

Classification Office

TE MANA WHAKAATU



Youth Advisory Panel
2024/25 Report

Youth Advisory Panel (YAP)

2024/25 Report

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Classification Office

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Contents

Foreword..... 4

Message from the Chief Censor 6

About the Youth Advisory Panel..... 7

Facilitators..... 9

Our Approach.....10

2024/25 Highlights.....11

2024/25 Co-views.....16

Opportunities for Members.....20

Social Media Campaigns & Blog Posts 22

Pastoral Care.....24

Our Other Work with Young People 25

Acknowledgments 27

Appendix.....28

Foreword

The YAP has been such an incredible experience, and I will never stop talking about it. Every meeting, hangout, and viewing we attended was full of laughter, care, support, and a collective goal that we want to get rangatahi voices and perspective out there in Aotearoa!

There were so many diverse perspectives around the table that our meetings could have gone on much longer. There was always another idea to explore or another perspective to learn from, knowing our opinions would always be heard and respected.

The conversations we had didn't end when the meetings did. I often found myself continuing them with friends and family, discussing topics and perspectives that I never would have considered before joining the YAP. Those discussions have genuinely changed the way I think about media, online spaces, and the importance of youth voice.

Those discussions have genuinely changed the way I think about media, online spaces, and the importance of youth voice.

The YAP has been part of many rewarding experiences that have supported the work of the Classification Office.

One of my favourite opportunities was co-viewing unreleased films, where we could bring a youth perspective to discussions about how young people might interpret and respond to different themes and content. Through the year, we viewed some noteworthy films, including: *Joker: Folie à Deux*, *Blink Twice*, *Sinners*,

Deadpool & Wolverine, *Companion*, and *The Housemaid*.

In our meetings, discussions led to meaningful outcomes. This reinforced the importance of involving young people in government decision-making. In one example of this, we explored what horror means to young people, the different forms it can take, and which elements have the greatest impact on different age groups. It is rewarding to see these perspectives contribute to the Classification Handbook, which will help guide future classification decisions.

We also had the opportunity to contribute to the development of youth-focused resources and campaigns addressing online misogyny and violent extremism. We discussed broader topics such as social media algorithms, media literacy, and the normalisation of harmful attitudes online.

I had the privilege of taking part in the "30 Years of the Classification Office" video. While I was nervous, it has become one of my favourite memories from my time on the YAP. It made me appreciate being part of an organisation that recognises that, as technology and online culture evolve so quickly, youth voices are essential in shaping decisions that affect us!

Beyond the work itself, the YAP also introduced me to incredible people. I've made friendships that have lasted well beyond my time as a

member, and I'm incredibly grateful for that. I'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Caitlin, Jess, Tara, Dylan, AJ, and Caroline for creating such a welcoming and supportive environment. Thank you also to my fellow YAP members, for their passion, humour, and diverse perspectives.

I can't wait to see how the Panel continues to grow and ensure young people's voices remain at the heart of the Classification Office's work.

Rhianna (she/her)

Youth Advisory Panel Member

Message from the Chief Censor

Our Youth Advisory Panel offers us invaluable insights and advice that contribute to real harm reduction for the whole of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our Youth Advisory Panel plays an important role in the work of the Classification Office. Throughout the year, the panel has provided thoughtful advice on a wide range of issues, helping us better understand how rangatahi experience both entertainment content and some of the more complex and harmful content. Their insights have informed research, communications, education, and our thinking about the future of content regulation.

The Classification Office has a unique role in Aotearoa New Zealand. Alongside providing trusted age ratings, we also make independent legal decisions about objectionable content to help protect New Zealanders from some of the most harmful material in circulation. Young people's voices are valuable across both parts of our work. They help us understand how content is experienced in the real world and ensure our work remains relevant, responsive, and grounded in the lives of those most affected.

I want to thank every member of the Youth Advisory Panel for the time, energy, and care they have brought to this work over the past year. Your willingness to share your perspectives, ask difficult questions, and contribute to meaningful conversations helps strengthen our work and ultimately supports our shared goal of reducing content harm for everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Caroline Flora (she/her)

Chief Censor

About the Youth Advisory Panel

Background

In 2018, Classification Office – Te Mana Whakaatu established a Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) as part of a wider youth engagement strategy. It made sense to involve rangatahi in New Zealand's classification system as they are most impacted by what we do. We thought the YAP could help plan and execute youth-targeted projects, and develop resources for public outreach. We also wanted to hear their views so we could improve our work on issues that directly affect them, such as our restricted classification decisions.

Through the YAP, the voices of rangatahi are now a part of our daily work. The YAP plays a critical role in informing us when we classify films and shows that impact young people. They also keep us in touch with what young people are seeing online and how to communicate with them and their whānau about keeping safe. The value they individually and collectively bring has exceeded all expectations.

