



**Women's Action Alliance (Australia ) Inc**

**Submission to:** The Senate Environment, Communications and the Arts Committee

**Re:** Inquiry into the sexualisation of children in the contemporary media environment

**Date:** April 2008

.....  
Women's Action Alliance is a national women's group, established in 1975, which has active representation in each State and Territory of Australia.

Our aims are twofold

1. To raise the status of women in the Australian community
2. To strengthen Australian families as the basis of our society

To further these aims we encourage women to be well informed, to analyse issues, and to participate in areas where opinions are formed, and where decisions are made.

.....  
We congratulate the Senate Environment, Communications and the Arts Committee on conducting an inquiry on this important matter. We apologise for this submission being late and hope it can still be considered.

**Women's Action Alliance believes that to rob a child of its childhood is grievously predatory. It is a theft for which no restitution is possible.**

**Heavily sexualised advertising and marketing to which children are exposed is doing just that.**

Premature sexualisation of young girls is occurring via their exposure to girls' magazines, advertising material of various types, television programs, in particular music video programs, and teen soap operas.

Many parents have expressed grave concern about how to protect their children's freedom to be children in the light of the onslaught from these sources. They find the need for continual vigilance over what is being seen and read by their children demanding in the extreme. They speak with dismay about trying to help their children interpret sexualised messages from advertising and the media.

Children are exposed to heavily sexualised outdoor advertising as well as television advertising. The Kittens bus in Melbourne – see Julie Gale's submission for an image of this - is a prime example as is the Horny Goat Weed advertisement.

Primary school aged children are also being taught to dress in the mode of "teen queens," to dance in a provocative manner, to idolise highly sexualised young women and to have crushes on adult male 'stars.' They learn that the way to be successful and feel good about themselves is by being sexy rather than through achievements such as academic success and the acquisition of new skills.

We believe that current regulation mechanisms are insufficient. Why do we think this? Because the evidence is everywhere.

Governments need to shoulder some responsibility in assisting parents by exerting a greater level of control over the sources of sexualising pressure i.e. advertisers and marketers.

Existing codes of practice for advertising, television programming and children's magazines need to be amended to recognise that sexualising children, whether directly or indirectly, puts them at risk.

We are grateful to the Australia Institute for drawing public attention to the sexualisation of children when it released its discussion paper "Corporate Paedophilia."

We are also grateful to the work being done by Julie Gale through Kids Free to be Kids

We wish to support the submissions of these two organisations and in particular that of the Australia Institute that “*an all-encompassing office of media regulation could include a division with the primary responsibility of protecting children’s interests in the contemporary media environment.*”

Media producers are primarily, and often scurrilously, concerned about markets at the expense of children’s welfare. This is predation.

Responsible government action is needed to support parents in their caring role.

Submitted by  
Pauline Smit (Mrs)

*On behalf of and with the authority of the National Executive of*  
Women’s Action Alliance (Australia)Inc  
Suite 6, 493 Riversdale Road  
Camberwell Vic 3124  
Tel 03 9882 8809  
Email [WAA@womensactionalliance.com.au](mailto:WAA@womensactionalliance.com.au)