



Mr Peter Meakin
Seven Network Australia
PO BOX 777
PYRMONT, NSW
Australia 2009

Dear Mr Meakin,

We refer to the broadcast last night of the piece produced by you entitled '*Video Games Under Fire*'. It is our opinion that not only was there a lack of balance in the reporting, but the piece contained a number of elements that we contend were either factually incorrect, or deliberately misleading.

The opening features a still shot allegedly taken from Grand Theft Auto which was blurred out because of its inappropriate nature. This scene is well documented as being accessible only when the game has been hacked and modified. This scene was never released by the publisher of the Grand Theft Auto franchise, never released in Australia, and will never be released in Australia. The inference that this material is what should be banned is misleading – because it has never been presented for classification in this country and, if so, would not be accommodated by the National Classification Scheme. There has been huge amounts written about the illegal accessing of these scenes and my concern is that to identify and use this screen shot, this fact must have been known to your production team.

The use of images of young children playing 'first person shooter' games that are clearly labelled and sold to a mature audience is exceptionally misleading. A huge amount of effort is spent by video games publishers, industry and retail organisations to ensure that these games are classified properly within Australian law, community is educated about children's access to appropriately classified material, and that restricted content is sold in line with these classifications. We would argue that using images of what appear to be four and five year olds playing games that are classified as MA15+, and therefore legally restricted, is not reporting on the issue, but rather using selective imagery to deceptively generate an emotional response from your audience. The irony here is that the exposure of this type of content to these children makes a mockery of the classification scheme and submits them to age inappropriate content.

Finally, we'd like to raise the issue of sensationally linking the Norway tragedy to adult classified games. We understand that the piece was reporting on the suggestions by your interview sources that there was a causal effect, but given Channel 7 sought to use news footage of the tragedy in your piece then some degree of fact checking would have been required. For the record, in his 'manifesto' Anders Brevnik mentions six games in total and in passing, which as reported by the ABC, does not





demonstrate a causal link in the context of a 769,412 word document (the equivalent of eleven doctoral thesis). A full analysis by the ABC can be found [here](#).

What we do know is that video games are played by millions of people across the globe and by a majority of the adult population without incident. We believe it's fair to say that in our communities there will always be individuals who will have a predisposition towards violent behaviour, the causes for which fall into a very wide range of factors. To single out a symptom, rather than the underlying cause, does little to understand, or show respect to, the greater tragedy.

The subject of an adult classification has been in discussion for over 10 years. It has been the subject of extensive community consultation, academic research and debate right across both the community and between stakeholder organisations. Not only did this piece fail to add intelligent or researched discussion to the piece, it did viewers the ultimate disservice by using your power as a broadcaster to use a range of images and quotes in such a way to muddy an important conversation.

I'm happy to provide any necessary background or information pertaining to these issues as we did in advance of this piece going to air.

Regards,
Ron Curry

