

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR DECISION

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

HEADNOTE

Title of publication:	Housebound
Other known title(s):	Not stated
OFLC ref:	1400474.000
Medium:	Online Film
Classification:	Objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 13 years.
Descriptive note:	Violence, horror scenes and offensive language.
Display conditions:	None

The publication is the New Zealand comedy horror film *Housebound*. The film opens with Kylie involved in a botched attempt to rob a bank ATM. Kylie is sentenced to home detention at her mother, Miriam and step father Graham's house, a fate for Kylie that could be regarded as worse than prison. Kylie is sullen and constantly bickers with Miriam. There soon emerges signs that the house is haunted. Kylie's probation officer Amos is a closet paranormal enthusiast, and starts investigating the phenomenon and things take a turn for the strange with her counsellor Dennis. Kylie discovers that the house used to contain a psychiatric facility called Sunshine Grove, and a teenage girl was murdered there decades earlier. Their menacing neighbour reveals his adoptive son Eugene disappeared years ago. Kylie is attacked in the basement, and frantically goes to the police station and tells them someone is living in the walls of the house. The police disbelieve her, and Dennis recommends she is transferred to a psychiatric facility. Kylie realises Dennis was the psychiatrist at Sunshine Grove. There is a fight between them, and in short order Eugene is found living in the walls of the house. Dennis attacks Miriam, but is killed in a creatively gruesome manner. The film ends seven months later with Kylie ending her home detention.

The publication deals with matters of horror, crime, cruelty and violence under s3(1) of the FVPC Act. The publication does not contain any material relevant to s3(2).

The publication contains numerous horrific elements. Signs that the house could be haunted begin with the computer blowing up when Kylie tries to log on, and a mysterious ring tone apparently coming from the basement. Kylie is woken in the night by a teddy bear crawling towards her. Kylie batters it and throws it in the fire. Amos later finds the burned teddy bear and hears a strange recorded message from a concealed tape recorder inside it.

In terms of s3(3)(a)(i) the publication includes the infliction of serious physical harm and significant cruelty. When Kylie googles the history of Sunshine Grove, several brief blood stained pictures of the murdered teenage girl flash up on screen.

Kylie mistakenly attacks Graham with garden shears believing him to be an intruder. The stabbing is briefly shown, as is Kylie's blood covered face as she pulls the garden shears out. The next scene has Graham recovering in hospital, and Kylie looking sheepish at what she has done.

Other cruelty includes Amos's being caught in a bear trap as he is trying to escape the neighbour's house. His legs are shown trapped in the jaws of the trap. Kylie moves a small fibreglass cabin over Amos to hide him from the neighbour as he approaches with a gun.

When the fight between Kylie and Dennis finally starts it has a comical, almost madcap, tone. Kylie kicks Dennis in the groin, and then attacks his face with a cheese grater on her arm. She shoves a large plastic laundry basket over his head. Dennis slashes blindly at her and Miriam. A man then falls from the shower dead with a corkscrew protruding from the back of his neck. Kylie stabs Dennis, with the stab wound briefly visible along with Kylie's bloodied face. The stabbing is not fatal, as Dennis later attempts to strangle Miriam with a phone cable. This leads to the climactic scene where Kylie stabs Dennis under the chin with a carving fork. This is attached to an electricity source which is turned on by Eugene from under the house. Dennis's head explodes and Kylie and Miriam are splattered with blood. There is a brief shot of Dennis's bloodied neck stump with blood squirting from it.

While the violence is not of the highest extent, there are some spikes of strong "splatter" violence. The humorous manner of depiction serves to substantially reduce the impact of both the violence and horrific elements of the film.

In terms of s3(3)(d) the publication deals with criminal acts. The film opens with the botched robbery of an ATM, leading to Kylie's home detention. Otherwise the film has a scene where Kylie discovers a bag of cannabis among other curios under the house, and a later scene where Dennis holds up the bag of drugs and tells her she shouldn't be smoking cannabis because as she has been diagnosed as bipolar. There are no scenes of drug use onscreen. The publication does not promote or encourage drug use.

In terms of s3A the publication has reasonably extensive use of highly offensive language in the form of "fuck" and its derivatives. Examples include Kylie telling Amos about Miriam, "She's a fucking dick." The language is often employed by Kylie as she bickers with her Miriam and other characters.

The dominant effect of the publication is of a fun, fast-paced, and humorous New Zealand horror film. The publication has cultural and artistic merit, as it is a well made genre film which has a readily identifiable New Zealand setting.

The New Zealand Bill of Rights Act states that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and opinions of any kind in any form. With the current publication the right to freedom of expression needs to be restricted due to its occasionally strong depictions of violence and horror. While the humorous manner of depiction substantially reduces the impact of the violence and horror, this material is still likely to greatly shock and disturb children particularly the occasional scary moments and the odd scenes of graphic gore. Highly offensive language is likely to cause serious harm to children by inuring them to such language and encouraging them to use it for themselves. The publication is classified as objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 13 years. This restriction on availability is the minimum necessary to prevent likely injury to the public good.

Note:

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