

# Henson photo not porn, says censor

David Marr

IT'S official. The picture of the naked girl that sparked the Bill Henson fuss is not porn.

The sight of her on an invitation to the photographer's Sydney exhibition two weeks ago provoked shock and outrage, but the Classifications Board has now declared the picture "mild" and safe for many children.

Yesterday the *Herald* also learned that the Director of Public Prosecutions was on the verge of advising NSW police that any prosecution of Henson was unlikely to succeed. In Canberra, Federal Police also announced that no charges would be laid over photographs in the Australian National Gallery.

The Henson affair appears close to collapse.

Police seized 32 of his photographs from the Roslyn Oxley9 gallery in Paddington on May 23 following uproar on talkback radio. The Premier, Morris Iemma, declared the pictures "offensive and disgusting" and the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, called them "absolutely revolting".

Since then, Henson photographs have been removed from the walls of two regional NSW galleries and impounded at the National Gallery. Stacks of the invitation, along with copies of *Art World*, a new magazine containing Henson images, have also been seized by NSW police.

But the Classification Board, under its new chief, former ABC head Donald McDonald, is far less



Rated PG ... a detail from the Bill Henson photograph.

troubled by Henson's work. Earlier this week it cleared five images – four of them had been partly censored – and it has now given the young girl on the invitation a rating of PG.

The board's guidelines state: "Material classified PG may contain material which some children find confusing or upsetting, and may require the guidance of parents or guardians. It is not recommended for viewing or playing by persons under 15 without guidance from parents or guardians."

The picture came to the board for classification when it was found in a blog discussing pornography and the sexualisation of children. The classifiers found the "image of breast nudity ... creates a viewing impact that is mild and justified by context ... and is not sexualised to any degree".

While a minority of the board thought the impact of the picture was "moderate", none of the classifiers called for any restriction on its display.