



OFFICE OF FILM
& LITERATURE
CLASSIFICATION

Tē Tari Whakarōpū Tukuata, Tubituhinga

Out Of The Blue Introduction

Out of the Blue, directed by Robert Sarkies, is a film about the massacre of 13 people by gun collector David Gray, in the small Otago township of Aramoana on 13 and 14 November 1990.

The film was first released at the Toronto Film Festival in August 2006. The New Zealand news media covered the premiere and the favourable response to the film. About this time, members of the Aramoana community contacted the Office of Film and Literature Classification and expressed their reservations about the film.

The film *Out Of The Blue* was submitted on 35 mm film reels to the Office of Film and Literature Classification on 11 September 2006. It was assigned to a classification officer who was responsible for examining the film, noting what happens in the film, researching any relevant matters, determining the classification and writing up the classification decision. The film was examined and then discussed by the staff present. They considered the most dramatic scenes of the film, the effect of the film and the likely impact on members of the public.

The families of the victims obviously are part of the public of New Zealand. But equally we have to balance that against the right of the film-maker to make the film- freedom of expression, and the fact that other people want to see something about what was a public event“

Bill Hastings

Chief Censor

New Zealand Herald 23/9/2006

The Chief Censor’s decision to consult locals on the classification of Out of the Blue is “...PC gone mad. I think it’s ridiculous to canvass them about the film, simply because they have already seen it,”.

Robert Sarkies

Director of Out Of The Blue

New Zealand Herald 23/9/2006

The depiction of ‘real life’ events in the film required special consideration by the Office. In the classification decision the Office noted that:

“many adult New Zealanders are likely to remember the actual event, which is likely to affect the impact the film has on them. Those who were closely involved in the tragedy at Aramoana are likely to find the film upsetting and potentially traumatic”.

After the film had been submitted to the Office, Robert Sarkies the director of the film, said that he was

“worried that his film will be given a higher censor’s rating because it is a New Zealand movie”.

There is no ‘special’ criterion for classifying New Zealand films. The Office is required to classify all films according to the criteria in the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993. Find out more about the Act on this web page (http://www.censorship.govt.nz/law_restricts.html).



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The Office held two consultations on *Out Of The Blue* with people involved in the tragedy at Aramoana. Nine people either related to the victims or who had themselves been injured attended the first meeting. The second consultation was attended by twenty-one members of the Aramoana community. Participants said that they appreciated the opportunity to express their opinions and responses to the films. The results of the consultation are presented in the Record of Assistance.

The Office's classification decision discusses possible restrictions raised in the consultations. It notes that while some people may have been more comfortable with the film restricted to theatrical release, another person said that they would be emotionally unable to view the film in a cinema. The classification decision notes that the film has merit in the way that it deals with a highly emotional and relatively recent event. It states that

"The film is likely to present violence to teenagers in a new light. Rather than the sanitised and glorified violence often depicted in popular mainstream productions, Out Of The Blue presents violence in a realistic manner."

"The film is likely to present violence to teenagers in a new light. Rather than the sanitised and glorified violence often depicted in popular mainstream productions, Out Of The Blue presents violence in a realistic manner. The random, unspectacular nature of violence is captured, as are the devastating repercussions it has for good, honest, real people"

Written decision for Out Of The Blue

"One of the main objections of the people (of Aramoana) was that ... they had been thrust into the public spotlight by this event. Every time an anniversary comes around or a film is made it happens all over again"

Bill Hastings

Chief Censor

New Zealand Herald 29/9/2006

There were several media articles, published at the time, on the Office's consultations with the Aramoana community. At the time, Robert Sarkies said that he thought that the consultations

"(Were) PC gone mad. I think it's ridiculous to canvass them about the film, simply because they have already seen it".

However, Chief Censor Bill Hastings said that when classifying the film the Office must consider whether the film deals with matters that may be injurious to the public good ...

"The families of the victims obviously are part of the public of New Zealand".

Out Of The Blue was classified as restricted to persons aged 15 years and over with the descriptive note "contains violence and content that may disturb". Robert Sarkies agreed with the R15 classification. He said that

"An R15 restriction allows the film in the future to be seen in senior high school classes. Fifteen year olds are old enough to comprehend the film."



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Questions

1. Who are the key stakeholders and what were their opinions on the classification of the film?
2. Which of the classification criteria (sex, horror, crime, cruelty, violence, offensive language, self-harm) in the Act, were discussed in the written decision for *Out Of The Blue*?
3. What were the main points raised in the community consultation with people from Aramoana? How would you feel about a film made about one of your relatives being killed?
4. *Out Of The Blue* depicts an event of historical significance, what merit do you think the film has?
5. Have you seen *Out Of The Blue* in a theatre or on DVD? Do you think the setting in which you viewed the film makes a difference to its impact? Do you think that the film would have a different impact on an adult viewer?
6. How do you think the presentation of violence in *Out Of The Blue* compares with the violence in other films you have seen (R13 – R16)?

Online resources

<http://www.tv3.co.nz/Programmes/NewsandCurrentAffairs/CampbellLive/StoryArchive/tabid/239/ArticleID/20869/Default.aspx>

<http://www.tv3.co.nz/Programmes/NewsandCurrentAffairs/CampbellLive/Video/tabid/67/ArticleID/13083/Default.aspx>

<http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/425828/627552>

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/6/story.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=10409496

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/1/story.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10404196

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramoana_massacre

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0839938/>

<http://www.crime.co.nz/c-files.asp?ID=7>

http://www.listener.co.nz/issue/3465/features/7189/the_spirit_of_aramoana.html;jsessionid=07756E89EA9ECD6C2156B5213C69FDFA