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Standing Committee on Social Issues

Impacts of harmful pornography on mental, emotional, and physical health

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1.0 Executive Summary

Representing our over 92,000 signatories, the Canberra Declaration is a grassroots network of caring Australians committed to the preservation of faith, family, freedom and life. We affirm the legal reality, etched into the preamble of the Constitution, that Australians are a people “humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God”. We believe that God’s blessing will endure in our nation to the extent that we continue to humbly rely on Him. Our vision is to see our country’s Judeo-Christian values revitalised for the good of all Australians. We welcome the opportunity to present our submission to this Inquiry.

We strongly endorse this vital inquiry established on 6 August 2024 by the Minns Labor Government and Attorney General Michael Daley. With New South Wales “the first state to hold an inquiry of this type into the impacts of harmful pornography”,¹ we commend this initiative and the immense amount of good that can come out of it.

However, we express caution about the wording of this inquiry which is to “inquire into and report on the impacts of *harmful* pornography on mental, emotional, and physical health”. It is not clear whether the inquiry is framed as defining *all* pornography as harmful, or whether only a subset of it is considered dangerous.

This submission will strongly argue that *all* pornography is harmful.

The Canberra Declaration, along with sister organisations that we work closely with, has previously submitted information (also included here) to other governments about the harmful effects of pornography. This submission continues this advocacy.

The Canberra Declaration is a community of people who affirm the personhood of everyone, and we seek to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. We believe that children are precious and valuable, and given that they will be the leaders of tomorrow, it is in our best interests to provide for their healthy development and growth.

This submission has sought to address the terms of reference with a particular focus on the following points:

¹ NSW Government Media Release, “Harmful pornography the subject of parliamentary inquiry”, 2 August 2024, <<https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/harmful-pornography-subject-of-parliamentary-inquiry>>.

- (a) age of first exposure to pornography and impacts of early exposure to pornography
- (b) media by which pornography is accessed and circulated
- (c) impacts on body image
- (f) the impact of exposure to violent and/or misogynistic pornography on children, teenagers and young adults
- (i) the effectiveness of current restrictions on access to pornography and consideration of any need to improve these

Thank you for taking the time to review our submission.

2.0 The Ubiquity of Pornography

In an effort to normalise pornography, many would point out that it's a phenomenon that has been around since ancient times. That might be true, but pornography today is like nothing the world has ever seen.

Pornography is now everywhere. It's available on almost every screen and smartphone on the planet. In the West, what was once scandalous and shrewdly stocked in the newsagent or video store is now fodder for billboards, and makes for vanilla viewing on prime-time TV.

Pornography is a US\$97 billion global industry.² In 2015, 4.3 billion hours of pornography were watched on a single website.³ That's half a million years of viewing time.

From 1998 to 2007, the number of pornographic websites online grew by 1,800%.⁴ Today, some 30% of all data transferred across the internet is pornography.⁵

Decades on from the dawn of the sexual revolution, pornography exposure among university-aged males is now almost universal. One in five mobile searches are for

² Fight the New Drug, "20 Stats About the Porn Industry and its Underage Consumers", n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/10-porn-stats-that-will-blow-your-mind/>>.

³ Ibid., "Get The Facts", <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/get-the-facts/>>.

⁴ Ibid., "Why Today's Internet Porn is Unlike Anything the World Has Ever Seen", <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/why-todays-internet-porn-is-unlike-anything-the-world-has-ever-seen/>>.

⁵ Alexis Kleinman, "Porn Sites Get More Visitors Each Month Than Netflix, Amazon And Twitter Combined", 4 May 2013, <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/internet-porn-stats_n_3187682>.

pornography.⁶ And 96% of young adults are either neutral, accepting or encouraging of pornography use.⁷

3.0 The Harms of Pornography

3.1 Introduction

If pornography is doing people no harm, then the statistics presented above might be benign or irrelevant. But the reality is very much otherwise. Like so many aspects of the sexual revolution, our decades-long experiment with pornography has provided us with mountains of research about its culture-wide impact.

Pornography's links to mental health problems, sexual dissatisfaction, infidelity and even crime have led American lawmakers to declare pornography a public health crisis in 16 states.⁸

3.2 Impact on Mental Health

People often turn to pornography to relax and relieve stress. But a growing body of research links pornography to a cluster of worrying mental health outcomes.

