

## **Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Domestic Violence and Gender Inequality**

### **Introduction**

*Collective Shout* welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Finance and Public Administration Reference Committee regarding the relationship between domestic violence and gender inequality.

Collective Shout is a grassroots campaign movement targeting corporations, advertisers, marketers and media that objectify and sexualise women and girls in order to sell products and services.

Collective Shout also provides education services for parents and students on the effects of a hyper-sexualised popular culture. We are concerned by the increasing pornification of culture and the way its messages have become entrenched in mainstream society, presenting distorted and dishonest ideas about women and girls, sexuality, and relationships. Collective Shout is one of the few organisations making the link between acts of violence against women and the endemic culture of sexual objectification of girls and women.

Pornified culture passes on the message to women and girls that their only value is their sex appeal. The proliferation of sexualised images of women and girls is linked to mental health problems such as low self-esteem, poor body image, eating disorders, depression and self-harm.<sup>1</sup> In February 2016, Collective Shout hosted the inaugural Australian symposium on the harms of pornography for young people at the University of New South Wales.<sup>2</sup> Academic and other authorities in the field who spoke at the symposium identified pornography as a public health crisis requiring urgent intervention.

We are also against the sexual exploitation of women more broadly, through the inter-linked industries of prostitution, trafficking and pornography.. Collective Shout's supporters include survivors of the sex trade and their recounted experiences of harm and social isolation inform our responses to this inquiry.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. Australian Psychological Society (2016). "Sexualisation of girls". At <http://www.psychology.org.au/community/public-interest/sexualisation/>; American Psychological Association (2007). "Sexualisation of girls is linked to common mental health problems in girls and women". At <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2007/02/sexualization.aspx>.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.pornharmskids.org.au/](http://www.pornharmskids.org.au/).

The Australian Government has made an important step in identifying gender inequality as the major causal factor in domestic violence. Collective Shout encourages this focus in the Government's current inquiry. While issues such as alcohol, individual psychopathology and socio-economic factors such as poverty have often been associated with domestic violence, they are neither necessary nor sufficient factors in domestic violence, and therefore cannot be considered part of its underlying causes. This finding has been widely confirmed in the Australian and international literature on the causes of domestic violence.<sup>3</sup>

It is Collective Shout's belief that the objectification of women is a major underlying driver of all forms of male violence against women, and we are concerned that this factor is not strongly enough emphasised in a framework focused solely on "gender inequality". The objectification of women takes place in a wide variety of ways, but in this submission we focus on pornography and the sexualisation of women and girls in advertising, marketing, the media, and popular culture generally. We also address the issue of prostitution.

Collective Shout welcomes the ambitious and laudable targets set by the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children. However these targets cannot be reached if policies and legislation allow objectification to take place in the pornography, prostitution and marketing industries. Collective Shout therefore recommends that in this Inquiry the Committee consider the links between these phenomena, gender inequality and domestic violence.

We are pleased to address the terms of the Inquiry in the sections below.

## **1. The role of gender inequality in all spheres of life in contributing to the prevalence of domestic violence**

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<sup>3</sup> e.g. Wall, L. (2014). "Gender inequality and violence against women: What's the connection?" Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault; VicHealth (2007). *Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria*. At <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/preventing-violence-before-it-occurs>; Our Watch (2014). "Policy brief 2: An emerging theory of change". At [https://www.ourwatch.org.au/MediaLibraries/OurWatch/our-publications/Policy\\_Brief\\_2\\_Theory\\_of\\_Change.pdf](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/MediaLibraries/OurWatch/our-publications/Policy_Brief_2_Theory_of_Change.pdf); Jewkes, R. (2002) "Intimate partner violence: Causes and prevention". *The Lancet* 359, 1423-1429; World Health Organization (2010). *Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: Taking action and generating evidence*. At [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/publications/violence/9789241564007\\_eng.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/violence/9789241564007_eng.pdf).

Researchers have long made links between gender inequality and violence against women, (including domestic violence), and Feminists have placed these harms in the framework of patriarchal power relations that systematically position men over women.<sup>4</sup> These systematic power differentials between women and men at every level (societal, community, relationship and individual) produce disadvantage for women in almost all areas. Combined with the socialisation of men to aggressive and violent forms of masculinity,<sup>5</sup> they have the effect of increasing and legitimating violence against women, including domestic violence.<sup>6</sup>

Collective Shout supports the efforts by the Australian government to address domestic violence. However, we believe it is contradictory to try to reduce domestic violence through addressing gender inequality while major forms of gender inequality emerging from the objectification of women in sexualised advertising, marketing, media and popular culture (addressed in the next section), pornography, and prostitution<sup>7</sup> are legal or decriminalised in many Australian jurisdictions. The widespread objectification of women is both caused by, and contributes to, the gender inequality that causes domestic violence. Addressing one form of violence against women – domestic violence – in complete isolation from these other forms is an incomplete strategy.

