

Submission to the Open Consultation on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy 2021 to 2024

26 March 2021

Introduction

Collective Shout is pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the Open Consultation on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). We commend your government on its Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020, especially regarding your aims to legislate against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), image-based abuse ('revenge pornography'), coercive/controlling behaviours, modern slavery, and domestic violence. We are also pleased to see the government's plans to work with international partners to address child marriage, forced marriage, and the use of sexual violence in conflict.

Collective Shout is a grassroots campaigning movement challenging the objectification of women and sexualisation of girls. We target corporations, advertisers, marketers and media which exploit the bodies of women and girls to sell products and services and campaign to change their behaviour. More broadly we engage in issues relating to other forms of sexual exploitation, including the interconnected industries of pornography, prostitution and trafficking as well as the growing market in the sale of children for Live Distant Child Abuse.

This submission focuses on three other areas which, if effectively addressed by government, hold great potential to improve outcomes for women and girls:

1. Pornography
2. Sexual objectification
3. Commercial sexual exploitation (prostitution)

1. Pornography

1.1 Education

It is a welcome development that the Home Office is focusing efforts on education in healthy relationships and consent. Collective Shout has for many years been active in the education sector. Movement Director Melinda Tankard Reist works with students, teachers and parents on issues of pornography, sexual objectification, and healthy relationships.¹ Based on these experiences, it is clear that education can only be effective in the context of broader cultural change.

Pornography has become the world's most powerful sexual groomer. In a recent piece for the ABC, Tankard Reist wrote that consent education cannot counter the pervasiveness and influence of online pornography which is undermining consent and respectful relationships education.

With every school workshop I run, I see that overwhelming cultural forces are overpowering any hoped-for advancement. Consent education won't be effective if women are not first seen as human and worthy of dignity and respect. We are, ultimately, talking about a grave and systematic human rights violation.

All the best intentions and efforts cannot compete with the world's biggest department of education: pornography. If we don't address pornography's conditioning of boys, which trains them to accept rape myths — that "no" in fact means "yes" — and which normalises aggression, coercion and domination, these girls and all those that follow don't stand a chance.²

Tankard Reist notes that there is evidence that offenders had already participated in 'consent' training, according to the testimonies of schoolgirls gathered by former student Chanel Contos.³ She observes that "many of the testimonies demonstrate the limitations of the language of "choice" and "consent". Girls often feel as though they didn't really have a choice; consent became merely giving in, or passive compliance."

Compelling evidence of the devastating impact of pornography on women and girls has been delivered to the current Canadian Parliament's investigation into MindGeek.

Collective Shout submitted a brief⁴ to assist the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics in its examination of the conduct of MindGeek, the Canadian-based parent company owners of Pornhub. We presented evidence of MindGeek's facilitating and distributing Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), non-consensual sexual activity, non-consensually shared images (image-based abuse or IBA) and content created using victims of sex trafficking. Along with our global partners the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE, USA)

¹ <https://melindatankardreist.com/>

² Tankard Reist, M. (9 Mar 2021). Why "consent" doesn't stand a chance against porn culture. *ABC Religion and Ethics*. https://www.abc.net.au/religion/consent-education-does-not-stand-a-chance-against-pornography/13231364?fbclid=IwAR3eOwyomJDIU5ophXH5W1F1R_xF2i9N_5UBgmcC1ys-leiSoODRI0zLKsS

³ <https://www.teachusconsent.com/testimonies>

⁴ Collective Shout (2021). *Briefing and Recommendations: Protection of Privacy and Reputation on Platforms Such as Pornhub*. House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/432/ETHI/Brief/BR11186220/br-external/CollectiveShout-e.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2VGUVyil7ek614xzPFHHzXDh_vyeTpiFGT47EDZaF-TFXXOV4rOKULaek

and Defend Dignity (Canada), we asserted that MindGeek has enabled and profited from illegal content—child sexual abuse material, sex trafficking, rape, and image-based abuse—uploaded, streamed and widely distributed across its platforms.

We began documenting the abuse and torture of women and girls in Pornhub content in 2016.⁵ In 2018, Movement Director Melinda Tankard Reist wrote in a piece also for the ABC:

Pornhub is both a repository and disseminator of hate propaganda. It hosts evidence of crimes against women for men to enjoy. Popular videos depict brutal sexual violence against women. Sadistic titles revel in women's inability to stop the violent assaults carried out against them. The most violent have views in the millions. Many titles are centred around the sexual abuse and rape of teen and underage girls. Men are fantasising about raping young girls with impunity while government, children's charities and advocacy groups try to tackle an epidemic of child sexual abuse.

At the Australian House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs hearings for its inquiry into age verification, Campaigns Manager Melinda Liszewski told the Committee:

[Pornhub] is one of the top five favourite sites of boys aged 11 to 16. Common themes on this website include incest; rape; abduction; refugee porn; hidden camera footage of women and girls showering, dressing and using the toilet; footage of trafficking victims; and coercing and restraining women into painful sex acts. We know that Pornhub hosts footage of crimes against women and girls. Recently a mother located her 15-year-old daughter, missing for a year, when she found 60 videos of her on Pornhub; that's how they were able to locate her and make an arrest.⁶

The dissemination of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children extends beyond Pornhub, though it is often interconnected - CSAM on social media platforms can end up on Pornhub and vice versa. It is facilitated by popular search engines, social media platforms, and e-commerce platforms. These mega corporations have been free to host and facilitate distribution of illegal child sexual abuse and exploitation material with impunity.

According to data recently shared by the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE), we are in the grip of a global child sexual exploitation epidemic. There has been a massive leap in the sharing of child sexual exploitation material.⁷ Melinda Tankard Reist wrote about pay per view child

⁵ See Collective Shout (February 2020). Pornhub commits crimes against women and girls. https://www.collectiveshout.org/pornhub_commits_crimes_against_women_and_girls and Collective Shout (June 2020). Racist and antisemitic: Pornhub is a hate group. https://www.collectiveshout.org/pornhub_is_a_hate_group

⁶ Tankard Reist, M. and Liszewski, M. (December 6, 2019). *Evidence given to Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs for Inquiry into Age verification for online pornography and online wagering.* <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;db=COMMITTEES;id=committees%2Fcommre%2F4cd19a9f-be18-4d9d-b70b-c4c04386701f%2F0011;query=Id%3A%22committees%2Fcommrep%2F4cd19a9f-be18-4d9d-b70b-c4c04386701f%2F0010%22>

⁷ For example, 21,000 child sexual exploitation images had been referred to ACCCE, compared to 14,000 last year. The average number of images seized has skyrocketed. According to the AFP, in the early to mid-2000s, offenders averaged about 1000 images; these days it is 10,000 to 80,000 images and videos. Double the number of child abuse files have been shared since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Kennedy, L.

abuse and rape in 2017 for the ABC, drawing on research by International Justice Mission and Anti-Slavery Australia.⁸ We have also highlighted the shocking practice in a number of submissions including to the Inquiry into the NSW Modern Slavery Act 2018 and Associated Matters.⁹ In our global collaborative #WakeUpInstagram campaign,¹⁰ we documented the widespread and routine sexualisation of children, primarily underage girls, on the Facebook-owned platform. Our evidence included male predators using Instagram's 'live' posts to engage with minors and live masturbate in front of them.¹¹

In partnership with NCOSE (USA) and Defend Dignity (Canada), we have called on Instagram to cease hosting child groomers, predators, and paedophile networks.¹² We also support a campaign highlighting widespread CSAM on Twitter.¹³

Following our participation in the ACCCE annual child safety stakeholder workshop in September 2020, we announced our support for the Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The 11 Principles aim to drive collective action from industry to combat online child sexual exploitation.¹⁴ We also support the Department of Home Affairs and Office of the eSafety Commissioner¹⁵ in their opposition to end-to-end encryption (E2EE) across Facebook-owned messaging services.

We have successfully lobbied to have child sex abuse dolls and replica child body parts removed from e-commerce platform Alibaba and are currently campaigning against these and related incest and child abuse-themed products on Etsy.¹⁶ Caitlin Roper, Collective Shout campaigner and global authority on child sex abuse dolls, has researched how child sex abuse dolls contribute to real-life

(September 10, 2020). Australians should be outraged by this offending. Collective Shout, https://www.collectiveshout.org/national_child_protection_week. See also Tankard Reist, M. (April 13, 2014). The dark world of paedophilia exposed. *Sydney Morning Herald*, <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/the-dark-world-of-paedophilia-exposed-20140413-zqu8v.html>

⁸ Tankard Reist, M. (July 6, 2017). Why are Australian telcos and ISPs enabling a child sexual abuse pandemic? *ABC Religion and Ethics*, <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/why-are-australian-telcos-and-isps-enabling-a-child-sexual-abuse/10095644>

⁹ Collective Shout (August 3, 2018). *Submission to Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry into Modern Slavery Bill 2018*, no. 57 at https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/ModernSlavery/Submissions

¹⁰ Alison, C. (November 22, 2019). Help Wake Up Instagram to Child Exploitation! Collective Shout, https://www.collectiveshout.org/help_wake_up_instagram_to_child_exploitation

¹¹ Kennedy, L. (March 17, 2020). School girl's Instagram 'live' post becomes sex predator webcam. Collective Shout, https://www.collectiveshout.org/schoolgirl_instagram_live_post_sex_predator_webcam

¹² See details about this campaign here: https://www.collectiveshout.org/_instagram

