



30 April 2008

The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment,
Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
Department of the Senate
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**Submission: Inquiry into the Sexualisation of
Children in the Contemporary Media Environment**

Australian Toy Association (ATA)

ATA is an independent, not-for-profit industry body representing and servicing Australian industries specialising in products for children and family leisure as well as learning and entertainment to enhance their future health and prosperity. Members include manufacturers, distributors, importers, retailers, agents and licensors. ATA's membership of more than 260 companies represents the overwhelming majority of total industry sales in Australia which amounts to more than one and half billion dollars annually.

The Australian Toy Association Limited was incorporated in 1983 having previously been the Toy and Games Manufacturers of Australia. Currently ATA's members are involved in a wide variety of children's products ranging across toys, hobbies, nursery products, clothing, confectionary, games (board, electronic and video), CDs, books, collectibles, car safety products, furniture, sports, lifestyle and licensed products. This diversity of ATA membership and their product range reflects the changing needs of a quickly evolving society.

Senate Committee Inquiry

ATA deplores sexualisation of children and applauds the ECITA Committee for conducting this inquiry.

It would appear from the substantive submissions to this inquiry that toys constitute a very small proportion of community concern on this issue. This is despite the fact that the toy industry has a huge footprint in 'the contemporary media environment' spending approximately \$30 million annually on media advertising of which 90 per cent is on Free-to-Air and Subscription television.

When the size of the media exposure is compared to the level of concern, it is apparent that the Australian toy industry is overwhelmingly in alignment with community standards on the sexualisation issue. Nevertheless ATA is actively engaged in this and other processes to ensure that its members stay in tune with community expectations especially in relation to the topic under review.

Community standards are difficult to determine. For instance, as a submission to this inquiry demonstrates, what to the eye of one beholder is 'sexy', to another is merely 'pretty'. Therefore, ATA is looking forward to the Committee's report on this reference with considerable interest as a possible input into the Association's own code formulation process.

As detailed in the next section of this submission, ATA is in the process of considering the amended AANA Code for Advertising and Marketing Communication to Children, and the Committee's recommendations will be a valuable reference point.

AANA Code

The Committee is already aware that the AANA Code has recently been reviewed and amended to include a new section (2.4) on 'Sexualisation'. ATA participated actively in the code review process.

The revised code came into effect at the same time as submissions to this inquiry were due, and ATA has not had time to consider whether or not it will incorporate the AANA amendments into its own Code. In the past, ATA has incorporated the former AANA Code for Advertising to Children into its own Code of Practice.

In its submission to the AANA review, ATA stated that it hoped to be able to continue to incorporate the AANA children's code "to promote uniformity and consistency in marketing to this very specific segment of the population".

In framing its recommendations, ATA urges the Committee to give due regard to consistency. In this country the principal vehicles for marketing toys are television and catalogues; the former is subject to government regulation in relation to content and the latter is not.

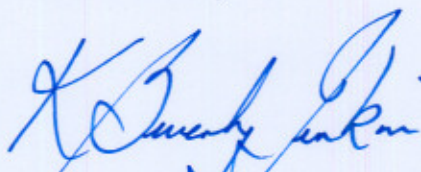
The uneven regulatory approach to different channels of communication underlines the importance of the new AANA code which, firstly, has expanded coverage from traditional media advertising to all marketing communication and, secondly, expands the content of the Code into new areas including sexualisation.

AANA is to be commended for this initiative as well as other measures to make the Advertising Standards Board more transparent and accountable.

Conclusion

In its submissions to both ACMA and AANA, ATA has stressed the need for consistency of approach across the proliferating channels of communication available to market products such as toys. ATA urges the Committee to take this in consideration in its Report in the interests of effective regulatory and self-regulatory solutions.

Yours faithfully



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Australian Toy Association