

14th May 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Health and Community Services Committee on Sexually Explicit Outdoor Advertising - Submission

I am writing to state my support for legislation and greater industry regulation to prevent sexually explicit or inappropriate content for the outdoor advertising and punish companies who do not adhere to community expectations.

I have owned a PR and marketing business in Brisbane for the past eight years and am aware of the industry's approach to regulating outdoor advertising content.

I urge the committee to recommend tighter regulations for outdoor advertising to prevent sexually explicit and inappropriate images and messages being used for all forms of outdoor advertising. Current regulation is ineffective and does not impose adequate financial fines and deterrents to prevent advertisers from stretching the boundaries and exposing children to inappropriate content.

Too much is left up to the moral compass of the advertiser, or corporate self-censorship. It is time for the community to set clear – and enforceable – standards on this issue. Sexually explicit advertising plays a role in helping foster negative attitudes and values towards both genders.

Offensive content can cause confusion, anxiety, fear and social/behavioural problems for children who are not developmentally ready to be exposed to adult content such as sexual images, connotations, interaction and wording.

As Melinda Tankard Reist states: "never has the youthful human brain been battered with so much erotic novelty during such a critical window of sexual development." This has repercussions.

Children repeat and mimic what they see, as part of the developmental process. Mirroring the behaviour (sexual or sexist sentiments – conveyed through imagery and/or words) shown on some inappropriate billboards can result in the child being chastised or punished at school or home – or in extreme cases, juvenile-to-juvenile (child-to-child) sexual assault. The Australia Institute's 2003 report shed light on the impact of childhood exposure inappropriate sexual content.

Not only is this content unnecessary for advertisers to use, but the prominence of outdoor advertising makes it impossible to avoid. In fact many adults would concur that not even they wish to have sexist, disrespectful or insulting advertising in their face every time they drive down the road. We can put filters and parental controls on our computers, but not our outdoor advertising space.

The prominent messages that children receive in youth has an impact on their understanding of women/men, relationships, gender equality and respect.

It is my hope that, to achieve the full benefit of the committee's investigations, your attention extends to include the front window of shops, newsagents and newsstands (both outdoor and indoor), that display pornography at child-height level.

Yours faithfully

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