



File No: T13/1528

Australian Government
Classification Board

Decision Report

Classification decisions are made in accordance with the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995 (the Act), the National Classification Code and the Classification Guidelines.

Production Details:

Title: SAINTS ROW IV
Alternate titles:
Publisher: DEEP SILVER
Programmer: DEEP SILVER VOLITION
Production Company:
Year of Production: 2012
Duration: VARIABLE
Version: ORIGINAL
Format: MULTI PLATFORM
Country/ies of origin: USA
Language/s: EFIGS
Application type: CG2
Applicant: KOCH MEDIA GMBH

Dates:

Date application received by the Classification Board: 13 May 2013

Date of decision: 19 June 2013

Decision:

Classification: RC
Consumer advice:

Synopsis:

This open-world action game, for the XBOX 360, is the fourth in the Saints Row series and is a direct sequel to Saints Row: The Third. In this instalment players control the leader of the Third Street Saints, who has been elected as the President of the United States after it comes under attack from an alien race. Players navigate open world environments and complete missions with the main objective being to destroy the Zin alien empire.

Reasons for the Decision:

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

In the Board's view this game warrants an 'RC' classification in accordance with item 1(a) of the computer games table of the National Classification Code:

"1. Computer games that:

(a) depict, express or otherwise deal with matters of sex, drug misuse or addiction, crime, cruelty, violence or revolting or abhorrent phenomena in such a way that they offend against the standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults to the extent that they should not be classified;" will be Refused Classification.

Computer games that exceed the R 18+ classification category will be Refused Classification. At the R 18+ classification, the Guidelines state:

"Implied sexual violence that is visually depicted, interactive, not justified by context or related to incentives or rewards is not permitted"; and

"Drug use related to incentives and rewards is not permitted".

The Guidelines also state that computer games will be Refused Classification if they contain "illicit or proscribed drug use related to incentives or rewards".

The game includes a weapon referred to by the Applicant as an "Alien Anal Probe". The Applicant states that this weapon can be "shoved into enemy's backsides". The lower half of the weapon resembles a sword hilt and the upper part contains prong-like appendages which circle around what appears to be a large dildo which runs down the centre of the weapon. When using this weapon the player approaches a (clothed) victim from behind and thrusts the weapon between the victim's legs and then lifts them off the ground before pulling a trigger which launches the victim into the air. After the probe has been implicitly inserted into the victim's anus the area around their buttocks becomes pixelated highlighting that the aim of the weapon is to penetrate the victim's anus. The weapon can be used during gameplay on enemy characters or civilians.

In the Board's opinion, a weapon designed to penetrate the anus of enemy characters and civilians constitutes a visual depiction of implied sexual violence that is interactive and not justified by context and as such the game should be Refused Classification.

The game contains an optional mission which involves the player obtaining and smoking drugs referred to as "alien narcotics". Smoking the "alien narcotics" equips the player with "superpowers" which increase their in-game abilities allowing them to progress through the mission more easily. The mission requires players to locate and kill a drug "dealer" to "score something to boost (them) up for killing". During the mission onscreen prompts guide the player to "Go to deal location" and "Get drugs". One character describes that the drug, referred to during the mission as an "alien narcotic", will "enhance abilities on top of giving you a really wicked buzz". After killing the dealer the player is depicted implicitly smoking from what appears to be a small glass pipe. The drugs they obtain from the first dealer do not achieve the desired effects and the player locates and kills a second dealer. After killing this dealer the player is again depicted implicitly smoking from a small glass pipe. Within moments the player begins to feel the effects of the drug, commenting "(my) powers feel limitless", "(I) feel like every muscle inside me is going to burst" and "holy crap we have superpowers". The player then embarks on a mission to locate and kill an enemy character and is depicted using superpowers which include increased speed and jumping abilities.

In the Board's opinion, there is insufficient delineation between the "alien narcotic" available in the game and real-world proscribed drugs. The Board notes that the label "narcotics" is commonly assigned to describe a class of real-world drugs that include such proscribed

substances as cocaine and heroin. In addition, the means by which the drugs are obtained (from a street dealer) and the method of administration (smoked using a small glass pipe) parallel real-world scenarios and, when used, the drug provides quantifiable benefits to a player's character. This game therefore contains drug use related to incentives and rewards and should be Refused Classification.

Decision:

This game is Refused Classification.

