



Media Release

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Governments have an obligation to promote healthier portrayal of women in advertising

Women's Health Victoria today called on Governments across the country to stand up to advertisers who resist regulation of exploitative or sexualized representation of women.

Governments have an obligation to promote healthier images of women in advertising by introducing regulation rather than bending to the complaints of the advertising industry.

WHV Executive Director Marilyn Beaumont said that Governments had an ethical obligation to regulate against the unhealthy portrayal of women in society, due to the detrimental health effects it can and does have in our community.

"Advertising and the exploitative or sexualized portrayal of women can have very serious negative health effects," said Ms Beaumont.

"As experienced health policy experts and advocates we have called for Government regulation of the advertising industry in the past, for the impacts on our health system are wide-ranging.

"Advertising can reinforce attitudes, stereotypes and perceptions that can be quite harmful at their most extreme.

"A 2007 report by the American Psychological Association found that women are sexualised in the media far more than men and boys and that sexualisation has a detrimental effect on women and girls' cognitive functioning, physical and mental health, sexuality and attitudes and beliefs regarding sexuality and femininity.

"Issues such as violence supportive attitudes; negative body image and ideals for young women that distort their perception of a healthy body are all very concerning by-products of certain forms of advertising.

"We encourage advertisers to take responsibility for the reinforcement of negative attitudes that can in turn, impact upon health.

"Regulation against advertising that exploits or sexualizes women is an important step towards reducing some of the impacts of poor body image and discriminatory treatment of women.

"These sorts of messages and imagery should be replaced by a healthier portrayal of women across the board," said Ms Beaumont.

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