A survey of almost 800 college students found a significant link between regular pornography use and depressive symptoms, including low self-worth.⁹ Strong correlations between pornography and loneliness have been uncovered in another study.¹⁰

A meta-analysis of fifty studies found that men who consumed pornography were much less happy with not just romantic relationships, but their relationships in general.¹¹

⁶ Covenant Eyes, "Pornography Statistics", <<https://www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats/>>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Fight the New Drug, "These 16 U.S. States Passed Resolutions Recognizing Porn as a Public Health Issue", n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/states-with-porn-public-health-resolutions/>>.

⁹ National Center on Sexual Exploitation, "Pornography & Public Health Research-Summary", January 2019, <https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/NCOSE_Jan-2019_Research-Summary_Pornography-PublicHealth_FINAL.pdf>.

¹⁰ Covenant Eyes, "Pornography Statistics", n.d., <<https://www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats/>>.

¹¹ National Center on Sexual Exploitation, "Pornography & Public Health Research-Summary", January 2019, <https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/NCOSE_Jan-2019_Research-Summary_Pornography-PublicHealth_FINAL.pdf>.

Many pornography users, whether male or female, report relationship insecurities, body-image issues and anxiety in connection to their habit.¹² In fact, partners of pornography consumers even show symptoms of anxiety, depression and PTSD.¹³

3.3 Similarities Between Pornography and Hard Drugs

Unlike alcohol, tobacco or other addictive drugs, pornography isn't a physical substance – its power is a passing image, video or idea. But brain scans reveal that its effect on users is almost identical to a heroin or cocaine hit.¹⁴ Pornography hijacks the brain's reward system. When users keep going back for more, it puts the amygdala under stress so that it enlarges, affecting emotional processing and decision-making.¹⁵

University of Cambridge researcher Dr Valerie Voon studied this phenomenon in-depth, comparing the brain scans of healthy patients and those who were pornography-addicted. She concluded that “these differences mirror those of drug addicts.”¹⁶

3.4 Effect on Sexual Satisfaction

One of the glaring ironies of pornography is that many people turn to it to enhance their sex life, only to discover that it achieves the opposite. Studies continually show that pornography use leads to less sex and less sexual satisfaction.¹⁷ As a result of viewing pornography, men are more critical of their partner's body and less interested in actual sex.¹⁸

One of the most detailed studies of pornography ever conducted found that, having viewed 'soft-core' pornography, both men and women were less happy with their partner's sexual performance.¹⁹

¹² Fight the New Drug, “Get the Facts”, n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/get-the-facts/>>.

¹³ Fight the New Drug, “How Porn Can Hurt a Consumer's Partner”, n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-hurt-partners-of-consumers/>>.

¹⁴ Go for Greatness, “Resources for Men”, n.d., <<https://goforgreatness.org/men/>>.

¹⁵ National Center on Sexual Exploitation, “Pornography & Public Health Research-Summary”, January 2019, <https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/NCOSE_Jan-2019_Research-Summary_Pornography-PublicHealth_FINAL.pdf>.

¹⁶ Fight the New Drug, “Groundbreaking Neuroscience Study Finds Striking Similarities in Brains of Porn and Drug Addicts”, n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/cambridge-neuroscientist-valerie-voon-porn-drug-addict-brain/>>.

¹⁷ Fight the New Drug, “How Porn Can Harm Consumers' Sex Lives”, n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-harm-consumers-sex-lives/>>.

¹⁸ National Center on Sexual Exploitation, “Pornography & Public Health Research-Summary”, January 2019, <https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/NCOSE_Jan-2019_Research-Summary_Pornography-PublicHealth_FINAL.pdf>.

¹⁹ Fight the New Drug, “How Porn Can Harm Consumers' Sex Lives”, n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-harm-consumers-sex-lives/>>.

Doctors today report a growing epidemic of young men suffering from erectile dysfunction.²⁰ This condition, which once mostly affected older men, is now a reality for countless young men who have become so accustomed to the constant variety and excitement of internet pornography that they can no longer perform without it.

3.5 Impact on Marriage, Family and Fidelity

Pornography consumption is statistically linked to less stability in relationships, a devaluing of marriage and family, and a greater likelihood of both infidelity and divorce.²¹ One study showed that people who had an affair were three times more likely to have used pornography than people who remained faithful to their partner.²²

Another study tracked the marriages of couples over time, and found that divorce was twice as common among couples that began using pornography compared to those who didn't.²³ As early as 2002, the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers reported that 56% of divorces involved one partner having "an obsessive interest in pornographic websites."²⁴

3.6 Role in Violence Against Women

In a post-#MeToo world, and with so much talk of gender equality today, it's imperative that we make ourselves aware of the research around the harms that pornography inflicts upon women. The vast majority of pornography depicts a power imbalance between men and women, with men in charge, and women subordinate and obedient.²⁵

Recently, a team of researchers looked at 50 of the most watched pornography films.²⁶ Of the 304 scenes in these movies, almost half contained verbal aggression and a staggering 88% depicted physical violence. This led the researchers to conclude that "mainstream

²⁰ Fight the New Drug, "How Porn Can Harm Consumers' Sex Lives", n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-harm-consumers-sex-lives/>>.

