

NFSA SUBMISSION ON TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR ALRC REVIEW OF NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION SCHEME

The National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) believes the terms of reference should include a specific item on the interaction between the National Classification Scheme and the role of cultural institutions in providing public access to Australia's audiovisual heritage.

As part of its role in providing access to the national collection of Australia's audiovisual heritage, the NFSA regularly screens films, home movies and some television content around the country. Due to its age and other factors, the collection includes many unclassified titles. Currently the only way the NFSA can screen these is to obtain festival exemptions enabling a limited number of screenings at specific events at specific locations.

The NFSA is interested in obtaining a blanket exemption under the National Classification Scheme so that it can screen unclassified titles without needing festival exemptions. Preliminary advice from the Classification Board is that this cannot be done without legislative change.

A blanket exemption allows an approved organisation to screen unclassified films on an ongoing basis where its activities or functions relate to this. It essentially authorises an organisation to self classify titles and impose access restrictions accordingly. All jurisdictions except Queensland have now passed legislation allowing blanket exemptions, although these are generally confined to restricted events at film festivals.

A blanket exemption would assist the NFSA to achieve its role by:

- avoiding the lengthy and sometimes cumbersome process of obtaining a festival exemption
- making it easier to show unclassified titles as part of a national tour, and
- giving it more opportunities for screening material (e.g. at award ceremonies, seminars and film introductions).

Obtaining a blanket exemption would require the NFSA to self classify titles it wants to screen. By special arrangement with the former Office of Film and Literature Classification, the NFSA already self classifies titles for the *australianscreen online* website.