¹³ National Center on Sexual Exploitation (January 20, 2021). NCOSE Law Center Hits Twitter with Groundbreaking Sex Trafficking Lawsuit. <https://endsexualexploitation.org/articles/ncose-law-center-hits-twitter-with-groundbreaking-sex-trafficking-lawsuit/>

¹⁴ Kennedy, L. (October 29, 2020). Collective Shout supports Voluntary Principles to counter online child sexual exploitation and abuse. Collective Shout, https://www.collectiveshout.org/11_principles

¹⁵ See our submission to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child: Children's rights in the digital environment https://www.collectiveshout.org/un_sub_children_digital_rights and our submission to Online Safety Legislative Reform https://www.collectiveshout.org/online_safety_legislation_reform

¹⁶ Roper, C. (2020). For more information about these campaigns, see https://www.collectiveshout.org/child_sex_abuse_dolls_faqs

offending; this is a crucial new area of research in understanding sexual violence against women and girls.¹⁷

In our briefing, we made the following recommendations:

1. That MindGeek be held liable for hosting and disseminating content featuring the filmed sexual abuse of children, non-consensual sex acts, image-based abuse and victims of sex trafficking.
2. Prohibit the production and hosting of pornography featuring violence, torture and rape.
3. Take measures to prohibit the eroticisation and normalisation of child sexual abuse and exploitation, incest and paedophilia through all forms of pornography, including anime, manga, and related material featuring children.
4. Update relevant laws to hold corporates including big tech and e-commerce platforms accountable for facilitating distribution of child sexual exploitation material and take measures to block Facebook's plans for end-to-end encryption.
5. Implement Age Verification globally.
6. Strengthen measures to address non-consensual image sharing/image-based abuse.
7. Expand education programs on the negative impact of pornography in shaping attitudes and behaviours, contributing to sexual harassment and coercion, and on consent and respectful relationships.

1.2 Pornography as a driver of violence against women and girls

In our submission to Australia's House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in July 2020 we pointed out the evidence basis for the understanding that pornography is a major driver of real-life violence against women and girls.

Dr Meagan Tyler found, on the basis of analysis of the pornography industry's leading trade magazine, that 'mainstream' pornography is becoming markedly more extreme and more openly degrading to women.¹⁸ *Big Porn Inc: Exposing the Harms of the Global Pornography Industry* (Tankard Reist and Bray) revealed how the pornography industry has become mainstream, popularising new kinds of hardcore and violent misogyny.¹⁹ Recent research shows that 35%-45% of pornography contains aggression, with women the targets of aggression in 97% of those scenes

¹⁷ Roper, C. (January 9, 2020). "Better a robot than a real child": The spurious logic used to justify child sex dolls. *ABC Religion and Ethics*, <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/spurious-logic-used-to-justify-child-sex-dolls/11856284>

¹⁸ Tyler, M. (5 October 2011). Porn: just a bit of harmless fun? *The Drum*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-10-05/tyler-porn-just-a-bit-of-harmless-fun/3299836>

¹⁹ Tankard Reist, M. and Bray, A. (eds.) (2011). *Big Porn Inc: Exposing the Harms of the Global Pornography Industry*. Spinifex Press, North Melbourne.

(Fritz et al. 2020). A systematic review confirmed that women are overwhelmingly the targets of violence in pornography.²⁰

Following the horrific death of Eurydice Dixon in 2018, Collective Shout Movement Director Melinda Tankard Reist wrote:²¹

I noticed the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader in rare bi-partisan agreement following the death of Eurydice Dixon: saying that we must not tolerate violence against women, and that we must tackle the enablers of that violence. We are hearing pronouncements like this more and more.

*But while there are many enablers of violence against women, there is a particularly monstrous one that rarely rates a mention. It is the global industrialisation of the bodies of women - among them, the most powerless - as fodder for men's consumption. As Abigail Bray writes in *Misogyny Re-loaded*, porn and rape culture means "inhabiting a paradoxical space where the rape and murder of women is prohibited but everywhere eroticised and the object of laughter."*

Forensic expert Dr Scott Johnson expressed his frustration with the widespread ignorance of the role of pornography in sexually violent crimes.²²

Many professionals tend to minimize the important role pornography plays in physically and sexually violent offenses. This is frustrating given that the research literature has demonstrated time and time again how pornography supports sexual offenders' fantasy which in turn encourages violent behavior. More recent research correlates pornography use to physical batterers as well. Pornography tends to influence the user to become numb to the victim's safety and well-being and offers a playground for fantasy and experimentation of violent, manipulative, and harmful sexual conduct towards both children and adults. Pornography is certainly a strong component that can inspire deviant behavior. In addition, there appears to be a strong correlation between engaging in domestic abuse and sexual abuse, often engaging in both types of violence against one's victim. The sexual offender utilizes pornography to fantasize about meeting their needs as well as to help define preferences that can often lead to more deviant and violent sexual offense behavior. Men are at high risk for engaging in forced sexual behavior when their use of pornographic material has instilled and reinforced attitudes involving women as sex objects. Importantly, Simons et al. found that messages in sexually explicit material are more powerful than lessons learned from the family or society, indicating that frequent use of pornographic material tends to taint appropriate moral and social development.

²⁰ Carrotte, E. R., Davis, A. C., Lim, M. S. (2020). Sexual Behaviors and Violence in Pornography: Systematic Review and Narrative Synthesis of Video Content Analyses. *J Med Internet Res.*2020;22(5):e16702. Published 2020 May 14. doi:10.2196/16702.

²¹ Tankard Reist, M. (3 July 2018). Never Again? Addressing Sexual Violence Must Include Pornography. *ABC Religion and Ethics*. <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/never-again-addressing-sexual-violence-must-include-pornography/10094568>

²² Johnson, S. (2014). Pornography and the violent offender: Importance of finding the offender's pornography stash. *J Forensic Research* 5(3) doi: 10.4172/2157-7145.1000229

Wright, Tokunaga and Kraus conducted a meta-analysis of 22 studies (n = 20,820), finding that consumption of pornography was associated with an increased likelihood of committing actual acts of sexual aggression. Violent pornography had a stronger association, but the difference was not significant. These researchers are also frustrated by ideological positions regarding pornography that disregard the facts:

Meta-analyses have now found that pornography consumption affects non-sexual aggression and ASV [Attitudes Supporting Violence against women] in laboratory studies and is correlated with ASV and sexually aggressive behavior in naturalistic studies. As with all behavior, sexual aggression is caused by a confluence of factors and many pornography consumers are not sexually aggressive. However, the accumulated data leave 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 than individuals who do not consume pornography or who consume pornography less frequently. It is acknowledged that the results of the present meta-analysis will not change the minds of those committed to the position that pornography cannot affect sexual aggression. The field will have to accept a "weight of evidence" approach to evaluation as opposed to a "consensus among scholars" approach.²³

In Australia, teen girls and young women are now enduring the effects of pornography, as described by Melinda Tankard Reist:²⁴

I'm increasingly seeing Year 7 girls who seek help on what to do about requests for naked images. Being asked "send me a picture of your tits" is an almost daily occurrence for many. "How do I say 'no' without hurting his feelings"? girls ask... Girls are tired of being pressured for images they don't want to send, but they seem resigned to how normal the practice has become. Boys use the images as a form of currency, to swap and share and to use to humiliate girls publicly.

Year 7 girls ask me questions about bondage and S&M. Many of them had seen 50 Shades of Grey (which was released on Valentine's Day). They ask, if he wants to hit me, tie me up and stalk me, does that mean he loves me? Girls are putting up with demeaning and disrespectful behaviours, and thereby internalizing pornography's messages about their submissive role.

More recently, Netflix film, 365 Days, has been widely viewed by children and is another example of the normalisation and eroticisation of sexual violence against women. As our Campaigns Manager Caitlin Roper explained: "The takeaway messages from the film are that male aggression against women is 'hot', that women secretly desire and enjoy violence and abuse, and that even 'no' really means 'yes'."²⁵

²³ Wright, P.J., Tokunaga, R.S. and Kraus, A. (2016). A meta-analysis of pornography consumption and actual acts of sexual aggression in general population studies. *J Communication* 66:183-205.

²⁴ Tankard Reist, M. (7 March 2016). Growing Up in Pornland: Girls Have Had It with Porn Conditioned Boys. *ABC Religion and Ethics*. <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/growing-up-in-pornland-girls-have-had-it-with-porn-conditioned-b/10097244>

²⁵ Roper, C. (23 June 2020). Netflix's 365 Days isn't romantic, it glorifies violence against women. Collective Shout. https://www.collectiveshout.org/365_days_glorifies_violence

In a major study on teen dating violence, 1694 grade 10 high school students in the USA were surveyed. Pornography use was statistically significantly correlated with physical abuse (both victimisation and perpetration), sexual abuse (both victimisation and perpetration), rape myth acceptance and negative gender equitable attitudes. Women who viewed violent pornography were more likely to experience sexual dating violence. Teen boys who were exposed to violent pornography were three times more likely to perpetrate sexual dating violence.²⁶

With sexuality increasingly equated with the consumption of cruelty and brutality, with boys learning to equate the dehumanization of girls and degradation of their bodies with pleasure, with girls treated as masturbatory props, there can be little doubt that we will see more of what Di McLeod, director of the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence (GCCASV), is witnessing. She wrote to me:

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.