²¹ Fight the New Drug, "How Porn Can Negatively Impact Love and Intimacy", n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-negatively-impact-relationship/>>.

²² National Center on Sexual Exploitation, "Pornography & Public Health Research-Summary", January 2019, <https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/NCOSE_Jan-2019_Research-Summary_Pornography-PublicHealth_FINAL.pdf>.

²³ Fight the New Drug, "How Porn Can Negatively Impact Love and Intimacy", n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-negatively-impact-relationship/>>.

²⁴ Covenant Eyes, "Pornography Statistics", n.d., <<https://www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats/>>.

²⁵ Fight the New Drug, "How Porn Can Promote Sexual Violence", n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-promote-sexual-violence/>>.

²⁶ Fight the New Drug, "How Porn Can Promote Sexual Violence", n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-promote-sexual-violence/>>.

commercial pornography has coalesced around a relatively homogenous script involving violence and female degradation".²⁷

Of course, ideas shape behaviour. An analysis of 22 studies from seven countries found that people who consume pornography frequently are likely to have sexually aggressive attitudes and behaviour.²⁸ Other studies have shown a strong correlation between men's pornography consumption and their likelihood to victimise women.²⁹

An FBI Academy report found a real connection between porn and sex crimes. It found that 86 per cent of rapists interviewed regularly consumed pornography.³⁰

An undeniable and real connection exists between pornography and sexual crime, including rape.³¹ One sociologist, after summarising the available data, says this about the connection between pornography and rape:

... pornography (a) predisposes some males to want to rape women and intensifies the predisposition in other males already so predisposed; (b) undermines some males' internal inhibition against acting out their desire to rape; and (c) undermines some males' social inhibitions against acting out their desire to rape.³²

Researchers Zillmann and Bryant report that when males had "massive exposure" to porn (defined as four hours and 48 minutes total over six weeks, which is hardly "massive" in an age of internet pornography), they had distorted views of sexuality. Regarding rape, men who had such exposure considered it to be a lesser offence. Pornography also fostered a "general trivialization of rape" and led to the belief that women rape victims did not suffer that much and/or that they deserved it. In sum, it leads to a "callousness toward women".³³

²⁷ National Center on Sexual Exploitation, "Pornography & Public Health Research-Summary", January 2019, <https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/NCOSE_Jan-2019_Research-Summary_Pornography-PublicHealth_FINAL.pdf>.

²⁸ Fight the New Drug, "How Porn Can Change the Brain", n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-change-the-brain/>>.

²⁹ Fight the New Drug, "How Porn Can Change the Brain", n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-change-the-brain/>>.

³⁰ Charles Colson, "Pornography destroys lives, society," *USA Today*, 21 October 1989.

³¹ For more documentation on this, see the paper "Pornography: Is it a Victimless Crime?", <http://www.sif.org.au/papers-_bill_muehlenberg_2.html>.

³² Diana Russell, *Dangerous Relationships: Pornography, Misogyny, and Rape* (Sage Publications, 1998), 120.

³³ Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant, "Effects of massive exposure to pornography," in Neil Malamuth and Edward Donnerstein, eds., *Pornography and Sexual Aggression* (Academic Press, 1984), 115–138.

Not only does the viewing of pornography by some men lead to the rape of some women, but “the actual *making* of pornography sometimes involves, or even requires, violence and sexual assault. Testimony by women and men involved in such activity provides numerous examples of this.”³⁴

In Australia, pornography expert Dr John Court has written extensively in this area. One of his studies looked at the correlation between increased reports of rape and the liberalisation of pornography laws. He found that between 1964 and 1974 after liberalisation, rape reports in the U.S. increased by 139%; in England by 94%; in Australia by 160% and in New Zealand by 107%.³⁵

To summarise one study, “At the core of contemporary pornography is contempt for women.”³⁶

3.7 Links to Deviant Behaviour

When the brain’s reward centre is stimulated too much – as is the case with a regular pornography user – it can make what was once exciting seem dull. This in turn can prompt people to seek out more extreme types of pornography.³⁷

