



OFFICE OF FILM  
& LITERATURE  
CLASSIFICATION

*Te Tari Whakarāpū Tikautā, Tūbitūhinga*

## ***Out of the Blue***

Report on consultations with families of victims  
& members of the Aramoana community

20 September 2006

David Wilson  
Manager, Information Unit

## Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Recruitment	3
1.2 The consultation process	3
1.3 The film	4
<b>2. Main themes of the discussion</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Questionnaire responses</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1 Classification of <i>Out of the Blue</i>	5
3.2 Reasons for recommended classification	6
3.2.1 Reasons for recommending an objectionable classification	6
3.2.2 Reasons for recommending a restricted classification	7
3.2.3 Reasons for recommending an unrestricted classification	8
<b>Appendix: Questionnaire</b>	

## 1.0 Introduction

The Office of Film and Literature Classification (Classification Office) sought the views of families of those killed at Aramoana in 1990 and members of the Aramoana community on the classification of the film *Out of the Blue* under section 21 of the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993.

### 1.1 Recruitment

The Aramoana League, a community group, invited family members and community members to separate meetings to discuss the classification of the film on the evening of 20 September 2006 in the Port Chalmers Town Hall.

### 1.2 The participants

The first meeting was attended by nine people whose family members were killed at Aramoana. The second meeting was with 21 members of the wider Aramoana community whose neighbours and friends were killed. Unlike consultations on other films, where the Office endeavours to recruit participants who are broadly representative of New Zealand society, the Office did not gather any demographic or identifying information about participants. Although people were free to identify themselves if they wished, this consultation does not claim to have a representative sample. It was focussed on those most affected by the tragedy – the people of Aramoana.

The Office is grateful to those who participated in the meetings and made written submissions on the classification of the film. We appreciate that, in doing so, people relived painful experiences. However, their assistance was invaluable in making a better-informed classification decision.

### 1.2 The consultation process

The Chief Censor, Deputy Chief Censor and Information Unit Manager met with members of the families of victims of the Aramoana tragedy and members of the Aramoana community in separate meetings. The meetings were held at the Port Chalmers Town Hall from 6.00pm to 8.00pm and 8.00pm to 10.00pm on Wednesday 20 September 2006.

The Chief Censor explained the relevant provisions of the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993. Some of the people attending the meetings had already seen the film. Some had chosen not to see it while others had not had the opportunity to see it.

After the Chief Censor's presentation those attending the meetings were invited to discuss the classification of *Out of the Blue*. Classification Office staff noted significant responses. Following the discussion participants were given a short questionnaire to complete (See Table 1). Participants were informed that they could complete the questionnaire immediately or post it to the Office at a later date. The questionnaire asked:

- what classification *Out of the Blue* should be given;
- the reasons for the classification they recommended; and

- whether they had seen the film.

In addition to the questionnaire, the Office received 7 written submissions from people on the classification of the film (see Table 2).

### 1.3 The film

*Out of the Blue* is a film directed by Robert Sarkies. It depicts a version of the events of 13 and 14 November 1990 when David Gray killed 13 people and wounded two in the Otago township of Aramoana. It has a running time of 104 minutes.

## 2. Main themes of the discussion

Participants in the discussion expressed concern that they had not been properly consulted about the making of the film or its content. Many also worried that the film would generate further media attention for a community that had no interest in such attention.

Some participants considered that the making and exhibition of the film would re-open old wounds and again traumatise the people connected with the Aramoana tragedy. One person pointed out that the traumatic effects of the film are wider than just those who lost family members and that they expand to include friends, acquaintances and extended families. The traumatising of a section of the New Zealand public was seen to be injurious to the public good. Written submissions stated that:

*...to make a film about it is not appropriate. To dredge everything back up and to portray so explicitly what took place does nothing for anyone involved during the event.*

*Every time the tragedy gains major publicity a type of ghoulish tourism recurs, some residents have moved out, as they are sick of feeling like an exhibit in a zoo as cars slowly drive the streets peering into people's homes.*

*...the feeling of injustice is immense – all we are left with is to beg – go away and leave us to heal ourselves.*

Some submissions took a different point of view:

*Everyone addresses grief in their own way and their own time. The media attention immediately after was hard to take on top of what had happened, the documentary opened it up again, the dramatization also, but for me there seems to be a lessening of the backlog of unprocessed emotion every time it comes up.*

Some people were worried that the film might encourage others to emulate David Gray's murders by portraying him as a martyr or by showing how easy it is to kill people. Written submissions stated that:

*I do not believe screening the film at all is in the best interests of anyone. The people left behind coping with the grief. People who may decide to do copycat shootings.*

*Since the shootings Aramoana has become a focal point for people who identify with David Gray. Some rather disturbed people arrive here in the village to see where the massacre occurred; this is a real worry to the residents.*

A small number of participants suggested that the film should be restricted to the purpose of cinema exhibition only. This would prevent it being released on DVD where people could replay disturbing scenes again and again. They also considered that it is easier to police an age restriction in a cinema than in a private home. In response to the suggested restriction of the film to cinemas, one participant stated that he would like to watch the film and to show it to his children but would be unable to do so in a cinema due to the emotional strain of the events depicted.

While some participants cited the above concerns as reasons to ban *Out of the Blue*, others considered that a ban would be counter-productive in that it would generate more public and media interest in the film. Another point of view expressed at the meetings was that a classification of objectionable was difficult to sustain under the criteria in the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 and would be unlikely to be upheld by the Film and Literature Board of Review.

