

## Senate Committee

One only has to listen to any public discussion on sexualisation of children via the media to understand that, overwhelmingly, Australian adults, and in particularly parents, believe that children are exposed to far too much sexualised advertising and marketing, and government regulations have failed to address the growing problem.

At present there is a proliferation of 'clever' advertising and marketing ploys, through radio, television, children's magazine, and so forth, that deliberately sets out to target children with sexualised images and themes. Whilst the motive for this is financial gain, there is a growing amount of data coming out that this type advertising and marketing is proving to have dire consequences on the psychological, emotional and physical development of children and adolescents.

However, findings from those best placed to understand the problems associated with the sexualisation of children through media - such as Dr Emma Rush, Researcher at the Australia Institute and lead author of the report *Corporate Paedophilia*; Dr Louise Newman Director New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry; Prof Dorothy Scott Director Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of SA; and Dr Joe Tucci, Chief Executive Officer Australian Childhood Foundation; to name but a few, have largely done little to sway our government media regulators to do anything about the situation.

For example: In Early Childhood Australia's [\*Every Child magazine\*](#), Dr Emma Rush writes on 'The sexualisation of young children: A powerful marketing ploy'. In this article Dr Rush states candidly that

'Children pick up the message from advertising and popular culture that "sexy" equals "cool". Games like modelling, makeovers and imitation of pop stars can lead to the displacement of interest in, and engagement with, a full range of age-appropriate activities—physical, social, creative and so on.

'The emphasis on "sexy" looks and behaviour can also engender a skewed view of how to initiate and sustain healthy, reciprocal and caring relationships. Marketing may send the message that it's ok for a young child to be seen and behave in a manner well beyond their chronological and developmental age. Messages like these can sometimes place children in dangerous situations.'

The reality is, we now have department stores advertising and selling sexualised fashion and underwear for children - even to the extent of 'G' strings for 10 year old girls; supermarkets selling soft porn magazines on low level shelving; and news agency and service stations selling overtly porn magazines in easy view of children and teenagers. We also have an epidemic of sexually suggestive billboards with women in provocative poses and in scant attire, as well as explicit billboards with mega bold writing, advertising 'WANT LONGER SEX' or 'FUKC'. There is also the overtly sexually evocative DVD music clips, with equally as lurid lyrics; and television stations airing adult programs - showing sex scenes and with sexual references, during children programs; not to mention the growing market of teenage girl magazines laden with sexualised images of teen idols, stories and other "advice" for young readers.

It is obvious that our children are being seriously affected by a good portion of the advertising and marketing industry, as well as ineffective government media regulations. And this is why our children need our protection – urgently.

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