In 2012, a survey of 1,500 males was conducted. They were asked if their tastes in pornography had grown “increasingly extreme or deviant” the more they had watched pornography. An alarming 56% said yes.³⁸

Pornography use has also been shown to influence what users consider to be abnormal. A 2016 meta-analysis into the connection between porn and sexual violence discovered a worrisome trend. The team of leading researchers who performed the study on the quality, relevant research papers concluded that there was “little doubt that, on the average, individuals who consume pornography more frequently are more likely to hold attitudes conducive to sexual aggression and engage in actual acts of sexual aggression.”³⁹

³⁴ Russell, *Dangerous Relationships: Pornography, Misogyny, and Rape*, 113.

³⁵ John Court, *Pornography: A Christian Critique* (InterVarsity Press, 1980), 51.

³⁶ Jensen and Dines, *ibid.*, p. 99.

³⁷ Fight the New Drug, “How Porn Can Become an Escalating Behavior”, n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-become-an-escalating-behavior/>>.

³⁸ Fight the New Drug, “Expectations vs. Reality: Why Watching Porn Can Change What You Find Attractive”, n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/porn-upgrades-what-a-consumer-finds-attractive/>>.

³⁹ Paul J. Wright, Robert S. Tokunaga and Ashley Kraus, “A meta-analysis of pornography consumption and actual acts of sexual aggression in general population studies”, *Journal of*

In fact, ‘rape culture’⁴⁰ has been a big discussion point in recent years, especially on university campuses. The premise is that rape is more likely in an “environment whose prevailing social attitudes have the effect of normalising or trivialising sexual assault and abuse.”⁴¹ If this is true, we need to state the obvious and declare that mainstream pornography is itself rape culture.⁴²

3.8 Connections to Human Trafficking

There are an estimated 20 to 40 million slaves in the world today – more than when slavery was abolished.⁴³ Around 22% of these are victims of forced sexual exploitation, which includes the production of pornography.⁴⁴

It’s confronting to realise that this is not just a developing world problem. Officially, sex trafficking is defined as a “modern-day form of slavery in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion”.⁴⁵ On that definition, this includes the shockingly common cases of young girls in Western nations who have been lured into a modelling career only to end up on pornography sets.⁴⁶

The USA’s Department of Justice and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children both flag pornography as a contributing factor to the problem of sex trafficking.⁴⁷

There’s also an infinite feedback loop between pornography and sex trafficking.⁴⁸ Traffickers get ideas from pornography and make their victims watch it in order to produce more of it.

Communication, vol. 66, no 1, 183–205 (2016), <<https://academic.oup.com/joc/article-abstract/66/1/183/4082427>>.

⁴⁰ Dictionary.com, “Rape Culture”, <<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/rape-culture>>.

⁴¹ Dictionary.com, “Rape Culture”, <<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/rape-culture>>.

⁴² Fight the New Drug, “How Porn Can Promote Sexual Violence”, n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-promote-sexual-violence/>>.

⁴³ Walk Free, “Global Slavery Index”, n.d., <<https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/global-findings/>>.

⁴⁴ International Labour Organization, “21 million people are now victims of forced labour, ILO says”, 1 June 2012, <<https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/21-million-people-are-now-victims-forced-labour-ilo-says>>.

⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Domestic Trafficking Hotlines”, <<https://www.state.gov/domestic-trafficking-hotlines/>>.

⁴⁶ Fight the New Drug, “How Teens Get Tricked, Coerced, and Trafficked Into Doing Amateur Porn”, n.d. <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-teen-girls-get-tricked-into-doing-porn/>>.

⁴⁷ Fight the New Drug, “Get The Facts”, n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/get-the-facts/>>.

⁴⁸ Fight the New Drug, “How Porn Can Fuel Sex Trafficking”, n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-fuel-sex-trafficking/>>.

3.9 Direct Harms to Children

Children growing up today are the first generation in history to be raised on tablets and mobile devices.⁴⁹ This has given them much easier access to pornography and the adult-world risks that accompany it.