There is a cost in the trickle-down effect that some of us bear witness to every day... GCCASV has experienced a 56% increase in referrals from emergency departments of local public hospitals in the past year. Women have been hurt, sustained vaginal, anogenital and other physical injuries in the perpetration of forced sexual contact ... It is rare for us to have a recent rape presentation that involves only vaginal penetration. Porn inspired sex signature acts of anal, deep throating, the money shot accompanied by choking and strangulation are the new 'norm'. Despite the sexologist saying rape and sexual assault are not relevant it is central to the women and young women whose lives have been negatively impacted.

As for men who have been arrested and imprisoned for acts of violence against women, pornography and its underlying messages are ubiquitous. Men arrested for domestic violence in Rhode Island were surveyed by Brem et al. (n = 237).²⁷ It was concluded that men who self-reported higher levels of excessive, compulsive, and uncontrollable pornography use perpetrated more frequent physical and sexual intimate partner violence than did men with lower levels of such pornography use.

²⁶ Rostad, W. L., Gittins-Stone, D., Huntington, C., Rizzo, C. J., Pearlman, D., & Orchowski, L. (2019). The Association Between Exposure to Violent Pornography and Teen Dating Violence in Grade 10 High School Students. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 48(7):2137–2147. Accessed July 2020 at <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-019-1435-4>

²⁷ Brem, M. J., Garner, A. R., Grigorian, H., Florimbio, A. R., Wolford-Clevenger, C., Shorey, R.C., and Stuart, G. L. (2018). Problematic Pornography Use and Physical and Sexual Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration Among Men in Batterer Intervention Programs. *J Interpersonal Violence*, 886260518812806. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518812806>

A 2017 systematic review of the literature found convicted rapists have a high acceptance of rape myths compared to non-offenders, attitudes taught by pornography and a broader culture that objectifies and depersonalises women.²⁸

1.3 Pornography harms children and adolescents

A 2018 study by the New Zealand Office of Film and Literature Classification reported that of young people (aged 14-17) who watched porn regularly, almost one-quarter often saw violence or aggression towards a woman and one-fifth of regular viewers often saw some form of non-consensual behaviour.²⁹

A 2019 study conducted by the same New Zealand Office showed that 35% of porn viewed in New Zealand contained some non-consensual behaviour.³⁰ Notably, nearly half (46%) of viewed content was about 'step-family fantasy' or so-called 'incest porn'. This is concerning given the real-life statistics related to child sexual abuse by a family member. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported in 2016 that more than 35 percent of persons who experienced childhood sexual abuse were first abused by a family member.³¹

The exposure of children and adolescents to pornography is associated with grave harms to their sexual and social development. A systematic literature review by Owens et al.³² found that adolescent consumption of online pornography was linked to attitudinal changes such as

- more permissive sexual attitudes towards casual sex, including viewing sex as primarily physical and casual rather than affectionate and relational, and
- acceptance of male dominance and female submission as the primary sexual paradigm, with women viewed as "sexual playthings eager to fulfill male sexual desires".

Owens concluded that adolescents who are intentionally exposed to violent sexually explicit material were six times more likely to be sexually aggressive than those who were not exposed.

Wright et al. concluded unequivocally on the link between pornography consumption and sexual aggression.³³

²⁸ Johnson, L. G. and Beech, A. (2017). Rape myth acceptance in convicted rapists: A systematic review of the literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 34:20-34.

²⁹ Office of Film and Literature Classification. (2018). *NZ Youth and Porn: Research findings of a survey on how and why young New Zealanders view online pornography*. Wellington, NZ: Office of Film and Literature Classification. <https://www.classificationoffice.govt.nz/assets/PDFs/NZYouthPorn-OFLC-December2018-PrintVersion.pdf>

³⁰ Office of Film and Literature Classification. (2019). *Breaking Down Porn: A Classification Office Analysis of Commonly Viewed Pornography in NZ*. Wellington, NZ: Office of Film and Literature Classification. <https://www.classificationoffice.govt.nz/assets/PDFs/Breaking-Down-Porn.pdf>

³¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). *Personal Safety Australia 2016*. Australian Bureau of Statistics. [https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4906.0~2016~Main%20Features~Characteristics%20and%20Outcomes%20of%20Childhood%20Abuse%20\(Feature%20Article\)%20~30](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4906.0~2016~Main%20Features~Characteristics%20and%20Outcomes%20of%20Childhood%20Abuse%20(Feature%20Article)%20~30)

³² Owens, et al. (2012). The Impact of Internet Pornography on Adolescents: A Review of the Research. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*. 19(1):19-22.

³³ Wright, P.J., Tokunaga, R.S. and Kraus, A. (2016). A meta-analysis of pornography consumption and actual acts of sexual aggression in general population studies. *J Communication* 66:183-205.

As with all behaviour, sexual aggression is caused by a confluence of factors and many pornography consumers are not sexually aggressive. However, the accumulated data leave 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 than individuals who do not consume pornography or who consume pornography less frequently.

Data provided to the recent Inquiry into Age Verification for Online Wagering and Online Pornography by Melinda Tankard Reist showed some of the evidence of the harms of children accessing pornography online:³⁴

- Researchers have found that sex offences by school-aged children quadrupled in Australia in four years, and authorities attribute this to children’s exposure to pornography.
- Seventy-five per cent of 7 to 11-year-old boys and sixty-seven per cent of 7 to 11-year-old girls in treatment for PSB [Problem Sexual Behaviour] reported early sexualisation through online pornography.³⁵
- A meta-analysis involving 59 studies and around 17,000 adolescents found those who offended were significantly more likely to have had early exposure to pornography, and to report higher rates of exposure to pornography.³⁶
- The late Emeritus Professor Freda Briggs AO wrote a disturbing submission to the 2016 Senate Inquiry into the harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the internet, drawing links between pornography and child sex abuse, paedophilia and child-on-child sex abuse.³⁷

As the Home Office will know, the Children’s Commissioner in England commissioned research into the effects of children’s exposure to pornography, and found such compelling evidence that the report was named “Basically, Porn is Everywhere...”.³⁸

The use of and children’s access to pornography emerged as a key theme during the first year of the Inquiry. It was mentioned by boys in witness statements after

³⁴ Tankard Reist, M. (2019). *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Age Verification for Online Wagering and Online Pornography*. Submission 177 at https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/Online_ageverification/Submissions

³⁵ Etheredge, L. and Lemon, J. (2015). *Pornography, problem sexual behaviour and sibling on sibling sexual violence*. Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Victoria. SUBM.0220.001.0001. <http://www.news.com.au/national/nsw-act/teenage-sex-offences-increase-australian-bureau-of-statistics-figures-show/story-fndo4bst-1226504441765>

³⁶ Seto, M. C. and Lalumiere, M. L. (2010). What is So Special about Male Adolescent Sexual Offending? A Review and Test of Explanations through Meta-Analysis. *Psychological Bulletin* 136(4):526-575.

³⁷ Briggs, F. (2015) *Submission to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee Inquiry into the Harm Being Done to Australian Children Through Access to Pornography on the Internet*. March 2016. http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Online_access_to_porn/Submissions

³⁸ Horvath, M.A.H., Alys, L., Massey, K., Pina, A., Scally, M. and Adler, J.R. (2013). “Basically, porn is everywhere”: A rapid evidence assessment on the effects that access and exposure to pornography has on children and young people. Office of the Children’s Commissioner, England. <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/basically-porn-is-everywhere/>

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.

1.4 Age Verification

We argued in our submission to the Australian House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into age verification for online wagering and online pornography in 2019 that the evidence of harms as a result of childhood exposure to pornography demands a serious and immediate response.³⁹

Children are exposed to rape porn, sadism porn, incest porn and other violent and degrading depictions of sex, even before their first kiss. This is an unprecedented experiment on the sexual development of children and young people. We recommended that in light of data verifying the real-life harms of childhood exposure to pornography, the Commonwealth government should recognise the potential benefits of an Age Verification system along with other measures to limit porn exposure to children, including education programs and improved ISP filters. We recommended the introduction of an age verification system which will restrict children’s access to online pornography (and the global porn industry’s unfettered access to children), acknowledging that our obligation to protect children, and the ensuing protections afforded to children by such a system, far outweigh the concerns of those with vested interests in the global porn industry.

Australia’s obligations under Articles 19 and 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are relevant to the implementation of an age verification system designed to protect children from exposure to online pornography. In 2016 the Children’s Commissioner for England stated, regarding the ease with which children are able to access online porn, that there is no room for complacency:

It cannot be right that so many children may be stumbling across and learning about sex from degrading and violent depictions of it. We need to act to restrict their access to such material and to ensure that they have spaces in which to discuss and learn about safe relationships and sex. It is our duty to protect children from harm and so we must ensure this happens.⁴⁰

The availability of online pornography without effective barriers to access by children is a form of sexual abuse of children which States Parties undertake to prevent by “appropriate legislative measures” under Article 14 of the Convention and, given that when a child views pornography a

³⁹ Collective Shout (2019). *Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Age Verification for Online Wagering and Online Pornography*. https://d3n8a8pro7vmtx.cloudfront.net/collectiveshout/pages/3258/attachments/original/1575331635/Age_Verification_Submission.pdf?1575331635

⁴⁰ Martellozzo, E. et al. (2017). “I wasn’t sure it was normal to watch it”: the impact of online pornography on the values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of children. <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1187/mdx-nspcc-occ-pornography-report.pdf>

sexual act is effectively being performed in the presence of that child, it is also a form of “unlawful sexual activity” that States Parties are obliged to take “all appropriate national measures” to prevent.

