



21 October 2013

The President
Film and Literature Board of Review
Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua
PO Box 805,
Wellington 6011.

Into the River – by Ted Dawes

APPLICATION TO THE FILM AND LITERATURE BOARD OF REVIEW TO REVIEW THE CLASSIFICATION

Background

We have reviewed the book which deals with graphic sexual content and paedophilia. Explicit descriptions of drug taking glorify the abuse of drugs, and there is the misuse of adult power and sinister manipulation of 14 year olds. Many would find these 'themes' abhorrent, and definitely not the content or style that suits a children's book. We would not suggest this book to a 15 year old. In fact, not to *any* school age person. Many adults would find it highly offensive and upsetting.

The c-word is used extensively along with f-word.

For example, **Steph** is having an affair with his music teacher, **Willie**, along with having an affair with his father's work colleague (who is a father himself). i.e. two separate paedophiles sexually abusing a 14 year old.

On a holiday back to East Coast, **Devon** has a graphic sexual encounter with young single mum (**Tania**) – twice...the second time whilst her young baby is in the room and who starts to mimic her mother's sounds of arousal! (yet another scene normalising paedophilia.)

Back to school and **Steph** takes **Devon** to see their music teacher **Willie** during the weekend. Willie takes the boys to an isolated beach and they swim naked, then smoke a joint. The session finishes back at Willie's house where the boys strip, and photos are taken of the boys (more sexual abuse)...these photos are added to a large pile of photos of naked boys.

Willie is one of the teachers that leads a school camp to Waiheke Island and both **Steph** and **Devon** are opportunistic to sneak graphic sexual encounters. The teachers in 'control' of camp lead the students in drug taking of ecstasy (drug abuse) and ends with a night swim complete with naked teacher and student engaging in an incident of statutory rape (yet more sexual abuse). No teacher holds any student accountable and it is a vile misuse of a teacher's position and power.

Here are excerpts of the book which have been made available in the media

Tania had Devon's jeans off much faster than he managed to clear the hooks on her bra. The urgency now bordered on panic. Then she had his cock in her wet hand. He gasped. The next thing was he felt a fluttering convulsion and came immediately, draping the wall of the bathroom with a ribbon of sperm.

Their mouths parted again, and still gasping, they stared into each other's eyes. Nothing was said; there was nothing to say. When they kissed again, this time slowly, more carefully, he was able to fumble free the buttons of her blouse and she lifted herself clear to help his urgent caress. His cock, which had hardened at the first kiss, now felt her hand tighten around it. What had strained awkwardly in the folds of his jeans now straightened to her touch. His mouth found her nipple as he felt her hand slip inside his zip. There were a few moments of exquisite pleasure before he came with a shuddering gasp inside his underpants. The ecstatic release immediately mutated into disappointment. The moment, the opportunity, had come and gone so quickly. "I've come..."

Devon turned and began to nibble at Sina's neck and earlobe. He could feel himself growing hard again, which surprised him because the water was so cold. Sina pulled away for a moment and then came in to kiss him on the mouth. He wondered what had been said between the two girls. He moved into shallower water until Sina slid lower on his body. In the shallows the steady rise and fall of the water made them rub rhythmically together. Devon sensed her recognition as his cock slid up between their tightly clasped bodies. Even though he had come only hours earlier he knew he could not delay this much longer. He pulled her pants to one side and fumbled for her vagina. He expected resistance but there was none. In a moment he was inside her. She felt hot compared to the water in the bay. He was able to raise and lower her easily in the bobbing water and she gasped in his ear as he drove deeper. This time his overwhelming feeling was one of accomplishment. He wanted to stay there forever; the two of them locked, joined and somehow completed. A moment later he sensed her eagerness to struggle free so he grasped her hips and covered her mouth with his. Her wriggling, his thrusts, her fingernails on his shoulders, his beating heart, all quickly climaxed in an exquisite shuddering burst. 'God!' she said and struggled free.

The book offers nothing in the way of hope, inspiration or how to have a healthy personal relationship. All 'hook-ups' were based on animalistic drives...nothing else, and is void of any kinship.

We would refer you to s3A of the Films, Videos and Publications Act 1993

3A Publication may be age-restricted if it contains highly offensive language likely to cause serious harm

(1) A publication to which subsection (2) applies may be classified as a restricted publication under [section 23\(2\)\(c\)\(i\)](#).

(2) This subsection applies to a publication that contains highly offensive language to such an extent or degree that the availability of the publication would be likely, if not restricted to persons who have attained a specified age, to cause serious harm to persons under that age.

(3) In this section, **highly offensive language** means language that is highly offensive to the public in general.