The majority of kids are exposed to porn before age 13.⁵⁰ 90% of boys and 60% of girls have visited pornography sites by the time they're 18.⁵¹ Half of teens come across pornography at least once a month whether they search it out or not.⁵²

Research has shown that the younger boys are when they first see pornography, the more likely they are to be using it later in life.⁵³ And among youth, internet pornography is statistically linked to sexual activity at younger ages, multiple sex partners, group sex, and other risky sexual behaviours.⁵⁴

Pornography harms children in other ways too. Every week, over 20,000 images of child pornography are posted to the web.⁵⁵ And since 2002, more than 10,500 victims depicted in child pornography have been located and identified.⁵⁶

Child pornography is a huge problem, and it goes without saying that children are grossly violated and exploited in the manufacture of it. As one expert on child abuse puts it:

... pictures or films depicting adult sexual interactions with children cannot be produced without an act which is defined in law as illegal taking place. Each piece of child porn

⁴⁹ Kurt Mahlburg, "Pornography: Protecting Our Kids From the New Public Health Crisis", *The Daily Declaration*, 16 October 2019, <<https://dailydeclaration.org.au/2019/10/16/pornography-protecting-our-kids-from-the-new-public-health-crisis/>>.

⁵⁰ Fight the New Drug, "What's the Average Age of a Child's First Exposure to Porn?", n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/real-average-age-of-first-exposure/>>.

⁵¹ Elwood Watson, "Pornography Addiction Among Men is On The Rise", *HuffPost*, 14 October 2024, <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/pornography-addiction-amo_b_5963460>.

⁵² Wendy J. Smith, "Pornography: A Looming Public Health Crisis", *The Gazette*, 18 September 2019, <https://gazette.com/opinion/guest-column-pornography-a-looming-public-health-crisis/article_32a68eea-d8b7-11e9-976f-bb8dc35a96fd.html>.

⁵³ National Center on Sexual Exploitation, "Pornography & Public Health Research-Summary", January 2019, <https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/NCOSE_Jan-2019_Research-Summary_Pornography-PublicHealth_FINAL.pdf>.

⁵⁴ National Center on Sexual Exploitation, "Pornography & Public Health Research-Summary", January 2019, <https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/NCOSE_Jan-2019_Research-Summary_Pornography-PublicHealth_FINAL.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Fight the New Drug, "Understanding the Growing Problem of Child Sexual Exploitation Material", n.d., <<https://fightthenewdrug.org/understanding-the-growing-worldwide-problem-of-child-porn/>>.

⁵⁶ FBI, "The Scourge of Child Pornography", 25 April 2017, <<https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/the-scourge-of-child-pornography>>.

involving adults (or in some cases animals) is a document of the sexual abuse of the child who was required for its production.⁵⁷

As but one example of the extent of the problem, Victorian police have said, “We could lock up any amount of people for the trade of (child) porn. It’s like trying to hold back the tide”.⁵⁸

Pornography used by adults often finds its way into the hands of children, with very negative outcomes. One American psychotherapist gives many examples of this occurring. In one episode, two brothers, aged nine and ten, stumbled across their parent’s X-rated videos. After watching them for a number of months, they forced their younger siblings and a neighbourhood boy to watch the videos, then stripped all of them naked, forced objects into their rectums, and forced them to engage in oral and anal sex. They continued these activities for a year.⁵⁹

There is also the tragic story of a nine-year-old Florida boy. He was convicted of first-degree murder, aggravated child abuse, and three counts of sexual battery in connection with the torture death of an eight-month-old girl. The brother of the nine-year-old boy testified that, in sexually assaulting the infant with a pencil and coat hanger, they were imitating actions they had seen in their mother’s sex magazine.⁶⁰

Young girls are particularly susceptible to harmful effects on body image due to pornography and the sexualisation of children. Such examples include girls as young as eight-years-old desiring T-shirts with the word “Porn Star” emblazoned across the chest, or ten-year-olds buying padded bras at mainstream shopping centres. This concerning trend is well documented by the author Ariel Levy in her book *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*.⁶¹ Indeed, a weekend newspaper magazine ran the cover story, “Rise of Raunch: Why Paris Hilton and porn stars are the new role models”.⁶²

⁵⁷ Liz Kelly, “Pornography and child sexual abuse,” in Catherine Itzin, ed., *Pornography: Women, Violence and Civil Liberties* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 116.

⁵⁸ Mark Butler, “Filth sites sicken cyber sleuth,” *The Herald Sun*, 6 April 1998, 4.

⁵⁹ Victor B. Cline, *Pornography’s Effects on Adults and Children* (Morality in Media, 2001), 10.

⁶⁰ This story and a number of similar stories have been assembled in a book. It contains excerpts from the Official Transcript of 3,000 pages of Hearings conducted by the Commission from 1985–1986. See Phyllis Schlafly, *Pornography’s Victims* (Crossway Books, 1987).

⁶¹ Ariel Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (Free Press, 2005).