In 2016 the Australian Institute for Family Studies summarised the research evidence on the harmful effect of children’s exposure to pornography as indicating that frequent and routine viewing of pornography and other sexualised images may:⁴¹

- reinforce harmful gender stereotypes;
- contribute to young people forming unhealthy and sexist views of women and sex;
- contribute to condoning violence against women;
- be associated with sexually coercive behaviour by young men;
- normalise sexual violence;
- contribute to unrealistic understandings of sex and sexuality;
- shape social norms around sex;
- lead to young people feeling as though they should engage in the sexual behaviour frequently displayed in pornography, including violent acts;
- be associated with pressure being put on girls to share naked images of themselves online;
- influence young people’s self-concept and body image; and
- be linked to problematic sexual behaviour and sexual abuse among children and adolescents.

Dr Michael Flood’s 2009 study *The harms of pornography exposure among children and young people* concluded that exposure to pornography helps to sustain young people’s adherence to sexist and unhealthy notions of sex and relationships. And, especially among boys and young men who are frequent consumers of pornography, including of more violent materials, consumption intensifies attitudes supportive of sexual coercion and increases their likelihood of perpetrating assault.⁴² In his submission to the 2016 Senate inquiry Dr Flood described pornography as “sexist education” and “rape training” for boys.⁴³

Professor Freda Briggs described the child-on-child abuse attributed to children’s exposure to pornography in her submission to the Inquiry, reporting that preschool-aged children are ‘acting out what they have seen and experienced, sexually abusing others in schools, kindergartens and child care settings’.⁴⁴ There are reports of children as young as 8 years old admitting to and seeking

⁴¹ Campo, M. (4 May 2016). *Children and young people’s exposure to pornography*.

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/2016/05/04/children-and-young-peoples-exposure-pornography>.

⁴² Flood, M. (2009). The harms of pornography exposure among children and young people. *Child Abuse Review* 18(6).

⁴³ Flood, M. (2016). Submission 250, Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, Inquiry into Harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the Internet.

<https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=1966f277-6267-4398-a8a6-7be9f97358a8&subId=410413>

⁴⁴ Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, Inquiry into Harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the Internet, 2016, p. 20,

treatment for 'porn addiction'.⁴⁵ The Third Action Plan 2016-2019 in the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children included a recognition that there is increasing evidence showing a correlation between exposure to online pornography and the sexual objectification of women and girls, the development of rape cultures and the proliferation of sexual assault.⁴⁶

In a US study of 472 boys and young men (aged 12-20 years; mean age 16 years) with criminal offenses, researchers evaluated and compared the self-reported childhood traumatic experiences of three groups: sexually victimised boys/young men with sexual offenses, non-sexually victimised boys/young men with sexual offenses, and non-sexually victimised boys/young men with general criminal offenses (e.g. assault, theft). They found that persons who were sexually victimised and who had committed sexual offences showed greater developmental antecedents including early exposure to pornography and pornography use.⁴⁷

The above-mentioned Australian study reported a correlation between frequent pornography consumption in adolescents and young adults and diminished mental health.⁴⁸

2. Sexual objectification

We believe it is inconsistent to aim to reduce men's violence through addressing gender inequality while the objectification and sexualisation of women in advertising, marketing, media and pornography continue to undermine progress toward achieving desired goals. The widespread objectification of women is both caused by, and contributes to, gender inequality. Evidence demonstrates that this in turn contributes to male violence against women.

We made evidence-based recommendations to Australia's House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in July 2020, arguing that sexual objectification in the broader culture is a vital contributor to violence against women. A hypersexualised culture conveys limited ideas of how men should behave, encouraging them to view women as inferior, and as sexualised objects existing merely or primarily for men's sexual gratification. A sexist culture grooms sexist men and boys; attitudes shape behaviours.

Our view is underpinned by a vast body of research which verifies the harmful consequences of exposure to objectifying imagery. For example, a global meta-analysis of two decades of research

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/OnlineAccessToPorn45/Report/c02#c02f77

⁴⁵ Chiara, S. et al. (2008). The Nature and Dynamics of Internet Pornography Exposure for Youth. *Cyber Psychology and Behaviour*, 11(6). <http://unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV169.pdf>

⁴⁶ National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, Third Action Plan 2016-2019, p. 24, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/10_2016/third_action_plan.pdf

⁴⁷ Cited in National Centre on Sexual Exploitation (2019). *Confronting the rise of child-on-child harmful sexual behaviour: Research Summary*. https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/COCSA_Research-Summary_FINAL_3-12-19-1.pdf Source: Leibowitz, G. et al (2012). Part II: Differences between Sexually Victimized and Nonsexually Victimized Male Adolescent Sexual Abusers and Delinquent Youth: Further Group Comparisons of Developmental Antecedents and Behavioral Challenges. *J Child Sexual Abuse*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10538712.2012.675421?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

⁴⁸ Lim, M. et al. (2017). Young Australians' use of pornography and associations with sexual risk behaviours, *Aust NZ J Public Health*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1753-6405.12678>.

verified that exposure to sexually objectifying portrayals of women leads viewers to have “a diminished view of women’s competence, morality, and humanity.”⁴⁹ A paper published by Women’s Health Victoria in 2018 documented the link between exposure to objectifying imagery and attitudes that were more tolerant of violence toward women.⁵⁰ Viewers were more likely to blame victims of violence. Women felt less safe in venues where objectifying images were displayed.

Collective Shout Movement Director and Co-founder Melinda Tankard Reist has repeatedly drawn attention to the inconsistency of government investment in respectful relationship programs while failing to address the proliferation of objectifying representations of women in marketing and media which serve to undermine government efforts. We have also documented how violence against women is glamorised and eroticised in advertising and popular culture.⁵¹

Despite an increased understanding and awareness of the scourge of men’s violence against women, and the relationship between the objectification of women and violence against them, Australian advertisers like Honey Birdette continue to objectify women for profit, and to reinforce gender inequalities that harm women.⁵² From sexualised images of women accompanied by words like “Cage” and “Bound”, and advertising focussed on women’s genitals, Honey Birdette advertising normalises female and eroticises submission with images of women bound, chained and with collars and leads accompanied by text “blissfully bound” and “cuff me up, baby”.

2.1 Workplace Safety

If we want to address violence against women we must begin to hold corporations accountable for their contribution to attitudes that are tolerant of violence against women as they wilfully objectify women in their marketing and advertising activities. As Collective Shout Movement Director and Co-founder Melinda Tankard Reist pointed out regarding harmful, sexist advertising: “We need to address the power of corporations to shape this diminished view of women’s competence, morality and humanity.”⁵³

In the workplace, women’s safety is also at risk when sexually objectifying and pornographic material is present. In our submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces (2019), we used published research to demonstrate that the interrelated issues of pornography, objectification of women and sexualised imagery in advertising are all pertinent to the issue of workplace sexual harassment.⁵⁴ These are

⁴⁹ Ward, L. M. (2016) Media and Sexualization: State of Empirical Research, 1995–2015, *J Sex Research*, 53:4-5, 560-577, DOI: 10.1080/00224499.2016.1142496.

⁵⁰ Women’s Health Victoria (2018). *Advertising (In)Equality: The impacts of sexist advertising on women’s health and wellbeing*. A Women’s Health Victoria Issues Paper No. 14. [https://womenshealthvic.com.au/resources/WHV_Publications/Issues-Paper_2018.12.06_Advertising-inequality-the-impacts-of-sexist-advertising_Dec-2018_\(Fulltext-PDF\).pdf](https://womenshealthvic.com.au/resources/WHV_Publications/Issues-Paper_2018.12.06_Advertising-inequality-the-impacts-of-sexist-advertising_Dec-2018_(Fulltext-PDF).pdf)

⁵¹ Tankard Reist, M. (2010). You look so good in blood! Violence is, like, so hot right now. *Melinda Tankard Reist Blog*. <http://melindatankardreist.com/2010/05/you-look-so-good-in-blood-violence-is-like-so-hot-right-now/>

⁵² For many examples and analyses, see https://www.collectiveshout.org/honey_birdette

⁵³ Tankard Reist, M. (20 April 2017). Why Australia Should Follow France’s Lead on ‘Degradating’ Sexist Advertising. ABC Religion and Ethics. <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/why-australia-should-follow-frances-lead-on-degrading-sexist-adv/10095846>

⁵⁴ Collective Shout (2019). *Submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplace*.

areas that need serious regulatory overhaul and a human rights-based approach to prevent the harms they cause.

Through a pornified culture, women and girls are fed a message that their only value lies in their sex appeal and ability to attract the male gaze. 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.⁵⁵ Pornified culture also harms men and boys, by inscribing limited ideas of how men should behave and encouraging them to view women as unequal and as sexualised objects existing merely or primarily for men's sexual gratification rather than as persons in their own right. We contend that there are strong connections between pornified culture and practice, and the issue of sexual harassment, including sexual harassment in the workplace.

Collective Shout believes that internet pornography is a key element of technology-assisted sexual and sex-based harassment in the workplace. We believe that even if other employees are not directly impacted by a person's pornography viewing, pornography has no place in the workplace.

