



## Fact Sheet

### The Sexualisation of Children



#### **GUESTS:**

**Dr Emma Rush** – Dr Emma Rush is a lecturer in philosophy and ethics at Charles Sturt University. She teaches professional ethics for human services, health, and creative industries students, as well as history of philosophy subjects. She is nationally recognised for her research on the sexualisation of children. She was the lead author of two papers on the sexualisation of children released by the Australia Institute in 2006 ([www.tai.org.au](http://www.tai.org.au)). These papers prompted considerable public debate, ultimately leading to a Senate Inquiry. Emma continues to write and speak about the issue of the sexualisation of children to academic, professional and general audiences (links to some of Emma's media pieces appear below).

**Sharon Witt** – Sharon Witt is a dynamic educator, author and speaker who has worked with thousands of young people across Australia. She has been a secondary teacher for over eighteen years and holds her Masters Degree in education. She has spent many years developing innovative curriculum that engages and impacts the lives of the adolescents she works with. Sharon has authored six books for young people including the best selling Teen Talk Series. She is also the author of *Surviving High School*. Sharon is a gifted and energetic communicator and regularly runs workshops and parent seminars in schools and youth events across Australia.

#### **DEFINITION:**

Sexualization - is to make something sexual in character or quality, or to become aware of sexuality, especially in relation to men and women.



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### QUICK FACTS:

- Images of sexualised children are becoming increasingly common in advertising and marketing material. Children who appear aged 12 years and under are dressed, posed and made up in the same way as sexy adult models. "Corporate paedophilia" is a metaphor used to describe advertising and marketing that sexualises children in these ways.
- Research has shown that the exploitation of children, particularly girls, as sexual objects has a detrimental effect on adolescent development, increasing the risk of depression, eating disorders and low self-esteem.
- Sexualisation of girls puts them in danger. It contributes to exploitation and violence against girls and women. It increases sexism, sex bias and sexist attitudes.
- Strong evidence indicates the exposure to ideals of sexual attractiveness in the media is associated with greater body dissatisfaction amongst girls and boys.
- Sexualisation practices may function to keep girls in their place as objects of sexual attraction and beauty, significantly limiting their free thinking and movement in the world.
- If girls and women are seen exclusively as sexual beings rather than as complicated people with many interests, talents, and identities, boys and men may have difficulty relating to them on any level other than the sexual.
- In the current environment, teen girls are encouraged to look sexy, yet they know little about what it means to be sexual, to have sexual desires, and to make rational and responsible decisions about pleasure and risk within intimate relationships that acknowledge their own desires
- <https://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/daily-mail-mailonline-stop-the-daily-mail-sexualising-children>

### TIPS IN RAISING CHILDREN:

- The Australian Psychological Society has a great tip sheet in what parents can do in regards to helping girls develop a positive self image.  
[http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip\\_sheets/girls\\_positive\\_image/](http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip_sheets/girls_positive_image/)



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### HOW TO MAKE A STAND:

There are numerous ways in which individuals can make a stand to help stamp out the sexualisation of our culture.

- Write to your local MP
- Write and/or complain to the Advertising Standards Bureau in Australia when you see an advertisement you think is inappropriate - <http://www.adstandards.com.au/process/theprocesssteps/>
- Boycott clothing items and any other items that promote the issue
- Discuss the issues with your children.
- There are also useful campaigns that give extra information about the issue of sexualised culture and the issues it has on children, and how we can help eradicate this. The 'Let Girls Be Girls' campaign is leading the way in this regard. You can find out more here: <http://www.mumsnet.com/campaigns/let-girls-be-girls>

### PAPERS BY DR EMMA RUSH:

- *Corporate Paedophilia: Sexualisation of children in Australia*  
<http://www.tai.org.au/node/1286>
- *Letting Children be Children: Stopping the sexualisation of children in Australia*  
<http://www.tai.org.au/node/1296>

### BOOKS BY SHARON WITT:

For all book resources written by Sharon Witt, check out the resources tab at her website:

<http://www.sharonwitt.com.au/resources>

### ADDITIONAL READING:

- [https://www.ranzcp.org/Files/Resources/58\\_ps-2008-pdf.aspx](https://www.ranzcp.org/Files/Resources/58_ps-2008-pdf.aspx)
- <http://www.theguardian.com/media/shortcuts/2014/feb/26/fight-against-sexualisation-children>
- <http://www.essentialkids.com.au/older-kids/development-for-older-kids/sexualising-girls-whats-missing-from-the-conversation-20130423-2icha.html>

### USEFUL WEB LINKS:

- <http://collectiveshout.org/>
- <http://childrenandmedia.org.au/>



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- <https://www.ranzcp.org/News-policy/Media-Centre/Media/Sexualisation-of-children-in-the-media.aspx>
- <http://www.kf2bk.com/>
- <http://iliketobeme.com/about/>

### REFERENCE:

- <http://www.womensforumaustralia.com/significant-issues/premature-sexualisation-of-children>
- <http://www.psychology.org.au/community/public-interest/sexualisation/>