## **Prostitution**

Prostitution and pornography are forms of violence against women because within them women “are subjected to sexual acts that in any other context, acted against any other woman, would be labelled assaultive or, at the very least, unwanted and coerced.”<sup>8</sup> The large majority of prostituted people are women,<sup>9</sup> and within the

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<sup>4</sup> Wall, L. (2014). “Gender inequality and violence against women: What’s the connection?” Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.

<sup>5</sup> Heise, L. (1998). “Violence against women, an integrated, ecological framework. *Violence Against Women*, 4(4), 2622-2690; True, J. (2012). *The political economy of violence against women*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>6</sup> World Health Organization (2010). *Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: Taking action and generating evidence*. At [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/publications/violence/9789241564007\\_eng.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/violence/9789241564007_eng.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> For more detail about the links between gender inequality and prostitution, pornography and the sexualisation of women and girls, see, e.g., Coy, M. (ed.) (2012) *Prostitution, harm and gender inequality: Theory, research and policy*. Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate; DeKeseredy, W. and Corsianos, M. (2015) *Violence against women in pornography*. Cincinnati, OH: Taylor & Francis; and Reist, M. (2009) *Getting real: Challenging the sexualisation of women and girls*. Melbourne: Spinifex Press.

<sup>8</sup> Giobbe, E. (1991). “Buying the right to rape”. In Ann Wolpert Burgess (ed.) *Child Trauma: Issues and Research*. New York: Garland Publishing, p.159. Cited in Jeffreys, S. (2008). *The Idea of Prostitution*. Melbourne: Spinifex Press, p.242.

<sup>9</sup> Sullivan, M. (2005). “What happens when prostitution becomes work?” Amherst, MA: Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, p.6.

pornography industry the extreme violence of pornography is enacted in the large majority of cases on woman “actors”.<sup>10</sup>

Prostituted women experience two forms of violence: paid and unpaid. Paid violence includes the acts that prostituted women are paid to endure, while unpaid violence includes the sexual and physical violence that the women are not paid for, which are carried out by buyers, pimps and other men.<sup>11</sup> A study undertaken in five countries found that:

- 73% of the prostituted persons interviewed experienced physical assault during prostitution,
- 62% reported being raped,
- 67% fitted criteria for PTSD and
- 92% wanted to leave prostitution.<sup>12</sup>

Women in prostitution commonly experience pain, abrasion and bleeding of the vagina and anus, and dissociate emotionally to survive the abuse.<sup>13</sup> 2006 research on 72 prostituted women in Sydney found that 71 interviewees had experienced trauma, typically beginning in early childhood. Just under half met the criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and depression and drug dependence were highly prevalent.<sup>14</sup>

Prostituted women “performing” in pornography suffer from a wide range of injuries as well as Sexually Transmitted Infections.<sup>15</sup> Mainstream internet pornography is “overwhelmingly centred on acts of violence and degradation toward women.”<sup>16</sup> Content analysis of best-selling videos has found that 88% of scenes involve acts of physical aggression, with 70% of these acts perpetrated by men and 87% of them committed against women.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that these forms of objectification of and violence against women are tolerated by Australian state governments is a major contributor to gender inequality. It is legal to buy women for prostitution in some form in Victoria, Queensland,

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<sup>10</sup> Dines, G. (2010). *Pornland: How porn has hijacked our sexuality*. Boston: Beacon Press.

<sup>11</sup> Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Australia (2012). “7 reasons for not legalising prostitution”. At [http://catwa.org.au/files/images/CATWA\\_pamphlet\\_2012.pdf](http://catwa.org.au/files/images/CATWA_pamphlet_2012.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Farley, M. et al. (1998). “Prostitution in five countries: Violence and post-traumatic stress disorder”. *Feminism and Psychology* 8.

<sup>13</sup> Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Australia (2012). “7 reasons for not legalising prostitution”. At [http://catwa.org.au/files/images/CATWA\\_pamphlet\\_2012.pdf](http://catwa.org.au/files/images/CATWA_pamphlet_2012.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Roxburgh A., Degenhardt L., Copeland J. (2006). “Posttraumatic stress disorder among female street-based sex workers in the greater Sydney area, Australia”. *BMC Psychiatry* 6:24.