Recent media reports about high-ranking professionals viewing pornography using workplace apparatus have highlighted this issue. For example, The Guardian reported that between June and October of 2017, there were more than 24,000 attempts to access pornographic websites in the UK Houses of Parliament.⁵⁶ There have also been cases of specific MPs and judges viewing pornography in the workplace.⁵⁷ While the fact these stories were reported at all stems from acknowledgement that the behaviour is inappropriate for men with such high levels of responsibility, there were some who argued that it was 'no big deal.' In the case of the UK judges (who were sacked), for example, one prominent Guardian columnist wrote:

*Yes, there's clearly a sound argument that judges should be doing their jobs, not getting off on porn. Fair enough, but there's all sorts of procrastination that goes on in the workplace. Who knows, maybe an otherwise tense judge seeking a quick bit of relief will concentrate better.*⁵⁸

This flippant response, justifying the judges' behaviour, demonstrates that workplace viewing of pornography is seen by many as benign. It does not take into account the specifically sexual nature of pornography, and, more importantly, the harmful messages about aggression and gender inequality that are common and overt in pornography.

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/collectiveshout/pages/3126/attachments/original/1558066560/submission_289_-_collective_shout.pdf?1558066560

⁵⁵ See, e.g. Australian Psychological Society (2016). *Sexualisation of Girls*, 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*. www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2007/02/sexualization.aspx.

⁵⁶ Press Association (2018). Parliament Reports 24,000 Attempts to Access Pornographic Websites since Election. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jan/08/parliament-reports-24000-attempts-to-access-pornographic-websites-since-election>.

⁵⁷ Stewart, H. (2017). Damian Green Sacked as First Secretary of State After Porn Allegations. *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/dec/20/damian-green-resigns-as-first-secretary-of-state-after-porn-allegations>; Jones, O. (2015). Simon Danczuk MP Has Watched Porn –Why Should We Care? *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/30/simon-danczuk-mp-watched-porn-who-cares>; Coleman, C. (2015). Judges Sacked for Watching Porn. *BBC News UK*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-31920906>.

⁵⁸ Jones, Simon Danczuk MP Has Watched Porn –Why Should We Care?

The use of pornography in the workplace is often considered to be a form of sexual and sex-based harassment when it directly impacts others in the workplace. For example, in a case in 2010 concerning the Melbourne Airport air traffic control towers, male workers' viewing and sharing of pornography formed part of the complainants' lawsuit. As well as alleging "[n]ame-calling, threats and overt sexism", bullying, and discrimination against pregnant women, the complainants alleged that:

...male air traffic managers have for the past five years emailed or viewed pornography at work. ... Both women saw Mr Holmes watch pornography at work and share the sexually explicit videos with other employees, the lawsuit alleges. In one video, which he had titled 'My new job', a man was shown rubbing himself against several half-naked women.⁵⁹

It is clear in this case that the manager's alleged use of pornography was carried out in front of the women in order to make them feel humiliated. Alongside the alleged threats, name-calling and other bullying, it was done to demean them.

In the influential feminist text *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf discusses the legal situation surrounding printed pornography in the workplace in the late twentieth century. At the time, the British National Council for Civil Liberties declared that 'pinups' in the workplace constitute sexual harassment, as they "directly undermine an individual woman's view of herself and her ability to do her job".⁶⁰ Wolf cites a 1986 court case, where the complainant said the men who harassed her in her workplace "commented on my physical appearance in comparison with that of the nude female depicted".⁶¹ This has similarities to the 2010 case in the air traffic control towers –by labelling the video "my new job", the manager was likening his female employees to the half-naked women in the video.

Academic Dr Meagan Tyler draws on the legal history of pornography in the workplace in a 2018 article. She writes that while the "public display of pornographic material has been recognised as making working environments hostile to women", this printed pornography "seems very mild in comparison to mainstream porn today".⁶² Indeed, in one of the most-cited studies on contemporary online pornography, an analysis of 304 scenes in popular videos found that 88.2% of scenes contained physical aggression and 48.7% of scenes contained verbal aggression, "primarily name-calling".⁶³ Perpetrators were usually male and targets of aggression were "overwhelmingly female"; furthermore, targets "most often showed pleasure or responded neutrally to the aggression".

This kind of content is far more extreme than still images of naked women, which we now accept are inappropriate for the workplace. However, it is important to note that still-shot pornography has not completely been removed from some workplaces. The negative impact of visual pornography in the workplace is illustrated in the case of 'lads' mag' Zoo Weekly. In 2015, a 20-year-old Coles employee made an official complaint to her union and manager that selling the magazine made her feel

⁵⁹ Lillebuen, S. (2010). Sexism Rife in Air Traffic Towers, *The Age*. <https://www.theage.com.au/national/sexism-rife-in-air-traffic-towers-20100728-10vv6.html>.

⁶⁰ Wolf, N. (1991). *The Beauty Myth*. London: Vintage.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Tyler, M. (2018). Leaving Blokesworld: Why You Can't Have Your Porn and #Metoo. *ABC Religion and Ethics*. <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/leaving-blokesworld-why-you-cant-have-your-porn-and-metoo/10094930>

⁶³ Bridges A. J. et al. (2010). Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best-Selling Pornography Videos: A Content Analysis Update. *Violence Against Women* 16(10):1065.

complicit in promoting rape culture and created an unsafe workplace.⁶⁴ Coles withdrew Zoo from sale and the magazine folded shortly after.

In 1990, Wolf argued that the use of printed pornography in the workplace “is intended to reinstate the inequalities that women’s entry into the workplace took away”.⁶⁵ This applies to not just still-shot pornography, such as Zoo, but also cases where video pornography is viewed in the workplace. In a contemporary study of power and gender in workplace sexual harassment, McLaughlin, Uggen and Blackstone state that “sexual harassment objectifies workers and reduces women to sexual objects”.⁶⁶ The use of pornography is one type of sexual harassment that achieves this. It is used to convey to women that, although they have achieved progress in the workplace, they can still be reduced to sexual objects.

Even when the viewing of pornography is not directly seen by colleagues, and when it is viewed by a worker in isolation (as in the cases in the UK), the workplace is still an inappropriate location for pornography viewing. As Dr Tyler asks, “...what does it mean for women to work in spaces where their male colleagues are also watching eroticised sexual inequality and violence?”⁶⁷

Research into the correlates and effects of pornography are not good news for those women working alongside pornography-consuming men. We have already discussed meta-analysis that revealed pornography consumption is associated with sexual aggression.⁶⁸ Other research finds the pornography is a powerful educator and motivator, creating a sexual script that guides sexual experiences to imitate pornographic practices.⁶⁹ Pornography viewers are less likely to intervene as bystanders, but more likely to believe rape myths and, frighteningly, to have an intention towards rape if they could get away with it.⁷⁰

We recommended to the Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces that the Commissioner should:

- a) encourage all workplaces to implement internet filters that prevent employees from accessing pornographic websites while in the workplace or using work-related internet access from any location and
- b) require all workplaces to enforce harsher penalties for workers who view pornography during worktime.

⁶⁴ Snow, D. (2015). Coles Withdraws Lads’ Mag Zoo Weekly from Sale after Staff Complaint and Online Campaign. *Sydney Morning Herald*. <https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/coles-withdraws-lads-mag-zoo-weekly-from-sale-after-staff-complaint-and-online-campaign-20150819-gj2nek.html>.

⁶⁵ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 52.

⁶⁶ McLaughlin, H., Uggen, C. and Blackstone, A. (2012). Sexual Harassment, Workplace Authority, and the Paradox of Power. *American Sociological Review*. 77(4):640-641.

⁶⁷ Tyler, *Leaving Blokesworld*.

⁶⁸ Wright, P. J., Tokunaga, R. S. and Kraus, A. (2016). A Meta-Analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies. *J Communication* 66(1):183–205.

⁶⁹ Sun, C., Bridges, A., Johnson, J. and Ezzell, M. (2016). Pornography and the Male Sexual Script: An Analysis of Consumption and Sexual Relations. *Arch Sexual Behavior* 45(4):983–94.

⁷⁰ Foubert, J. D., Brosi, M. W. and Bannon, R. S. (2011). Effects of Fraternity Men’s Pornography Use on Bystander Intervention, Rape Myth Acceptance and Behavioral Intent to Commit Sexual Assault. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity: The Journal of Treatment & Prevention* 18(4): 212–231.

2.2 Online Safety

Our collaborative international #WakeUpInstagram campaign has exposed the way young girls are routinely sexualised, exploited and abused on social media platforms. We have also exposed how predators use Instagram to network and exchange, solicit and sell child sexual exploitation material. Global authorities have reported significant increases in online predatory activity on both the standard and dark web and on social media platforms as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns. In 2020, Australia's eSafety Office documented a 40 percent increase in reporting of child sexual abuse material from the same reporting period in the previous year, and reports of image-based abuse have almost doubled.⁷¹

In 2020 Collective Shout made recommendations to the Australian Government in response to the Online Safety Legislative Reform public consultation, including:

- Strengthened requirements that apps and services protect all minors from being direct messaged by adults.
- Algorithms, overseen by human moderators, should be included to proactively remove sexualising or sexually graphic comments on minors' images and posts.
- Privacy settings should be much more visible in order to increase awareness of safety tools.
- Digital services should automatically provide children with maximum data protection whenever they download a new app, game or visit a website, as proposed in the UK. Privacy settings should be set to high by default. Nudge techniques should not be used to encourage children to weaken their settings. Location settings should also be switched off by default. Data collection and sharing should be minimised and profiling that can allow children to be served up targeted content should be switched off by default.
- When an account is made private, remove the ability for strangers to send unsolicited direct messages to that account. Remove the ability for that person's account to be visible in Likes or Comments on other posts.
- Include links in safety sections to define sexual harassment, and how to get help.
- Revise 'Community Standards' so that all sexualised, predatory and grooming-style comments (text, slang, short-hand, hashtags, emojis and graphics) qualify as violations.
- Add 'sexualised/predatory/grooming comment directed at a minor' as a category for reporting violations of community guidelines and address these reports as a priority.
- Prohibit adults from using 'live' posts to contact minors.
- Update systems used to detect and remove sexualised, predatory comments.
- Recognising that social media serves as a supply source of images of children for web-based paedophile forums, update all relevant policies, guidelines and help documents (including 'A Parent's Guide to Instagram') so that users are properly informed of the risks of sharing images of children to the platforms.
- Stop the 'explore' feature from promoting minors' pages and connecting predators with children.
- Investigate parasite pages that are exclusively devoted to republishing photos of minors, deleting pages where children are sexualised, harassed, groomed or where any type of predatory comments/behaviour is displayed.

