



Australian Government
Classification Board

Media release—Labiaplasty: Understanding why women have cosmetic surgery on their vulva

The article *Labiaplasty: Understanding why women have cosmetic surgery on their vulva* published on the ABC news website on Thursday 7 September 2017 suggests that women's genitals are airbrushed in publications to fit with the Australian Classification Guidelines. The Classification Board and the *Guidelines for the Classification of Publications* do not encourage airbrushing of women's genitals in publications.

The article incorrectly implies that the 'M15+' [sic] (is in fact MA 15+) and R 18+ categories apply to publications. Depending on the media submitted, the Classification Board applies the:

- *Guidelines for the Classification of Publications* (the Publications Guidelines)
- *Guidelines for the Classification of Films* (the Films Guidelines)
- *Guidelines for the Classification of Computer Games* (the Computer Games Guidelines)

The three sets of Guidelines (available at www.classification.gov.au/About/Pages/Legislation.aspx) are different and are not interchangeable. The *Publications Guidelines* use three categories: Unrestricted, Category 1 Restricted and Category 2 Restricted. The M, MA 15+ and R 18+ categories used in the *Films Guidelines* and the *Computer Games Guidelines* do not apply to publications.

The article quotes that the 'Australian Classification Guidelines state: *realistic depictions of sexualised nudity should not be high in impact. Realistic depictions may contain discreet genital detail but there should be no genital emphasis.*' This criteria comes from the 'Unrestricted' contents section of the *Publications Guidelines* and is not found in the *Films* or *Computer Games Guidelines*.

The article's interpretation of genital 'emphasis' appears to focus only on whether there is protrusion of skin folds. The Classification Board does not interpret 'emphasis' this way. The Classification Board considers a range of contextual factors to determine 'emphasis,' including a picture's centre of interest, subject placement, viewpoint and camera angle, lighting, framing, contrast and perspective. The Classification Board considers the overall composition of an image, including the way a photographer has arranged the scene or has caught the viewer's attention. For example, a low camera angle pointed up from ground level towards a standing naked woman's splayed legs that focusses on her vulva, may be considered as genital 'emphasis' in a publication.

The Classification Board has sought to actively discourage the practice of genital airbrushing among relevant Australian publishers. The Classification Board has no involvement or influence over the content of international publications imported into Australia that may include genital airbrushing.

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Classification Board