<sup>15</sup> Dines, G. (2010). *Pornland: How porn has hijacked our sexuality*. Boston: Beacon Press, p.xxviii

<sup>16</sup> Sun, C., et al. (2013). “Pornography and the male sexual script: An analysis of consumption and sexual relations”. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory. Prostitution is decriminalised in NSW and the ACT. It is illegal in South Australia, though attempts have recently been made to decriminalise it there.<sup>18</sup> It is worth thinking about the message being sent to young men and women by the fact that prostitution is effectively sanctioned in almost all Australian jurisdictions: that women are simply commodities to be bought and sold according to men's sexual whims.

Collective Shout believes such a message to be incompatible with gender equality. This is the conclusion reached also by a large number of women's and other groups in Australia and worldwide.<sup>19</sup> For example, the European Parliament found in its 2014 report *Sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality* that prostitution was contrary to the principle of gender equality enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights.<sup>20</sup>

## **Pornography**

Pornography is minimally regulated in Australia except for child pornography, though laws vary somewhat between states. However, child pornography can be easily accessed due to the laxity of government regulation, and pornography is often displayed in ways visible and easily accessible to children; for example, on sale at service stations and corner stores.<sup>21</sup>

Again, the Government's silence on the topic of pornography and inaction over these issues effectively sanctions its existence. Australian research has found that substantial proportions of boys are regular consumers of X-rated video and internet pornography, and Flood and Fergus suggest that it is a significant influence on boys' adherence to violence-supportive attitudes.<sup>22</sup> Further, a 2012 review of the impact of internet porn on adolescents found that adolescent consumption of internet porn was linked to attitudinal changes such as the acceptance of male dominance and female submission as the primary sexual paradigm, with women viewed as "sexual

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<sup>18</sup> Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (n.d.) at <http://catwa.org.au/?q=Statelegislations>.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Collective Shout, the European Women's Lobby, Equality Now, SPACE International, Survivors for Solutions, the Institute for Feminism and Human Rights, Eaves Charity for Women.

<sup>20</sup> European Parliament Directorate General for Internal Policies (2014). "Sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality". At [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/493040/IPOL-FEMM\\_ET\(2014\)493040\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/493040/IPOL-FEMM_ET(2014)493040_EN.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Collective Shout (2011). At [https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/collectiveshout/pages/655/attachments/original/1421819882/Collective\\_Shout\\_submission\\_on\\_classification\\_review.pdf?1421819882](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/collectiveshout/pages/655/attachments/original/1421819882/Collective_Shout_submission_on_classification_review.pdf?1421819882).

<sup>22</sup> Flood, M. and Fergus, L. (2010). "An Assault on our future: The impact of violence on young people and their relationships". At [http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/Research\\_series/An\\_assault\\_on\\_our\\_future\\_FULL\\_Flood\\_Fergus\\_2010.pdf](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/Research_series/An_assault_on_our_future_FULL_Flood_Fergus_2010.pdf), p.27.

playthings eager to fulfil male sexual desires”.<sup>23</sup> Finally, a 2015 meta-analysis of 22 studies from 7 countries found that pornography consumption was positively and significantly correlated with sexual aggression.<sup>24</sup> These results are not surprising given the messages communicated through pornography: according to media scholar Gail Dines, the messages boil down to the idea that “[women] are always ready for sex and are enthusiastic to do whatever men want, irrespective of how painful, humiliating or harmful the act is.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Effects of pornography on intimate relationships**

The World Health Organisation’s 2010 report on preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women, which identifies gender inequality as a major societal factor causing domestic violence, notes:

Sexual violence committed by men is to a large extent rooted in ideologies of male sexual entitlement. These belief systems grant women extremely few legitimate options to refuse sexual advances. Many men thus simply exclude the possibility that their sexual advances towards a woman might be rejected or that a woman has the right to make an autonomous decision about participating in sex. In many cultures, women as well as men regard marriage as entailing an obligation on women to be sexually available virtually without limit, though sex may be culturally proscribed at certain times, such as after childbirth or during menstruation.<sup>27</sup>

It is clear that these ideologies of male sexual entitlement that manifest themselves within marriage and relationships are supported by prostitution and pornography, the existence of which suggests to men that they are entitled to buy women for sex at any time, whether in person or on camera, and that women will be ready and willing to fulfil and/or obliged to submit to their every desire. It is inconceivable that these messages could not be contributing to gender inequality and thereby to domestic violence.