⁶² Richard Jinman, “Generation Sex,” *Sydney Morning Herald Spectrum*, 8–9 October 2005, 6–7.

3.10 Harm to Women

Pornography is inherently anti-women. It is demeaning to women, exploitative of women, and fundamentally hostile to women.

Dr Judith Reisman has done an extensive amount of research into the way porn (even so-called “soft porn”) exploits women (and children and men). In her important book, *“Soft Porn” Plays Hard Ball*, she documents the horrible way in which porn treats and depicts women. The *Playboy* attitude is typical and representative: “In the playboy’s world, women are a lower species – sexual game (like rabbits) that one goes out to hunt.”⁶³

Hugh Hefner, the founder of *Playboy*, was an ardent disciple of Alfred Kinsey, whose perverted ideas of human sexuality have been documented elsewhere.⁶⁴ Hefner simply popularised much of the deviant sexology promoted by Kinsey. And both men shared a common dislike, even hatred, of marriage and family.

But it is not just the way pornography depicts women that is so harmful. Women in the porn industry are regularly abused and ill-treated. Documentation now exists highlighting the horrible treatment women receive in the sex industry. There is nothing glamorous or exciting about it. Reisman features a number of testimonies by women who have been damaged both by porn, and by being in the porn industry.⁶⁵

One important article on the horrors and ugliness of the world of porn was featured in *The Guardian* newspaper in the UK. In the article, the author, Martin Amis, spelled out in gory and disgusting detail what most porn stars are expected to do, and the great toll it takes on them. The world of porn is a dangerous, high-risk world where women are simply used for other people’s lusts and pornographers’ desire to get rich.⁶⁶

Most important are the testimonies of women who have left the porn industry. Their stories are remarkably similar, and decidedly different from what the pornographers and civil libertarians would have us believe. Common themes include drug abuse, violence, suicidal tendencies, self-loathing and regret. One ex-porn worker put it this way:

⁶³ Judith Reisman, *“Soft Porn” Plays Hardball* (Huntington House Publishers, 1991), 45.

⁶⁴ Edward Eichel and Judith Reisman, *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud: The Indoctrination of a People*. (Huntington House, 1990). See also Michael Jones, *Degenerate Moderns: Modernity as Rationalized Sexual Behavior* (Ignatius Press, 1993).

⁶⁵ Reisman, *Soft Porn*, 160–169.

⁶⁶ Martin Amis, “A rough trade,” *The Guardian*, 17 March 2001.

It was awful. It was horrible... The way I felt. The way I felt about myself. The way I was abused by men. The way I let people treat me. And even the effects of it now are awful... I was highly addicted to cocaine... I attempted suicide. I hit bottom.⁶⁷

Although this woman is now out of the pornography business, she is still a slave to it. She writes:

Actually, pornography is much worse than prostitution because it will harm you in a different way the rest of your life. I'm still exploited all over the internet ten years later. It follows me around. People recognize me. I'm harassed because of it. My kids are being harassed at school because of it. So, it's going to affect me the rest of my life.⁶⁸

3.11 Harm to Men

A leading authority on sexual dysfunction, Dr Mary Anne Layden, refers to pornography as an "equal opportunity toxin!"⁶⁹ That is, everyone pays the price of porn: men, women and children.

A pervasive myth of our highly sexualised society is that a healthy outworking of male sexuality is demonstrated by a 'healthy' openness to pornography, and a 'healthy' or rather voracious, appetite for sex. This is seen as normal, as what men do, as what men are, and as what men want.

Surprising enough the roots of pornography driven anti-masculinity lie in the urban landscape of 1950's America. Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* project⁷⁰ was nothing more than an incredibly successful attempt to emasculate men by a form of cultural hypnosis on a previously unconsidered scale. For thousands of years, the dominant outworking of male sexuality had been geared to marriage and family. In a relatively short period of time, Hefner created a new archetype, the 'playboy'; the cool urban male, surrounded by beautiful, sexually willing, sexually aggressive women, the ultimate objectification of women as male playthings. Since then, pornography has steadily gone mainstream.

⁶⁷ Ann Simonton and Carol Smith, "Who are women in pornography?: A conversation" in Christine Stark and Rebecca Whisnant, eds., *Not for Sale* (Spinifex Press, 2004), 352–353.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 355–356.

⁶⁹ Dr Mary Anne Layden, Speech to delegates and politicians, the National Sexual Integrity Forum", Monday, 8 August 2005, <http://www.sif.org.au/forum_1.html>.