⁷¹ Office of the eSafety Commissioner (2020). *Keeping our kids safe during COVID-19*.
<https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/newsroom/keeping-our-kids-safe-online-during-covid-19>

- Prohibit the republishing of images of minors on pages that also feature porn-style images of adults.

2.3 End-to-End Encryption

We also highlighted the problems caused by encryption technologies. We share the views of Rachael Falk, CEO of the Cyber Security Cooperative Research Centre, responding to those who want to keep encrypted messages beyond the reach of authorities:

This argument ignores the fundamental truth that we are just as vulnerable on messaging apps as we always have been on older platforms. The same crooks, fraudsters, paedophiles and terrorists have not restricted themselves to monitorable platforms, they now use messaging apps to plot their malevolent acts. They continue to scam us, defraud us, menace our children and threaten our public safety. Only now the convenience of messaging apps allows them to find one another and conspire more easily in a cyber world that is invisible, encrypted and beyond the reach of the law... we wouldn't respect the privacy of a neighbour whose home was turned over to producing meth or child pornography, so we shouldn't respect the privacy of our digital neighbours who – evidence tells us – carry on the same conduct every day....The idea of privileging online privacy over these people's welfare is mind-boggling....⁷²

We commend to you the Open Letter to the Technology Industry by MissingKids.org:

At the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children we are alarmed by the continued march toward end-to-end encryption without safeguards for children. We call on you to implement technological solutions that enhance consumer privacy while prioritizing child safety. Robust safeguards should transfer to a child's digital experience in an end-to-end encrypted environment. Without proper protections, children will be even more susceptible to potential online sexual exploitation. And countless survivors of child sexual abuse will continue to suffer knowing images depicting their sexual abuse are being shared with impunity.⁷³

We also commend to you the following Principles to Safeguard Children in End-to-End Encrypted Environments:

- Do not implement end-to-end encrypted communications for accounts where a user has indicated they are under 18 years old.
- Implement detection technologies, at least as effective or better than those currently available, to prevent offenders from distributing child sexual abuse material.
- Adopt technology vetted by the child protection community to identify sexual grooming of children by adults.
- Promptly report apparent child sexual exploitation to NCMEC's Cyber Tipline with actionable information to help rescue child victims and hold offenders accountable.

⁷² Falk, R. (21 Feb 2020). We are powerless as evil is encrypted all around. *The Australian*, p12.

⁷³ Missing Kids (2020). *End-to-end encryption: Principles to Safeguard Children. An open letter to the technology industry*. Missing Kids. <https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2020/an-open-letter-to-the-technology-industry>

- Ensure that law enforcement can use existing legal processes to effectively investigate the sexual exploitation of children.

3. Commercial Sexual Exploitation (Prostitution)

Collective Shout has for a long time highlighted the violence and abuse inherent in the sex industry. We comment to you the Nordic Model as a legislative framework for reducing demand for women's bodies, based on evidence over past decades. We are gravely concerned for the safety and wellbeing of women in the sex industry both in Australia and internationally.

Australia itself is a hub for sex trafficking in the region due to the large scale of the sex industry, its legal status, and its relative profitability compared to other sex industries in the region. It is an attractive investment destination for pimps and traffickers as the industry has in the past operated relatively free of government monitoring and intervention. The market for buying sexual services ensures Australia remains a hub for victims of trafficking because Asian women are in demand by the local Australian male population.

3.1 Legalisation and deregulation of prostitution increases violence against women and girls

One of the aims of legalisation/decriminalisation is to make prostitution safer for women involved. But men's purchase of sexual access to women's bodies is inherently violent, described by survivors as "compensated sexual abuse" and "paid rape".⁷⁴ Legalisation and decriminalisation do not reduce this form of violence against women, but legitimise it. Sex buyers continue to rape, assault, torture and murder women in the sex industry, even in jurisdictions where prostitution has been legalised and decriminalised. Legislative approaches are argued to "reduce stigma" of individuals in prostitution. But it is not stigma that rapes and murders women in the sex trade; it is male buyers who believe they have an entitlement to women's bodies and view them as less than human.

Instead, industry legalisation and deregulation create a lucrative and expanding prostitution market into which women will be trafficked to meet escalating levels of consumer demand. Legalising or deregulating the sex trade serves to normalise the purchasing of sexual services, and as a result, many men who had never before purchased sex when it was illegal may now feel comfortable to do so. As the demand for women and girls for sexual exploitation increases, a greater number of women and girls must be imported to meet this demand, which leads to a significant rise in sex trafficking. A study of 150 countries confirmed that legalised prostitution leads to expansion of the prostitution market and increasing human trafficking, and that on average, countries where

⁷⁴ Mianiti, M. (2017). Prostitution is paid rape, and men know it. *Il manifesto*, 11 October. <https://global.ilmanifesto.it/prostitution-is-paid-rape-and-men-know-it/>

prostitution is legal experience larger human trafficking inflows.⁷⁵ As the Native Women's Association of Canada writes:

*[Legalisation] fails to protect women who are targeted by traffickers and who continue to be forced into prostitution, and there seems to be a direct link between legalizing prostitution and the rise of human trafficking for sexual exploitation... the legalized prostitution system has provided for a great increase in trafficking victims in an unhealthy dynamic that seems to be increasing the number of women who are forced and trapped within a legalized system.*⁷⁶

In Europe, countries which have legalised prostitution have similarly seen significant expansions to the sex trade as well as increased sex trafficking. In the Netherlands, after pimping was legalised and brothels decriminalised in 2000, the sex industry expanded by 25%.⁷⁷ One study found that 80% of the women in the sex industry were most likely trafficked from other countries.⁷⁸ After legalising prostitution in 2002, Germany has become a popular sex tourism hotspot and is widely known as the 'brothel of Europe'. Only 20% of women in Germany's sex industry are believed to be German, with the vast majority being imported from foreign countries.⁷⁹

German Detective Superintendent Helmut Sporer described the devastating impacts of legalising the sex industry in Germany, including worsened conditions for women, greater power to pimps and organised crime gangs, and a significant increase in trafficking. Sporer described legalisation as "an El Dorado for pimps [and] punters"⁸⁰ who were transformed into legitimate businessmen overnight and empowered with the right to give orders to women in the industry. Women were subjected to strict rules by brothel operators:

*They had to be at the disposal of punters for 13 hours running, they weren't even allowed to leave the brothel earlier, they had to walk around stark naked, they weren't even allowed to decide on the prices for their services. Prices were unified and set. Some had to offer unprotected sex. And they all had to pay fees to the brothel for the infringement of any of these rules. These conditions are of course incompatible with human dignity. It has led to a massive reduction of the legal standing of the women... You could therefore say it is a new form of slavery, under state supervision.*⁸¹

Sporer reported signs of sex trafficking, such as women being moved around every few weeks, and an estimated 80% of prostituted women coming from abroad,⁸² as well as a rise in demand for younger, more childlike women who were referred to as "fresh meat".⁸³ Sporer described a trend

⁷⁵ Cho, S.Y., Dreher, A., and Neumayer, E. (2012). Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking? *World Development*, 41, pp. 67-82. Appendix B, p 30, citing the United Nations Office On Drugs and Crime. https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/45198/1/Neumayer_Legalized_Prostitution_Increase_2012.pdf

⁷⁶ Native Women's Association of Canada (2014). *Sexual Exploitation And Trafficking Of Aboriginal Women And Girls: Literature Review and Key Informant Interviews: Final Report*. Native Women's Association of Canada, p. 41. https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2014_NWAC_Human_Trafficking_and_Sexual_Exploitation_Report.pdf

⁷⁷ Jõe-Cannon, I. (ed.) (2006). *Primer on the male demand for prostitution*. Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, p. 9. <http://media.virbcdn.com/files/b0/FileItem-149956-PRIMERonmaledemand.pdf>

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 11.

⁷⁹ Sporer, H. (2013). Speech for the Seminar "Reality of Prostitution" of the European Women's Lobby, p. 4. <https://www.scribd.com/doc/184667092/Prostitution-in-Germany-by-Detective-Superintendent-Helmut-Sporer>

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 5.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 3.

