

**EQUITY  
INTIMACY  
GUIDELINES  
FOR STAGE  
AND SCREEN**



# Contents

A Message from Equity .....	3
Objectives .....	4
Definitions .....	4
Consent .....	5
Pre-production .....	5
Auditioning .....	6
The Performer’s Contract .....	6
Preparation and Rehearsal .....	7
Performance .....	9
Extras, Stand-ins, Bit Players, Doubles .....	9
Marketing and Use of Stills .....	10
Post-Production .....	10
Ongoing Safety and Duty of Care .....	10
Appendix — Template Intimacy Report .....	11

## A message from Equity

**The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance's Equity Section has spent more than 18 months developing the intimacy guidelines you are now reading.**

Over the past couple of years, we have seen a great awakening in our industry about the health and safety of performers both on stage and screen, but also in their other engagements with the industry.

#MeToo was a watershed. It was the moment when the unspoken culture of sexual harassment, bullying, the 'casting couch' and all the other dirty secrets finally came into the open and women especially felt empowered to say 'enough is enough'.

MEAA collaborated with other industry bodies to develop a code of conduct governing sexual harassment, harassment and bullying for stage and screen. These intimacy guidelines are the next logical step.

The initial catalyst came from the Equity National Performers Committee and the appointment of a dedicated sub-committee. We watched and learnt as Equity New Zealand President Jennifer Ward-Lealand led the way in developing guidelines in her country, and then the Equity Foundation brought world-renowned Intimacy Co-ordinator Ita O'Brien to Australia and New Zealand to conduct training and workshops in early-2019.

We have worked with other industry organisations to draft what we now believe to be the most comprehensive guidelines for screen and stage in the world. We wish to commend those other bodies for their commitment to making performers' workplaces safer.



**Jason Klarwein**  
Federal President  
MEAA Equity



**Chloe Dallimore**  
Immediate Past Federal President  
MEAA Equity

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# Objectives

These Guidelines provide a framework for the stage and screen industries when creating, performing or recording performances of Intimate Scenes (as defined below). The intent is to create respectful processes for everyone whose practice intersects with intimate content to ensure that they are prepared, supported and able to do their best and most daring work.

The Guidelines aim to:

- encourage open communication around the performance of intimacy;
- ensure informed consent is at the heart of intimacy work;
- ensure that play, trust and goodwill remain central to the creative process;
- best serve the spirit and intent of the project and encourage good storytelling as the prime motivation for the representation of intimacy;
- encourage the participation of an **Intimacy Co-ordinator** or **Intimacy Director** where appropriate; and
- guide best practice, particularly when a production does not engage an **Intimacy Co-ordinator** or **Intimacy Director**.

They are created in consultation with and are endorsed by MEAA, Screen Producers Australia (SPA), Australian Directors' Guild (ADG), Casting Guild of Australia (CGA), MEAA National Stunt Committee, Fight Directors, Theatre Directors, Stunt Co-ordinators, Intimacy Co-ordinators and Intimacy Directors. The Australian Writers' Guild (AWG) has also been consulted throughout the process.

Recommendations are drawn from the Equity New Zealand *Intimacy Guidelines*, Ita O'Brien's *Intimacy On-Set Guidelines* (UK), *Guidance Notes for Screen Directors* (Directors UK), *Intimacy Co-ordinator Standards & Protocols* (SAG-AFTRA) and 'The Pillars' created by Intimacy Directors International (US). Also included are the contractual obligations when engaging Performers to appear nude, semi-nude or in sex simulated scenes under MEAA Equity Agreements, notably the *Actors' Feature Film Collective Agreement* (AFFCA), the *Actors' Television Programs Agreement* (ATPA) and the MEAA Theatre (*Performers' Collective*) Agreement.

# Definitions

For the purposes of this document, Intimate Scenes are defined as:

- a. intimate interaction involving bodily contact between Performers whether sexual or otherwise, whether sexually violent or not and whether involving nudity or not (eg. romantic caresses, handling an infant, bathing a frail aged character);
- b. intimate interaction of the Performer with themselves in a sexual or exposing manner (eg. masturbation, striptease, using breast pump); and
- c. the Performer/s appearing nude, semi-nude, scantily clad or in underwear, whether or not they interact physically with another.