⁷⁰ R. M. Schuchardt, "The Cultural Victory of Hugh Hefner", *Christianity Today*, vol. 47, no. 11 (2003): 50.

The exploitation of women by pornography is relatively easy to accept but suggesting that men are victims is much harder to accept. As already documented above, there is a growing link between pornography and male sexual dysfunction. The more men use pornography, the more men are exposed to and exploited by unwanted sexual imagery, the more they experience various forms of sexual dysfunction.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) refers to preoccupation with masturbation and pornography as a sexual disorder: "... Sexual Disorder Not Otherwise Specified: other, non-classified disorders of sexual functioning, including such behaviors as anomalous preoccupation with masturbation, pornography and promiscuity."⁷¹

Frequent and increasing exposure to explicit sexual imagery which often inspires addictive patterns of masturbation and compulsive sexual acting out, as well as emotional problems and an inability to form mutually beneficial intimate relationships. In short, men become addicts and victims.

It is worth noting the impact of Hefner's social project on the man himself. According to long time Hefner girlfriend, Sandy Bentley, he became a victim of the very dysfunction he created. In an interview in *Philadelphia* magazine she states that he "... had trouble finding satisfaction through intercourse; instead he liked the girls to pleasure each other while he masturbated and watched gay porn."⁷²

Male sexual and psychological health is linked to a man's ability to engage in mature relationships that recognize the subjectivity, uniqueness and inherent dignity of all women. Men are exploited by a predatory and intrinsically selfish vision of sexuality (women as objects) that sees them experience increasing rates of emotional, sexual and interpersonal dysfunction.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

⁷¹ DSM-IV, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), 535.

⁷² Schuchardt, "The Cultural Victory of Hugh Hefner": 54.

4.1 Introduction

This submission has demonstrated and documented the extreme harms of *all* pornography to children, women and men. In any other area of public health, governments seek to implement strategies to benefit their citizens. This area of public health should be no different.

While not restricting his comments to pornography, British Prime Minister David Cameron's words certainly include the dangers of it and warn against its use. Importantly, the former Prime Minister said governments have the responsibility to protect people (especially children) from harm. In references to sexualisation of children he wrote,

Premature sexualisation is like pollution. It's in the air that our children breathe. All the time. Every day.

As a society we don't just shrug and say, there's nothing we can do about pollution, it doesn't matter if childhood asthma levels and bronchitis reach epidemic proportions. We slap controls on emissions. We penalise businesses that dump toxic waste.

But some businesses are dumping a waste that is toxic on our children. Products and marketing that can warp their minds and their bodies and harm their future. That can take away their innocence, which I know most parents would agree is so precious and worth defending.⁷³

We will now make specific recommendations to the inquiry.

4.2 Recommendation 1: Mandatory Filtering of the Internet at ISP Level

Evidence demonstrates that minors, including young children, are exposed both accidentally and deliberately to sexually explicit material via the internet. This is a form of child sexual abuse which leads to serious and lasting harm. The widespread availability of sexually explicit material via the internet exploits and degrades women, destroys families and imposes significant costs on the community.

We call on the NSW Government to request that the Federal Government legislate the implementation of a national system of mandatory filtering to block access to pornographic

⁷³ David Cameron, "Too Much, Too Young", *Daily Mail*, 19 February 2010, <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1252156/DAVID-CAMERON-Sexualisation-children-too-young.html>>.

material at the internet service provider (ISP) level (with an opt-out option). The most recent advances in filtering technology have made such a mandatory scheme technically feasible and economically affordable.

Pornography exposure among children is often accidental – but it just as addictive and destructive. A national system that filters pornography will be particularly effective at reducing harm among children.

ISP internet filtering has had much discussion in Parliament over the last decade. Other nations have already sought to block out harmful pornographic sites, and we need to learn from their experience in terms of how successful or effective they have been. Singapore provides an example of how the issue can be dealt with:

The Republic of Singapore is an economic leader in Southeast Asia, with a vibrant information and communications technologies sector; however, the state maintains strong formal and informal controls over the information to which its citizens have access. Singapore's official position is that the state filters Internet content to promote social values and maintain national unity, with the goal of denying access to objectionable material, especially pornography and content encouraging ethnic or religious strife. The Media Development Authority (MDA) claims to block only a symbolic list of 100 Web sites (primarily pornography) as a symbol of the state's disapproval of this content. In addition, the MDA encourages, and each of Singapore's three primary Internet Service Providers offers, optional, filtered Internet access services that block additional sites for a minimal monthly fee.⁷⁴

Internet customers in the UK are prohibited from accessing a range of web sites by default, because they have their Internet access filtered by their ISPs. The filtering program has applied to new ISP customers since the end of 2013, and has been extended to existing users on a rolling basis. A voluntary code of practice agreed by all major ISPs means that customers have to 'opt out' of the ISP filtering to gain access to the blocked content.⁷⁵

Many options are available, and some might work better than others. We believe the clean feed version with an opt-out option, only to be authorised by adults, to be the best. Holding ISPs accountable for what content they allow could be considered.

