



## **Australian Government**

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## **Classification Review Board**

**Date:** 30 November 2021

**Members:** Sue Knowles (Convenor)  
Peter Price AM (Deputy Convenor)  
Susan Bush

**Applicant:** Sony Pictures Releasing P/L

**Interested parties:** Sony Pictures Releasing P/L

Stephen Basil-Jones (Executive Vice President)  
Michael Atkins (National Print Controller)  
Mike Selwyn (Consultant)

**Business:** To review the Classification Board's decision to classify the film *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*, **M** with the consumer advice '**Fantasy themes and violence**'.

# Decision and reasons for decision

## 1. Decision

The Classification Review Board (the Review Board) unanimously classified the film **PG (Parental Guidance)**, with the consumer advice '**Fantasy themes and infrequent mild coarse language. Some scenes may scare young children**'.

## 2. Legislative provisions

The *Classification (Publications, Film and Computer Games) Act 1995* (Cth) (the Classification Act) governs the classification of films and the review of classification decisions.

### The Review Board

Part 5 of the Classification Act outlines the provisions relevant to the Review Board and its procedures.

Section 42 of the Classification Act sets out the persons who may apply for review of a decision:

- a) the Minister
- b) the applicant for classification of the film, or the likely classification of the film under section 33
- c) the publisher of the film, or
- d) a person aggrieved by the decision.

Section 43 sets out the conditions regarding the manner and form of applications for review, including time limits. Under section 44, the Review Board must deal with an application for review in the same way that the Classification Board deals with an application for classification of a film.

### Classification of films under the Classification Act

Section 9, subject to section 9A, provides that films are to be classified in accordance with the National Classification Code (the Code) and the classification guidelines. Section 9A states that a film that advocates the doing of a terrorist act must be classified RC.

Section 11 of the Classification Act requires that the matters to be taken into account in making a decision on the classification of a film include the:

- a) standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults, and
- b) literary, artistic or educational merit (if any) of the film, and
- c) general character of the film, including whether it is of a medical, legal or scientific character, and
- d) persons or class of persons to or amongst whom it is published or is intended or likely to be published.

## The National Classification Code

Relevantly, the Films Table of the National Classification Code (the Code) provides that:

Films (except RC films, X 18+ films and R 18+ films) that depict, express or otherwise deal with sex, violence or coarse language in such a manner as to be unsuitable for viewing by persons under 15 are to be classified M, and

Films (except RC films, X 18+ films, R 18+ films, MA 15+ films and M films) that cannot be recommended for viewing by persons who are under 15 without the guidance of their parents or guardians are to be classified PG.

The Code also sets out various principles to which classification decisions should give effect, as far as possible:

- a) adults should be able to read, hear, see and play what they want
- b) minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them
- c) everyone should be protected from exposure to unsolicited material that they find offensive
- d) the need to take account of community concerns about:
  - (i) depictions that condone or incite violence, particularly sexual violence and,
  - (ii) the portrayal of persons in a demeaning manner.

## The Guidelines

Three essential principles underlie the use of the Guidelines for the Classification of Films 2012 (the Guidelines), determined under section 12 of the Classification Act, the:

- importance of context
- assessment of impact, and
- the six classifiable elements—themes, violence, sex, language, drug use and nudity.

## 3. Procedure

Three members of the Review Board met on 30 November 2021, in response to the receipt of an application from Sony Pictures Releasing P/L on 15 November 2021, to conduct the review of the film, *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*, which had previously been classified **M** with consumer advice of '**Fantasy themes and violence**' by the Classification Board. The Review Board determined that the application was a valid application.

The Review Board was provided a written submission from the Applicant.

The Review Board viewed the film.

The Review Board heard an oral submission from the Applicant.

The Review Board then considered the matter.

## 4. Evidence and other material taken into account

In reaching its decision, the Review Board had regard to the following:

- (i) Sony Pictures Releasing P/L application for review
- (ii) Sony Pictures Releasing P/L written and oral submissions
- (iii) the film, *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*
- (iv) the relevant provisions in the Classification Act, the Code and the Guidelines, and
- (v) the Classification Board's report.

## 5. Synopsis

*Ghostbusters: Afterlife* is a fantasy/action film based on the original *Ghostbusters* title from 1984. Set 30 years later, *Ghostbusters: Afterlife* follows single mother Callie and her two children, Trevor and Phoebe, who move to a small town where they discover their connection to the original *Ghostbusters* from the secret legacy left behind by their grandfather.

## 6. Findings on material questions of fact

The Review Board found that the film contains aspects or scenes of importance under various classifiable elements:

- (a) Themes—the film contains fantasy themes which do not exceed a mild impact level and are justified by context.  
  
The impact of this element is no higher than mild and can be accommodated at the PG classification level.
- (b) Violence—the film contains violence that does not exceed a mild impact and is justified by context.  
  
The impact of this element is no higher than mild and can be accommodated at the PG classification level.
- (c) Sex—the film contains a very mild sexual reference that is discreetly implied and justified by context.  
  
The impact of this element is no higher than mild and can be accommodated at the G classification level.
- (d) Language—the film contains verbal use of mild coarse language that is justified by context.  
  
The impact of this element is no higher than mild and can be accommodated at the PG classification level.
- (e) Drug Use—the film does not contain drug use.
- (f) Nudity—the film does not contain nudity.

## 7. Reasons for the decision

In making the decision, the Review Board has applied the Classification (publication, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995 (the Classification Act), the National Classification Code (the Code) and the Guidelines for the Classification of Films 2012 (the Guidelines).

The Review Board has unanimously determined *Ghostbusters: Afterlife* to be classified PG, on the basis that the impact of the classifiable elements is no higher than mild.

In the opinion of the Review Board, the themes and violence are justified by the context of the narrative.

The element of language can be accommodated within the PG classification.

The element of sex can be accommodated within the G classification.

There is no drug use or nudity in the film.

The Review Board determined the consumer advice of: 'Fantasy themes and infrequent mild coarse language. Some scenes may scare young children'.

## 8. Summary

*Ghostbusters: Afterlife* is a fantasy themed movie that is an extension of the story from the original 1984 film. It engages young children to bust the ghosts. The cast is predominantly children with a focus on science and humour.