We think it is important to note that members of the Youth Advisory Panel do not wholly represent the general youth population. They are in no way expected to represent the voices of all young New Zealanders. However, their contribution is rich and varied.

How the YAP works

Members of the YAP come from across the wider Wellington region, and must be aged between 16 and 19. Once they turn 20, they age out of the group.

We have monthly evening meetings, which are run by trained facilitators and supported by other Office staff. Sometimes we have guest speakers. We provide pizza and pay for travel costs. We also have mid-year and end-of-year dinners.

As well as meetings, we support members as they move into the next phase of their lives – helping them with job applications, conversations about university pathways, and introductions to people who might help them.

Alumni

In 2025, on request of past YAP members, we launched the YAP Alumni. There were many young people who are passionate about the work we do and still wanted to be engaged with the Office. We set up the Alumni group to meet once per year, run like a standard, but longer, YAP meeting. This year they were an invaluable consultation group for our [Content that Crosses the Line](#) research about harmful online content.

Today

Our Youth Advisory Panel currently includes 15 members, representing 10 different ethnic communities. The average age is 19 – with members at various stages of high school and tertiary education. In 2024/25, the panel met seven times (see Appendix) and took part in three reward events – two group dinners and a film screening.



Facilitators

“Time and again, rangatahi show us just how deeply they care about the wellbeing of those around them.”

Caitlin

“It’s so inspiring to see rangatahi use their own lived experiences to help create safer spaces for other young people.”

Jess

“One of the most rewarding aspects of working with rangatahi is seeing the confidence and enthusiasm they bring to discussions, and knowing their voices are making a meaningful contribution.”

Renee

Our Approach

Our approach to collaborating with the YAP is based on the Mana Taiohi Framework.

Whanaungatanga

The facilitators and panel members purposefully cultivate a constructive, fun, and encouraging environment. There is no expectation of bringing anything more than what each individual already knows, believes and has experienced. We are grateful for our panel members' time, energy, and meaningful engagement.

Manaakitanga

We take responsibility for creating a safe environment for young people to share their views, particularly when discussing challenging content. We protect and respect their voices, prepare them for what will be discussed, build in wellbeing support, and regularly check that our approach is working for them.

Whai wāhitanga

Being a young person can be hard. They are all on their individual journeys, which include setbacks, pressures, barriers, emotions, and physical and mental changes. All this comes while they are trying to find their place in the world and work out who they are. It has been a privilege getting to know our panel members individually, experiencing their insights and walking alongside them as they positively develop. Our aim is to always respect, listen, and amplify their voices. We encourage and connect individual members to participate in additional opportunities.

Mātauranga

As an independent Crown entity, the YAP helps us to deliver our statutory functions well, but we have to be careful that any collaboration with young people is not decorative, manipulative, or tokenistic – something that could happen unintentionally. We ensure that every project benefits both the young person and our Office, and ensure their voices are not misused or repurposed. We want to provide meaningful opportunities for young people and empower and enhance their mana.

2024/25 Highlights

The YAP supports the Office with understanding issues that directly impact rangatahi. Below are some highlights from the year.

The Classification Handbook – helping understand horror

Background

The Classification Handbook is a comprehensive guide that collates and records all the Office's practices, procedures, and policies for classifying and rating publications.

Previously, the Office has engaged with the YAP on topics like true crime (May 2023) and anime (November 2023) to assist with the development of the Handbook and provide insight into important classification considerations. For this meeting, the Classification Unit was interested in the YAP's thoughts about what gives horror more impact for them and what lessens the impact.

Discussion

Members of the YAP had differing opinions about which elements of horror had a bigger effect on them. All said that they had seen a scary film too young, but what impacted them now depended on their taste and experience. The main trend was that the psychological elements of horror were more likely to stick with them than violence. They didn't like watching anyone enjoy inflicting suffering, or anything where animals were threatened. Most members felt that torture, psychological horror, and body horror had the most impact on them, although many pointed out that body horror didn't stop them sleeping and wasn't scary in the moment.

Outcomes

The YAP's ideas were summarised and posted on the horror page of the Classification Handbook, the Office's intranet resource describing our practice. We also presented the summary at a staff meeting.

“The members of the Youth Advisory Panel always give thoughtful responses and help us understand content harm with fresh eyes.”

Tara, Classification Unit

Online misogyny

Background

In May 2024, the Classification Office published a [Summary Report](#) and [Online Resource](#) on our research into *Online Misogyny and Violent Extremism*. While this research did not involve speaking with or surveying young people about their experiences, we recognised the importance of engaging with the YAP about potential outputs. We wanted to understand what the Office could share through social media and web content that would be useful to young people, as well as their whānau and wider communities, in understanding and responding to misogynistic content.

