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Media Release

ALRC CLASSIFICATION PROPOSALS HELP INDUSTRY; FAIL TO SUPPORT PARENTS AND CHILDREN

“If adopted, the recommendations made by the ALRC in its review of the National Classification Scheme would result in a system that failed its primary purposes - to protect children and provide reliable and consistent information to parents about media content”, said Professor of Law and President of the Australian Council on Children and the Media, Elizabeth Handsley, today.

The ACCM considers that the main points of failure for families and children, and major sources of classification inconsistency, include proposals for:

- increased self regulation, which would include the introduction of more industry classification codes
- increased use of industry classifiers separately applying a range of industry codes across different media
- “platform-neutral” regulation (with one set of laws establishing obligations to classify or restrict access to content across media platforms) which ignores the differences in experience, for example, between interactive games and films
- the removal of any obligation to have interactive games under the level of MA15+ classified by the Classification Board. The industry will be encouraged to classify these voluntarily
- the removal of age access restrictions on MA15+ classified media
- the failure to provide classification categories carrying more age-based information suitable for ages under 15 years
- the failure to require that reviews of the classification categories and criteria take into account research evidence about the media experiences that can harm children

“In its haste to provide industry with a lower regulatory burden, and using the excuse of difficulty in classifying increasing flows of products, the ALRC has proposed a system that indeed helps industry, but will make the task of parents in finding age-appropriate media experiences so much harder. What is proposed is a massive deregulation that has not been adequately supported or justified. The justification based on there being too many things to classify is defeatist and shows insufficient recognition of the commission’s own ‘guiding principle’ that ‘children need to be protected from material that is likely to harm or disturb them.’”

ACCM is a unique national community organisation, which strives for a media environment that supports the health, safety and wellbeing of Australian children. It is committed to promoting healthy choices and stronger voices in children’s media.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please email clare@youngmedia.org.au or call on 0434 146 096, or contact Elizabeth Handsley on 08 8201 5256, 08 82721170 (AH) or mobile 0448 898 185.