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GAMING CLASSIFICATION BECOMES ELECTION ISSUE IN 2010

PC and video game enthusiasts, the games industry and everyday Australians overwhelmingly support a change in PC and Video game ratings.

91% of Australian adults, whether from game or no-game households, whether gamers themselves or non-gamers, think that Australia should have an R18+ for games just as it does in other media. (Source: Interactive Australia 2009, Bond University)

And in just over four weeks, retailer GAME has spearheaded a petition calling for an R18+ classification to be created and has attracted over 65, 000 signatures.

GAME will present a sample of these petitions to every Attorney-General and Shadow Attorney-General before all various State Attorneys-General meet at the next STANDING COMMITTEE OF ATTORNEYS-GENERAL MEETING ON THE 29TH APRIL IN MELBOURNE. We will also present a sample of these petitions to the Federal Home Affairs Minister, Brendon O'Connor.

Federal Attorney-General Robert McClelland said recently that the discussion paper and public submissions *COULD* be on the agenda at the next Attorneys-General meeting, and GAME's petition is designed to ensure that this issue is in fact on the April 29 agenda.

GAME will continue collecting petitions in store until 15th April.

"Unanimous support is required by all State Attorneys-General to change classification system. And to date, neither the gaming industry nor the media have been able to ascertain confirmation that any preliminary results from the public's submission to the R18+ PC and video games discussion paper will be presented to State Government Attorneys-General at the next SCAG meeting in late April." said Rob Lukic, GAME Managing Director.

"We all recognise the significant difference in maturity levels between an adult and an adolescent. It is time for the government to provide the equivalent "distance" in the classification system, the "distance" being a clear distinction between an 18 year old and a 15 year old.

This is plain to see for all parents and only with this change will parents have a clear view of what is suitable for their children. Some games are meant for everyone and some are only meant for adults", said Lukic.

"We will continue this campaign for as long as it takes. We will persist. We're in it for the long haul. We want a change in the PC and Video game classification", said Kulen.

Background

THREE weeks ago submissions closed for The Commonwealth Government's discussion paper on the pros and cons of creating an R 18+ classification for computer games.

And THREE weeks ago leading national Video and PC games retailer, GAME, along with gaming news website, Pal Gaming Network (PALGN) launched a campaign to keep the pressure on governments to support an R 18+ game classification.

Roland Kulen / PALGN / 0414 429 986/ roland.kulen@palgn.com.au

Why keep the pressure on State Governments?

For games classification legislation to change the unanimous support of all State Attorneys-General is required. Moreover, if one state attorney-general disagrees, legislation remains unchanged.

Censorship Ministers have considered the issue of an adult classification for computer games on several occasions, but this time, Rob Lukic, GAME Managing Director, is calling on governments around the country to help support parents in understanding which games are suitable for over 18s and which games aren't.

"GAME and PALGN want to ensure that children are not exposed to Video and PC games with mature content, and they both firmly believe that the R18+ classification provides a clear message," said Lukic.

"Some games are played by everyone, but some are only meant for those over 18," explained Lukic.

Games appealing to more families, more than ever before

"Australia currently does not have an adult video game classification. Games that are only suitable for adults are either pushed into the MA15+ category or simply banned altogether."
"GAME and PALGN believe that an R18+ classification will allow adults the freedom of choice to play games with mature content, and help to ensure that these games are not rated MA15+ under any circumstances."

"The public should be educated to ensure that children are not exposed to any video games with mature content, and the R18+ classification provides a clear message that this is the case."

"It will allow our (GAME) stores to offer clear advice to all customers, on the suitability of the content for the end user. An R18+ Classified product is clearly intended for Adults, based upon its content, and would not be suitable for anyone under that age."

"Family gaming is now the largest segment of the video games market, and it is important for all video games to provide a clear message with regards to their content - Some games are played by everyone, but some are only meant for those over 18," added Lukic.

PALGN, Australia's most trusted independent source of video and PC game news, has partnered with GAME to keep the PC and Video game classification debate alive. Roland Kulen, Director of PALGN says, "It is not over until the games classification legislation is changed – and change doesn't come easy. We're in this for the long haul."

Kulen added, "We spoke to a number of gaming retailers last year presenting the idea of joining forces on a petition to urge governments to create an R 18+ game classification. GAME really understood our concern that the current gaming classification system, which doesn't have an R 18+ rating, leaves Australian families without a specific guide as to which games are suitable for under 18s and which aren't.

GAME shared our vision that creating an R 18+ rating is not about the right to view or sell over R 18+ games, but rather about helping families identify those games which are not suitable for under 18s."

As just about every Aussie family knows games are now well and truly mainstream family entertainment and repeated studies show that gaming has become integral to family connections with parents and children playing together and siblings of all ages playing together.

In a recent GAME focus group, a female divorcee wanted to make sure her next male companion and his kids were adept at using the same console platform as she and her daughter, because it meant they could all play games together.

The gaming industry and gamers have created a website to harness the enormous support for an R18+ game classification – www.EveryonePlays.org.au.

The EveryonePlays website was built as a result of a recent survey on PALGN revealing that almost half of core gamers, 97% of whom are male, are gaming with family members. The survey revealed 42% of core gamers are gaming with either their parents, siblings or other family members.

“These are powerful statistics. The EveryonePlays name speaks to all Australians representing both core gamers and parents with children, which means our message will appeal to mainstream and social media audiences”, says Kulen.

“Overwhelmingly the industry and the public support an R 18+ Classification rating,” concluded Lukic. And to ensure that public support for an R 18+ classification remains top of mind for censorship Ministers around the country, GAME has launched a petition in all 120 GAME stores nationwide, and on EveryonePlays.org.au.”

The petition will be open for a total of six weeks.

Links: www.game.com.au www.everyoneplays.org.au

Media Contacts:

Anne Lawler / AKL Public Relations / 0419 018 834 / anne@aklpr.com.au

Karla Boge / GAME / 02 8998 4567 / karla.boge@game.com.au

Roland Kulen / PALGN / 0414 429 986/ roland.kulen@palgn.com.au





GAME Australia operate 120 retail stores nationwide and an ecommerce site game.com.au. Our specialist proposition is the retail of video and PC games, consoles and related accessories. GAME offers customer friendly policies, unrivalled product knowledge, a pre-owned programme, pre-orders, wide range of software and accessories, choice and value deals, constant promotions, offers and a Reward Card programme. For further details see our website www.game.com.au

Roland Kulen is a director of the games website PAL Gaming Network - PALGN. PALGN writes news, reviews and articles on PC and video games. Kulen is the architect of the GAME / EveryonePlays R18+ PC and Video imitative that includes the support of Robert Lukic, Managing Director, GAME, 120 GAME stores across Australia, operation and marketing teams, a dedicated website (www.everyoneplays.org.au), social media, in-store communications materials and offline / online PR. To be effective, this is an integrated multi media campaign.

As a parent, with two children (Mackenzie 16 and Elise 10), games are a big part of how his children socially interact with each other. "I feel comfortable sending my kids to an MA15+ movie; but when it comes to my kids playing games together, I'm quite unsure which game is right for them."

"I want to put some "distance" between an MA15+ rating for games and the next age-appropriate game because the older we get the more worldly we become. An R18+ rating helps me understand this.