Discussion

The YAP hui explored how the Office could communicate with young people about the online misogyny research. They were not surprised by the overall research findings, but some of the statistics were unexpected. They discussed what they are seeing across their online spaces, including the influence of figures such as Andrew Tate, US politics and media portrayals of relationships and violence. They also highlighted that media is part of the problem, but not the only influence.

The group supported using short, engaging and accessible formats such as reels, animation and social media content, with information broken into smaller pieces. Their strongest message was to avoid large or alarming messages about misogyny that young people may switch off from or find overwhelming. Instead, they favoured gentle, human reminders that give young people practical actions, such as trusting their gut, reporting harmful content, seeking support and knowing who the Office is and how we can help.

Outcomes

Since then, the Office has focused on non-alarmist, practical key messages, including where to report harmful content, how to make a complaint to us, where to find reliable information, and how to reach out for support. We have prioritised resources that help adults become trusted and safe people for young people to talk to when they encounter harmful content. We have also developed information pages and resources that explain the legal line around harmful and potentially objectionable content.

This work is intended to support young people to navigate harmful online content while giving the adults around them the information and tools they need to help. The YAP's feedback is consistent with what we have heard through our wider research with young people and from parents/whānau and educators, who are also asking for practical, accessible and reassuring information about how to respond to harmful online content.

AI-generated content

Background

The YAP was asked to share their views on AI-generated and CGI content, including how they experience this content online, the risks and challenges it presents, and what young people need to help them navigate it. Their input will contribute to the Office's thinking about AI-generated and CGI content supporting internal work and also how we communicate about AI content to the wider public.

Discussion

The YAP described AI-generated content as increasingly difficult to avoid or identify, with AI now embedded across many of the platforms and tools they use. They discussed seeing AI-generated images, videos, celebrity deepfakes, chatbots, memes and other content, and noted that while some uses are harmless or entertaining, other uses can be confusing, misleading or deeply harmful. They were particularly concerned about the ability to create convincing content involving real people, including content that could falsely depict someone doing something harmful or illegal. They also discussed the potential impacts on artists, workers and the environment, and the challenge of knowing what information can be trusted when AI can generate convincing but inaccurate sources.

The group saw a need for greater awareness and critical thinking about AI-generated content, rather than simply focusing on identifying whether something is AI. They supported the Office being transparent about AI and clearly acknowledging that it is changing the content young people encounter online. They also saw value in practical resources, including guidance for people who encounter AI-generated content involving themselves, information about how to critically assess content, and greater transparency about how the Office considers AI and CGI when making classification decisions. The discussion highlighted that the impact of AI or CGI can depend on the context, purpose, intent and how realistic or misleading the content is, rather than the technology itself.

Outcomes

The discussion reinforced the need for the Office to continue exploring how AI-generated and CGI content affects the way harmful content is created, experienced and understood. The YAP's feedback has also influenced how we communicate about AI-generated content, reinforcing the importance of helping New Zealanders understand their rights and responsibilities, while providing clear and timely information about emerging issues and technologies.

Since then, the Office has developed a range of website content to support this approach, including:

- [AI-Generated Content: When Is It Illegal in New Zealand?](#) – information page
- [Chief Censor: There is no AI loophole. What every New Zealander should know about creating harmful content](#) – blog

- [What is Grok?](#) – information resource
- [Children and Chatbots: Your Questions Answered](#) – parent resource

The key message about there being no AI loophole is also now incorporated across much of our communications about AI-generated content.

Coded language

Background

The Office increasingly encounters objectionable content that uses Gen Z and Gen Alpha language, including slang, abbreviations, emojis, and online trends. While much of this language is humorous and creative, some can carry hidden or harmful meanings, including misogyny, racism, or links to extremist ideologies. This session explored how such language shows up in content young people see online – across social platforms, in comments, gaming spaces, and more – and to better understand the impact of repetition, context, and evolving definitions.

Discussion

The YAP highlighted that context is critical when understanding coded language. Terms can be used ironically, humorously or sincerely, and language that appears harmless on its own can take on a different meaning when used repeatedly or alongside other content. They discussed how terms associated with manosphere and other online subcultures can move into mainstream use through memes, humour and algorithmic recommendations, potentially normalising harmful ideas without young people necessarily understanding their origins or implications. Platforms including TikTok, YouTube, Discord and Roblox were identified as important spaces where this language spreads.