⁸² Ibid, p. 4.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 4.

where men's purchase of sex had come to be accepted in civil society, and sex buyers were emboldened:

... visiting a brothel and buying a woman is considered as cool... There is also a new type of punter. He is assertive and confident. This becomes very apparent during raids or checks of brothels. Punters used to feel embarrassed at being found there. If their names were taken down, some of them at least started sweating or showed an increased pulse rate. These days, raids in brothels do not deter the punters from entering the brothel even if the presence of the police is clearly visible. They wait patiently for the police to finish checking the brothel and for the women to be available again. The question is how the scene could change so drastically.⁸⁴

Many jurisdictions that have legalised or decriminalised prostitution have failed to achieve the intended objectives. Instead, legitimising the sex industry leads to weakened social sanctions against prostitution, leading to an increase in demand for sexual services and a corresponding expansion of the legal and illegal industries, an increase in street prostitution, child prostitution, the involvement of organised crime and sex trafficking. This process is assisted by the proliferation of pornography that inspires men to become sex industry customers, and agitates demand for sex acts only acceptable in places like brothels. In the Netherlands, after spending millions of euros trying to rid Amsterdam of criminal gangs that had moved in, Deputy Prime Minister Lodewijk Asscher described legalisation as “a national mistake”.⁸⁵ In 2012 in New Zealand, then Prime Minister John Keys said the Prostitution Law Reform had not achieved its stated objectives in achieving a reduction of street prostitution and child prostitution:

The argument was that it would eliminate all the street workers and underage people, particularly girls, and the reports that we see in places like South Auckland is that it hasn't actually worked... I think it's been marginally successful, if at all.⁸⁶

Legalising or deregulating the sex industry leads to an expansion of both legal and illegal sectors. In Victoria, the illegal industry is believed to be around five times larger than the legal industry, with 91 licensed brothels and around 500 illegal brothels, often disguised as massage parlours, beauty salons and karaoke bars.⁸⁷ Sex industry entrepreneurs, often associated with criminal elements, own and operate both legal and illegal brothels simultaneously.⁸⁸ Women and girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation indiscriminately between the two sectors, and child prostitution exists across the spectrum.⁸⁹ In her research on Victoria's legalised sex industry, Melbourne academic Mary Lucille Sullivan wrote, “the increased tolerance of prostitution in Victoria, in effect, requires a steady flow of women and girls to meet the demands of a vastly expanded and lucrative market.”⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 4

⁸⁵ Diu, N.L. (2013). Welcome to Paradise. *The Telegraph*. <https://s.telegraph.co.uk/graphics/projects/welcome-to-paradise/>

⁸⁶ APNZ (2012). Prostitution law reform hasn't worked: PM. *Otago Daily Times*, 14 November. <https://www.odt.co.nz/news/politics/prostitution-law-reform-hasnt-worked-pm>

⁸⁷ Hynninen, E. (2017). Melbourne's illegal sex industry. *Upstart*, 26 May. <https://www.upstart.net.au/melbournes-illegal-sex-industry/?fbclid=IwAR003d-t8sYmVZd9WoFVy9tTY86hHW-F4qdKsy5A2mVxaJzGXEx94byTvKl>

⁸⁸ Sullivan, M.L. (2007). *Making Sex Work: A Failed Experiment With Legalised Prostitution*. Spinifex Press, Victoria, p. 186.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 186.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 5.

A 2015 inquiry into brothels in New South Wales found that drug use, abuse, organised crime and sex trafficking remained substantial problems under full decriminalisation. There had also been no improvement to women's safety.⁹¹

Women who worked in New Zealand's sex industry both prior to and following the 2003 Prostitution Reform Act report worsened conditions for women after decriminalisation. Sabrinna Valisce, a volunteer with the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective for 24 years, campaigned for full decriminalisation. Having worked in the sex industry under prohibition, where women were subjected to fear of the police and police brutality, Valisce believed decriminalisation would improve the working conditions for women in the sex trade: "I thought it would give more power and rights to the women, but I soon realised the opposite was true."⁹² After prostitution was decriminalised, Valisce described the outcome as a disaster which only benefited pimps and sex buyers. Women went from fearing police to fearing pimps, brothel owners and escort agency owners.⁹³

Women who worked in New Zealand's sex trade under decriminalisation described being employed as though they were independent contractors but expected to behave as though they were employees. Michelle Mara, who worked in 'high-end' escorting before and after decriminalisation, said, "I never met one single woman who had a contract that even resembled something you would get in a regular job."⁹⁴ Mara reported that women working under decriminalisation had "all of the expectations and none of the rights" of being an employee, with no ability to say no, or to determine working hours, no protection and no access to health services.⁹⁵

Sex trade survivor Rae Story described similar conditions working in a New Zealand brothel:

We were supposed to be 'independent contractors,' I discovered later, but the way the system was set up, it didn't feel that way. We had to keep careful count of what we earned, otherwise, some of the women told me, the receptionists would try to short-change you. Often, though, I was so confused by my necessary intoxication that I wasn't entirely sure how much money I was owed and mostly didn't bother to count. I wasn't the only one.⁹⁶

In New Zealand, women in the sex trade report having less power to negotiate with buyers. Following decriminalisation, brothel owners started offering sex buyers an "all inclusive" deal, where they could pay a set price to the brothel or agency to do whatever they wanted with a woman. This prevents women from being able to set their own prices or to determine which sex acts they will offer.

⁹¹ Legislative Assembly of New South Wales (2015). *Select Committee on the Regulation of Brothels Report 1/56 – November 2015 Inquiry into the Regulation of Brothels*.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/inquiries/1703/Final%20Report%20-%20Inquiry%20into%20the%20Regulation%20of%20Brot.pdf>

⁹² Bindel, J. (2017). My work as a prostitute led me to oppose decriminalisation. *BBC*, 2 October.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-41349301>

⁹³ Valisce, S. (2017). The Pimping of Prostitution. Sabrinna Valisce, *YouTube*, 23 October.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pasJGGunWsk&feature=emb_title

⁹⁴ Murphy, M. (2020). PODCAST: Michelle Mara on the truth about the decriminalized sex trade in New Zealand. *Feminist Current*, 13 April. <https://www.feministcurrent.com/2020/04/13/podcast-michelle-mara-on-the-truth-about-the-decriminalized-sex-trade-in-new-zealand/>

⁹⁵ *Ibid*.

⁹⁶ Story, R. (2016). Working in a New Zealand brothel was anything but 'a job like any other. *Feminist Current*, 2 May. <https://www.feministcurrent.com/2016/05/02/working-in-a-new-zealand-brothel-was-anything-but-a-job-like-any-other/>

*[All inclusives] means that the prostituted person/sex worker has no power of negotiation. It also means that the pimp decides her earnings (most are women). The pimps gained the power to decide what a 'service' would be paid and how much of that belonged to them. They also gained the power to withhold the woman's earnings or even deny any existence of those earnings.*⁹⁷

Valisce listed other ways brothel owners and escort agencies deduct money from the women's payments, taking half to begin with, as well as shift fees, driver's fees, petrol and advertising fees and fines for coming out of the room late, for arriving late, or for "appearance infractions".⁹⁸

Women working in New Zealand after decriminalisation reported increased violence and entitlement from sex buyers. "The men were the same men, but they were different, they had been emboldened," said Michelle Mara. "Now we were just completely commercialised, just marketable goods... There was no illusion."⁹⁹

Chelsea Geddes, who was prostituted in New Zealand, wrote about how sex buyers became increasingly entitled after decriminalisation:

It used to be that men knew the sex they did to us was unwanted, that we just needed the money. This didn't make them feel like helping us out with some money and leaving without raping us, but it did make them feel at least a little bit guilty about exploiting us, which made them treat us a little bit gentler, and they aimed to get their jollies and leave a little faster with a little less inconvenience to us.

Increasingly, with the current decriminalisation legislation and pro-sex work propaganda saturating the media, more men are convincing themselves that we are having consensual sex with them, and charging them, not for hard work or victim compensation, but only because we can. This makes men feel ripped off: 'If we are two consenting adults why do us men have to pay while she just collects?' It makes them more angry, more violent.

*They are expecting more and more, and willing to pay less and less... No, decriminalisation of johns and pimps has not improved our safety or lives.*¹⁰⁰

Sabrina Valisce said that within the space of a year, sex buyers had turned more violent and had greater demands. "They thought they could do whatever they wanted, thought they had bought your body. I had never had someone say, 'I paid for your body and I can do what I want' until decriminalisation."¹⁰¹

Despite the worsened conditions, women working under decriminalisation reported having very little support from 'sex work' advocacy groups, particularly the support required to exit prostitution. Chelsea approached NZPC for advice, and all they provided was discounted condoms.¹⁰² Jade, who

⁹⁷ Moran, R. (2016). The Evidence About Prostitution That The New York Times Ignored. *TruthDig*. <https://www.truthdig.com/articles/the-evidence-about-prostitution-that-the-new-york-times-ignored/>

⁹⁸ Valisce (2017) op cit.

⁹⁹ Murphy (2020) op cit.

¹⁰⁰ Geddes, C. (2018). No, decriminalisation of johns and pimps has not improved our safety or lives. *Nordic Model Now*, 26 August. <https://nordicmodelnow.org/2018/08/26/no-decriminalisation-of-johns-and-pimps-has-not-improved-our-safety-or-lives/>

¹⁰¹ Bindel, J. (2017). *The Pimping of Prostitution: Abolishing the Sex Work Myth*. Spinifex Press, Victoria, p. 141.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 101.

first began working in a New Zealand brothel while she was underage, described her failed attempts to leave the industry:

*After five years I wanted out of the sex industry. Twice I tried to go to school – once when I was eighteen and again when I was nineteen. I wanted to be a youth worker. But I couldn't study due to drugs and sex work. None of the sex worker advocacy agencies ever offered a contingency to get me out of the sex industry. They supplied lawyers, health checks, lube, condoms and dams but nothing to help me get out.*¹⁰³

If prostitution is decriminalised, and regarded as a job like any other, then there is no recognition of the need to provide exit programs or support for women wanting to leave the industry. For example, in NSW, with a mostly deregulated sex industry, there are no government-funded exit services to assist women desiring to leave prostitution.

