

Submission by Karen Donnelly (Psychologist) 22/6/2013

### Examples of explicit advertising:

I can recall a range of inappropriate advertisements that I have personally seen over the last few years. Several I have reported to the Advertising Standards Bureau. These include the 'Windsor Smith' roadside billboards, 'Seafolly' swimwear posters on buses, and the billboard on Milton Road of a woman seductively licking a plate. Other seasonal billboards that I deem inappropriate are the 'Sexpo' advertisements which often depict women who are scantily clad in inappropriate poses. I have also had a range of issues with my own daughter after she has walked past 'Bras n Things' posters in shopping centres which have depicted women in seductive poses wearing underwear.

[REDACTED] My most recent complaint to the ASB involves a vehicle that was driving in peak hour traffic along Gympie Road, Chermside which featured two full length posters of naked women (with the door handles covering the spots where their private spots would be) on the sides and back of the car. The car was promoting 'Nude Muse magazine' which is a pornographic internet site featuring full female nudity without any pre-warnings. I had to go to great lengths while trying to drive to tell my daughter to look at landmarks on the other side of the road so she didn't see the car. I have no idea how I could have explained the imagery to her.

### Why sexually explicit advertising is harmful to our children?

In my experience, sexually explicit advertising has several effects:

- it normalises sexually provocative behaviour and little girls learn that you will only be liked if you act sexy. Simultaneously, boys learn that girls are first and foremost sexual beings and they expect girls to act like the women in these images if they are to be worthy of them. All of these sexualised messages become so ingrained in our heads from such a young age that girls assume they have to be and act sexy to get attention and to be liked, even in their pre-teens. This will undoubtedly lead to the being more likely to be at risk of engaging in risky sexual activities at a younger age when they are not emotionally prepared. This is likely to result in the risk of girls being sexually abused and victimised.
- it prematurely sexualises children by opening up the world of sexuality and adult concepts to children at a young age. For example, when my daughter starts asking questions about billboards and why the ladies are naked or scantily dressed she loses a little bit of her innocence each time. At 5 years old, she should not be asking these types of questions and seeing this type of imagery.
- it changes the societal view of sexuality and acceptance of sexual imagery as normal. For example, if any of these explicit advertisements depicted men in seductive poses instead of women there would be uproar and the billboards removed immediately as society does not accept the objectification of the male form. However, most people barely even notice the level of sexual

imagery in most advertising nowadays as they are so used to seeing it. This results in sexually explicit advertising starting to shape society's sexual values, attitudes and behaviours.

Possible solutions:

***Make reporting inappropriate advertisements easier:*** Create a hotline with a simple number for people to lodge complaints about inappropriate advertising so if it does exist it can be more easily and quickly reported and dealt with. The current complaints process through the Advertising Standards Bureau involves quite a bit of time and it takes weeks to resolve complaints. Perhaps devise a quote scheme that if a piece of advertising gets more than a certain number of complaints (eg. 100) it is ordered to be taken down. Also many people I talk to would only write a complaint to the ASB if they

***Educate advertisers:*** I can imagine that most advertising executives only think about how their advertisements are viewed by their potential customers, without considering the collateral damage caused to other members of society. They may not realise how harmful sexual imagery is to children, however as a parent it is a full-time job trying to protect your children's innocence as sexual messages and imagery are everywhere. I think if a range of educational programs or training packages were to be designed to educate advertisers on the effects that their projects can have on children and wider society they may understand the reasons why their public arena advertising needs to be appropriate for an all age audience. If they wish to target particular groups with their advertising messages, there are many ways of doing this such as targeted advertising through men's and women's magazines, promotional events etc. The training packages should focus on helping advertisers understand how children's self-esteem and body image develop. They also need to understand how sexualised advertising objectifies women in the eyes of boys and men (leading to the development of poor attitudes towards women and how this is then linked to increases in domestic violence and sexual assaults) and how women and girls begin to see themselves as merely playthings for men.

***A committee of citizens to approve advertisements:*** A volunteer or paid committee of people from different cultures and professions with a common interest in child development and welfare. These committee members could include parents, child care workers, magistrates, grandparents, teachers, GPs, psychologists etc. All public outdoor advertisements should be cleared through this committee prior to being erected on billboards etc. Due to the sheer quantity of advertising needing approval, perhaps a team of three or four of these people could approve or provide advice on each advertisement. This committee would be an extra step in helping to prevent harmful advertising.

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