television
program
classification
associated standard
Television Program Classification

Status of Associated Standard
This Associated Standard is approved by the ABC Board and is binding. It is for consideration by relevant editorial decision-makers when providing advice on compliance and by complaints bodies when dealing with complaints. The Associated Standard is provided to assist interpretation of or otherwise supplement the standard in the Editorial Policies to which the Associated Standard relates.

This Associated Standard forms part of the Code of Practice notified to the Australian Communications and Media Authority under section 8(1)(e) of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983.

Key Editorial Standard
7.3 Ensure all domestic television programs – with the exception of news, current affairs and sporting events – are classified and scheduled for broadcast in accordance with the ABC’s Associated Standard on Television Program Classification.

Mandatory referral
Any proposed exception to the time zone for a program classification must be referred upwards to an appropriately senior ABC person designated for the purpose within the responsible Division.

Principles
The ABC applies the classifications listed below to the broadcast of all its domestic television programs with the exception of news, current affairs and sporting events. The ABC classifications are adapted from the Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games issued by the Classification Board made under the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995.

The guiding principle in the application of the following classifications is context. What is inappropriate and unacceptable in one context may be appropriate and acceptable in another. Factors to be taken into account include: the artistic or educational merit of the production, the purpose of a sequence, the tone, the camera work, the intensity and relevance of the material, the treatment, and the intended audience.
Standards

7.3.1 Television Classifications

G – GENERAL

(G programs may be shown at any time)

G programs, which include programs designed for pre-school and school-aged children, are suitable for children to watch on their own. Some G programs may be more appropriate for older children.

The G classification does not necessarily indicate that the program is one that children will enjoy. Some G programs contain themes or storylines that are not of interest to children.

Whether or not the program is intended for children, the treatment of themes and other classifiable elements will be careful and discreet.

Themes: The treatment of themes should be discreet, justified by context, and very mild in impact. The presentation of dangerous, imitable behaviour is not permitted except in those circumstances where it is justified by context. Any depiction of such behaviour must not encourage dangerous imitation.

Violence: Violence may be very discreetly implied, but should:

- have a light tone, or
- have a very low sense of threat or menace, and
- be infrequent, and
- not be gratuitous.

Sex: Sexual activity should:

- only be suggested in very discreet visual or verbal references, and
- be infrequent, and
- not be gratuitous.

Artistic or cultural depictions of nudity in a sexual context may be permitted if the treatment is discreet, justified by context, and very mild in impact.

Language: Coarse language should:

- be very mild and infrequent, and
- not be gratuitous.

Drug Use: The depiction of the use of legal drugs should be handled with care. Illegal drug use should be implied only very discreetly and be justified by context.
Nudity: Nudity outside of a sexual context should be:
• infrequent, and
• not detailed, and
• not gratuitous.

PG – PARENTAL GUIDANCE
(Parental Guidance recommended for people under 15 years)
PG programs may be shown:
• on weekdays between 8.30 am and 4.00 pm and between 7.00 pm and 6.00 am; and
• on weekends at any time except between 6 am and 10 am.

PG programs may contain themes and concepts which, when viewed by those under 15 years, may require the guidance of an adult. The PG classification signals to parents that material in this category contains depictions or references which could be confusing or upsetting to children without adult guidance. Material classified PG will not be harmful or disturbing to children.

Parents may choose to preview the material for their children. Some may choose to watch the material with their children. Others might find it sufficient to be accessible during or after the viewing to discuss the content.

Themes: The treatment of themes should be discreet and mild in impact. More disturbing themes are not generally dealt with at PG level. Supernatural or mild horror themes may be included.

Violence: Violence may be discreetly implied or stylised and should also be:
• mild in impact, and
• not shown in detail.

Sex: Sexual activity and nudity in a sexual context may be suggested, but should:
• be discreet, and
• be infrequent, and
• not be gratuitous.

Verbal references to sexual activity should be discreet.

Language: Coarse language should be mild and infrequent.

Drug Use: Discreet verbal references and mild, incidental visuals of drug use may be included, but these should not promote or encourage drug use.

Nudity: Nudity outside of a sexual context should not be detailed or gratuitous.
**M – MATURE**
*(Recommended for people aged 15 years and over)*

M programs may be shown:
- on weekdays that are school days, between noon and 3.00 pm; and
- on any day of the week between 8.30 pm and 5.00 am.

