

Submission No: 14

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Secretary:

Submission to the Inquiry into billboard and outdoor advertising.

Billboard advertising is a very public way of sending a message and its impact is made on all who see it regardless of age or education. There is no "choice" involved. Over the last 10 years this form of advertising has become overwhelming – on bus shelters, phone booths, multiple changing pictures of products and promotions. Most distressing is to see already crowded roads with trucks and cars, even motor bikes whose only purpose is to travel around with billboards to distract road users.

There have been some very suggestive ads for panty hose which depict sexualised images of women and girls. By the time there is sufficient complaint to gain the removal of the posters they have already done their damage and weeks of busloads of adults, teenage boys and girls have seen these images. Such public displays promote disrespectful attitudes to all women in general. Depicting women in sexual dress and pose moulds attitudes and promotes a view that "women are available" – that they are "hot".

Billboards and outdoor advertising should not be used advertise strip clubs, raunchy magazines, sex shops or for promoting sex aids such as AMI (Want longer lasting s*x) and Wicked Vans . In treating sex as a spectator sport our community, and especially young people, are the losers.

There is no real control of advertising . The fact that it relies on "complaints" virtually ensures that there is little oversight. If there are few complaints more inappropriate material is generated as some advertisers seek ever more distracting images. The public is now virtually powerless to alter the situation. The Advertising Board contains many of the same people who are producing Advertising. The industry has little interest in public taste or discretion. By the time a complaint is replied to the campaign will have run its course. Replies to me have expressed attitudes of "we live in a pluralist society" or "we cater to all tastes". This has been going on for a long time. Now the community must contend with increasingly "pornified" imagery of women at many levels.

I believe the Code should be altered to reflect available research that the objectification of women frequently employed by advertisers threatens the well being of women and girls and is a form of sexual harassment. When or if, the Code is altered it needs to be followed - oversight and penalties applied officially. Inappropriate material should not be ignored until enough people have written in and the damage has been done. I believe this attitude has destroyed media standards of across the board. It has also deterred people from commenting because ultimately it makes little difference.

Mrs Marion Smith AM

