

15 April 2008

The Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee ECA  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Dr Holland,

I am writing on behalf of the Women in Sport Media Group to offer not a full-blown submission but some comments on issues for the Inquiry into the sexualisation of children in the contemporary media.

The problem with the sexualisation of female athletes in the media starts from childhood and, if this issue can be combated as children are growing up, then there will be a better legacy for the adult athlete. Images of female athletes should be appropriate and project the idea that girls and women come in all shapes and sizes and can be physically active and enjoy sport. The media portrayal of some sports such as Beach Volleyball and Dancesport can have a considerable effect on adolescent girls who are overly concerned with their body shape and how society judges them. The images of women on the front of certain sport magazines also give an unreal focus on sex and can quite mislead young people besides being inappropriate in the context of the magazine content.

Unfortunately there have been times in our history when sportswomen in Australia have resorted to the publication of "Nude Calendars" in order to gain recognition and attract sponsorship for their sport. This should not be necessary and the Inquiry should see that strategies are established to prevent the need for such publications which focus wrongly on the sexualisation of the athletes.

Our Group believes that the premature sexualisation of children in the media can make some children self conscious about participating in sport and physical activity which in turn affects their self esteem and their attitudes to the world. We hope that the Inquiry can come up with strategies to combat the growing trend in the media so that we have healthier children and adults in the long term.

Yours sincerely,



Ann Mitchell  
Coordinator, Women in Sport Media Group