The group also discussed how coded language can be used to bypass moderation, and how repeated exposure can contribute to the normalisation of harmful ideas. They noted that parents, educators and other adults often do not understand the slang and emojis young people encounter online, creating a gap in their ability to recognise when seemingly harmless language may have a more concerning meaning. The YAP supported approaches that build awareness and media literacy, including helping people recognise dog whistles, encouraging “conscious scrolling”, and providing accessible explanations of evolving language.

Outcomes

The discussion reinforced the importance of understanding coded language in context, rather than treating individual words or phrases as inherently harmful. The YAP identified an opportunity for the Office to provide accessible information that helps young people, parents and educators understand emerging terminology, recognise when language may carry harmful meanings, and consider the wider context in which it is being used.

The feedback has helped inform the Office's thinking about how we identify and communicate about emerging forms of harmful content, particularly where language is evolving quickly or being used to disguise or normalise harmful ideas. They reiterated the message for adults to listen to young people without judgement or condescension.

Since then, the Office has created added notes on coded language to our resources on Roblox and Discord, both of which were informed by YAP input, and written a blog on Coded Language aimed at parents:

- [What is Discord and how can I talk with my tamariki and rangatahi about the platform?](#) – resource
- [What is Roblox and how can I talk with my child about the game?](#) – resource



2024/25 Co-views

This year, members of the Youth Advisory Panel helped us to classify 12 films. Members attend viewings along with our classification advisors and provide their insights on the most impactful content.

Deadpool and Wolverine

R16 | [Graphic violence, sexual references and offensive language](#)

Three members attended and thought the bone and gore had more of an effect on them than blood during the violent scenes. The part of the film they found most unsettling was a villain putting their hand inside the heads of other characters. They did not take offence at the jokes or language due to the comical nature of the characters and how it was delivered, but acknowledged that this may land differently for other.

Blink Twice

R16 | [Brutal violence, cruelty, rape, drug use and offensive language](#)

Two members attended this film's classification screening. They thought that the drug use was glamourised, and that scenes involving rape and bloody violence were particularly hard-hitting. They said it was disturbing when the girls started to remember the sexual violence that was happening to them, and that it could be triggering for anyone who has experienced date rape drugs. They shared that the rape scenes will stay with them even though you don't see much. The YAP members found that the violence was enhanced by sound effects, and said that

even though the results of beatings/killings were shown, shots of the actual violence were brief which minimised the effect the scenes had on them.

Megalopolis

R13 | [Violence, offensive language, drug use and sex scenes](#)

One member attended the screening and said the moments that impacted them most included a character being shot in the head, as it was so unexpected, and other characters being shot with arrows. They said they didn't find the references to suicide overly impactful as they took place in an unrealistic dream sequence. They also said drug use in the film is somewhat normalised and could potentially be harmful for younger viewers.

Joker: Folie à Deux

R16 | [Violence, sex scenes, suicide and content that may disturb](#)

One member attended the classification screening for this film. They found the violence gory, especially two separate death scenes. However they felt the song and dance scenes trivialised the violence. The guards' abuse and Arthur's mental state also stood out. They were concerned younger viewers might idolise Joker or

miss the sadness behind the story. They also thought Lady Gaga could attract viewers who aren't ready for the dark tone. They thought one sex scene raised concerns about consent.

A Real Pain

R13 | Drug use and offensive language

One member attended the classification screening. They found the most impactful content to be the scenes at the concentration camp and the discussion of one character's possible suicide attempt, however they did not consider this content strong enough to warrant a content warning. They said that the discussion of the character's overdose gives context to his personality, and that they felt empathy for him. They found the drug use and offensive language to be of low impact.

Better Man

R13 | Drug use, offensive language and mental health themes

One YAP member attended and found certain scenes to evoke empathy through its mental health themes. They noted the fact that the main character is depicted as a monkey made some parts less realistic. While drug use was extensive, it was portrayed negatively, showing its self-destructive impact and likely deterring young viewers.

The Brutalist

R16 | Rape, sex scenes and drug use

Two members attended the classification screening. They thought that if 16-year-olds were to watch the film, they might be shocked at some

scenes, especially when the man is raped. They also thought that the act of sex itself occurring on-screen was more impactful than seeing the genitals and nudity. Though drugs appeared often, it was the use of drugs between the husband and wife that stood out the most for them. They were worried other teenage viewers might perceive the casual use of drugs as "cool" and more appealing than they are in real life. They also thought the old method of drug application (using a large metal heroin needle) and the sharing of heroin needles looked unsafe. Discriminatory comments were also impactful for them.

