

Common Questions

Q: What do the film classifications mean - who is allowed to see what films?

There are no legal restrictions on who can see a film classified G, PG or M. These are advisory classifications only. Generally, G means that the film is suited to most audiences, although very small children can be frightened by such features as larger-than-life animations, or very loud noises. A PG classification means that parental guidance is desirable for children under 15 years. Parents may wish to watch these films with the child, or be available nearby to answer questions or explain concepts. A film classified M is intended for mature audiences and is not recommended for anyone under 15 years. These films may contain adult concepts and realistic presentations of adult issues.

However, it is up to parents to decide whether they will allow their children to see these films. There is no legal restriction.

Films classified MA and R are legally restricted. An MA film cannot be shown or hired to an unaccompanied child under 15 years. A film classified R cannot be shown or hired to anyone under 18. In either case, proof of age can be required and the cinema operator or video store commits an offence if these rules are broken.

Q: Can a child under 15 see an MA film?

Yes, if he or she is accompanied by a parent or adult guardian. This does not include being accompanied by a friend who is over 18 - it can only be the parent, or another adult who is exercising parental control over the child.

The adult must remain in the cinema with the child during the screening, except for brief absences to use facilities provided in the cinema for its patrons. The child is not 'accompanied' if the adult simply takes the child into the cinema and then leaves. In that case, the cinema may remove the child from the screening.

A child aged 15 or over can see an MA film without an adult being present.

Q: What do the publications classifications mean?

Most publications are not classified and are not required to be. Only 'submittable' publications have to be classified. These are publications which contain contentious material which might warrant restricting the publication to an adult audience.

The lowest classification is 'Unrestricted' which means that, although the publication was one which the National Classification Board had to consider, there are no legal restrictions on its sale. 'Unrestricted' publications may include material that is not recommended for some readers. 'Unrestricted' publications that include material that is not recommended for readers under 15 may be required to carry consumer advice labels, as follows: *'Unrestricted' – M – not recommended for readers under 15 years.*

The next is 'Category I Restricted'. This means the publication must be offered for sale in a sealed bag and cannot be sold to a child. However, such publications can be on sale

in ordinary newsagents and bookshops. A 'Category II Restricted' publication can only be offered for sale in 'restricted premises', that is, an adult bookshop. Children are not allowed in and cannot buy these items. The items must be in a sealed opaque bag on delivery.

Q: Can a child buy an 'Unrestricted' publication?

Yes. These are publications which may have content intended for mature audiences, but which are not legally restricted to adults. However, the term 'Unrestricted' does not imply that the publication is suitable for children.

Q: Can X films be legally sold/hired in adult bookshops or sex shops?

No. The sale or hire of X rated films is illegal in South Australia as in other States. A shop which offers these items for sale, even if the shop is an 'adult' shop which is off limits to children, is committing an offence.

Q: What is meant by an item being 'Refused Classification'?

This is sometimes referred to as being 'banned'. It means that the item cannot be legally sold, delivered, exhibited, etc. Material which is refused classification includes sexually violent material, material instructing in crime, child pornography or paedophile material, or other material which the community does not tolerate.

Q: Who sets the guidelines?

The guidelines are agreed on by the relevant Ministers of each Australian State and Territory, after a process of public consultation. Each set of guidelines is reviewed every few years. Reviews are advertised in the press. Any interested person is entitled to make a submission.

Q: How are Board and Council members chosen?

The National Classification Board is the national body. Members are appointed from the general public for a three-year term. They can be reappointed and can serve a total of up to seven years. Vacancies are advertised in the press and a selection process takes place. No set qualifications are required. It is intended that the National Classification Board is representative of the Australian community as a whole, so efforts are made to ensure that Members come from a range of backgrounds and that as many States and Territories as possible are represented. Members may be either full-time or part-time. If you are interested in serving as a National Classification Board member, you should apply when positions are advertised in the press.

The Council is the State body. Members are appointed by the Governor for a term of three years in accordance with the Act. There are six members in total, including a legal practitioner, a person with expertise relating to the psychological development of children and adolescents, and a person with wide experience in education. A member who has served three years can be reappointed. These positions are not advertised.