

24 February 2022

Ryan Bullock

By email: fyi-request-18074-2a882c1b@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Mr Bullock,

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), which was partially transferred to the Classification Office by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on 27 January 2022.

You asked:

Can you detail how the government discovers, tracks and classifies content online and via TV, radio.

Can you provide detail about the budget spent per year on these associated activities.

In responding to your request, I have weighed up the factors in the OIA, including the purposes in [section 4](#) and the principle of availability in [section 5](#).

Response to your request

Classification activities

Te Mana Whakaatu—the Classification Office classifies a wide variety of publications and online content, including films, images, books, and video games.

The Office receives publications from:

- Commercial providers, mainly via the Film and Video Labelling Body, which is funded by film distributors;
- Enforcement officials, such as the New Zealand Police, Customs Service, and Department of Internal Affairs;
- The courts, who must refer publications to the Office when it is unclear whether or not a publication is objectionable;
- Members of the public, who can apply for leave to submit a publication for classification; and
- The Chief Censor, who can ‘call in’ a publication for the Office to classify when the publication poses a risk of harm to the public.

The Office's Classification Advisors examine publications. Classification decisions are made according to the criteria in [sections 3 to 3D of the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993](#). A publication may be unrestricted, objectionable, or restricted (for example, objectionable unless access is restricted to those 18 years of age or older): [section 23\(2\)](#). For films, decisions include whether including or excluding particular parts of the film would change the rating given to the film overall: [sections 32 to 35](#).

The Office is an independent Crown entity. This means that while it is part of the wider state service, it does not perform its functions, such as classifying content, at the direction of elected government officials or public service departments.

More information about the Office is available on [its website](#).

The Office does not deal directly with television or radio content. The Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) deals with complaints about breaches of broadcasting standards on television and radio. More information about what the BSA does can be found on [its website](#).

Funding and budget

The Classification Office receives around \$3.3m per annum in Crown funding. Of this amount \$463,000 is allocated specifically to responding to violent extremist content online in response to the 15 March terror attacks.

The budget for classification activities (excluding overheads) for 2020/21 was \$840,000. This includes the classification of material submitted by the Crown, and commercial material which includes but is not limited to online content.

The Office is also funded separately for oversight of the self-rating systems operated by commercial video on demand providers which operate in Aotearoa New Zealand (including providers such as Netflix). The budget for this in 2020/21 (excluding overheads) is approximately \$480,000 and is largely funded by a levy on these providers.

Right of review

You have the right to make a complaint and seek a review by the Ombudsman of this response under [section 28\(3\) of the OIA](#). Information about this process is available at [ombudsman.parliament.nz](#) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Thank you for your interest in the work of the Classification Office.

Ngā mihi nui,



David Shanks
Chief Censor
Classification Office—Te Mana Whakaatu