Companion

R16 | Violence, domestic violence, cruelty and sexual references

A member of the YAP attended the classification screening. They found the cruelty, emotional manipulation and gaslighting throughout the film disturbing. The final sequence between Josh and Iris as a clear depiction of intimate partner violence was particularly intense. They enjoyed the moral and ethical questions posed by the complex narrative arch and suggested that younger teens may struggle to grasp the complex cruelty themes in the film.

Sinners

R16 | Violence, offensive language, and content that may disturb

One member of the YAP attended the screening. This was someone who watches a lot of horror and felt they may be "desensitised". However, they considered the horror scenes to be bloody and gory, and the death of the snake to be particularly impactful. They observed that the "N-

word" was used quite a bit to put down Black characters. They also noted the film would likely appeal to young people given Michael B. Jordan's lead role.

Drop

R16 | Violence and domestic violence

One member of YAP attended the screening and commented that it was the kind of film they would have watched in high school at a sleepover. They considered the plot to be cruel, but the female lead clever, reducing the tension and sense of threat. The YAP member found the most impactful moment was when a gun was placed under someone's chin, even though no suicide resulted.

Hurry Up Tomorrow

R16 | Violence, drug use, offensive language and content that may disturb

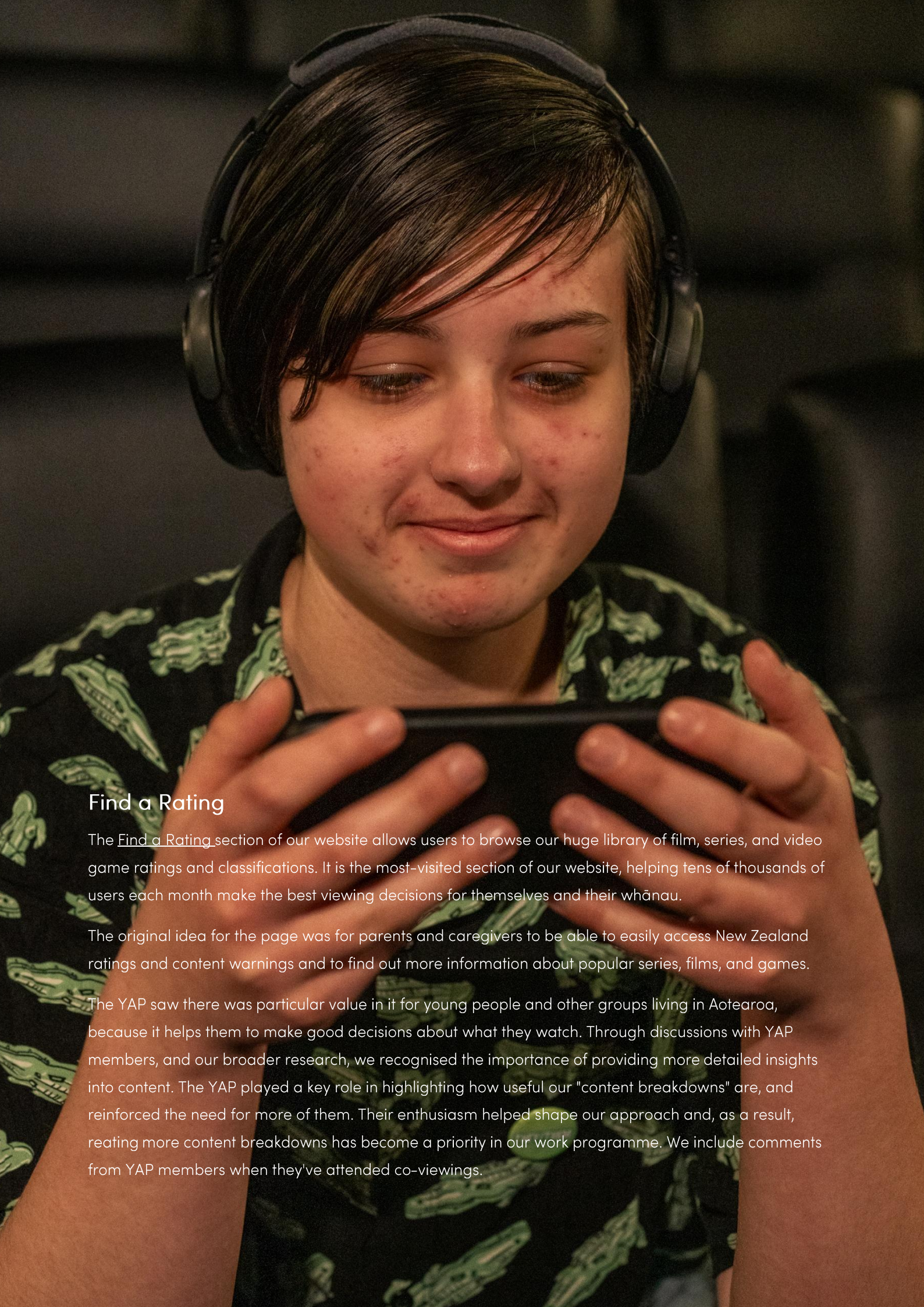
One of our YAP members viewed attend with members of the Classification Office. The most impactful scene for them was the violent and bloody killing. They thought the drug and alcohol

use seemed normal for someone living a rock and roll superstar life, and they felt the movie made this behaviour look exciting. They added that young fans of The Weeknd would probably want to see the movie, but seeing their idol struggling with his mental health could be upsetting for them.