As the Native Women's Association of Canada states: "Instead of legalising prostitution, governments should be looking toward alternative solutions that address root causes that make women susceptible so that they truly do have choices for survival."¹⁰⁴

3.2 COVID-19 pandemic impacts on prostituted women in legalised and decriminalised jurisdictions

The COVID-19 pandemic has been most catastrophic for the poor and marginalised, especially prostituted women, around the world. Researcher Melissa Farley gathered a broad range of data describing these impacts and the responses of pimps and clients that compounded women's trauma and abuse.¹⁰⁵

In Colombia, where prostitution is legal, webcam work was promoted as the solution to the pandemic but "the women try webcamming only to discover that they have no control over the use and resale of their images on porn sites. Because they lack Internet skills or access to banking, they are deceived and often not paid."¹⁰⁶ Farley points out that almost all women in prostitution plan to quickly make some money and leave as quickly as possible. Very few plan it as a career and most do not want their images circulating indefinitely on the web where their children or future partners or employers might find them. Unfortunately, in February, London-based OnlyFans had 1.5 terabytes of pornography leaked; just one example of the compromising of women's privacy.¹⁰⁷ Sex industry unions, however, continue to promote webcamming during the pandemic.

In Australia, Scarlet Alliance, like many other prostitution organisations, encouraged women to go online (i.e. webcamming) during the pandemic, rather than encouraging prostituted women to apply for JobSeeker programs. Scarlet Alliance complained that women were not able to "prove earnings," yet women in prostitution were certainly eligible for the government's economic support

¹⁰³ Jade (2017). The Fake You, in Norma C and Tankard Reist M (eds.), *Prostitution Narratives: Stories of Survival in the Sex Trade*, Spinifex Press, Victoria, p. 47.

¹⁰⁴ Native Women's Association of Canada (2014) op cit, p. 42.

¹⁰⁵ Farley, M. (2020). Prostitution, the Sex Trade, and the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Logos – A Journal of Modern Society and Culture*, Spring 2020, Vol. 19, No. 1. <https://prostitutionresearch.com/prostitution-the-sex-trade-and-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Shehadi, S. and Partington, M. (7 April 2020). Coronavirus: Offline sex workers forced to start again online. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52183773>

measures.¹⁰⁸ Instead, the Alliance launched a fund to tide women over until business was back to normal, potentially discouraging them from pursuing a safer line of employment with real prospects.

Farley writes that exaggeration of prostitution's safety, hygiene, and 'harm reduction' from sex industry unions are dangerous at any time, but especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰⁹ Scarlet Alliance published in its online *Red Book* a set of guidelines on how to reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission, despite prostitution being one of the industries specifically ordered to close during the pandemic. A raft of suggestions is made in the *Red Book* about how to reduce contact, with 'social distancing' mentioned far down the page. Implicitly acknowledging women's extreme disempowerment and financial vulnerability by being unable to stop servicing men, the Alliance advises: "If possible, do not see clients who have any of the following symptoms: cough, fever, headache, runny nose," and suggest to somehow avoid "close contact" by keeping face-to-face activity under 15 minutes, and even suggested nurse and doctor fantasy to incorporate hygiene precautions.¹¹⁰

The extreme vulnerability of prostituted women in Germany, Europe's brothel, was seen during COVID-19 and described in an open letter to Chancellor Angela Merkel and the German Parliament, written by Sandra Norak, former victim of human trafficking and prostitution, and Dr Ingeborg Kraus, trauma therapist:

*What can we now observe from the Corona crisis regarding prostitution? According to social workers from Stuttgart and Karlsruhe, most women (it is said around 80%) have returned to their home countries (mostly Romania and Bulgaria) or have been sent back by their pimps. Despite the new prostitution protection law of 2017, most women in prostitution are not officially registered. The number of those who have registered is approximately 32,800 (as of November 26, 2019). Estimates assume, however, that there are an estimated 200,000 to 400,000 people in prostitution in Germany. Those who could not return are facing nothing. Some are at risk of homelessness, they have no reserves because the prostitution system works in such a way that people, mostly women, are exploited and caught in a vicious circle without prospects. They are now penniless, without social support and without integration in the health system.*¹¹¹

3.3 Failure to address sex buyer demand

The sex industry is driven by demand, overwhelmingly that of male consumers, who buy sex primarily from women and girls. Mary Lucille Sullivan writes, "the [sex] buyer's economic power means he determines how the sexual act will be played out... [Buyers believe] their purchasing power entitles them to demand any type of sex they want."¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Channel Nine News (1 May 2020). 'All people deserve love': Should sex work be an essential service during COVID-19? *Channel Nine News*. <https://www.9news.com.au/national/coronavirus-sex-work-adult-industry-suffering-covid-19-police-penalties/26713f49-6b36-4537-a5ae-8c62bc1e596a>

¹⁰⁹ Farley (2020) op cit.

¹¹⁰ Scarlet Alliance (2020). COVID-19 (Coronavirus). *Scarlet Alliance Red Book*. <https://redbook.scarletalliance.org.au/covid-19/>

¹¹¹ Norak, S. and Kraus, I. (15 April 2020). *Open letter to Angela Merkel and the German Parliament*. Available at <https://appinternational.org/2020/04/28/german-prostitution-letter/>

¹¹² Sullivan (2007) op cit, p. 28.

A 2011 study found:

- sex buyers had an extensive awareness of the relationship between coercion, prostitution and trafficking;
- 41% used women they knew were controlled by pimps;
- both sex buyers and non sex buyers had extensive knowledge of the physical and psychological harms of prostitution;
- two thirds of both sex buyers and non sex buyers observed that a majority of women are lured, tricked or trafficked into prostitution;
- many had an awareness of the economic coercion and lack of alternatives in women's entry to prostitution;
- and almost all share the opinion that minor children are almost always available for prostitution in bars, massage parlours, escort, and prostitution.¹¹³

This awareness did not deter them from buying sex. Male participants agreed that the most effective deterrents to buying sex would be time in prison, public exposure, and being issued with an anti-social behaviour order.¹¹⁴

3.4 The need to adopt best practice Nordic/Equality model

To address violence against women and girls, we urge the UK to implement the Nordic Model, as Sweden has done as part of tackling male violence and to address sex inequality.

As a result of Sweden's legislation, street prostitution has halved,¹¹⁵ the number of prostituted women in the country fell from 2500 to 1500 within two years of implementing legislation,¹¹⁶ and the number of sex buyers decreased by 80%.¹¹⁷ A Government review found that the law had been an effective barrier for trafficking for sexual exploitation and that prostitution in Sweden, unlike other comparable countries, had not increased, but prostituted people in Sweden were around ten times lower per capita than Denmark.¹¹⁸ Rates of prostitution and sex trafficking remain substantially higher in neighbouring countries where prostitution is legalised,¹¹⁹ as Sweden is no longer a profitable option for traffickers. Police wiretaps confirm that Sweden and Norway are less attractive markets for pimps and traffickers.¹²⁰

¹¹³ Farley, M., Schuckman, E., Golding, J.M., Houser, K., Jarrett, L., Qualliotine, P. and Decker, M. (2011). Comparing sex buyers with men who don't buy sex. *San Francisco, CA: Prostitution Research & Education*, p. 5. <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/pdf/Farleyetal2011ComparingSexBuyers.pdf>

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 5.

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Justice (2015). Evaluation of the prohibition of the purchase of sexual services. Government Offices of Sweden, 25 August. <https://www.government.se/articles/2011/03/evaluation-of-the-prohibition-of-the-purchase-of-sexual-services/>

¹¹⁶ Ekberg, G. (2004). The Swedish Law That Prohibits the Purchase of Sexual Services: Best Practices for Prevention of Prostitution and Trafficking in Human Beings. *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 10 No. 10, pp. 1187-1218.

¹¹⁷ Gripenlöf, A. et al (1991-2002). *Yearly reports from the Stockholm Police Prostitution Group*. Stockholm: The County Police of Stockholm.

¹¹⁸ Waltman, M. (2011). Sweden's Prohibition of Purchase of Sex: The Law's Reasons, Impact, and Potential. *Women's Studies International Forum* Vol. 34, No. 5, pp. 449-74.

¹¹⁹ Ekberg (2004) op cit.

¹²⁰ Waltman (2011) op cit. p459.

The Nordic Model includes the following key elements:¹²¹

- The full decriminalisation of those who are prostituted, including clearing criminal records for prior convictions relating to their own prostitution.
- High-quality non-judgmental services for those in prostitution, including exit support, housing, legal advice, addiction services, long-term emotional and psychological support, education and training, and childcare.
- Buying sex to be made a criminal offence.
- Procuring, pimping, and sex trafficking legislation to be strengthened, recognising these offences as human rights abuses and having appropriate penalties.
- Factors driving people into prostitution to be addressed.
- A holistic approach including public information campaigns, education programmes, police training, and national coordination and prioritisation of the laws.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to your vitally important inquiry into violence against women and girls. We commend our submission to you and wish you well in your consideration.

Collective Shout

March 26, 2021

¹²¹ Nordic Model Now! (2021) What is the Nordic Model? <https://nordicmodelnow.org/what-is-the-nordic-model/>