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Media Release

NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION SCHEME: TIME TO START AGAIN

Professor Elizabeth Handsley, President of the Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM) is calling for a complete rethink of Australia's classification scheme (NCS) for films, DVDs, and computer games.

Professor Handsley is Professor of Law at Flinders University and a national expert on media law, as it affects children. Professor Handsley explained 'that one of the chief purposes of the NCS is to protect children from harm, and yet it is not based on evidence or research about what is likely to adversely influence children at different developmental levels'. She continued 'the review of the NCS undertaken by the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) between 2011 and 2012 was a missed opportunity to re-examine the very foundations of the system. Instead, it focussed on who would classify what in a convergent media environment'.

ACCM's CEO, Barbara Biggins will deliver a paper touching on these issues at the *Right to Childhood Conference* on Friday 19th October at the NSW Parliament House. Ms Biggins said 'that because Australia's current system is based only on the ages of 15 and 18 years, it is unable to give parents much needed information about the likely impacts on children of different age levels, specifically those under 15 years'. She points to the Netherlands Kijkwijzer (Watch wiser) system as an example which includes classifications based on ages 6, 9, 12 and 16yrs which she says is far more effective in providing parents with information about both the age appropriateness, and content.

The federal and State governments commenced their consideration of the ALRC recommendations in early October, and are expected to finalise their views by April, 2013. Ms Biggins said 'parents who want a classification system that will better protect their children and give them more detailed information should take action and let their State Attorney General know that it's time to get this right.

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 admin@youngmedia.org.au or call on (08) 8376 2111, or contact Elizabeth Handsley on 08 8201 5256, 08 82721170 or mobile 0448 898 185 OR Ms Barbara Biggins on 0403 005 736.