Final Destination: Bloodlines

R16 | Graphic injury detail and offensive language

Three members of the YAP attended the screening of this film. They said the film had a comedic tone rather than scary. One said close-ups of hands being injured were more disturbing than the deaths. They said the franchise is well understood to be gory, and the audience will go in expecting to see lots of blood and gore, though some of the extended scenes where it was clear death was coming made them squeamish.



Find a Rating

The [Find a Rating](#) section of our website allows users to browse our huge library of film, series, and video game ratings and classifications. It is the most-visited section of our website, helping tens of thousands of users each month make the best viewing decisions for themselves and their whānau.

The original idea for the page was for parents and caregivers to be able to easily access New Zealand ratings and content warnings and to find out more information about popular series, films, and games.

The YAP saw there was particular value in it for young people and other groups living in Aotearoa, because it helps them to make good decisions about what they watch. Through discussions with YAP members, and our broader research, we recognised the importance of providing more detailed insights into content. The YAP played a key role in highlighting how useful our "content breakdowns" are, and reinforced the need for more of them. Their enthusiasm helped shape our approach and, as a result, creating more content breakdowns has become a priority in our work programme. We include comments from YAP members when they've attended co-viewings.

Opportunities for Members

30 Years of the Classification Office

In October 2024, the Office celebrated its 30-year anniversary. We had one former and one current YAP member take part in [a video](#) about the history of the Office, alongside the current Chief Censor Caroline Flora, and two former Chief Censors, David Shanks and Jane Wrightson.

The video is a celebration of the milestone, and highlights various changes over the years. It speaks to why our work remains crucial, touches on standout moments for each of our guests and what they're most proud of, and includes messages for the future of the Office, with insights for our staff and young people.



Global Youth Dialogues

From April to June 2025, a YAP member took part in the Global Online Safety Regulators Network's special project, Youth Dialogues, a forum hosted by eSafety Australia. This project involved 19 youth ambassadors, aged 18 to 24, from nine countries around the world. Participants shared their culture and heritage, insights from their experience as youth advocates, and explored the common challenges young people face globally in digital environments.

"I attended a number of meetings, hearing from industry leaders and collaborating with like-minded ambitious students and young adults from across the globe to develop five key initiatives to address the digital safety challenges facing the world today. Our initiatives were focused around digital

literacy, specifically for young people and parents, and improving technology governance, including improvements to algorithmic transparency and user control.

“I found this experience particularly rewarding as I was able to have a real positive impact guiding future legislation on digital safety. Our youth dialogue letter was circulated within policy circles in Brussels, London and Washington DC, meaning our initiatives helped shape policy in some of the most influential regulatory environments globally.”

Liam, Former YAP Member

Classification Office Steering Group

In June, we invited one YAP member to be on the Office’s Prevention and Education Steering Group, where they would contribute to the oversight of three projects set up to develop evidence-based resources for young people, whānau, and those who work with youth, with tools are aimed to strengthen media literacy, increase accessibility, and prevent online harm.

“I was nervous to join the Prevention, Education, and Information Steering Group because I felt unqualified and knew I would be in a room full of people who had done this kind of work for years. But when I got involved, I felt very supported and encouraged by the team. It showed me that youth voice isn’t a weakness, it is a strength – even in spaces where you wouldn’t normally see a young person.”

Grace, Former YAP Member

Social Media Campaigns & Blog Posts

Members of the YAP helped us with our general approach to social media messaging, as well as for specific campaigns. They also contributed to a number of blogs that were published on our website.

At the start of our meeting about AI, we discussed with the YAP what sort of messages they'd give to their younger selves with regards to harmful content online (on social media), taking particular notice of the phrases they used and their direct experiences to shape our future approaches. We asked them for their advice about "lurking", going down "rabbit holes", setting boundaries, and what they wished they knew when they were younger.

"It's important to remember
that not everything you'll see
is true."

YAP Member

The YAP feedback on our social media approach to our [Body Image research](#) warned us that while humour is good in theory, we shouldn't try too hard, because it can go wrong quickly. They suggested we work on resources helping young people shape their social media algorithms positively.

