

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR DECISION

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

HEADNOTE

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| Title of publication: | 127 Hours |
| Other known title(s): | Not stated |
| OFLC ref: | 1001815.000 |
| Medium: | Film |
| Classification: | Objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 16 years. |
| Descriptive note: | Content that may disturb. |
| Display conditions: | None |

127 Hours is classified as objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 16 years. This is due to the way in which the publication deals with horror and violence that may disturb.

The publication, *127 Hours*, is a 35mm film with a total running time of 93 min 54 sec. The film is a biographical account of American outdoor enthusiast Aron Ralston's 2003 accident in which his right forearm becomes trapped under a large boulder after he slips down a remote canyon in the Utah desert. After five days Ralston (played by James Franco) breaks and amputates his trapped forearm before walking and abseiling out of the canyon. Most of the film focuses on Ralston's psychological stages while he is trapped. Ralston initially experiences frustration and anger then physically and mentally deteriorates as his water supply runs out and he is forced to drink his urine. Ralston frequently recalls past memories or experiences fatigue-induced hallucinations. He also records moments of his ordeal on a hand-held video camera and still image camera, including a series of farewell messages to his family as he believes he will die. Ralston finally decides to sever his forearm by breaking the bones then cutting the flesh with a blunt multi-purpose knife. The film ends with Ralston walking out of the canyon and being rescued. A postscript depicts the real Aron Ralston, his wife and their newborn son. The film is based on Ralston's 2004 autobiography *Between A Rock And A Hard Place*.

The publication contains matters of sex, horror and violence under s3(1) of the FVPC Act. The film contains a matter of sex by way of a flashback sequence in which Ralston recalls an intimate moment with an ex-girlfriend. Ralston and the woman are lying in the back of a utility truck and are in a tender embrace. She strokes Ralston's chest and places her hand under a blanket. Horrific violence is discussed under s3(3)(a)(i). The publication does not raise any issues that require discussion under s3(2).

Under s3(3)(a)(i) the publication contains a harrowing, graphic and horrific amputation scene where Ralston forcibly snaps then severs his right forearm with a blunt multipurpose blade. The scene is about three minutes in duration and occurs near the conclusion of the film. During this

segment, the camera focuses on Ralston cutting and digging his fingers into his flesh. Blood is smeared over his wound as well as around his mouth from where he has held the blade in his teeth. Ralston winces in pain when he cuts through muscle tendons, with this depiction exacerbated with jarring music, which emphasises the unpleasantness of the procedure. Ralston eventually cuts through his forearm flesh and pulls free of the trapped hand. The severed limb is momentarily depicted before Ralston dresses his wound and begins his trek out of the canyon.

Under s3A the publication contains occasional use of highly offensive language including the term “fuck”. This language is generally used as a colloquial curse by Ralston after he finds himself in a frightening and horrific predicament. Although likely to be regarded as highly offensive by a younger audience, the publication’s restriction to older teenagers to content that may disturb is likely to prevent any injury to the public good. Older teenagers and adults are likely to view this language within the context of a well made and gritty biographical account of an extraordinary personal situation.

The dominant effect of the publication is dramatisation of a person’s real-life extraordinary experience in which he amputates his arm in order to survive a climbing accident. The publication is dominated by the character’s deteriorating psychological stages before he decides to carry out the extreme act. The publication is strongly coloured by a three minute scene graphically and realistically depicting the amputation.

The unrestricted availability of the publication would be injurious to the public good given the manner in which it deals with matters of horror and violence. The feature’s subject matter, of a climber who becomes trapped for five days and is forced to sever his arm to free himself, would be highly disturbing to children and younger teenagers. Older teenagers and adults, on the other hand will be able to put the graphic and jarring images of a man amputating his arm into the context of a dramatic account of a man’s extraordinary real-life personal experience. The publication is therefore restricted to audiences aged 16 years and over.

DATED at Wellington this 8th day of January 2011.

Deputy Chief Censor of Film and Literature

Note:

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