



23 May 2007

Attn: Kerri-Ann Smith
Classification Review
Classification Policy Branch
Australian Attorney-General's Department
Robert Garran Offices
2-4 National Circuit
Barton ACT 2600
Email: classificationreview@ag.gov.au

Dear Attorney-General

Submission on the Discussion Paper – Material that advocates terrorist acts

The Australian Publishers Association is the peak industry body representing publishers of books, scholarly journals and educational materials in print and electronic form. We currently represent almost 90% of the book publishing industry in Australia by turnover.

Australian publishers submit that the proposed amendments to the national Classification code and the Classification guidelines to ensure that material that advocates terrorist acts is refused classification is unnecessary and further erodes freedom of speech in Australia.

The current scheme requires that material that “promotes, incites or instructs in matters of crime or violence” or “offends against the standards of morality, decency and propriety of a reasonable adult” be refused classification. It is the view of Australian publishers that these existing requirements are sufficient to cover material that advocates terrorist acts. It is unnecessary to introduce further restrictions into the Classification Scheme.

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By adopting the term “terrorist”, the guidelines will include a subjective definition which introduces uncertainty into the classification process. There is a real risk that books containing ideas that are disliked will be caught up in the classification process in the interpretation of this subjective definition.

Publishers fear they will be exposed if they commission and publish books from political or social commentators that might be regarded under the Classification Code as “advocating terrorist acts”. It is important for the nation that dissenting opinion be heard and this will be restricted if there is an actual or even perceived risk of a ban and the presumably negative publicity that will result.

Yours faithfully



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