

Committee Secretary,
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Department of the Senate,
P.O. Box 6100
Parliament House,
Canberra, ACT 2600

Submission re: Inquiry into the Sexualisation of children in the contemporary media environment.

In reply to the Terms of Reference, on behalf of the members of CWL of Victoria & Wagga Wagga Inc I offer the following:

- (a) The Advertising Standards Bureau has the oversight of all advertising to make sure that it meets the standards laid down in the Australian Association of National Advertisers and its Code of Ethics. Both fail our children and rob them of their childhood. This failure is another form of child abuse. The current guidelines and ethics are a joke. People willingly admit that it is a waste of time making a complaint as no one listens and no one is prepared to take action.
- (b) The short term effect upon the failure of the ASB and the AANA to protect our children from unacceptable advertising etc is that very young children, especially girls, are now dressing like teenagers. So called 'young girls' magazines assist in the big push to fill the minds of the young with total junk. Sadly dolls are no longer dolls but rather tarted up images of prostitutes.

Boys have not escaped. Look at their hairdos. Where once boys just went into a barber shop and got a straight back and sides, to day they have to have dyed blond tips that are gelled up to look like a cocky comb. They will look back in horror in the not too distant future and wonder why their parents let them get away with such an outrageous hairdo.

Computer games have caused big problems for boys both from the point of view of health and violence. The can now get their thrills from hunting and killing people rather than sport.

The clothing industry has succumbed to producing totally inappropriate clothes for our children. As many mothers have stated...'there is nothing else to buy'.

And the sexualisation of our young children is on the increase.

The major long term effect will begin to unfold in the not too distant future. Health issues will be a huge problem. Lack of respect by men for women will increase even further and thus lead to more violence against women.

- (c) While not requesting total censorship, we do believe that the following strategies need to be looked at as a way to reduce the damage upon our children, Australia's future generation :
 - 1- Bring the ASB and the AANA under the control of the Communications Minister under an all-encompassing office of media regulation including a division with the primary responsibility of protecting children's interests in this modern day media environment.

- 2- Review and re write the code.
- 3- Impose penalties when code is breached
- 4- Consult with specialists on the effect of the sexualisation of children and in particular in the area of physical and psychological health.
- 5- Recognise that the current standards both in the media and the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice are too low and in reality do not reflect community standards.
- 6- School-based sexuality and reproductive health education programmes promotes 'safe sex' and thus supports the 'sexualisation of children". Children are being given the wrong message.
- 7- Children must be told the truth which is that the only truly 'safe sex' is 'no sex'.

Many adults find it totally embarrassing to have to sit and watch TV with the younger generation as one is never sure what advertisement will appear on the screen. As one 8 year old child stated "advertisements are gross -I hate them".

Children need to be given the opportunity to develop to their full potential. Today in Australia they are being denied this opportunity.

The Federal Government is hell bend on providing each secondary school child with a personal computer. This will lead to many more problems. Society is already experiencing the detrimental effects of pornography, chat rooms, My Space, YouTube and the use of mobile phones to photograph bashings and rape which are then posted on YouTube.

Children fail to realise the damage that they can cause to themselves when they get involved in all these things. Programmes that prevent children from accessing certain web sites can be overridden within minutes.

Dr. Karen Brooks, Senior Lecturer Communications & Cultural Studies, University of Sunshine Coast had this to say: "Adults must protect very young children from the notion that sex sells –products and the self. If they do, they will be given the time and space to create solid foundations and nurture kids imaginations and identities; ones that aren't contingent upon sex, looks or material possessions".

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