



OFFICE OF FILM
& LITERATURE
CLASSIFICATION

Tē Tari Whakarōpū Tukuata, Tūbituhinga

Canis Canem Edit

- Bully

Discussion over the content of the console game *Bully* was covered in the New Zealand and overseas media prior to its official release. Community interest groups and parents had expressed concerns in the media about a console game that they believed would promote physical violence and bullying.

Bully a console game for Playstation 2 was submitted for classification on 21 August 2006. After it had been submitted to the Office of Film and Literature Classification, the name was changed by the distributors in Europe, Australia and New Zealand to *Canis Canem Edit*. The Latin title translates to “dog eat dog”.

In the third person perspective game, the player takes on the character of Jimmy a new 15 year old student attending a boarding school called Bullworth Academy. The player, as Jimmy,

“The missions include good deeds such as standing up to bullies, stopping them tormenting other students, and escorting younger children to the toilets to protect them from bullies, as well as pranks... Breaking school rules, vandalism, truancy, and fighting will have Jimmy quickly overwhelmed by prefects, or if he is in town, by Police.”

Written decision for Canis Canem Edit



is required to undertake a number of missions standing up to school bullies.

When the Office examines a console or computer game, a specialist game player plays it under the direction of a classification officer who is responsible for writing the classification decision. The game play is usually also observed by a Senior Classification Officer in a supervisory role. Given the high amount of public interest in the game the Deputy Chief Censor and Chief Censor also observed the game play of *Canis Canem Edit*.





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The game session was followed by discussions about the most suitable classification for the game. Staff looked at the consequences Jimmy's actions had in the game and whether these consequences reflected real life. The written decision noted that

“Jimmy can attempt to escape [the consequences] by running away, but this is usually unsuccessful. The resulting punishments are proportionate to the seriousness of the offending and include Jimmy having to mow a large lawn, a task that takes four minutes of real time before they player can resume the game play. Instant discipline and purposely boring punishments act as a strong disincentive on the player. Jimmy learns from his mistakes.”

The Office assessed the content in the game against the legal criteria in the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993. In particular it considered the depiction of violence and the extent and degree and manner in which the game promotes or encourages criminal acts. The Office concluded that the violence in the game was limited to small incidents that do not result in serious physical injury.

“There are no apparent injuries or blood, and unlike many other fighting games, no special effects, to intensify the violence. The violence is not expressed in a graphic or excessive manner, and is given context by each particular mission.”

The content of the game did not reflect the types of activities discussed in the media prior to the release of the game. The community interest groups commenting on the game had not had the opportunity to play the game and were commenting based on existing media coverage.

The Office considered that the dominant effect of the game on its intended audience was to convey that bullying is bad.

“The player's character Jimmy must negotiate his relationships with various high school cliques. Although Jimmy uses low level violence and commits petty crimes, he learns that violence has consequences and that he must take responsibility for his actions.”

Canis Canem Edit was classified as R13 with the descriptive note “contains violence”





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Questions

1. Who were the main interest groups concerned with the classification of *Canis Canem Edit* and what were their views?
2. What sections of the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 were discussed in the written decision for *Canis Canem Edit*?
3. Have you played the game? What classification would you give *Canis Canem Edit*?
4. Does the content in *Canis Canem Edit* remind you of content in other films, videos or DVDs you have seen? Do you think a console game played at home can effect you differently than watching a film in a movie theatre?
5. Media reports on the console game often discuss negative impacts associated with playing console and comuter games. What do you think the positive and negative impacts of playing computer games are? Do you think that these different for young people and adults?

Online Resources

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bully_\(video_game\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bully_(video_game))

The wikipedia entry for *Canis Canem Edit*.

<http://www.rockstargames.com/canis/home/>

A website set up by the developers of *Canis Canem Edit* to promote and provide more information on the characters and setting of the console game.

<http://www.nzgamer.com/hub-xbox-reviews-361>

A review of the game by Emily Buxtom for New Zealand Gamer

<http://www.gameplanet.co.nz/mag.dyn/Reviews/3128.html>

Another onlinew review of *Canis Canem Edit*



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Exerpts and references for print media articles on *Canis Canem Edit* and computer games

[Boycott call over violent Bully game](#)

Bay of Plenty Times 10 August 2006

This article has comments from a psychotherapist and teacher about their impressions of *Bully*. "A Western Bay psychotherapist and a school leader say a controversial new video game that encourages a bullied teengager to fight back with violence will escalate the problem in schools.... Company spokesman (Rockstar) Rodney Walker said: "Finally *Bully* can speak for itself. People can look at the game and see what it is and what it's not."

[Bullying game sparks outrage](#)

Waikato Times 12 August 2006

There are a range of comments from a primary school social worker, the Youth Affairs Minister, an agency social worker and a person from a Hamilton video game store. "A new video game which encourages playground bullying had been branded "disgusting" by a Hamilton social worker. And an MP says there is no place for the game, *Bully*, in this country".

[Ban urged for bullying kids' video](#)

Waikato Times 13 September 2006

This follow up article re-interviews a psychotherapist, school leader and an anti-bullying facilliator respond to the R13 classification of *Canis Canem Edit*.

"Violence creates violence- what we model we will get. This bullying game is saying you are allowed to hit other children with a baseball bat. The problem is that adults need to take responsibility not the children",.....'There are lots of methodologies and tools you can give a child against bullying but sitting in front of a computer game is not going to deliver on any of those,"..."

[Online games teach life skills](#)

The Dominion Post 25 September 2006

Lisa Galarneau (Waikato University PhD student) discusses the content of the keynote speech she is giving at the ULearn 06 education conference in Christchurch. She is looking at players taking on the role of virtual superheroes in the *City of Heroes* multiplayer online game.

"What I would like to see happen is for people to worry a little less that videogames are rotting their kids' brains. There is a tremendous amount of learning that happens when kids play games of all sorts, videogames included."