As well as supporting the ideologies of gender inequality that constitute the root cause of domestic violence, pornography frequently plays a direct role in domestic violence. The direct links between pornography and domestic violence can be seen in the recent example of the pornography site *Pornhub*, which recently announced that it was releasing a line of porn-themed t-shirts to raise money for a “domestic abuse charity”. However, the first Google search result for “Pornhub domestic violence” is a link to

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<sup>23</sup> Owens, et al. (2012). “The impact of internet pornography on adolescents: A review of the research”. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 19 99-122.

<sup>24</sup> Wright, P. et al. (2016). “A meta-analysis of pornography consumption and actual acts of sexual aggression in general population studies”. *Journal of Communication* 66, 183-205.

<sup>25</sup> Dines, G. (2010). *Pornland: How porn has hijacked our sexuality*. Boston: Beacon Press, p.xxiii.

<sup>27</sup> World Health Organization (2010). *Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: Taking action and generating evidence*, p.29.

its many videos tagged “domestic violence”, while the second links to videos tagged “sexual abuse”.<sup>28</sup> It should thus be no surprise that victims of domestic violence often report that pornography played a role in their abuse.<sup>29</sup> For instance, in a 2000 study of 100 women who presented at a rape crisis centre, 28% said that their abuser used pornography; of them, 40% said it was part of the abuse and 43% said it affected the nature of the abuse. 21% thought it increased the frequency of abuse and 14% thought it increased the level of the violence. 12% believed the abuser imitated what he saw in pornography and 14% said he tried to force them to do something he had seen in pornography.<sup>30</sup>

This academic research is backed up by the testimony of a director of a Queensland sexual violence counselling service:

In the past few years we have had a huge increase in intimate partner rape of women from 14 to 80+. The biggest common denominator is consumption of porn by the offender. With offenders not able to differentiate between fantasy and reality, believing women are “up for it” 24/7, ascribing to the myth that “no means yes and yes means anal”, oblivious to injuries caused and never ever considering consent. We have seen a huge increase in deprivation of liberty, physical injuries, torture, drugging, filming and sharing footage without consent. I founded the centre 25 years ago and what is now considered to be the norm in 2015 is frightening. I wonder where we will be in another 10 years.<sup>31</sup>

### **Effects of Pornography on teenagers**

Doctors report that young girls are increasingly suffering internal injuries due to being pressured into porn-inspired sex acts, including group sex. Some girls are also contracting the Human Papilloma Virus through oral sex, and some later develop throat cancer as a result.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Murphy, M. “Pornhub’s new domestic violence clothing line is a slap in the face”. *Feminist Current*, January 26 2016. At <http://www.feministcurrent.com/2016/01/26/pornhubs-new-domestic-violence-clothing-line-is-a-slap-in-the-face/>.

<sup>29</sup> Sommers, J. and Check, E. (1987). “An empirical investigation of the role of pornography in the verbal and physical abuse of women”. *Violence and Victims* 2(1), 189-209; Shope, J. (2004). “When words are not enough: The search for the effect of pornography on abused women”. *Violence Against Women* 10(1), 56-72.

<sup>30</sup> Bergen, R. and Bogle, K. (2000). “Exploring the connection between pornography and sexual violence”. *Violence and Victims* 15(3), 227-234.

<sup>31</sup> Di Macleod, Director of the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence, personal correspondence to Melinda Tankard Reist, 7 April 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Pearson, A. (2015). “Pornography has changed the landscape of adolescence beyond all recognition”. *The Telegraph*, April 22. At <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/mother-tongue/11554595/Pornography-has-changed-the-landscape-of-adolescence-beyond-all-recognition.html>.

Teenage girls report to Collective Shout that they are increasingly pressured by boys to provide porn-inspired acts, and feel obliged to submit to acts despite not liking them. Pressure from boys to provide naked images are common even among 12- to 13-year-old girls; these images are then swapped and shared among boys and used to humiliate girls.

Girls are frequently sexually harassed and groped at school.<sup>34</sup> A recent survey of 600 Australian girls aged 15-19 found that 82% believed it unacceptable for boyfriends to ask for explicit pictures, but 51% believed girls are pressured into sending such pictures.<sup>35</sup> In the face of the physical and psychological harms routinely suffered by women in prostitution and in, or due to, pornography, it is difficult to see how these practices could not be considered forms of violence against women.