Some participants thought that *Out of the Blue* might have merit in highlighting deficiencies in the mental health system by showing the devastating effects of David Gray's mental illness. Other considered that it had merit as an account of historic events in New Zealand, though some thought it had been made too soon after the events it portrays. Two written submissions stated that:

*I think the movie is a very realistic and factual reflection of what occurred, but feel the due to the graphic scenes and content that it needs to be viewed through mature eyes.*

*It gave colour to the emotional reality of interrupted lives, of the police and armed offenders squad, the heartbreak of lives slipping away, the unspeakable anguish of mental illness, the horror and grief of a man who finally confronts himself, the courage and spirit of ordinary people in extraordinary situations - those are the aspects of the story that had not been fully addressed and maybe it can give a little more depth and meaning to that part of the history of the town as well as the culture.*

There was general agreement that the film was not suitable for children because it would disturb them or cause them to be fearful. Older teenagers were thought to be more likely to be able to place the film in its historical context and less likely to be frightened by the deaths of children depicted in the film.

### **3. Questionnaire responses**

#### **3.1 Classification of *Out of the Blue***

The Classification Office received 28 completed questionnaires. The recommended classifications varied widely in keeping with the personal experiences and particular outlooks of individual participants. They reflected the wide variety of views expressed during the earlier discussion of the classification.

The single largest group of responses recommended that the film be given an age-restricted classification, with some also recommending that it be restricted to the purpose

of cinema exhibition. A slightly smaller group of responses recommended that the film be classified as objectionable. The smallest group of responses were those that recommended that the film be given an unrestricted classification.

**Table 1: Recommended classification (all questionnaires)**

Recommended classification	Number recommending classification	Number who have seen film	Number who have not seen film	Did not indicate whether they had seen film
Objectionable	11	1	10	0
Restricted	14	8	5	1
Unrestricted	3	3	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>

**Table 2: Recommended classification (all submissions)**

Recommended classification	Number recommending classification	Number who have seen film	Number who have not seen film	Did not indicate whether they had seen film
Objectionable	3	0	3	0
Restricted	3	2	1	0
Unrestricted	0	0	0	0
No recommendation	1	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

**Table 3: Recommended classification (all responses)**

Recommended classification	Number recommending classification	Number who have seen film	Number who had not seen film	Did not indicate whether they had seen film
Objectionable	14	1	13	0
Restricted	17	10	6	1
Unrestricted	3	3	0	0
No recommendation	1	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>

### 3.2 Reasons for recommended classification

Participants were asked why they recommended the classification that they did. They gave the following reasons in the questionnaires.

#### *3.2.1 Reasons for recommending an objectionable classification*

*The film is morally wrong and damaging [to the families of victims and the community]*

*Aramoana's recent tragic history has not only cause severe turmoil to the remaining living residents but that turmoil will never go away so long as there are people willing to exploit past events.*

*Every year we as a community have this event raised for us to deal with. The movie continues this.*

*The continued invasion of our lives [by film makers and news media] is very hurtful.*

*The film will give ideas to young and impressionable people that promote violent death and how easy it is to kill people.*

*The film can only cause similar events [to occur again] in New Zealand*

*Glorifying someone who gunned down children.*

### **3.2.2 Reasons for recommending a restricted classification**

*I don't think the film is suitable for younger people. I don't think there is that much violence in the film and overall the story has been told well.*

*This is part of our history. It needs to be seen but children must be supervised by a parent or guardian.*

*To not [restrict] it is to condone violence... The commercial motives of movie producers will be top priorities unless a stand is taken [by restricting the film].*

*I would like to see the film restricted to cinemas only because of the impact on society in terms of this portrayal. No one under 16 should be able to see this film. It should only be released in cinemas not on DVD. I would hate to see my husband's life for sale on a stall at a school fair.*

*Children in no way should view this film. Children should not feel unsafe. I am also concerned about people finding glory in David's role in events. David himself was inspired by literature, why would this film not inspire others?*

*I feel very concerned that certain parts of the film might feed the disturbed imagination of an isolated and angry individual and particularly the graphic portrayal of David Gray's death could feed a negative fantasy.*

*In the wrong hands this movie has the potential to be injurious. We do not want a repeat of another Aramoana. I strongly recommend that the movie be limited to theatres only with no DVD sales.*

*To keep distribution of the film to a minimum to hopefully forestall copycat acts of aggression and murder.*

*I would not like children to see the dark side of the film.*

*I thought [the film] was well done and also think it could help others to understand how these things happen.*

*Maybe if the film is restricted [rather than banned] mental health people will use it in a positive way to educate themselves in helping prevent this tragedy happening again.*

### *3.2.3 Reasons for recommending an unrestricted classification*

*There are numerous movies far more violent than this one.*

*This is a history.*

Following the discussion, the Chief Censor thanked the participants and the consultation concluded at 10.00pm.



## APPENDIX



OFFICE OF FILM  
& LITERATURE  
CLASSIFICATION

*Tē Tiri Whakarōpū Tikautā, Tūhūbinga*

### *Out of the Blue* Consultation

The Office of Film and Literature Classification wants your views in order to help with the decision about what classification to give to the film *Out of the Blue*.

You are not required to put your name on this questionnaire but you may if you wish. The information collected is being used for the purposes of research, and will not be used in any other way.

**1. What classification would you recommend for the film?  
Please choose one.**

- Objectionable (banned)
- R18
- R16
- R13
- M (Unrestricted)
- PG (Unrestricted)
- G (Unrestricted)
- Other - please specify .....

**2. Why did you recommend that particular classification?**

