

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Program 1.1

Question No. 10

Senator McGauran asked the following question at the hearing on 18 October 2010:

- (a) Have there been any steps towards, or is a review coming up, regarding classification of music videos and their imagery sexualisation?
- (b) Are parents' concerns about the sexualised imagery in music videos addressed by the current guidelines which use the terms 'sexual references' and 'sexual activity'? Are these terms understood to include sexualised imagery? Are these music videos with this imagery being classified G or PG?
- (c) How many complaints or enquiries has the Classification Board received about music videos?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

- (a) As the Senator noted, this issue was raised by the Senate Committee on Environment, Communications and the Art's Inquiry into the sexualisation of children in the contemporary media environment. The Department of Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy was the lead agency on this matter and the Government response to the Committee's report was tabled in August 2009.
- (b) Under the national classification scheme, music videos that are submitted to the Classification Board are classified as films in accordance with the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* (the Act), the National Classification Code (the Code) and the Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games (the guidelines). The guidelines are agreed by Commonwealth, State and Territory Censorship Ministers.

Classification decisions are made by the Classification Board. The Act requires that, in appointing members to the Board, regard is to be had to the desirability of ensuring that the membership of the Board is broadly representative of the Australian community.

Music videos, like any other films submitted to the Board, are classified according to the impact of any classifiable elements in the material. The guidelines list the classifiable elements as themes, violence, sex, language, drug use and nudity. Sexualised imagery, sexual references and sexual activity are addressed by the classifiable element 'sex'.

The guidelines use the following hierarchy of impact:

- very mild impact – G (General)
- mild impact – PG (Parental Guidance)
- moderate – M (Mature)
- strong – MA 15+ (Mature Accompanied)

- high – R 18+ (Restricted)
- very high – RC (Refused Classification).

Assessing the impact of material requires consideration of not only the treatment of individual classifiable elements but also their cumulative effect. It also requires consideration of the purpose and tone of a sequence. As such, music videos may be classified at any level depending on their content and its impact.

(c) Since 1 January 2000, the Classification Board has received 14 complaints about music videos. Of these, eight complained of the sexual content or explicit lyrics and six complained of violence or other issues.

In the same period, 13 members of the community requested information about classification issues relating to music videos.