In the foreword to the 2012 report *Basically... porn is everywhere*, Deputy Children's Commissioner for the UK Sue Berelowitz highlighted the links between pornography and the violence of boys against girls:

The first year of our Inquiry ... revealed shocking rates of sexual violation of children and young people... The Inquiry team heard children recount appalling stories about being raped by both older males and peers, often in extremely violent and sadistic circumstances, and in abusive situations that frequently continued for years... The use of and children's access to pornography emerged as a key theme... It was mentioned by boys in witness statements after being apprehended for the rape of a child, one of whom said it was 'like being in a porn movie'; we had frequent accounts of both girls' and boys' expectations of sex being drawn from pornography they had seen; and professionals told us troubling stories of the extent to which teenagers and younger children routinely access pornography, including extreme and violent images. We also found compelling evidence that too many boys believe that they have an absolute entitlement to sex at any time, in any place, in any way and with whomever they wish. Equally worryingly, we heard that too often girls feel they have no alternative but to submit to boys' demands, regardless of their own wishes.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> see, e.g. Tankard Reist, M. (2014). "Wolfwhistling is not a compliment..." At <http://melindatankardreist.com/2014/07/if-we-reject-your-request-to-send-a-sexual-image-please-dont-stop-talking-to-us-what-girls-want-boys-to-know-personal-appeals-from-the-heart/>. See also: Tankard Reist, M (2016) 'Growing up in Pornland: Girls have had it with porn conditioned boys', ABC Religion & Ethics, March 7, 2016 at <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2016/03/07/4420147.htm>

<sup>35</sup> See <https://www.plan.org.au/learn/who-we-are/blog/2016/03/02/dont-send-me-that-pic>.

<sup>36</sup> Horvath, M. et al. (2012). *Basically... porn is everywhere: A rapid evidence assessment of the effects that access and exposure to pornography has on children and young people*. Office of the Children's Commissioner (UK). At [https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Basically\\_porn\\_is\\_everywhere.pdf](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Basically_porn_is_everywhere.pdf).



Prostitution, pornography and domestic violence should be seen as a continuum of violence against women,<sup>52</sup> and as such are all manifestations of the same phenomena and all are simultaneously both causes of, and consequences of, gender inequality. Consequently, trying to address domestic violence alone, while refusing to acknowledge that prostitution and pornography are forms of violence against women, is to a large extent self-defeating.

### **Recommendations:**

- The objectification of women be made central to government policy makers in understanding the connection between gender inequality and domestic violence.
- Prostitution and pornography be officially recognised by the Government as forms of violence against women and as factors both caused by, and contributing to, gender inequality.

## **2. The role of gender stereotypes in contributing to cultural conditions which support domestic violence, including, but not limited to, messages conveyed to children and young people in:**

- a. the marketing of toys and other products,**
- b. education, and**
- c. entertainment**

One of the strongest cross-cultural predictors and risk factors for violence against women, including domestic violence, is adherence to strict, hierarchical gender roles. This is a risk factor at all levels, whether of individuals who hold attitudes supporting strict gender stereotypes, relationships showing a rigid division of gender roles or in which conflict over gender roles occurs, in communities where traditional gender roles are widely accepted, and in ideologies prevailing at the broadest societal levels.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Kelly, L. (1988). *Surviving Sexual Violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>53</sup> E.g. Our Watch (2014). "Policy brief 2: An emerging theory of change". At [https://www.ourwatch.org.au/MediaLibraries/OurWatch/our-publications/Policy\\_Brief\\_2\\_Theory\\_of\\_Change.pdf](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/MediaLibraries/OurWatch/our-publications/Policy_Brief_2_Theory_of_Change.pdf); Jewkes, R. (2002) "Intimate partner violence: Causes and prevention". *The Lancet* 359, 1423-1429; World Health Organization (2010). *Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: Taking action and generating evidence*. At [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/publications/violence/9789241564007\\_eng.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/violence/9789241564007_eng.pdf).

International research demonstrates that men with traditional ideas about gender roles are more likely to perpetrate violence against women,<sup>54</sup> and a study of 12-20 year old Australians showed that those with the strongest tolerance for violence in relationships were significantly more likely to hold traditional ideas about gender roles.<sup>55</sup> This suggests that gender stereotypes, in contributing to the construction of rigid gender roles, are highly likely to contribute to cultural conditions supporting domestic violence.

Gender stereotyping is rife in the marketing of toys and other products,<sup>56</sup> in education,<sup>57</sup> and in entertainment.<sup>58</sup> Such messages, communicated through these means and many others, clearly contribute to the construction of the rigid gender role stereotypes that are implicated in violence against women. Children take on the messages communicated in these media to create fixed ideas about what behaviours and attributes are appropriate for women and men.