⁷⁴ "Internet Filtering in Singapore in 2004-2005: A Country Study," <<https://opennet.net/studies/singapore>>.

⁷⁵ "Web blocking in the United Kingdom", *Wikipedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_blocking_in_the_United_Kingdom>.

Families are becoming increasingly active online and more likely to accidentally be confronted by pornography images while searching the internet. Children are unaware that they are one click away from porn website. Leading nations, e.g. the UK, have successfully implemented policies to ensure higher levels of ISP level filtering to protect the children of their nation from harm.

4.3 Recommendation 2: Mandatory Filtering of the Internet at Public Libraries, Schools and Government Service Providers

While the State Government cannot mandate internet filtering at the national level (recommendation 1 above), it can do so for state-based services such as public libraries, schools and other government services.

Filtering systems in elementary schools and/or public libraries need to be introduced as a matter of urgency. Looking at ready availability of pornography on smart phones should also be considered. Many things in fact can be examined here. We owe it to our children to keep working on this and provide them the protection they deserve.

4.4 Recommendation 3: Mandatory School Education on the Harmful Effects of Pornography

We call on the NSW Government to mandate the teaching of the harmful effects of pornography in the curriculum. This curriculum must be evidence/fact-based, age-appropriate, offer parents resources (such as internet filtering options for computer and mobile devices) and sensitively delivered.

4.5 Recommendation 4: Funding for Non-Profit Organisations That Aim to Free People from Pornography Addiction

We call on the NSW Government to provide annual funding to non-profit, community-based organisations that work with children, women and men to free them from pornography addictions.

4.6 Recommendation 5: Government Health Warning

We wish to submit a recommendation that the Federal Government Legislate the placement of a visible warning label (such as is currently displayed on tobacco products) on all sexually explicit material including digital material to prevent harm to children:

WARNING

Sexually explicit material may cause harm to children.

It might also cause sexual addiction and

personal and relational difficulties.

4.7 Recommendation 6: Child Sexual Abuse and the Need for Help Centres and Education Programmes

In the light of the enormous personal, family and economic costs of child sexual abuse, which more than one million Australians report having suffered, we propose the establishment of Child Sexual Abuse Help Centres and an educational multimedia campaign to:

- a) Expose the problem of child sexual abuse by exposing the culture of secrecy, silence and shame.
- b) Train parents to empower their children to recognise and reject abusive behaviour.
- c) Train children to trust their instinctive rejection of inappropriate adult behaviour.
- d) Inform and educate about child sexual abuse through co-ordinated website development.
- e) Provide assistance to those affected, through Child Sexual Abuse Help Centres.
- f) Provide training and support of workers in Child Sexual Abuse Help Centres to assist child victims.
- g) Provide assistance for those adult victims who want to break the cycle of abuse, and child sexual abuse offenders who genuinely want help.

5.0 Conclusion

This submission has argued that pornography is harmful to children, women and men. We have specifically addressed the following points of reference of this inquiry. In summary:

- (a) We have demonstrated the young age (on average, before 13 years) of first exposure to pornography and the harmful impacts of early exposure to pornography.
- (b) We have demonstrated the internet and mobile devices as today's primary media by which pornography is accessed and circulated. Online pornography is a drastically increasing industry.
- (c) We have demonstrated the link of pornography to negative impacts on body image.

(f) We have demonstrated the impact of exposure to violent and/or misogynistic pornography on children, teenagers and young adults.

(i) We have provided examples from Singapore and the UK of some effectiveness current restrictions on access to pornography. We have also made specific recommendations of how these may be improved and implemented.

While there have been previous government inquiries into the harmful effects of pornography (such as the *Inquiry into age verification for online wagering and online pornography*⁷⁶), to date there is too little to show from these endeavors.

This Inquiry represents a fresh opportunity for real action. We once again applaud the NSW Government for undertaking this Inquiry, and urge the committee to take the evidence presented in this submission and the recommendations presented with all diligence.

⁷⁶ Australian Parliament House, "Inquiry into age verification for online wagering and online pornography", <https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/Onlineageverification>.