

SENATE Inquiry

Environment, Communications and the Arts Committee

Senator Kemp asked the Director of the Classification Board, upon notice, on 30 April 2008:

Could we have a copy of the decision that you made in relation to the complaint about *Dolly* and *Girlfriend*?

The Director of the Classification Board has provided the following answer to the honourable Senator's question:

The Board considered the August 2007 edition of *Dolly* magazine, in response to a complaint from a member of the public to their local constituent. The Board considered the magazine to determine whether it was a "submittable publication". The Board concluded it was not a "submittable publication" and therefore it was not required to be classified.

Under the classification scheme, only certain publications - known as 'submittable publications' as defined in the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* - are required to be classified.

Section 5 of the Act defines 'submittable publication' as "...an unclassified publication that, having regard to the Code and the classification guidelines to the extent that they relate to publications, contains depictions or descriptions that are likely to cause the publication to be classified RC, or are likely to cause offence to a reasonable adult to the extent that the publication should not be sold or displayed as an unrestricted publication or is unsuitable for a minor to see or read."

Magazines, such as *Dolly*, if they were to be submitted for classification, are likely to fall within the Unrestricted classification (which means that there are generally no restrictions on sale and display). The Unrestricted classification encompasses a wide range of material and includes material that is not recommended for some readers.

The Board viewed the contents of the August 2007 edition of *Dolly* magazine and in its view, none of the content of this magazine, meets the criteria articulated in the definition of 'submittable publication'.

With specific reference to the 'sealed section' of the magazine, the Board noted that it contained references to sexual matters which are not detailed and are justified by context. This section includes information about safe sexual practices, advice on medical matters that teenagers may feel embarrassed to consult their parents or other adults about, and encourages readers to seek help by contacting counselling/information services if they believe they have a problem with drugs. The Board concluded that none of the content in this section appears gratuitous or unsuitable for minors (although it is noted that some children and parents may be embarrassed by the frankness of the information presented).

It is ultimately the responsibility of parents or guardians to make decisions about appropriate reading material for their children and to provide adequate supervision.'