However, intimacy means something different to each Performer and in each circumstance. Notions of intimacy are shaped by a Performer's cultural background, abilities or disabilities, gender identification, age and sexuality. This also influences how a Performer goes about giving or seeking consent.

Consequently, these Guidelines deal with best practice for creating Intimate Scenes, as defined broadly by the Performers themselves to cover any activity, interaction or exposure occurring within their close personal space.

# Consent

Permission to perform intimate action may be given by a director, a choreographer or a writer.

Consent can only be given by the Performer/s doing the action and the Performer/s receiving the action. Consent must be gained from the Performer/s in relation to each and every intimate action. It cannot be assumed and it may be withdrawn at any time. In order to genuinely consent, a Performer must be informed of the Intimate Scene and its specific requirements in advance.

At the point of engagement, consent should be given in writing for any performance of intimacy. To enable intimate content to be realised with the creative engagement and ongoing active consent of the Performer, best practice should follow in pre-production, rehearsal and performance.

## Pre-Production

As part of the production's risk assessment, just as for stunts or fight choreography, the **Producer** should identify the Intimate Scenes, and might seek the assistance of a professional, skilled **Intimacy Co-ordinator (screen)** or **Intimacy Director (theatre)** for this task. If the risk assessment is altered due to rewrites of Intimate Scenes, all relevant personnel should be kept informed in writing of any changes.

Once the Intimate Scenes have been identified, in consultation with the relevant Performers (once cast), the Producer should consider whether it is appropriate to engage an Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director for the production. Questions to consider:

- Does the scene depict nudity or semi-nudity?
- Is there sexual activity depicted on stage, on camera or in audio?
- Are there any other sensitive or exposing factors of the scene; those specific to the creative approach (eg. a graphic or violent nature)? Individual performer circumstances? Power dynamics? Cultural or other factors?

If the answer to any of the above questions is 'yes', engaging an Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director would be appropriate.

If the answer to a factor of sexual violence is 'yes', then engaging a Stunt Co-ordinator/Fight Director **and** an Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director is **expected**.

The Producer will ensure that relevant departments, **Stage Management/HODs** and **Essential Crew** are informed of the Intimate Scenes, and familiarised with these Guidelines. There should be adequate budget and scheduling provided to enable the Intimate Scenes to be created, performed and recorded in a manner consistent with best practice notably:

- ensure the **Casting Director** is aware of these Guidelines and conducts auditions accordingly;
- ensure the **Director** is aware of these Guidelines and works in accordance;
- ensure **Costume** personnel supply appropriate costume and/or modesty clothing/barriers with fittings prior;
- consult with Stage Management/HODs and the Director to identify Essential Crew for **closed rehearsal rooms/sets** and inform them of appropriate protocols;
- ensure the Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director, if engaged has access to the Performers, the Director and other relevant personnel.

# Auditioning

There are no circumstances where **nudity** or **semi-nudity** should ever be required, proposed or agreed to in an audition. Semi-nudity in this context means any less clothing than underwear or swimsuit. The wearing of revealing clothing in an audition is appropriate only if it is intrinsic to the role (eg. a burlesque dancer, swimwear commercial) and this will be noted in the audition brief.

Simulated sexual activity, including sexual violence, will not be performed in an audition. The exception might be where the entirety of the role entails simulating sexual activity (eg. erotic dancer) and the audition material is for a scene where the Performer only interacts intimately with themselves.

Otherwise, to depict an Intimate Scene, the Casting Director and the Producer should find an approach that delivers the intention of the scene using non-sexual substitute action (eg. *to represent a kiss, the convention is to lean in and turn heads away from each other*).

Prior to the first read, the Casting Director will ensure that all Performers and **Readers** are instructed in these actions. Intimate Scenes will be clearly discussed and blocked before a take.

Additionally:

- the Casting Director or Producer will provide the Performer and/or their **Agent** with the audition script at least **48** hours in advance of the audition with the required action of the Intimate Scenes detailed;
- a **Third Party Advocate** (such as Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director) may attend should the Performer require;
- the only people present in the audition room should be the Performer, Casting Director, Director, Producer, Reader and Third Party Advocate for the Performer (eg. Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director).

A Performer has an obligation, when asked, to disclose any tattoos or significant markings likely to be exposed during the performance or that may affect filming. A Performer may be required to provide still photographs of same for the purpose of make-up, wardrobe or filming.

