

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views on the sexualisation of children in our society. I am a parent of three small children, my eldest is five and a half. As a parent, I have found myself genuinely shocked at the way our children are marketed to, in particular the increasing general acceptance of exposure to sexual concepts.

The issues I would like this inquiry to take into consideration are: the types and methods of advertising and the times at which they run; the marketing of inappropriately aged products; the systematic breakdown of parents ability to protect children, by corporations chasing the dollar and finally the general reluctance of society to do anything to control the mass bombardment upon our children.

What happened to the notion of allowing children to explore life? This includes exploring sexuality and what it means to them, on THEIR terms. What happened to letting kids be kids?

I am of the belief that the best way to deal with small children's questions about sex is to answer their questions honestly, without elaborating explicitly unless they ask. This allows them to process the information and come back when they are ready to know more.

Even if you do not take this approach, surely most of society would agree that what is occurring now is not acceptable. We have thrown our hands up when companies introduced tvs to advertise in every aisle of supermarkets, in food courts, even on hand dryer in the toilets. I know that these are pretty difficult to regulate in any way, but our kids are targeted at every turn, using every method. Mass bombardment of advertising means we need to very seriously regulate the type and timing of advertisements.

Advertising with young children that are dressed and posed to look adult are subtle attacks on our children and their innocent and playful approach to life. I firmly believe that small children do not need to be marketed to in this way, it gives children a false sense of what they need to be and dulls all of society's senses to what being a child is about. At it's worst it blurs the line for paedophilia, companies are literally selling sex to kids and selling society on kids and sex.

As an example of inappropriate time frames that some advertisements run, there are numerous "premature ejaculation technology" companies, which seem to regularly run on commercial channels at school run times. My children don't know what ejaculation means because they haven't asked yet, why does the idea need to be put into their minds by media? They also have not thought about "going all night" as stated at the start of some of these ads.

Also, does society accept sexually provocative items sold and marketed to our children? Bralettes in size 6 are for what purpose? Obviously as the consumer I have the power not to purchase such an item. In addition, I am more than happy to have the discussion with my five and a half year old why Mum and Dad think they are inappropriate for her. My question here is what happened to a society that supported parents in taking care of their children? Why at every turn do I have to be undermined in parenting my child?

A friend has suggested to me and this inquiry that children need media training, beginning at Prep so that they can start to disseminate why companies would use sex to sell to them. I am hopeful that we would not need to do so much of this after this senate inquiry has set about a way forward which prohibits the kind of “niche” marketing that these corporations are currently undertaking. If parents do not gain support from society, what is to become of this generation?

I would be happy to answer further questions around this issue as a concerned parent. I vote according to issues that concern me and I would be extremely happy to see appropriate political policies and platforms that establish a supportive framework for modern and positive parenting. Why protect the natural environment if we are simply going to let each generation grow up in a more complicated and hostile social environment, these issues deserve real political attention now!

Kind regards,
Kyla Miller