

To whom it may concern,

I am writing with regards to the enquiry regarding the **sexualisation of children via the media**. I am a Social Worker, Primary School Support worker and Counsellor working with children. I also present a program to high school students 'CDO' which encourages young people to rethink their choices re: sexuality and am training as a presenter for kids keep safe in primary schools. As such I am deeply concerned at what I see of the effect of early sexualisation of children via media. As you may know this bombardment takes many forms: television, internet, advertising (billboard and otherwise) radio even video games.

As a parent I am also acutely aware of the impossibility of guarding our children (despite our best efforts) due to the proliferation of such material. My nephew was 10 years old when exposed to pornographic pictures whilst using a public library internet, picture which he went on to describe to my then 7 year old daughter. Not only do children see they also share! The evidence is in and readily available of the profound detrimental effect of this bombardment upon children and later adolescents attitude to sexuality - we have 12 year old pregnancy clinics, out of control rates of young abortions, epidemic sti's and std's, children becoming sexually active well before the legal age with no knowledge of potential risks not to mention a greater vulnerability to sexual abuse via paedophilia, pornography viewing and re-enacting acts seen via the media.

Such early sexualisation can be termed 'corporate paedophilia' and is a form of abuse of our children permitted by our current media laws. If I as a parent were to expose my child to viewing sexual acts that would clearly be an abuse, but place that in a small box with cute American characters or a game and we call it freedom of media! The sad fact is we are going to pay a price, the price is the hearts, minds, health and development of our children (our nations greatest asset).

Some quotes from www.youngmedia.org.au

**Dr Louise Newman, Director
New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry**

“There is a concern that we are sending very conflicting messages to people. On the one hand, we’re telling people that children need to be protected - that paedophilia is regarded as one of the most heinous crimes - on the other hand we allow advertisers and marketers to present images and saturate our media with images that might be sexually arousing to some paedophiles in the community.”

**Prof Dorothy Scott, Director
Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of SA**

“Commercial forces turn children into consumers. This is bad enough when it compromises health by encouraging them to consume bad food, cigarettes and alcohol. But when commercial forces turn children into sexualised commodities, it corrodes the core of the developing child and makes them more vulnerable to exploitation.” (Email from Prof Scott to YMA, December 2006)

**Dr Joe Tucci, Chief Executive Officer
Australian Childhood Foundation**

“Childhood is shrinking. We are exposing children to adult concepts that they can’t manage, that are developmentally inappropriate, and I think we are going to pay the cost for this in a range of emotional and psychological costs down the track.

I hope that you will consider my plea on behalf of my daughter, my nieces and nephews, the children I work with and indeed the children of our nation. Someone has to stand up on their behalf and allow them the protection to develop healthily to become whole and productive adults who are able to address the issue of sexuality when maturity rather than media dictates.

Sincerely,

Naomi Gloria Harley