The M category is recommended for people aged over 15 years. Programs classified M contain material that is considered to be potentially harmful or disturbing to those under 15 years. Depictions and references to classifiable elements may contain detail. While most themes may be dealt with, the degree of explicitness and intensity of treatment will determine what can be accommodated in the M category – the less explicit or less intense material will be included in the M classification and the more explicit or more intense material, especially violent material, will be included in the MA15+ classification.

**Themes:** Most themes can be dealt with, but the treatment should be discreet and the impact should not be strong.

**Violence:** Generally, depictions of violence should:
- not contain a lot of detail, and
- not be prolonged.

In realistic treatments, depictions of violence that contain detail should:
- be infrequent, and
- not have a strong impact, and
- not be gratuitous.

In stylised treatments, depictions of violence may contain more detail and be more frequent if this does not increase the impact.

Verbal and visual references to sexual violence may only be included if they are:
- discreet and infrequent, and
- strongly justified by the narrative or documentary context.

**Sex:** Sexual activity may be discreetly implied.

Nudity in a sexual context should not contain a lot of detail, or be prolonged.

Verbal references to sexual activity may be more detailed than depictions if this does not increase the impact.

**Language:** Coarse language may be used.
Generally, coarse language that is stronger, detailed or very aggressive should:
- be infrequent, and
- not be gratuitous.

**Drug Use:** Drug use may be discreetly shown.

Drug use should not be promoted or encouraged.

**Nudity:** Nudity outside of a sexual context may be shown but depictions that contain any detail should not be gratuitous.

**MA15+ – MATURE AUDIENCE**
*(Not suitable for people under 15 years)*

MA15+ programs may be shown between 9.30 pm and 5.00 am on any day of the week.

MA15+ programs, because of the matter they contain or because of the way it is treated, are not suitable for people aged under 15 years.

Material classified MA15+ deals with issues or contains depictions which require a more mature perspective. This is because the impact of individual elements or a combination of elements is considered likely to be harmful or disturbing to viewers under 15 years of age. While most themes may be dealt with, the degree of explicitness and intensity of treatment will determine what can be accommodated in the MA15+ category – the more explicit or more intense material, especially violent material, will be included in the MA15+ classification and the less explicit or less intense material will be included in the M classification.

**Themes:** The treatment of themes with a high degree of intensity should not be gratuitous.

**Violence:** Generally, depictions of violence should not have a high impact.

In realistic treatments, detailed depictions of violence with a strong impact should:
- be infrequent, and
- not be prolonged, and
- not be gratuitous.

Depictions of violence in stylised treatments may be more detailed and more frequent if this does not increase the impact.

Depictions of sexual violence are permitted only if they are not frequent, prolonged, gratuitous or exploitative.

**Sex:** Sexual activity may be implied.
Depictions of nudity in a sexual context which contain detail should not be exploitative.

Verbal references may be more detailed than depictions, if this does not increase the impact.

**Language:** Coarse language may be used.

Coarse language that is very strong, aggressive or detailed should not be gratuitous.

**Drug Use:** Drug use may be shown, but should not be promoted or encouraged.

More detailed depictions should not have a high degree of impact.

**Nudity:** Nudity should be justified by context.

### 7.3.2 Implementation Guidelines

The time zones for each program classification are guides to the most likely placement of programs within that classification. They are not hard and fast rules and there will be occasions on which programs or segments of programs appear in other time zones. For example, a PG program or segment of a program designed for teenage viewers could appear between 4.00 pm and 7.00 pm on a week day if that is the time most suitable for the target audience.

There must be sound reasons for any departure from the time zone for a program classification.

Programs which are serious presentations of moral, social or cultural issues, may appear outside their normal classification time zone, provided that a clear indication of the nature of the content is given at the beginning of the program.

Programs, including those having a particular classification under the Classification Board’s Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games, may be modified so that they are suitable for broadcast or suitable for broadcast at particular times.

Broken Hill in New South Wales shares a time zone with South Australia and ordinarily receives the ABC’s SA TV services. Given the time zone difference, in the rare cases when Broken Hill receives ABC NSW TV services, some programs may be broadcast outside their classification time zone.
### 7.3.3 Television Classification Symbols
The classification symbol of the PG, M or MA15+ program (except for news, current affairs or sporting events) being shown will be displayed at the beginning of the program.

The classification symbol of the PG, M or MA15+ program (except for news, current affairs or sporting events) being promoted will be displayed during the promotion.

### 7.3.4 Consumer Advice
Audio and visual consumer advice on the reasons for an M or MA15+ classification will be given prior to the beginning of an M or MA15+ program.

### 7.3.5 Time Zone Chart

#### ABC TV CLASSIFICATION TIME ZONES

**School Days**

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