

17th April 2008

Senate Standing Committee on the
Environment, Communications and the Arts
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

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Inquiry into the sexualisation of children in the contemporary media.

The Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends Inc (TASSP&F) Executive Committee are very concerned about the current trends towards the sexualisation of children in the contemporary media.

TASSP&F is holding a seminar for Tasmanian parents and young girls in June 2008 that will focus on issues such as body image and self esteem in girls aged 8 – 16.

The main concerns of our members relate to trends in magazines, advertising material and television. Young girls in particular are being influenced by the images that are portrayed, to adopt unsafe and stressful behaviour.

Of particular concern is body image. Young girls reading magazines with perfect waif-like models who are extensively airbrushed, are influenced to undertake unsafe eating habits causing adverse affects on both physical and mental health. This can also affect how they relate to male and female friends as well as family members. They are often confused about what they should wear and how they should present themselves to their peers and are setting their goals to impossible and unrealistic standards. Boys are judging girls on body image and believe that it is only cool to have a girlfriend who is thin.

The media is very aware of the influence they can have in the market place and must be encouraged to ensure the availability of age appropriate material in all media environments – radio, television, magazines and other printed material.

Through the media, marketing and retail availability, young girls in particular, are being encouraged to adopt inappropriate fashion trends to the extent that it can be difficult for parents to find clothing that they are happy for their young children to wear.

Children need to be allowed and encouraged to be children, to embrace and enjoy their childhood without unnecessary pressures that they are unable to process or react to appropriately.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Branch
President