## The Performer's Contract

The Producer should ensure that the Performer's deal memo and contract expressly state if any of the following is required of the Performer:

- Nudity or semi-nudity, and details of whether this includes:
  - full frontal nudity
  - full rear nudity including buttocks
  - upper frontal including breasts
  - side nudity, including profile of breasts and buttocks
- Simulated sexual activity.

Performers should not agree to a contract including any of the above without fully considering what will be required and whether they are willing to perform it.

Prior to the Performer signing a contract consenting to nudity, semi-nudity or simulated sexual activity, the Producer will provide a copy of the full script and also provide in writing to the Performer and their **Agent** the following information:

- the scene/s in which the semi/nudity will be required and the extent of the nudity involved;

- the type of contact, if any, required by the scene;
- the nature of any wardrobe required;
- information about the use of **Body Double/s**; and
- any other relevant information requested by the Performer to enable full and informed consent.

The use of Body Doubles should be discussed with the Performer and written consent obtained to every scene in which a Body Double will be used.

The Producer, Agent and Performer are jointly responsible for ensuring the Performer is fully informed before giving their consent.

## Preparation and Rehearsal

### Preparation

Producer, Director and Performer/s can now jointly consider whether the Intimate Scenes would benefit from the engagement of an Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director. Where such scenes also involve simulated violence or stunts, a Stunt Co-ordinator or Fight Director must be engaged.

Any affected Performer may initiate a discussion about whether an Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director is engaged or alternatively, what the Producer proposes in terms of the process and preparation for the Intimate Scenes.

The affected Performers should be included in the decision-making regarding the process and preparation for the Intimate Scenes

If agreed amongst all affected Performers, they may also reserve the right to work without an Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director.

In advance of rehearsal/performance, Performer/s who have consented to Intimate Scenes must be provided the opportunity to participate in discussions with the Director, Producer and Stage Management/HODs, as well as an Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director if engaged, about each of these scenes. The discussions will cover:

- the Director's vision for these scenes, including, in consultation with the Director of Photography, a shot by shot description;
- the extent of any nudity required and what wardrobe (eg. modesty barriers) will be used;
- the type of contact and emotion required by the scene;
- what the rehearsal process will be; and
- any other questions the Performer may have.

The Producer, Performer and/or others participating in the discussion may decide to record key elements of this discussion in writing in the form of an Intimacy Report (see Appendix — Template Intimacy Report). A copy of the Intimacy Report can be distributed to other relevant personnel, eg. Stage Management/HODs.

If a subsequent need arises for Intimate Scenes not expressly consented to in the Performer's deal memo or contract:

- the updated revisions shall be provided to the Performer with as much notice as possible;
- Director and Performer should discuss as soon as possible with a Third Party present (eg Producer or Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director);

- the Performer will be given time to consider the changes and consult with their Agent;
- the Performer may suggest alternatives to the changes and will not be obligated to agree to the proposed changes; and
- agreed changes will be recorded in writing and signed by the Performer.

## Rehearsal

When rehearsing Intimate Scenes, the Performer/s and Director, or the Performer/s, Director and/or Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director, will:

- discuss and agree to times when intimate content will be scheduled for rehearsal/shooting, allowing sufficient time for an unhurried process;
- ensure there are always three people present (ie. a Third Party additional to a Performer and a Director) to keep the work in the professional realm;
- not require Performer/s to be nude or semi-nude for rehearsals, except in the case of technical and dress rehearsals for stage or final camera rehearsal for screen;
- ensure a closed room/set will apply;
- outside observation by monitor or other off-set/stage means is prohibited except by essential personnel.

When rehearsing or performing Intimate Scenes, consideration might also be given to ensuring:

- Performer/s are afforded adequate personal space on set/backstage;
- provision of a masked area for quick changes (stage) with the logistics of the change agreed with the Performer;
- nudity is only from action to cut or stage entrance to exit, at other times Performer/s are covered;
- no nudity with genitals touching — modesty barriers should be supplied by the Production and used;
- boundaries should be established around areas of concern, including an agreed strategy to halt the action where necessary (eg. 'time out');
- Performers agree to areas of physical touch and agree on the blocking of the scene to ensure consent is given at each step;
- a Performer does not independently override agreed choreography — a new proposal should be discussed with the other Performer/s and agreed upon before incorporation.



