

## Legislative Council

Wednesday, 3 June 2009, Page 2502

### CLASSIFICATION (PUBLICATIONS, FILMS AND COMPUTER GAMES) (R 18+ FILMS) AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (17:47): I indicate my support for the second reading of this bill. In so doing, I congratulate the Hon. Dennis Hood for pursuing this most important issue. This bill seeks to prohibit video stores from mixing pornographic and violent adult videos with other materials (such as videos obviously targeted at children) by establishing separate marked areas or, in the case of a very small store, requiring blank covers for these videos. It also seeks to prohibit the advertising and screening of R18+ trailers within video stores, whether or not children are present in the store.

Young people these days face an unprecedented barrage of violent and sexually explicit material, and I am concerned about what this does to a young developing mind; and many other parents feel the same. Numerous studies have concluded that although every child exposed to pornography or violent movies does not necessarily become a serial killer, sexual deviant or sex addict, there are many ways in which pornography and violent movies can potentially harm our children.

According to a study in the *Journal of Sex Research*, early exposure to pornography is related to greater involvement in deviant sexual practice, particularly rape. Pornography has also been blamed for instilling the message that sex without responsibility is acceptable and desirable and, therefore, placing children's health at risk. The rate of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly chlamydia, continues to reach alarmingly high levels among teenagers in Australia.

In 2007 a study revealed that one in 10 sexually active Australian teenagers has a sexually transmitted infection, and the number of chlamydia notifications across Australia more than tripled between 1999 and 2006, with 15 to 24 year olds making up over 60 per cent of all notifications.

Another issue of great concern is the increased rate of pregnancy among teenagers in Australia, and a study by Patrick Carnes concluded that males who are exposed to a great deal of erotica before the age of 14 are more sexually active and engage in more varied sexual behaviour as adults than is true for males not so exposed.

Due to the extensive range of material easily available online these days, it is becoming increasingly difficult to preserve the innocence of our children, which becomes problematic health-wise when they become teenagers. As well as the physical component of this, we should not underestimate the negative and potentially dangerous attitudes that such material instils in many young people towards sex and violence.

While things such as the internet are somewhat outside our control, when it comes to material displayed in video stores this is a matter that we can do something about. I completely agree that parents should be able to take their children to a video store without their being exposed to pornographic or very violent video covers.

It is somewhat unfortunate that we need to legislate for such sensible, commonsense behaviour, but the personal experience that the Hon. Dennis Hood highlighted in his second

reading explanation does not appear to be an isolated case, with the commonwealth classification board confirming that it receives fairly regular complaints about this issue.

In his second reading explanation, the Hon. Dennis Hood said that this bill, if passed, will have no significant impact on adults (who will still be able to rent these videos) or the businesses that rent and sell them. I believe this is important, so there is a scenario which somewhat troubles me.

Let us say a customer enters a video store and whilst browsing in the shop takes a sexually explicit or very violent DVD off the shelf with the intention of hiring it. However, before they reach the counter they change their mind but, rather than returning the DVD to its original place, they place it on a shelf right next to the children's section. Of course, if an employee were to walk past and see it, they most likely would remove it and return it to its original position. However, if the store was busy it is highly unlikely that they would notice it before the customer did.

I do not believe it is fair or reasonable for a video store to be prosecuted in such a scenario. Therefore, in summing up or in the committee stage, I ask the Hon. Dennis Hood to make clear his intention for defences that can be provided for such a scenario under clause 40(3). I also look forward to hearing other members' contributions on this bill.

Debate adjourned on motion of Hon. B.V. Finnigan.