The feedback on how we should approach an Online Misogyny social media campaign was very valuable. They said "reels" on Instagram were the way to go, and suggested we have a young person talking to camera, rather than an adult. They suggested we point out the different ways misogyny can appear, from extreme to casual, helping young people to identify it.

Two YAP members featured in short videos on our social media platforms – as part of our 30-year celebration – talking about the first film that scared them.

Detailed impactful content guide – Blink Twice

Two members of our YAP attended *Blink Twice* alongside Te Mana Whakaatu staff during the classification of the film. We wrote [a blog](#) that featured their thoughts about the film's most impactful scenes.

For example, "When viewers find content that mirrors real-life trauma, it can be especially difficult to process. In *Blink Twice*, the use of a drug that mimics the effects of date rape could be deeply distressing for those who have had similar experiences or know someone who has."

Detailed impactful content guide – Joker: Folie à Deux

One of our YAP members attended *Joker: Folie à Deux* with Te Mana Whakaatu staff during the classification process. We wrote [a blog](#) that featured their thoughts about the film's most impactful scenes.

For example, "Our YAP member said the film's depiction of mental illness was complicated and they felt sympathy for him, which made them feel strange. They thought the film could be seen as glorifying killer culture for younger viewers,

and they might not understand the sadness of it. They also raised concerns about younger viewers idolising Arthur’s chaotic character and the Joker persona, and said Lady Gaga’s popularity could attract an audience that may not be prepared for the film’s darker tone.”

30 Years of the Classification Office: Reflecting on Our Past and Looking to the Future

Chief Censor Caroline Flora wrote [a blog](#) to mark the 30-year anniversary of the Classification Office. It mentioned the Youth Advisory Panel as one of the initiatives that continue to “place the needs and voices of New Zealanders at the heart of what we do”.

There is a link within the blog to the short documentary featuring former and current YAP members.

What is Discord and how can I talk with my tamariki and rangatahi about the platform?

The popular Discord platform hosts a range of online communities themed around gaming, education, tech, music, entertainment, and other interests. Members of the YAP talked to us to give an important youth voice to [this blog](#), and we included their insights from the meeting on coded language.

What is Twitch and how can I talk with my tamariki and rangatahi about the platform?

The Twitch platform hosts a range of gaming and social communities. Members of the YAP talked to us to give an important youth voice to [this blog](#).

Supporting young people in a changing online world

We published [a guest blog](#) by Dougal Sutherland, a clinical psychologist with Umbrella Wellbeing, following the release of our [Content that Crosses the Line](#) report into young people’s experiences with illegal content online. In the blog, he breaks down how to talk with, and support, young people in a changing online world, mentioning our insights from the YAP.

Pastoral Care

The purpose of the work we do as an Office is to safeguard tamariki and rangatahi from harm, and we extend this kaupapa to our YAP members.

We deal with challenging content, so we have a strong internal focus on keeping each other safe. We achieve this in a variety of ways:

Interview processes

During recruitment for the YAP, we are transparent with applicants about the kind of topics we talk about in meetings and after watching films. We make sure that new members know exactly what they are getting into when they join the YAP.

Support policies

We don't ask for personal experiences when it comes to discussion challenging topics. We ensure that members are aware of and have access to appropriate help and support measures. We have a disclosure policy in place, and we evaluate our approach with members annually.

Follow-ups

We have evaluations halfway through each year, which are individual catchups with members. We use these meetings to discuss privately how they are finding the YAP, especially any of the specific content we've talked about in the group, and to get their feedback and suggestions. We always want to make sure that we are giving back to them, since they offer so much to the Office and our wider mahi. Out of these sessions, we connect them with people who might assist with their future careers or have advice for tertiary education. We also help them with CVs, interviews, and references, and we provide writing opportunities on our blog that they can add to their future portfolios.

Our Other Work with Young People

The Office ensures we engage with a range of young people every chance we get, not just once a month with our YAP members. Here are some of the other invaluable work and opportunities rangatahi contributed to this year.

Censor for a Day (C4aD)

Each year we invite senior media studies students to a local cinema for Censor for a Day, to walk through the legislative criteria used to classify films, video games, books, and other publications.

The event is a valuable learning opportunity, giving students a unique insight into the world of film classification. The Classification Office also benefits from receiving feedback from young people about the content they're seeing in films and games, and their views on film censorship.

We hope that by participating in Censor for a Day, students gain information that is not only useful to their school studies, but also to their everyday moving-watching lives. In turn, these events are a valuable opportunity for the Office staff to gain insight into what rangatahi think about both the classification system and the content they're seeing in films and video games.