A wide range of research has found that gender stereotypes shape children's worldview from an early age. For example, a Dutch study found that young people who seek out certain kinds of media, such as hip hop and hard house music, are more likely to hold gender stereotypical views.<sup>59</sup> Welsh research has found that by late primary school children already have clear ideas about the jobs that are suitable for

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<sup>54</sup> World Health Organization (2010). *Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: Taking action and generating evidence*. At [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/publications/violence/9789241564007\\_eng.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/violence/9789241564007_eng.pdf);

<sup>55</sup> Flood, M. and Fergus, L. (2010). "An Assault on our future: The impact of violence on young people and their relationships". At [http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/Research\\_series/An\\_assault\\_on\\_our\\_future\\_FULL\\_Flood\\_Fergus\\_2010.pdf](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/Research_series/An_assault_on_our_future_FULL_Flood_Fergus_2010.pdf), p.25.

<sup>56</sup> E.g. Browne, B. (1998). "Gender stereotypes in advertising on children's television in the 1990s: A cross-national analysis". *Journal of Advertising* 27(1), 83-96; Murnen, S. et al. (2016). "Boys act and girls appear: A content analysis of gender stereotypes associated with characters in children's popular culture". *Sex Roles* 74, 78-91.

<sup>57</sup> For example, the Council of Europe (2014). *Combating gender stereotypes in and through education*. At <https://www.coe.int/t/DGHL/STANDARDSETTING/EQUALITY/03themes/gender%20stereotypes%20and%20sexism/Report%202020NFP%20Conference%20Helsinki%20-%20Education.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> e.g. Dill, K. and Thill, K. (2007). "Video game characters and the socialization of gender roles: Young people's perceptions mirror sexist media depictions". *Sex Roles* 57, 851-864; Hylmö, A. (2006). "Girls on film: An examination of gendered vocational socialization messages found in motion pictures targeting teenage girls". *Western Journal of Communication* 70(3), 167-185; Lauzen, M. et al. (2008). "Constructing gender stereotypes through social roles in prime-time television". *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 52(2), 200-214.

<sup>59</sup> Bogt, T. et al. (2010). "'Shake it baby, shake it': Media preferences, sexual attitudes and gender stereotypes among adolescents". *Sex Roles* 63, 844-859.

boys and girls.<sup>60</sup> Finally, Scottish research found that 11- and 12-year olds interpreted men's violence against women through the framework of the normalisation of violence as a natural part of men's identity.<sup>61</sup> These and many other findings suggest that children absorb gender stereotypes early in their lives from the messages around them.

Given the above evidence about how ubiquitous gender stereotypes are, how easily they are absorbed by children, and how they are implicated in domestic violence, a serious concern for policymakers should be the escalating sexualisation of women and girls through pornographic representations in retail marketing. An example of the ubiquity of sexualised advertisements was documented recently by Collective Shout.<sup>62</sup> At a major shopping centre in Melbourne over a half-hour period, close to 50 images depicting the objectification and sexualisation of women were observed, in an environment heavily frequented by young children and teenage girls and boys.

Such objectification, sexualisation and pornification has become normalised in many spheres of society, such as in advertising, entertainment, marketing, the media, and popular culture generally, and contribute greatly to the strict gender stereotypes that are implicated in domestic violence. The proliferation of these images inevitably affects how men and boys perceive women.

We would like to highlight the fact that sexualised, objectifying representations of women and girls displayed in workplaces constitute sexual harassment under anti-discrimination law.<sup>63</sup> However, the open display of similar objectified and sexualised images of women in the public domain is exempt from sexual harassment laws. If this material has been ruled inappropriate for workplaces or schools, Collective Shout asks why it is considered acceptable as the 'wallpaper' of the public domain, where members of the public have no choice but to view it.

Collective Shout believes that girls and women have the right to go through their lives without encountering objectifying and sexualised images of women and girls. We support the recommendations of the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and

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<sup>60</sup> Hutchinson, J. et al. (2013). "Gendered horizons: Boys' and girls' perceptions of job and career choices". At <http://derby.openrepository.com/derby/handle/10545/304844>.

<sup>61</sup> Lombard, N. (2013). "Young people's temporal and spatial accounts of gendered violence". *Sociology* 47(6), 1136-1151.

<http://theconversation.com/violence-against-women-starts-with-school-stereotypes-18440>

<sup>62</sup> Alison, C. (2016). "All this and more in 30 minutes". At [http://www.collectiveshout.org/all\\_this\\_and\\_more\\_in\\_30\\_minutes](http://www.collectiveshout.org/all_this_and_more_in_30_minutes).

<sup>63</sup> For example, see *Horne and McIntosh v Press Clough Joint Venture and Metals and Engineering Workers' Union WA*, Equal Opportunity Tribunal of WA, nos 28 and 30 of 1992, 21 April 1994; and *Hopper v Mount Isa Mines Ltd* [1997] QADT 3 (29 January 1997), and *Mount Isa Mines Ltd v Hopper* [1998] QSC 287. See also Rosewarne, L. (2007). *Sex in public: Women, outdoor advertising, and public policy*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub.

