



# Australian Government

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## Classification Review Board

<b>Date:</b>	6 April 2021
<b>Members:</b>	Sue Knowles (Chair) Rechelle Leahy Susan Bush
<b>Applicant:</b>	Maslow Entertainment
<b>Business:</b>	To review the Classification Board's decision to classify the film <i>Ascendant</i> , <b>MA 15+ (Mature Accompanied)</b> with the consumer advice ' <b>Strong themes and violence</b> '.

## Decision and reasons for decision

### 1. Decision

The Classification Review Board (the Review Board) unanimously classified the film **M (Mature)**, with the consumer advice '**mature fantasy themes, violence and blood detail**'.

### 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.

#### 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 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 Classification 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 the:

- a) standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults, and
- b) literary, artistic or educational merit (if any) of the film, and
- c) general character of the film, including whether it is of a medical, legal or scientific character, and
- d) persons or class of persons to or amongst whom it is published or is intended or likely to be published.

## The National Classification Code

The Code 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
- 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 6 April 2021, in response to the receipt of an application from Maslow Entertainment on 31 March 2021, to conduct the review of the film, *Ascendant*, which had previously been classified **MA 15+ (Mature Accompanied)** with consumer advice of **'Strong themes and violence'** by the Classification Board. The Review Board determined that the application was a valid application.

The Review Board was provided a written submission from the Applicant.

The Review Board viewed the film.

The Review Board heard an oral 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) Maslow Entertainment application for review
- (ii) Maslow Entertainment written and oral submissions
- (iii) the film, *Ascendant*
- (iv) the relevant provisions in the Classification Act, the Code and the Guidelines, and
- (v) the Classification Board's report.

## 5. Synopsis

*Ascendant* is an Australian fantasy thriller which follows a young girl, Aria Wolf, who is the personification of Mother Nature. She is trapped in an elevator and is threatened in an effort to extract information from her father, who is being tortured about his work with the CIA.

## 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 impact of this element is no higher than moderate and can be accommodated at the M classification level.
- (b) Violence—  
The impact of this element is no higher than moderate and can be accommodated at the M classification level.
- (c) Sex—  
Not applicable
- (d) Language—  
The impact of this element is no higher than mild and can be accommodated at the PG classification level.
- (e) Drug Use—  
Not applicable
- (f) Nudity—  
Not applicable

## 7. Reasons for the decision

In making the decision, the Review Board has applied the Classification (publication, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995 (the Classification Act), the National Classification Code (the Code) and the Guidelines for the Classification of Films 2012 (the Guidelines).

In the Review Board's view, this film warrants an M classification as, in accordance with item 4 of the films table of the Code, the impact of the classifiable elements for material classified M is no higher than moderate.

The classifiable elements are mature themes and violence that can be justified by context.

The examples described below do not represent an exhaustive list of the content that caused the film to be classified M. The times given are approximations.

## 8. Summary

The film contains moderate themes and violence that can be justified by context in the realm of a fantasy thriller.

From about 17 minutes onwards, and throughout the film, the depiction of violence is broken up by regular flashbacks, phone calls, and camerawork which, in the Review Board's opinion, reduced the impact.

Regular supernatural themes appear with Aria presenting as a fantasy being. These supernatural themes can be accommodated at a lower classification.

The blood detail that is seen intermittently throughout the film is justified by context and is not seen to be gushing or spatter.

The captors of Aria's father are seen to be threatening him and there is an implied severing of his ear (at 34 minutes) and removal of a fingernail.

At 87 minutes there is an implied shooting of Aria's father however no impact or injury is seen.

In the Review Board's opinion, the fantasy nature of the film, whereby Aria goes back and forth from the supernatural to human, make the themes moderate in impact and they therefore can be accommodated at the M classification level.

A classification of M with a consumer advice of mature fantasy themes, violence and blood detail is therefore warranted.