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The Research Director  
Health and Community Services Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

By email: [hcsc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:hcsc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Ms Cawcutt,

## Re: Inquiry into sexually explicit outdoor advertising

This submission is made on behalf of the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane Social Responsibilities Committee.

We refer specifically to item 2a in the Committee's considerations: that is, the sexualisation of children and other adverse impacts on children through sexually explicit outdoor advertising. Sexualisation, as distinct from healthy sexuality, includes circumstances when sexuality is inappropriately imposed; and when a person is sexually objectified, rather than seen as an individual with the capacity for independent action and decision making.<sup>1</sup>

### There is increasing concern about the sexualisation of children

A growing number of government and peak body inquiries and reports demonstrates that the sexualisation of children is a matter of increasing concern in Australia<sup>2</sup> and internationally.<sup>3</sup> A range of negative impacts including body dissatisfaction, depression and lower self-esteem, and impacts on how children conceptualise gender roles, have been cited to potentially flow from exposure to sexualising and objectifying media.<sup>4</sup> This includes sexually explicit outdoor advertising.

### Outdoor advertising is unavoidable

The Social Responsibilities Committee believes that outdoor advertising of a sexually explicit nature is particularly concerning because this material is *inappropriately imposed* on children. Parents are unable to monitor their children's exposure to such material because it is positioned in public spaces, for maximum effect.

<sup>1</sup> American Psychological Association (2007, republished 2010). *Report of the APA Taskforce on the Sexualisation of Girls*. <http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report-full.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> As noted in the Commonwealth Parliament, Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communication and the Arts, *Inquiry into Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media* (2008). [http://www.aphref.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eca/cte/completed\\_inquiries\\_2008-10/sexualisation\\_of\\_children\\_report\\_report.pdf](http://www.aphref.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eca/cte/completed_inquiries_2008-10/sexualisation_of_children_report_report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The American Psychological Association's Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls reported, for example, that "Ample evidence indicates that sexualisation has negative effects in a variety of domains, including cognitive functioning, physical and mental health, sexuality and beliefs."

<sup>4</sup> Commissioner for Children and Young People – Western Australia (2012). *Literature Review: the Sexualisation of Children*. <http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/files/Literature%20Review%20-%20Sexualisation%20of%20children.pdf>.

A key message of the 2008 Senate Inquiry into Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media was that “parents have a pivotal role to play in how children engage with sexualised material and that the role of parents in supervising ... children is important”.<sup>5</sup> The UK ‘Bailey Review’ made a number of recommendations that aimed to support parents in reducing children’s access to sexualised material, including the placement of sexualised advertising aimed at adults away from schools.<sup>6</sup> We note, similarly, that the Australian Commonwealth Inquiry into Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media recommended “that the Australian Standards Board rigorously apply standards for billboards and outdoor advertising to more closely reflect community concern about the appropriateness of sexually explicit material and the inability of parents to restrict exposure of children to such material”.<sup>7</sup>

As a Committee, we challenge the development of a social norm that considers the sexualisation of children as acceptable. Like parents in the UK cited in the Bailey Review, we reject the appropriateness of contemporary sexualised society becoming “the wallpaper of children's lives”.<sup>8</sup>

Given its positioning for maximum impact, and the inherent lack of control that parents have over their children’s exposure to this form of media, we support regulation of sexually explicit outdoor advertising that may increase the sexualisation of children, and potentially cause psychological and social harm to them.

Peace

The Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt  
Chair  
Anglican Diocese of Brisbane Social Responsibilities Committee

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<sup>5</sup> Commonwealth Parliament, Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communication and the Arts, *Inquiry into Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media* (2008).

<sup>6</sup> Department for Education (2011), *Letting Children be Children: Report of an Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood* ('the Bailey Review').

<sup>7</sup> Commonwealth Parliament, Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communication and the Arts, *Inquiry into Sexualisation of Children in the Contemporary Media* (2008), p. vi.

<sup>8</sup> Department for Education (2011), *Letting Children be Children: Report of an Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood* ('the Bailey Review').