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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 10 February 2011 11:07 PM
To: Committee, SPLA (REPS)
Subject: Submission to Inquiry Re Billboard Advertising

Submission No: 12
Date Received: 11-2-11
Secretary:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
9 February
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Committee Members

Re: Submission to Inquiry re Billboard Advertising.

I am delighted to hear (by accident) that you have been directed to inquire into billboard advertising in public spaces.

I write simply as a mother of 3 children under 10 years of age, who, as a Canberran, have occasion to drive up and down the Hume highway, past airports, motorways (etc), in the usual course of running a family. I am constantly dismayed by what is allowed to be presented on billboards for all in the car to see whenever we want to drive up to pop's house, or pick up dad from the airport or take a vacation past Gundagai.

My children are old enough to ask questions about what they see, but far too young to understand any answer I may be able to provide (and I must confess there are times when I simply cannot find the words.....!). Mostly however, the car just goes uncomfortably silent amidst feelings of anger and disgust on the parents part, and of confused curiosity on the kids' part.

I object particularly to:

- a) the overly-sexualised images in underwear/ clothing and even footwear ads; and
- b) adds promoting products to address sexual dysfunction of various kinds.

I am not a prude. I am not frightened of the world or of sexuality. However, I believe that there is a time and a place for these important things to be considered and discussed, and I believe that I should have some control over when/where these things are discussed. I do make considerable effort in the home and elsewhere to ensure my children do not watch videos, commercial TV adds, films, magazines (etc) that I consider they are too young to understand. However, every time I pass one of these massive, pervasive and suggestive billboards with the kids in tow, I feel that my efforts in this regard are thwarted. I don't know the mechanism by which these matters are currently regulated, but in my view, whoever is responsible for such things is doing an extremely poor job.

I honestly believe that some matters are private, and that the world would be a better place if such matters were dealt with as such. I understand this may place me out of step with cool young things, anti-

copyright lobbyists and free marketers. It may even be suggested that since only a few people had the time or ability to make submission to this Inquiry that I represent a minority view. However, I am quite sure if you did a straw poll in any school carpark across the country, and ask parents if they are pleased at the forced, early sexualisation of their children that these images (amongst others) clearly promote, they will sigh deeply, and shake their heads (with either vehemence or quiet resignation, depending on their personality).

I do not expect better from the advertisers. We live in a market economy governed by the rule of law, so what is not prohibited is allowed, and what is profitable must be pursued by business at any cost even if the 'pornification' of society is the result. I do expect better from the regulators who allowed this to creep into society, with inappropriate billboards being a part of the problem.

My solution would simply be to ban such offensive billboards altogether. Of course, this would engender many tedious arguments defining what is objectively offensive (and hence prohibited) from that which is not, (and hence is allowed). However, I'm sure these arguments have already been had for the purposes of Film, Video and TV classification systems, so there's at least a starting point there. Don't let the fact that it is difficult, or contested, stop Government asserting a modicum of leadership by making a start on tackling this serious issue.

My husband puts it this way: billboards are 24/7 static broadcast medium - meaning, everyone passing sees them regardless of whether its relevant or appropriate to them or not. Therefore, he says, similar classification regulations that apply to the highest common denominator for other broadcast media (e.g. daytime children's TV time) should at least apply. I can't see how you can argue with that.

I wish you well in your research and deliberations.

I would be pleased if you would acknowledge receipt of my 'submission' in due course.

Regards,

Gabrielle Sullivan

PS. I heard about this Inquiry through a small blurb in Canberra's Child magazine only yesterday. I am the kind of person to keep up to date with developments generally, so I suggest its possible that not many people have heard about it.