



# Australian Government

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## Classification Review Board

**Date:** 20 April 2022

**Members:** Sue Knowles (Chair)  
Susan Bush  
Adam Davy  
David Toll

**Applicant:** Double Eleven

<b>Interested parties:</b>	Jacques Bezuidenhout	Peter Skaltsounis
	Finn McColl	Simon Green
	Benjamin Locke	Brendan Sherrin
	Shane Scriven	Josh Walsh
	James Massey	Douglas Drake
	Alexander Lambert	Octavio Ferreira
	Molly Pearce	Michael Main
	Christopher Payton	Navrin Thomas
	Mitz	Kyle Brown
	EH	James Sadler
	Phillip Boyack	Annamaria Quaresima
	Amy Hightower	

**Business:** To review the Classification Board's decision to classify the computer game *RimWorld*, **RC (Refused Classification)**.

## Decision and reasons for decision

### 1. Decision

The Classification Review Board (the Review Board) unanimously classified the computer game *RimWorld* **R 18+** with the consumer advice '**High impact themes and drug use**'.

### 2. Legislative provisions

The *Classification (Publications, Computer game and Computer Games) Act 1995* (Cth) (the Classification Act) governs the classification of computer games 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 computer game, or the likely classification of the computer game under section 33
- c) the publisher of the computer game, 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 computer game.

## Classification of computer games under the Classification Act

Section 9, subject to section 9A, provides that computer games are to be classified in accordance with the National Classification Code (the Code) and the classification guidelines. Section 9A states that a computer game 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 computer game 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 computer game, and
- c) general character of the computer game, 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

Relevantly, the Computer games Table of the National Classification Code (the Code) provides that:

Computer games (except RC computer games) that are unsuitable for viewing or playing by a minor are **to be classified R 18+**, and;

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 Computer games 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.

A further consideration in classifying computer games is interactivity. Due to the interactive nature of computer games and the active repetitive involvement of the participant, as a general rule computer

games may have a higher impact than similarly themed depictions of the classifiable elements in film, and therefore greater potential for harm or detriment, particularly to minors.

### 3. Procedure

Four members of the Review Board met on 20 April 2022, in response to the receipt of an application from Double Eleven on 29 March 2022, to conduct the review of the computer game, *RimWorld*, which had previously been classified **RC (Refused Classification)** 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 computer game.

The Review Board was provided written submissions from the 23 interested parties listed above.

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 considered the following:

- (i) Double Eleven application for review
- (ii) Double Eleven written and oral submissions, including expert opinions
- (iii) written submissions received from 23 interested parties
- (iv) the computer game, *RimWorld*
- (v) the relevant provisions in the Classification Act, the Code and the Guidelines, and
- (vi) the Classification Board's report.

### 5. Synopsis

*RimWorld* is a single-player, science fiction colony simulator game driven by an intelligent AI storyteller that generates stories by simulating a vast array of details including psychology, ecology, combat, climate, biomes, diplomacy, medicine, trade, and interpersonal relationships. The game does not include any online interactivity.

### 6. Findings on material questions of fact

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

- (a) Themes— there are themes that include organ harvesting, slavery, and interactive cannibalism.  
The impact of this element does not exceed high and can be accommodated at the R 18+ level.
- (b) Violence— there is moderate violence justified by context.  
The impact of this element does not exceed moderate and can be accommodated at the M level.
- (c) Sex—there is sexual activity that is discreetly implied and justified by context.  
The impact of this element does not exceed moderate and can be accommodated at the M level.

- (d) Language—there is no coarse language present in the game.
- (e) Drug Use— there is fantasy drug use that is not detailed and realistic and not linked to incentives or rewards in the context of the broader objectives of the game.

The impact of this element does not exceed high and can be accommodated at the R 18+ level.

- (f) Nudity—there is infrequent nudity that is discreetly depicted and justified by context.

The impact of this element does not exceed mild and can be accommodated at the PG level.

## 7. Reasons for the decision

In the Review Board's view, this game warrants an R 18+ classification, as in accordance with item 2 of section 4 of the Code, it is unsuitable for viewing or playing by a minor. Under the Computer Games Guidelines, at R 18+, themes have virtually no restriction. Drug use is permitted, however it should not be related to incentives or rewards.

The visual aspect of the game is simplistic, distant, top down, and stylised. Due to the complex and nuanced representation of the simulation, the Review Board considers the appeal of the game to be skewed to an adult audience.

The themes are related to the mechanics of survival in an inhospitable fantasy environment, and the difficult choices that need to be made, including moral dilemmas such as organ harvesting, slavery, and cannibalism.

The game provides depictions of the consumption of drugs labelled "yayo", "flake", "luciferium", "smokeleaf" and other terminologies. In the Review Board's opinion, the game mechanic ultimately provides disincentives related to drug-taking behaviour, to the point where regular drug use leads to negative consequences such as overdose, addiction, and withdrawal. Players may choose for the colonist pawns to consume drugs in certain scenarios, but this greatly hinders player progress, as characters will succumb to addiction and must deal with long-term negative impacts of their drug use. The drug use is depicted at a distance through a top-down perspective, in a highly stylised, simplified form.

## 8. Summary

In the Review Board's opinion, *RimWorld* has sufficient disincentives to drug use to enable it to be accommodated within the **R 18+** classification with consumer advice of '**High impact themes and drug use**'.