

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR DECISION

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

HEADNOTE

Title of publication:	Alan Wake
Other known title(s):	Not stated
OFLC ref:	1000395.000
Medium:	Console Game
Classification:	Objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 16 years.
Descriptive note:	Contains violence and horror.
Display conditions:	None

Alan Wake is classified as objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 16 years because of its treatment of horror and violence.

The publication is a console game formatted for play on the Xbox 360 console. A bonus DVD of behind-the-scenes material, cinematic cut scenes, and game trailers was concurrently examined, see OFLC No. 1000400.

The game is a third-person action thriller. The player's avatar is Alan Wake, a writer who retreats to the small Pacific Northwest town of Bright Falls with his wife, Alice, on what is meant to be a relaxing holiday. Following an argument Alice mysteriously disappears. It seems she has been kidnapped by someone wanting the manuscript of Alan's latest book, but there is much more going on – paranoia, hallucinations, and supernatural forces of Alan's own creation.

The game is made by Remedy, the company behind the successful *Max Payne* games. *Alan Wake* is similar in many respects. For example, the mainstay of the game lies in third-person "shooter" action – exploring a linear series of environments while combating numerous enemies, and collecting weapons and ammunition from conveniently-sited storage areas. The near-continuous voiceover by the title protagonist is another similar feature, as is the device of mixing realism with surreal, psychological twists.

The publication deals with matters of horror and violence in terms of s3(1) of the FVPC Act. The game begins with a dream sequence which serves as a kind of tutorial for the player. Alan accidentally runs down a hitchhiker in his car, then is pursued through the night by dark, shape-shifter figures wielding axes and sickles. Alan uses a flashlight to ward off the creatures, and shoots them with a revolver. The setting is dark and the figures' attacks sudden. Music and atmosphere combine to put the player on edge. The infliction of serious physical harm is discussed in relation to s3(3)(a)(i).

The publication does not deal with any s3(2) matters.

The game contains regular depictions of the infliction of serious physical harm. These depictions are mostly directed by the player, and are also present in cinematic cut scenes. In order to progress through the game Alan must kill a large number of possessed humans using a variety of guns. Since the possessed humans respond to light, flashlights, flare guns and other light sources are also used to kill or destroy. The possessed humans, or the 'Taken' as they are referred to in the game, reel backwards when shot, and explode in bright bursts of light when killed. No blood is produced during these kills, however blood is visible on human victims during cut scenes. On a number of occasions the cut scenes show people being killed by the Taken, who wield axes and other farm implements.

The dominant effect of the publication as a whole is of a repetitive third-person "shooter" game with psychological/supernatural elements. The game's obvious influences are David Lynch films and Stephen King horror.

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. Weighting is given to the game's horror atmosphere, and depictions of the infliction of serious physical harm which would be disturbing to children, or have the effect of trivialising violence through presenting this behaviour as entertaining and exciting. Constant exposure to the game's killings of creatures, which are human in appearance, has the potential in children and younger persons to lead to a desensitisation in general towards violent behaviour in real life. Likelihood of injury to the public good is prevented by restricting this publication to audiences that have attained the age of 16 years.

Note:

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