

Submission for the inquiry into the premature sexualisation of children

Dear Inquiry,

I am concerned specifically with one aspect covered by this inquiry, that is the sexual objectification of women and its effect on girls and young children. I believe we have regressed to a point where everything that the women's rights movement fought so hard for has been wasted. I am 35 years old and when I was growing up I was constantly being taught messages of equality - by society and other women. I was made to believe that I was equal to any man and could do anything I wanted. I think that the messages young girls - and boys for that matter are taught these days has changed a lot since then. I think that girls are told that they are inferior to boys and women to men. I think this has come about by male dominated media and the thought that sex sells, many women have also contributed to this, in particular magazine editors from trashy gossip mags that put female celebrities on the front page with headlines about how they have put on a few kilos or make a big deal about how bad they look without makeup. Is it any wonder that Anorexia is on the increase amongst young girls and self-esteem is such an issue.

I am constantly disappointed and astounded by the likes of how the media place certain people such as Jennifer Hawkins on a pedestal. What has she ever done? Won Miss Universe and that's it. Surely as a society we should be celebrating the likes of Fiona Stanley for her work with burns victims. Certain celebrities who do humanitarian work are talked about more for what clothes they are wearing than anything of substance. The media are incredibly shallow and are constantly attempting to dumb us down in terms of the mindless stories they think we should be interested in. Whilst celebrating people not for their achievements but for their aesthetic value. Unfortunately I think the media has succeeded in dumbing us down.

I am shocked that programs such as Miss World are again being shown on mainstream TV and talked about positively, they would have been too embarrassing to show not so long ago. The trash in the gossip magazines is an insult to all women. Do we see men paraded in front of the media if they put on a bit of weight? Never. It is really concerning the effect that all of the negative imaging of women in the media will have on the hearts and minds of not just young girls but boys too. Will we see a further rise in domestic violence? Eating disorders? Alcoholism and drug abuse? My opinion is that we will continue to see a rise in all of these until we prevent the constant saturation in the media of the sexual objectification of women. The message that women are the lesser sex needs to stop. It is having an adverse effect on the self-esteem of young girls.

I would like to see women stop buying trashy magazines but I think that they have become so much the norm that most people don't question the effect they are having on young girls and society in general. I personally don't believe in censorship but there's definitely a place for it in girls magazines that publish age inappropriate material. Let's see an expansion of what's put on the top shelf and kept out of reach of children - lets put the mainstream gossip magazines up there too. It could be argued that they are in fact more damaging to young girls psyches than anything else.

Faye Galbraith.