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22 April 2008

Senate Standing Committee on
Environment, Communications & Arts
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100 Canberra ACT 2600
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Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Senate Inquiry into Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media
Environment

As a marketer of 15 years experience I am firmly of the view that current codes of advertising and marketing practice and industry regulation are not operating to the best advantage of girls and young women.

I am the founder of Australia's first dedicated agency marketing to women. Our methodology, SheMarketing, recognises the significant differences between male and female genders, and recommends approaches that market intelligently to women. Our experience is that male consumers respond positively to this approach.

My business rejects traditional approaches that stereotype and objectify female consumers. Splash Consulting Group operates in Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland. Our annual turnover is \$5.5 million.

Whilst we have not undertaken extensive research into the full scope of this Inquiry, I submit the following observations for your consideration in this important matter.

The "Tweens" segment, valued at around \$10 billion, will continue to grow rapidly. While the market segment is new, it appears that very few age-appropriate approaches have been developed to market to it. Instead, it appears that advertising assumptions have been made based almost entirely on adult sensibilities.

Advertising, products, online content, music lyrics and images that represent girls as sexualised adults has been on the rise as part of Tween market growth.

The emergence of this trend has been a significant cultural shift in Australia yet there has been no sustained public or industry debate on the subsequent impacts of sexualization of children.

According to the American Psychological Association (2007 Task Force), research has been shown that links sexualization and objectification with three common health problems: eating disorders, low self-esteem and depression.

It reported that sexualisation and objectification have been found to undermine self confidence and ease with one's own body, and can lead to a range of negative emotional consequences



When girls take on objectification of their own bodies, the American Psychological Association tells us that they have been found to have diminished sexual health, including reduced sexual assertiveness and reduction in protective behaviour

A most alarming finding in my view is that self objectification has reduced young women's ability to concentrate and focus their attention, thus impairing their performance in mental activities.

Recommendation

Given the lack of research in Australia, and the rapid growth of the Tweens market, I believe that we need a Task Force to oversee a new set of marketing and advertising guidelines that would sit underneath the Advertising Standards of Australia

Why a Task Force?

The unprecedented growth of the Tweens market means that it will be almost impossible to forecast the policy and regulation required to protect children from being overly sexualised in marketing and advertising content.

Such is the speed of the global Tween market that we need to involve both industry and community leaders in order to evolve the right policy settings to protect children from the risks of sexualised marketing and product development.

As a symbol of industry responsibility, the advertising and marketing associations could take the lead in funding such a body.

Primary matters to be raised by the Task Force would include

- a) Research into negative impacts on development of girls and young women
- b) Education of children via schools to understand and analyse the media
- c) Advice to government on regulatory requirements and best practice.

Under the Child Rights Convention children are to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse and all forms of exploitation that is prejudicial to a child's welfare I believe that our industry needs to engage more actively in promoting this definition.

Yours sincerely


Amanda Stevens
Managing Director
Splash Consulting Group