

LITMUS TESTING OF BSA DECISIONS NUDITY ON SCREEN

July 2019

Through its annual litmus testing research, the BSA explored the public’s views regarding nudity on screen and whether the public agreed with the recent BSA decisions on complaints relating to nudity. Research was conducted through 5 focus groups across the country and a national online survey of 500 participants.

The BSA wanted to find out whether New Zealanders are becoming more or less accepting of the naked body on screen. It also wanted to find out whether community views are context specific and whether the use of warnings and classifications are sufficient tools to help audiences protect themselves and their children from potential harm arising from nudity on screen.

DECISIONS TESTED AND THE RESULTS

The majority of research participants agreed with the BSA’s decisions for all four programmes:

Decision Tested	% rated the decision as acceptable/good/very good
<p><u>Naked Attraction</u> (2017-101) – 9:30-9:45pm (AO) British dating show with naked contestants On screen warning: <i>“This programme is rated adults only. It contains nudity.”</i> Complaints upheld on Good Taste and Decency only</p>	91%
<p><u>Shortland Street</u> (2017-013) – 7:00pm (PGR) Same sex couple storyline (naked male chests, kissing) No on screen warning Complaint not upheld</p>	81%
<p><u>Embarrassing Bodies</u> (2012-002) – 8:30pm (AO) Reality television covering health problems with the vulva On screen warning: <i>“This programme contains medical and surgical scenes that may disturb, and nudity that may offend some people.”</i> Complaint not upheld</p>	93%
<p><u>East West East</u> (2017-045) – 8:30pm (AO) Albanian comedy film (including sexual content and sex scenes) On screen warning: <i>“This programme is recommended for adults only viewing. Certain scenes and language may offend.”</i> Complaint not upheld</p>	75%

PUBLIC OPINION INSIGHTS

Litmus testing participant responses highlighted the following themes:

Nudity on screen

- There is a higher tolerance for plain nudity, compared with sex scenes.
- Context is important (ie classification, type of show, audience expectation, type of nudity).
- Nudity is more acceptable when depicted positively (eg educational context).
- Respondents expressed concerns that inappropriate nudity on screen may cause:
 - younger children to mimic negative actions
 - older children to gain unrealistic expectations and adopt negative societal norms
 - desensitization.

Parental responsibility, warnings & content management tools

- Most agree it is the responsibility of parents/caregivers to monitor what children are exposed to.
- There is a risk that the manner and tone of audience advisories cause viewers to 'switch off', leaving audiences improperly informed.
- Many felt the Adults Only timeband should start later than 8:30pm.
- Nearly 75% of the 500 survey respondents do not manage viewing using available tools (such as electronic programming guide, classifications, warnings, parental locks, timebands).

BSA ACTIONS

As a result of this research, the BSA intends to:

- work with broadcasters to increase the effectiveness of classifications and warnings
- increase its focus on educating parents/caregivers regarding ways to both manage their children's viewing and have appropriate conversations
- gain an informed understanding of the actual harm from nudity through further research
- increase its focus on shared responsibilities between broadcasters, parents, caregivers and agencies to manage harms from content.