



## About us: protecting and empowering New Zealanders

We inform and empower New Zealanders to experience, understand, create and share content in a positive way, while safeguarding our tamariki and rangatahi from harm.

### OUR CHANGING ROLE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

- The Classification Office is an independent media regulator focused on keeping New Zealanders safe in a fast-changing digital world.
  - Once upon a time we were best known for classifying physical media like DVDs and films in cinemas. That's still part of our job, but as New Zealanders' media habits have evolved our focus has too.
  - We're thinking about how government regulates digital media, and collaborating with government agencies, NGOs and experts on interventions to help New Zealanders enjoy digital content safely.
  - We see an urgent need for change in a system that hasn't kept up with the times: the harms from digital media are evolving and becoming more critical.
- Our perspective is informed by direct experience and engagement:
    - Research is a significant part of what we do and gives us real-world insight. Our research into how young New Zealanders are affected by online porn has provided a strong evidence base on this subject.
    - We have first-hand exposure to the 'darker side' of the Internet through our work classifying content such as child sexual exploitation, suicides, and terrorist material.
    - We put young people at the centre of what we do. Our Youth Advisory Panel provides us with an ongoing youth voice to inform our thinking on key issues.
    - We are committed to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and are investing in improving our team's literacy of Te Reo Māori and Te Ao Māori and applying this knowledge. We have registered our Te Mahere Reo Māori (Māori language plan) with Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, and we seek to have a clear Māori voice in our work – for example in the design and participation of our pornography research.

# Why what we do matters



- The Classification Office is a trusted centre of expertise for New Zealanders. Our classification system and labels are well recognised by the public, giving people helpful information and assurance about entertainment content and publications.
- Our research drives positive change. Our research into young people using online porn enabled us to develop practical, evidence-based resources for whānau and educators. It has also led to substantially improved content in the Ministry of Education's (MoE) Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum guidelines, which talk about porn for the first time. We're currently working with MoE on a professional development module for educators on this topic. Our next research project is a comprehensive survey of disinformation in New Zealand.
- We tackle difficult, real issues. A good example is *13 Reasons Why* being released on Netflix in New Zealand with no warning about the explicit suicide scene. Our work with the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) to bring commercial video on-demand platforms into New Zealand's classification framework closes an important legislative gap in the streaming arena.
- We played a significant role in New Zealand's response to the Christchurch terrorist attacks in 2019, including banning the livestream video and so-called manifesto. Since then we have ramped up our internal expertise on violent extremism – including engaging with international experts – and are taking steps to drive long-term system change.



# Driving progress through partnerships



We work collaboratively with government agencies, organisations and experts to achieve common goals. Currently this includes:

- Working to create an ongoing, cohesive government and community response to the impacts of online porn on young people, including creating and chairing the inter-agency Pornography Working Party.
- Working with DIA and industry on changes that will soon require commercial video on-demand and streaming platforms to display New Zealand age ratings and content warnings.
- Our new Countering Violent Extremism team has developed an outreach plan as part of our strategy for violent extremism, and has started proactively engaging with and connecting academics, practitioners, policy-makers, regulators, and civil society.
- We are a member of the Online Harm Prevention Group which also includes Netsafe, DPMC, DIA, Police, CERT NZ, InternetNZ and TradeMe, with input from N4L and the Mental Health Foundation.
- We maintain strong links with the Children's Commissioner, the Ministry for Women, the Human Rights Commission, and the Privacy Commissioner, and work closely with a wide range of NGOs and community organisations nationwide.
- We have close connections with media regulators, researchers, and organisations countering online hate worldwide, allowing us to track the latest developments.

## Looking ahead: Key opportunities this term

New Zealand is facing new and constantly evolving harms from modern digital media – and this will continue. We need integrated approaches and effective tools and interventions to respond to these harms, and keep New Zealanders safe.

**Details on these issues and key opportunities are set out in the other fact sheets in this pack.**