

## Information for schools

### Screening films at the school

There are no legal restrictions on the screening of G, PG or M films. They can legally be screened to children of any age. However, some parents may object to their children being shown PG or M films. In the case of PG films, parental guidance is recommended for children under 15, and in the case of M films, these are suited to mature audiences and not recommended for anyone under 15. The school may therefore wish to notify parents in advance so that a parent who does not wish his or her child to see the film can make other arrangements.

Films are commonly accompanied by consumer advice which indicates aspects of the film which may be contentious. It is wise to make parents aware of this advice, as well as the classification, when notifying them. If the classification and consumer advice are not apparent from the cover of the film, they can be checked at [www.classification.gov.au](http://www.classification.gov.au).

Films classified MA15+ are legally restricted. They cannot be exhibited in a public place to a child under 15, unless the child is accompanied by a parent or adult guardian. Mere permission is not enough - the parent or guardian must be present in person. A **'public place'**<sup>1</sup> is defined in the Act. A place can still be 'public' even though it is privately owned. Schools may wish to seek legal advice on this.

Children aged 15 and over can legally view these films without a parent or guardian being present. However, again, schools may wish to notify parents in advance as some parents may object to their children viewing MA films.

Films classified R are legally restricted to adults. They cannot be exhibited in a **public place**<sup>2</sup> while there is a child present. Parental permission makes no difference. A parent who wishes his or her child to see an R film can hire the film and show it to the child at home or in some other private place.

The classification of the film does not indicate anything about its quality or educational value. Information of this kind is available from critical reviews, which can readily be found on the internet.

### School library materials

Most publications are not legally required to be submitted for classification before they can be sold. Only those which are 'submittable' ie contain contentious material unsuitable for children, are required to be submitted for classification. This means that most publications on sale, other than certain magazines, have not been scrutinized by the National Classification Board before going on sale. This is true whether the publication is imported or published locally. Further, items which are classified 'Unrestricted' are not necessarily intended or suitable for children.

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in s. 4 in the [Classification \(Publications, Films and Computer Games\) Act 1995](#) (State Act)

<sup>2</sup> As defined in s. 4 in the [Classification \(Publications, Films and Computer Games\) Act 1995](#) (State Act)

Schools should therefore not assume that because an item is published without legal restriction, it will be suitable for inclusion in the school library or on the curriculum. The school should make up its own mind about this. While it is not an offence to lend a child an unsuitable book, it can lead to complaint from parents and may cause distress to the child.

Some publications, including serious works, are legally restricted to adults only. These include items classified Category I Restricted and Category II Restricted. Such publications should not therefore be available in the school library.

If the school needs to know the classification of a publication, it can consult the Australian Government Classification database at [www.classification.gov.au](http://www.classification.gov.au).

### **The internet**

Parents are often concerned that their children not be exposed to unsuitable internet content when using the internet at school. There are several steps which schools can take to protect children using school internet facilities. More information is available from Netalert, contact [www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au), or from the school's internet service provider.