# Performance

## Screen

When shooting Intimate Scenes, the set will be closed to all but essential personnel. When shooting semi-nudity outside a sex-simulated scene, the Performer may elect as to whether the set will be closed. The Producer might also consider whether the gender composition of crew on the closed set makes for an inclusive environment.

All cast and crew involved shall be briefed in advance of the content of the scene.

Performers may ask to have their comments or preferences about particular takes of Intimate Scenes noted by the Director and Script Supervisor for the editing process.

Performer/s (and an Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director, if engaged), if they are concerned about unintended exposure, may on that day view playback of that Intimate Scene and exposure not previously agreed to will be time coded, written down and removed. It is acknowledged that this provision is not intended to mean that footage can be viewed or removed on other grounds.

## Stage

Where a production involves Intimate Scenes, the Production or Stage Manager will schedule an opportunity for an Intimacy Call to be held before each or any performance if so requested by the Performers and/or the Director, Intimacy Director or Stage Manager. An Intimacy Call is an opportunity for Performers to:

- assess the maintenance of the intimate choreography;
- refresh it if necessary; or
- accommodate any proposed adaptations.

## Extras, Stand-ins, Bit Players, Doubles

Extras, Stand-ins, Bit Players and Doubles may be called to join and/or witness scenes involving nudity, simulated sexual activity or sexual violence. Where this is the case, the Artist under casting consideration and/or the Agent should be provided with a brief of the scripted content at least 48 hours where possible prior to booking.

If the Artist does not wish to accept the engagement, no adverse action will be taken against the Artist, nor shall they be excluded from further opportunity for engagement.

Where Artists are required to appear nude, semi-nude or simulate sexual activity or sexual violence as part of the scene, they will be considered as Performers for the purpose of these Guidelines.

## Marketing and Use of Stills

The Producer may use stills or footage of the Performer appearing in scenes with nudity, semi-nudity, simulated sexual activity or sexual violence provided that the Performer's written consent to such usage has been obtained.

No still photographs will be taken during the rehearsal, performance or shooting of a Performer's intimate scenes.

A special still photographic session may be conducted immediately prior to or after the rehearsal, performance or filming of such scenes, provided that the Performer's written consent is obtained and the Performer is clearly advised prior to and at the time of the stills session that such a session is to take place.

## Post-Production

The Producer shall ensure to the best of their ability that all recordings of scenes, except the final cut, involving nudity, semi-nudity, simulated sexual activity or sexual violence are destroyed. The Producer shall also use their best endeavours to ensure that recordings of such scenes held for alternative versions of the film or other legitimate purpose shall be destroyed when no longer required or within five years whichever is sooner.

## Ongoing Safety and Duty of Care

When creating performances which involve intimacy, nudity, sexual or violent content, Producers should have particular regard to their duty of care for all participants in the process and will provide general support, information and resources for employees on request.

## Appendix – Template Intimacy Report

To assist in recording agreed best practice for the production, particularly in circumstances where an Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director is not engaged.

### Intimacy Report

<b>Performers</b>	Write the names of all performers.
<b>Director</b>	As above
<b>Intimacy Co-ordinator</b>	Their name. Intimacy Co-ordinators/Directors are recommended for Intimate Scenes and expected for simulated sex scenes, together with Stunt/ Director/Fight Co-ordinators for all scenes of sexual violence.
<b>Stunt Co-ordinator/ Fight Director</b>	As Above
<b>Intimacy meetings held</b>	Details of meetings held to clarify: degree of intimacy/nudity, specifics of simulated sexual activity, how scene is being shot,/performed, rehearsal scheduled.
<b>Cast Consultations</b>	What conversations have been held with cast about consent and what are their expressed needs/expectations?
<b>Scene description</b>	Overview of what happens in the scene.
<b>Scene breakdown</b>	Write a detailed breakdown of the scene as consented to and rehearsed by the performers and director.
<b>Blocking</b>	A description of the general blocking (choreography) of the scene and/ or reference to playscript, shot list or story boards.
<b>Nudity required</b>	Outline in plain language the nudity that will be required of all performers throughout the scene.
<b>Modesty clothing</b>	Modesty clothing/barriers to be provided by production. List here what will be worn by the performers.
<b>Reviews with Performers</b>	What practices and protocols have been put in place and implemented to review the intimate work with performers throughout the production.

*Signed by the Performers, Producer, Director, Intimacy Co-ordinator/Director (if applicable), Stunt Director/Fight Co-ordinator (if applicable).*

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