

SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS COMMITTEE

FROM CAROLINE HOUSE INC. CARR ST., HOBART. TASMANIA. 7000.

Caroline House was established in 1977 as a shelter for women suffering from drug and alcohol problems and in 1991 extended its target group to women with substance abuse problems and their children. We extended our premises and obtained funding under the SAAP Programme. In 2002 with a re-evaluation of the shelter programme, Caroline House switched to having women with mental health difficulties.

During the 23 years we operated as a shelter we observed that younger and younger people were presenting for assistance, quite often with little ones and that the self-esteem of this group was extremely low. They found it difficult to accept that they were entitled to be treated with respect but saw themselves as worthless.

We believe that they saw themselves just as commodities to be used by all and sundry - they reflected the image seen in magazines, newspapers, radio and television as sexual objects - their only value seemed to be if they could primp themselves up to be accepted as desirable - especially by men. How to attract a boyfriend by dressing, heavy make-up and loud talk.

The philosophy of Caroline House rests on the idea that we are all on an adventure where life has form, a plan, meaning, purpose and a destiny.

The younger residents saw themselves as damaged - unlovable.

Their exploited sexual image was projected as "normal" - the fantasy world of the magazines when translated into the reality of their lives was devastating. "I didn't want this life for myself - I'm finished at 15 - (and of course some did kill themselves). After a visit to Family Planning "They think I'm shit and my baby is shit too". After the "normalizing" advice to abort, the replacement pregnancy often occurred "I'll keep this one and love it - I'll make up for the one I lost".

The sources and beneficiaries of premature sexualisation of children in the media - usually identical. Product manufacturers, magazine and television owners, advertising agencies, brothel owner are all in it for the money. Paedophiles and sex addicts also benefit.

AT CAROLINE HOUSE WE BELIEVE THAT EVERY CHILD IS ENTITLED TO A CHILDHOOD - IT HAS BEEN A SAD OBSERVANCE THAT A CHILD DEPRIVED OF CHILDHOOD DOES NOT HAVE AN ADULTHOOD EITHER - THERE IS A

NATURAL PROGRESSION THROUGH LIFE - THE EARLY ENFORCED
SEXUALIZATION PLACES THE PSEUDO ADULTHOOD FIRST AND THE
DAMAGE IS RARELY IF EVERY CORRECTED.

Parents who wish to live vicariously through their children and teachers who believe that "the pill" solves a multitude of evils should review their attitudes.

The Australian government can honour children (not through out-sourcing their care to institutionalised settings with third party carers) but by 1. Amending and strengthening the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics and the

Advertising to Children Code to acknowledge the significant body of research demonstrating the harm done to children by early exposure to inappropriate sexual content.

2. Limit the time served on any regulatory boards so that jaded appetites are replaced with relatively fresh ones.
3. Involve elected representatives to have final responsibility for the outcomes of lax enforcement of both current and hopefully better regulations.
4. Improve the complaints procedures (the Committee members may like to read the letter in to-day's "Australian" by Gerald Henderson re the ABC and its standards of responding to complaints.

Because the time frame for researching and checking back records only allows us to make a brief and very limited response we do wish to emphasise the dishonesty of advertisers in presenting the "abnormal" as normal, the greed of magazine and television owners and the lack of professionalism by many journalists in pretending that they report actually happens - in other words they discredit their calling by telling lies.

ERIS SMYTH,
CAROLINE HOUSE SECRETARY