




Speech by

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CLASSIFICATION OF COMPUTER GAMES AND IMAGES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (12.25 pm): I rise to support the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill amends the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995 to provide for the demonstration, sale, supply and advertisement of computer games classified as R18+. As a parent I might say that it would be incredibly helpful for these kinds of ratings to be available to parents. I think this is a good change. Further, the bill will also change the Classification of Films Act 1991 to transfer to the Director of the Commonwealth Classification Board the function of granting exemptions to enable the exhibition of unclassified films at special events such as film festivals. With the ability of people to use the internet to show films and other things, I think it is highly appropriate there be one governing body looking after that. I certainly support that.

The bill will also amend the short title of the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Act 2011 for clarification. The final part is the amendment of the Recording of Evidence Act 1962 to enable the outsourcing of recording and transcribing of legal proceedings.

Let us go to the main objective of the bill, which is to amend the classification of computer games so that they are clearly marked as R18+. I think it is very important that we understand that technology is completely integrated into our lives these days. When my children are watching things online or playing games online they can be connected to anybody not just in Australia but also in other parts of the world. I have a 13-year-old-boy and 14- and 15-year-old girls who will often tell me when they are playing a game, 'It is fine, Dad. It is okay. It is age appropriate.' Without having a classification label it can sometimes be very difficult for parents. To be honest, I find many of the games that are available online and in the shops violent and sexually explicit, and I certainly would not recommend them for my children. Having a classification at least means I can rule that out in a very short space of time.

Last year the ministers responsible for censorship agreed to introduce this R18+ category for computer games to ensure we have consistency across the states. This was done after extensive public consultation. Over 50,000 submissions were received and 98 per cent supported this classification. The key part of having this classification—and I thank the Attorney-General for it—is that not only is it clear for a parent to be able to see what is classified and whether it is age appropriate, but also there are some severe punishments—and appropriately so—for people who might find themselves on the wrong side of this legislation.

For example, I am pleased to see the strong punishment for an offence under this bill—a maximum penalty of 100 penalty points—for selling or delivering or attempting to sell or deliver an R18+ computer game to a minor. That is an \$11,000 penalty and that should mean that anybody who is looking to sell this stuff to minors and looking to try to make a profit out of it would only need to be caught once to destroy a large percentage of the profit that they might otherwise have made by preying on young minds. I certainly support that part of the legislation. Up Until 31 December the classification ratings that applied to computer games differed to those that are generally recognised for films. As I said before, there was no R18+ category in Queensland. The ratings were G, very mild impact; PG or parental guidance recommended,

mild impact; M or recommended for mature audiences, moderate impact; MA15+—and I might say my 13-year-old always wants to watch MA15+—one not suitable for people under 15, strong impact, and that is always helpful when we are having the discussion; and refused classification or RC. Having an R18+ category, as is proposed by this bill—not suitable for people under 18, high impact—makes it very clear who is supposed to be watching or playing both films and games in this category.

There are a couple of other penalties in the bill that are worth noting. The bill prohibits the public demonstration of a computer game classified MA15+ or R18+ unless the determined markings for the game are displayed before the game is demonstrated. That carries a penalty of 40 penalty points or just over \$4,000. In today's world where computers are found in shop windows and there are many opportunities for public display, it is very important that we have these punishments in place. With the introduction of the R18+ classification for computer games, I think it would be timely for the government to continue its work in the area and possibly in conjunction with the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian to monitor the possible effects that violent video games might be having on our youth. I might add that violent video games do not have any effect on me, because I am absolutely rubbish at them and I usually get killed in about the first 10 seconds. So I find it incredibly boring trying to play them.

The committee recommended that the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, after liaising with relevant ministers, update the Legislative Assembly on the status of the government's consideration of strategies for determining the effect of violent computer games on youth and continued monitoring violent computer games. I agree with the committee's recommendation. I know the Attorney-General said he feels that this might be redundant in that there might be others looking into parts of this, but I would encourage him to bring back to this Assembly some information in relation to this area. As we know, violence around the world is often reported and there is speculation as to whether these kinds of games and interactions have added to that violence. Having some independent Queensland based information on what is happening in our state would be very useful to us. I recommend that the Attorney-General consider this.

I turn now to a couple of other parts of the bill. With regard to the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Act, it is a simple name change to make sure that it is clearly identified that it deals with fences and trees. With regard to the Recording of Evidence Act—and I heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about this—this really just goes to a different political philosophy. Outsourcing the recording of evidence and other things is something that can often be done by an organisation and a company that specialises in those things and I support the government looking at that if it makes savings for the taxpayers of Queensland. I certainly would encourage people to outsource. Certainly if they want to—

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr WATTS: Union officials do do that; I take that interjection. If anybody who is considering looking at this wants to base themselves in Toowoomba, there is always a good opportunity for people to come to Toowoomba and set up businesses such as that.

I want to place on record my thanks to the team of researchers and other staff at the secretariat who support the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. They do a great job for us. I also thank my parliamentary colleagues who work on this committee with me. This bill will assist in protecting our children from inappropriate material and, more importantly, it has some strong punishments that I support for those who will try to profit from such practices. I would encourage that we ensure that those who are policing that are well resourced so that the punishments can be appropriately handed out if someone finds themselves on the wrong side of this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.