

From: [Laurence and Nicola Stevens](#)
To: [Health and Community Services Committee](#)
Subject: Outdoor advertising enquiry
Date: Wednesday, 19 June 2013 5:28:33 PM

To the committee,

We are writing a submission to your enquiry, as we feel that outdoor advertising needs to be better regulated. We are a married couple in our late twenties, expecting our first child soon.

We feel that too many public ads, such as billboards and bus-stop ads, are sexualised and inappropriate for children. In addition, we feel they also desensitise the general public to sexual images and promote the objectification of women, and in some cases violence towards women.

The decision to uphold or dismiss a complaint sometimes comes down to the interpretation of the board members of the ASB versus the general public – so that even if 96 people from the general public complain about an ad (as was the case in 2012 for the third-most complained ad), the decision of the majority of the board (20 or less people) is sufficient to dismiss the complaints. Because the decision is based on subjective interpretation, it seems that many complaints are dismissed (in 2012, of the top 11 ads that were complained about, 8 were dismissed). It is therefore our belief that more stringent and consistent standards need to be applied, not just a subjective argument of whether an ad is “too” sexualised or “too” violent.

We feel that a possible solution would be to incorporate regulation for outdoor advertising into the Australian Communications and Media Authority’s current role. As this is an already-established regulatory body, the government would not be required to spend more money setting up a new body, but may be able to invest more funding into ACMA at a fraction of the cost. This would also remove the possibility of a conflict of interest between the ASB and their current funding sources (advertisers paying a levy).

We do feel that outdoor advertising should be G rated, as it is situated in a public space, literally for general exhibition. The ACMA’s Code of Practice regarding G ratings could be applied to outdoor advertising, providing more consistent and objective standards by which to uphold or dismiss complaints. These standards would also allow for a variety of industries to advertise without discriminating against a particular industry itself, which would address the Eros Association’s accusation that the adult industry is being discriminated against. In addition, no topics in and of themselves would be necessarily taboo. As long as the content of an ad met the G rating standards, it would be deemed appropriate. People wishing to submit a complaint would also have more objective criteria by which to assess their complaint before submitting it, perhaps resulting in more substantiated complaints, but less often.

Ultimately, we want our child to learn, and we ourselves want to retain positive, healthy messages and attitudes towards people, relationships and sex. We don’t feel we can do this in the current climate of advertising where complaints are often dismissed and we go on seeing highly suggestive or sexualised images day in, day out. We believe a G rating for outdoor advertising would be a big step in the right direction, and that regulation by an outside body is needed to ensure that objective standards are complied with in a consistent and timely manner.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Yours sincerely,

Laurence and Nicola Stevens