her body. Laser surgery is performed which is largely bloodless due to cauterisation. The alien, in an embryonic sac, is then extracted by the robotic device and Dr. Shaw's stomach is then robotically stapled to seal the wound. The wriggling squid like alien bursts from its sac, spraying blood, as it is held by the robotic device above Dr Shaw's body. She escapes from the pod and hits the contamination button with the intention of killing the alien.

The unrealistic scenario presented in this scene requires a considerable suspension of disbelief. The lack of blood in the laser surgical procedure, the external

perspective of the filming with no view of the internal abdominal cavity and the fact that Dr Shaw is in control of the procedure and is able to escape, as well as the short duration of the scene, minimise the overall impact of this scene and it can be accommodated at the higher end of the M classification.

- (b) Violence – The film contains scenes of violence which are linked to encounters between Prometheus crew members and aliens. At approximately 62 minutes two crew members are attacked by a snake-like creature which encircles and breaks one man's arm, breaking the skin. His colleague cuts the snake in an attempt to release the arm. He is sprayed with acidic blood which spurts over his helmet and visor eating them away. The man then dies. The creature regenerates and enters the first crew member through his mouth.

The violence depicted in this scene is frenetic and the scene is dimly lit. The scene is shot using a medium camera angle with no lingering close up shots. These factors minimise the impact of the scene and it can be accommodated at the M classification.

At approximately 76 minutes Dr Holloway, who is infected by alien matter, is prevented from reboarding the spaceship. He is aware of the risk he poses to the rest of the crew and asks to be killed. He is quickly killed by a flame thrower.

This scene is of short duration and there are no lingering close-up shots of Dr Holloway in flames, the scene being filmed in medium to long shot. The focus is on the reaction of the crew, not on Dr Holloway. These factors minimise the overall impact of this scene and it can be accommodated at the M classification.

At approximately 85 minutes a crewman who has been infected by an alien returns to the space ship and attempts to gain entry. He attacks two crewmen, smashes one man's helmet open and blood comes from the head of this victim. A second crewman is knocked to the ground. The infected crewman jumps on the prone man's chest causing blood to spurt from his mouth. He then punches the man in the head causing blood to come from his broken skull. The rest of the crew use flamethrowers on the infected man who catches fire, falls down, and is then run over by a lunar vehicle. The infected man gets up and attacks a third crewman before being killed with a number of flamethrowers.

This scene is frenetic, is of short duration (less than two minutes), has no close up shots and does not linger on any injury or gore. These factors reduce the impact of this scene and it can be accommodated at the M classification.

- (c) Language – There is infrequent coarse language which is justified by context and can readily be accommodated at the M level.
- (d) Sex – There is one scene of sexual activity which is discretely implied, justified by context and can readily be accommodated at the M level.
- (e) Drug Use – There is no drug use.

(f) Nudity – There is no nudity

7. Reasons for the decision

The Review Board determined that the highest classifiable elements were “themes” and “violence” and that these elements could be accommodated within an M classification. Material classified M is recommended for mature audiences only and is not recommended for persons under 15 years of age. All other elements could readily be accommodated within an M classification.

The Review Board found that the impact of the science fiction “themes” was no higher than moderate. In particular, the scene depicting the surgical removal, controlled by Dr Shaw, of the alien embryo from her abdomen was short, relatively bloodless, filmed from an external perspective and depicted her as being in total control of the operation. As noted above, the unrealistic scenario depicted also required a considerable suspension of disbelief. The Review Board found that these factors contributed to reduce the overall impact of the scene to no higher than moderate.

The Review Board found that the depictions of violence were of very short duration, the activity was frenetic and the scenes were dimly lit and/or filmed using medium or long camera angles without lingering shots or graphic detail. The violence depicted was in all cases justified by the context of the film and its impact was no higher than moderate.

8. Summary

In the opinion of the Review Board the impact of the classifiable elements was no higher than moderate and the impact of the 3D effects did not alter the viewing experience sufficiently to raise the level of impact.

The Review Board determined that the film “Prometheus” 3D version should be classified M with the consumer advice “moderate science fiction violence and a medical procedure”.