Legal Affairs inquiry into the regulation of billboard and outdoor advertising (July 2011) that the “unrestricted display of racist or sexualised images in the public space [be included] under the scope of discriminatory practice” (recommendation 4) and that the sexual objectification of men, women and children in advertising be proscribed (recommendation 8).<sup>64</sup>

However, regulation of sexualised advertising in Australia is woefully weak. In Collective Shout’s experience of campaigning against instances of sexualised advertising or products, regulatory bodies such as the Advertising Standards Bureau(ASB) act in only a minority of cases and do not impose penalties for non-compliance. The effects of such advertising on young people is disregarded entirely, and offensive advertising or products are frequently removed only after sustained community activism.

For example, in February 2013 a billboard advertisement for a strip club was placed directly outside a Brisbane boys’ high school, and initial complaints to the ASB were rejected. The billboard was finally removed only after a community-based campaign, and similar advertisements in nearby locations were not affected by this change.<sup>65</sup> This is just one example among many that demonstrate the ineffectiveness of Australia’s current system of advertising regulation.

A growing body of Australian and international research demonstrates the negative effects of such representations on all people, but particularly on children and young people who absorb these messages before adulthood.<sup>66</sup> As the Australian Psychological Association told the Senate Committee Inquiry into the sexualisation of children, “Girls learn to see and think of their bodies as objects of others’ desire, to be looked at and evaluated for its appearance.”<sup>67</sup> Such images also socialise men and boys to see the sexualisation of women and girls as acceptable and normal. This contributes to the creation of gender stereotypes of women being sexually available

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<sup>64</sup> House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into the regulation of billboard and outdoor advertising (July 2011). At [http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House\\_of\\_Representatives\\_Committees?url=spla/outdoor%20advertising/report.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=spla/outdoor%20advertising/report.htm).

<sup>65</sup> Collective Shout (2013). At [https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/collectiveshout/pages/656/attachments/original/1421825658/Collective\\_Shout\\_submission\\_Explicit\\_Outdoor\\_Advertising\\_QLD.pdf?1421825658](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/collectiveshout/pages/656/attachments/original/1421825658/Collective_Shout_submission_Explicit_Outdoor_Advertising_QLD.pdf?1421825658).

<sup>66</sup> See, e.g. Australian Psychological Society (2016). “Sexualisation of girls”. At <http://www.psychology.org.au/community/public-interest/sexualisation/>; American Psychological Association (2007). “Sexualization of girls is linked to common mental health problems in girls and women”. At <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2007/02/sexualization.aspx>.

<sup>67</sup> See submission 115 at [http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eca\\_ctte/sexualisation\\_of\\_children/submissions/sublist.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eca_ctte/sexualisation_of_children/submissions/sublist.htm).

and submissive,<sup>68</sup> and to the creation and maintenance of the rigid gender roles that are such a critical factor in the perpetration of domestic violence, including sexual violence within intimate relationships.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The objectification and sexualisation of women and girls be a central consideration in the regulation of advertising, marketing, and the media
- The prevalence of sexualised images of women and girls in Australian society be recognised as a significant underlying contributor to violence against women and girls.
- The role of the Advertising Standards Bureau be reviewed, and a new code of ethics on objectification form part of the ASB's criteria for complaints.

### **3. The role of government initiatives at every level in addressing the underlying causes of domestic violence, including the commitments under, or related to, the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children**

There is much potential for government initiatives to address issues of the objectification of women through sexualised advertising, prostitution and pornography as well as other forms of gender inequality. Collective Shout believes that the government initiatives that will have the best chance of success at reducing gender inequality are those that act to reduce these and other forms of objectification of women.

Such initiatives will help the government fulfil its commitments under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.<sup>69</sup> Outcome 1 of the National Plan is that communities are safe and free from violence. Communities can never be safe and free from violence while pornography and prostitution exist, because these themselves are forms of violence, as well as contribute to the perpetration of domestic violence (see Section 1). It is contradictory for a community to be intolerant of domestic violence but tolerant of prostitution and pornography.

Outcome 2 of the National Plan is that relationships are respectful. As long as it is possible for men to go out and buy women's bodies for sex in prostitution, watch sexual violence being enacted against them in pornography, and men are surrounded by sexualised images of women and girls, relationships cannot be respectful. The

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<sup>68</sup> Report of the American Psychological Association Task Force on the sexualisation of girls, at <http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report.aspx>.