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1993/0094/latest/whole.html#DLM313410>

and also section 3, in terms of the paedophilia themes contained in the book

3 Meaning of Objectionable

(2) A publication shall be deemed to be objectionable for the purposes of this Act if the publication promotes or supports, or tends to promote or support,—

(a) the exploitation of children, or young persons, or both, for sexual purposes;

(3) In determining, for the purposes of this Act, whether or not any publication (other than a publication to which subsection (2) applies) is objectionable or should in accordance with [section 23\(2\)](#) be given a classification other than objectionable, particular weight shall be given to the extent and degree to which, and the manner in which, the publication—

(a) describes, depicts, or otherwise deals with—

(i) acts of torture, the infliction of serious physical harm, or acts of significant cruelty:

(ii) sexual violence or sexual coercion, or violence or coercion in association with sexual conduct:

(iii) other sexual or physical conduct of a degrading or dehumanising or demeaning nature:

(iv) sexual conduct with or by children, or young persons, or both:

(v) physical conduct in which sexual satisfaction is derived from inflicting or suffering cruelty or pain:

(b) exploits the nudity of children, or young persons, or both:

CENSOR'S REPORT – GUILTY OF INACCURACY AND BIAS

The Office of Film and Literature Classification has reviewed “*Into the River*” by Ted Dawes after Family First NZ laid an official complaint. They’ve acknowledged that it’s suitable for mature audiences 16 years of age and over, and that it contains sex scenes, offensive language and drug use. But they have made no requirement to warn parents about the content.

They say it is up to marketers and booksellers to take the responsibility of warning parents and caregivers - something the Classification Office won’t do.

But what is most significant is that their report is factually incorrect and suggests that they haven’t actually read the book.

Bias

They base their judgement extensively on those with a vested interest in the book or its award e.g. the author, the chief judge of the Awards, and a blogger who just happened to have ‘worked on in its initial assessment and editing phase’.

They also argue that a low number of calls to the Classification Office suggests there’s little objection. They fail to mention the widespread [condemnation](#) by many in the media including the *NZ Herald* [editorial](#), and they also fail to acknowledge the massive protest to NZ Post calling on them to withdraw the Award given to the book, and that some bookstores refused to sell the book!

Factually Incorrect

The Censor’s report says

*“The word ‘f**k’ and its derivatives are used occasionally and the word ‘c**t’ is seen once. The language is not likely to cause harm. These are words and terms that have relatively common usage amongst teenage boys.”*

This is factually incorrect. In fact, the **c-word is used a staggering total of nine times** – (in a book supposedly targeted at teens!) ‘F**k’ is used 17 times, “sh*t” 16 times, and “c*ck” 10 times, amongst others. (*Refer Appendix 1*)

We note that in the [report](#) just released by the Broadcasting Standards Authority, **“What Not to Swear: The Acceptability of Words in Broadcasting 2013”**, these words were in the top eight words or phrases rated as *totally or fairly unacceptable*. The survey measured how acceptable the public finds the use of swearwords, blasphemies and other expletives in broadcasting.

Other statements of concern in the report:

“...The issue of having sex under the legal age is not discussed or raised in any way in the novel... The sexual material in the book assumes some maturity and life experience from the reader...”

“There is illegal drug use presented in the storyline... descriptions of use are mildly educative... the drug use is peppered throughout the novel... its presence may have a trivialising or desensitising effect on some readers.”

“...his relationship with the teacher is dubious, probably sexual, but this is not dwelt upon...”

*“The book deals with some stronger content. There are sexual relationships between teenagers, encounters with possible child sex exploitation, the use of illegal drugs and other criminal activities, violent assault, and a moderate level of highly offensive language.” (But here’s the best bit!).. *These are well contextualised...*”*

The other fascinating aspect is that the report complements the book because of the analysis of the racism.

“The strength of the publication is the clarity and the analysis of the intermittent but continuing racism that Te Apera is subject to from boys, teachers and other adults he encounters.”

So analysis of racism is important, but it appears that anything-goes-no-worries for teenage sex, illegal drug activity, child sexual exploitation, and violence.

REQUEST FOR RATING

We would request an R18 rating with shrink-wrap. For the benefit of parents, the rating sticker should be prominent on the cover.

We would also request that the book not be made available in school libraries or public libraries.

Thank you for your consideration



Bob McCoskrie
National Director

APPENDIX 1

INTO THE RIVER – Offensive words

Page 13 cock
page 14 cocks
page 16 bullshit
page 20 arses, arse
page 22 arse
page 24 bastard
page 27 bullshit
Page 97 arses, arse
page 101 Jesus, fucken idiot
Page 102 assholes
page 130 pissing
Page 131 bum CUNT
Page 134 fuck
page 135 bastards
page 136 bastard, bastard
page 137 dumb CUNT, fucken'
Page 139 bastard
page 145 pisses God off
Page 157 cock
page 158 cock
page 159 cock
page 160 shit
page 161 bullshit
Page 162 bullshit
Page 175 arse-bandits
Page 176 fucken fucken CUNT
page 177 shit
Page 181 fucken
page 196 shit
page 197 CUNT
Page 200 Cock, cocks
Page 201 cock
Page 215 bitchin'
Page 217 cock
Page 223 cock
Page 224 fuck, arse licker
Page 225 CUNT
Page 226 CUNT, CUNTS
Page 228 wanker, fucked up
Page 233 pissed off
Page 235 fuck
Page 236 shee-it, arse, arse
page 237 fuck
Page 238 fucking
page 239 shee it
page 240 shit, CUNTS
Page 243 arses
Page 244 shit
Page 248 shit
Page 250 arsehole, arse, fucked up
Page 252 shit-storm, shit
page 253 bullshit, fuck, black CUNT
Page 258 fuck, fuck
page 259 pissed
Page 276 fucken, fucken, bitch

Cunt = **9 times**
fuck = **17 times**
shit = **16 times**
cock = **10 times**