

## SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR DECISION

Under the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 (FVPC Act)

### HEADNOTE

<b>Title of publication:</b>	Mortal Kombat
<b>Other known title(s):</b>	Mortal Kombat I/ Mortal Kombat: Sega Genesis Classic Game Console
<b>OFLC ref:</b>	1600731.000
<b>Medium:</b>	Computer Game
<b>Classification:</b>	Objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 13 years.
<b>Descriptive note:</b>	Contains violence.
<b>Display conditions:</b>	None

*Mortal Kombat* is a console game examined on the Sega Genesis Classic Game Console. It is one of 80 games packaged together with the console. It is a two-dimensional side-scrolling fighting game that was originally released in the early 1990s. The game's arcade-style graphics are low resolution compared to contemporary games.

The game is played in a tournament format with one-on-one matches. The options menu enables the player to choose between five different levels of difficulty for the tournament. The player selects one of fourteen characters to play as, each with their own unique fighting abilities. The tournament is divided into matches that are, in turn, divided into rounds. The first player to win two rounds, by fully depleting his or her opponent's health bar, is the winner. At this point the losing character becomes dazed and the victorious character is presented with the opportunity to kill their opponent in a bloody manner with a "fatality". The game's overall gameplay is highly repetitive but requires a high degree of controller manipulation to master.

Under s3(1) of the FVPC Act the game deals with matters of cruelty and violence within the context of an animated fighting game. The extent and degree to which, and the manner in which, the game depicts the infliction of serious physical harm and acts of significant cruelty will be discussed under s3(3)(a)(i). It does not contain any elements that require discussion in terms of s3(2).

The infliction of serious physical harm is extensive throughout. The game requires the player to actively inflict punches and kicks on opponents using their console controller in order to win each match and progress through the tournament. The fighters grapple, punch and kick each other, or stab and slash each other with swords or supernatural powers. Some characters have the ability to project flames at their opponents, lasso them or use supernatural powers. The blows result in blood spurting into the air for a brief moment or the characters fall to the ground before quickly getting to their feet and resuming the contest. The characters' health bars decrease when struck but no bodily injuries are shown. The action is fast-paced and highly unrealistic.

The winner of each contest has the option to kill their opponent in a grisly manner by executing a fatality. The fatality moves are bloody and cruel. Each character has their own unique fatality: Johnny Cage decapitates his opponent with a single uppercut punch; Kano punches through his opponent's chest and rips out their still beating heart; Raiden blasts lightning into his opponent's head, which causes it to explode; Liu Kang punches his opponent very high into the air with accompanying blood splatter; Scorpion removes his mask, revealing his skull, and toasts his opponent to a skeleton with his flame breath; Sub-Zero pulls off his opponent's head from its body with the spine still attached; and Sonya blows a fiery kiss from her palm, which circles around and burns her opponent. The impact of the fatalities is reduced to a certain extent by the game's arcade-style graphics and low resolution. Furthermore, not all players will have the necessary gaming ability to press the set combination of controller buttons in rapid succession to activate the fatality before the contest ends. In these instances, the player can punch or kick their opponent several times before the opponent simply falls to the ground.

The dominant effect of *Mortal Kombat* is a fast-paced violent fighting game involving the player manipulating martial arts and supernatural characters. The retro arcade-style visual appearance and low resolution graphics has an impact on overall gameplay. The unrestricted availability of this game is likely to be injurious to the public good given the manner in which it deals with matters of cruelty and violence. The game's only objective is to fight opponents and inflict injury and death to advance through the tournament. It requires the player to commit acts of violence and cruelty by manipulating the console controller to win fights. The player is also able to execute unique character fatality moves at the end of the match, which enables them to kill opponents in a bloody manner. This is likely to have the effect of inuring children to cruelty and violence through presenting this behaviour as entertaining and exciting. Teenagers and adults are more likely to put this kind of material in the context of a highly unrealistic fighting game. For older game players, the stronger depictions are tempered by the high skill level and manual dexterity required to perform the fatalities. The low resolution graphics and retro arcade-style gameplay are mitigating factors helping the game not receive a higher restriction. Balancing these harms against the right to freedom of expression as set out in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, a restriction on the availability of *Mortal Kombat* to teenagers and adults is a reasonable restriction in order to prevent injury to the public good.

**Note:**

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