<sup>69</sup> COAG (2014). "National plan to reduce violence against women and their children". At [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08\\_2014/national\\_plan1.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2014/national_plan1.pdf).

current situation has significant negative effects on young people: seeing that such objectification of women is possible and implicitly sanctioned by the government and wider society makes it difficult, if not impossible, for them to develop equal and positive relationships.

Outcome 6 is that perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account. Introducing measures to penalise those who buy prostituted women, use pornography or create and/or disseminate sexualised images of women and girls will effectively achieve this aim.

The following initiatives will contribute to the achievement of these outcomes:

*Pornography and the sexualisation of girls and women in advertising*

Collective Shout has written extensively about measures that could be undertaken to reduce the impacts of sexualised advertising and pornography. These include the overhaul of the film and literature classification scheme<sup>71</sup> to more effectively regulate pornographic material and prevent it reaching children, and the scrapping of the self-regulatory system of advertising,<sup>72</sup> which has proven utterly ineffective. As Collective Shout argued in a recent submission to the Parliament of NSW Committee on Children and Young People:

*“The current legislative and regulatory environment is piecemeal, confusing for the community to navigate, and tends to serve the commercial advantage of corporate and marketing interests to the detriment of the community - children and young people in particular. Despite a number of state and federal inquiries demonstrating the need for systemic reform, media classification and self-regulatory schemes have failed to halt or even slow the proliferation of imagery and messaging through electronic, print and social media and marketing that demeans women, reduces them to sexual objects, fosters a culture which condones sexual violence, and pressures young girls to act in prematurely sexual ways.*

*“Collective Shout is critical of the self-regulatory system currently favoured in media and advertising, which allows free rein to marketers while placing the burden of action on those most at risk of exploitation and harm. In particular, we are concerned about the lack of effective incentive or enforcement to deter those who are making a profit from the sexualisation of children and young people. Media and advertising interests have had ample opportunity to hear and act on community concerns but*

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<sup>71</sup> Collective Shout (2011). At [https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/collectiveshout/pages/655/attachments/original/1421819882/Collective\\_Shout\\_submission\\_on\\_classification\\_review.pdf?1421819882](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/collectiveshout/pages/655/attachments/original/1421819882/Collective_Shout_submission_on_classification_review.pdf?1421819882).

<sup>72</sup> Collective Shout (2013). At [https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/collectiveshout/pages/654/attachments/original/1421817972/Submission\\_Outdoor\\_advertising.pdf?1421817972](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/collectiveshout/pages/654/attachments/original/1421817972/Submission_Outdoor_advertising.pdf?1421817972).

*have instead have chosen to protect their vested interests. It is time for government to step in and act on behalf of children and young people.”<sup>73</sup>*  
*Prostitution*

Collective Shout supports the implementation of the ‘Nordic Model’ as a legislative approach to combat prostitution of women in Australia. This model involves asymmetric decriminalisation, which means that sex buyers and third parties who profit from prostitution are criminalised while victims/survivors of prostitution and trafficking are supported. Thus, prostituted persons are decriminalised but pimping, brothel owning and the buying of sex are prohibited. This model has been adopted in Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Northern Ireland and Canada, and is under consideration in a number of other countries including France, Israel, Scotland and Lithuania. It is a legislative approach that recognises prostitution as a form of violence against women, which, more broadly, undermines gender equality. Evidence shows that the Nordic Model reduces the market for prostitution and trafficking.<sup>74</sup>

The Nordic Model therefore offers a means for the Australian government to meet its obligations under the National Plan as outlined above; particularly Outcome 6 by holding perpetrators of prostitution violence to account and, additionally, Outcomes 4 and 5 (Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence and Justice responses are effective) by providing support for victims/survivors of prostitution.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Restructure the current regulatory environment to bring the regulation of all media and marketing together under one encompassing independent federal regulator, including a division with the primary responsibility of protecting the interests of children and young people
- The Nordic Model be adopted as Australia’s legislative approach to prostitution.

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<sup>73</sup> Collective Shout (2015). At [http://www.collectiveshout.org/submission\\_parliament\\_nsw\\_inquiry\\_sexualisation\\_children\\_young\\_people](http://www.collectiveshout.org/submission_parliament_nsw_inquiry_sexualisation_children_young_people).

<sup>74</sup> Tyler, M. et al. (2013) *Demand Change: Understanding the Nordic Model*. Melbourne: The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Australia at [http://www.catwa.org.au/files/images/Nordic\\_Model\\_Pamphlet.pdf](http://www.catwa.org.au/files/images/Nordic_Model_Pamphlet.pdf)