This year, over two weeks in July and August 2024, the Office joined around 500 media studies students from high schools in Upper and Lower Hutt, Palmerston North, New Plymouth and Napier at their local cinema. We watched the film *Dream Scenario* (2023), starring Nicolas Cage, which is rated R13 with a warning note for bloody violence, offensive language, sexual material, and content that may disturb. We talked with students after the movie to ask them why they think ratings are so important, and what themes they thought had the most impact.

“[Ratings] are important because of harm, and for people to safely show their kids movies.”

Censor for a Day participant, Age 17

Summer Intern

The Office hosted a paid internship from July to December 2024, providing a student with an opportunity to contribute to the Information Unit's public-facing content. The role focused primarily on developing "content breakdowns" for trending and classic films and series, alongside blogs and social media content. This was supported by regular editorial feedback and mentoring from the Information Unit. The intern contributed ideas about newer platforms such as Discord and Twitch, while developing their professional writing skills and learning to communicate potentially harmful content clearly and concisely.

The internship provided the Office with a valuable, in-house young person's perspective on the content and platforms that young people are engaging with. The experience demonstrated the value of creating opportunities for young people to contribute directly to the Office's work and bring their knowledge and perspectives into the organisation.

Reflecting on their experience, the intern said: "With an office whose mahi impacts rangatahi, it was a meaningful experience to see that the best interests of rangatahi were not only a key concern, but a frequent topic of discussion."

They also noted that being a young person themselves helped them write Quick Takes with younger audiences in mind:

"I still clearly remember what kind of elements in mature films impacted me as a child."

Office Intern

Research

Content that Crosses the Line: Conversations with young people about extremely harmful content online

We spoke with ākonga from Palmerston North Boys' High School, Napier Girls' High School, Mount Maunganui Intermediate, Mount Maunganui College, and Whitby Collegiate, as well as YAP alumni for this consultation report, published in May 2025, which showed that encountering extreme – and sometimes illegal or banned – material is part of life online for many rangatahi.

Across our engagement, young people consistently raised concerns about encountering harmful or illegal content online, and said real-world graphic violence was the most common type. These concerns reflect not just personal discomfort, but broader uncertainty about what's safe, what's legal, and how to respond. These consultations were designed to give us deeper insight into those experiences and ensure that young people's voices shape not just the resources we create, but the broader approaches we take in responding to these challenges.

Participants talked about the importance of getting support when dealing with negative experiences online, but they worried about adults' reactions. The young people we spoke to asked for open conversations and non-judgmental support. From this, we created [resources for adults](#) to help them support young people.

Acknowledgments

To our supporters, teachers, facilitators and most importantly our members, thank you for all your mahi. We also acknowledge all rangatahi in Aotearoa. We hear you and we see you.

Feeling inspired to work with rangatahi?

For organisations intending to set out on this journey we recommend working with others with expertise to help guide and support you. We have leant on and have been guided by experts in youth engagement.

Our advice is to understand the ethics and remain updated. And most of all, have fun. Every single young person brings something unique, and it is exciting to support and enhance their mana.

Appendix

Meeting timeline

16/07/2024 | Body Image Research

With the launch of our report *Digital Reflections: The Online Experience and Its Influence on Youth Body Image in Aotearoa*, we provided YAP members with an overview of the research, including quotes from the young people interviewed, and the key messages. We discussed how we could use the research to encourage open conversations about body image between rangatahi and their whānau.

03/08/2024 | Classification Handbook

The YAP was given an overview of the Classification Handbook and why it's being written down. We reviewed past advice received from previous YAP on "teen sex comedies" and "drug use". The feedback was used to inform the ongoing work of the Classification Handbook project.

17/10/2024 | Horror

The meeting focused on assisting in the development of the Classification Handbook in the area of horror. The discussion will be used to inform the ongoing work with the Classification Handbook project.

05/11/2024 | Misogyny

In May 2024, the Office published a Summary Report and online resources on our research into Online Misogyny and Violent Extremism. In this month's meeting, we spoke with YAP members to get their thoughts about related resources and a campaign aimed at young people.

25/02/2025 | Overview of the Office

As it was the first meeting of 2025, we gave a wrap-up of 2024 meetings, an overview of the Office's mahi for 2025, and opportunities for members in the year ahead.

30/03/2025 | AI-Generated Content

The monthly meeting for March focused on AI and CGI-generated content and its impacts.

20/05/2025 | Coded Language

We talked with the YAP about "coded language", including slang, abbreviations, emojis, and online trends that may have hidden meanings. We discussed the kinds of language that can be humorous and creative, and language that can carry harmful meanings, like misogyny, racism, or links to extremist ideas.

Classification Office

TE MANA WHAKAATU