Advocate for Children
and Young People

27 May 2016

Dr Abigail Groves
Committee Manager
Joint Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People
Email: childrenyoungpeople@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Dr Groves

Inquiry into the Sexualisation of Children and Young People

Please find attached our responses to the additional questions as requested.

If you have any further questions about the responses or any other related matters, please contact me on (02) 9248 0976 or at Andrew.Johnson@acyp.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

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NSW GOVERNMENT

Questions Taken on Notice

1. *Are the current regulatory codes for advertisers adequate to protect children and young people?*

   Response

   The Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB) administers the advertising industry's voluntary self regulation scheme using the industry codes. The Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) maintains the advertising industry codes that have greatest relevance to this inquiry.

   The *AANA Code for Advertising & Marketing Communications to Children* states that advertising and marketing communications 'directed primarily at children' must not employ sexual appeal. However, the code does not cover advertisements with sexualised content that may not be intended for children but which they are nevertheless exposed to.

   The *AANA Code of Ethics* and the associated *Practice Note* are the primary references for the advertising industry more generally. This code would include advertisements with sexualised content that children and young people are exposed to but is not specifically targeted at them. While applying codes or guidelines always requires a level of interpretation, ACYP considers the AANA Code of Ethics and accompanying Practice Note to leave a significant margin for inappropriate content.

   Only the most egregious depictions appear to be prohibited. For example Section 2.2 of the Code of Ethics states that 'advertising or marketing communications should not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is *exploitative or degrading* of any individual or group of people.' And the Practice Note states that 'images are not permitted which are '*highly sexually suggestive and inappropriate* for the relevant audience.'

   Beyond these prohibitions at the extreme end, the Code of Ethics and Practice Note leave advertisers with significant discretion. For example the Practice Note states that 'advertisements with appeal to younger people (under 14 years) which contain sexualised images or poses are to be used with caution.'

Supplementary Questions

1. *In your evidence you referred to a literature review on the topic of sexualisation of children and young people conducted by your Office. Can you provide the Committee with a copy of this literature review?*

   Response

   A copy of the literature review commissioned by ACYP is attached for the Committee. (Note: This literature review has not been published.)

Additional Questions

Safe Schools

1. *During the course of the hearing, several organisations made submissions to the committee relating to the "Safe Schools" program. It is noted that in your evidence before the committee, you endorsed the review of the "Safe Schools" program which has been conducted by the Federal Government, and the recommendations which have been made.*

   Having said that, we would be pleased to receive your advice as to whether in its previous form, the program as provided to schools for implementation, by those schools that are elected to do so, could properly be construed as "sexualisation of children".

   Response

   As noted in our evidence, ACYP endorses the review of the *Safe Schools* program which has been conducted by the Federal Government, and the recommendations which have been made.

   The review's findings included the following:

   - Overall it found that: "all of the official resources are consistent with the intent and objectives of the program", which aims to reduce homophobic and transphobic behaviour and intersex prejudice, and increasing support for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students.
   - It found that the *All of Us* teaching resource "is consistent with the aims of the program, is suitable, robust, age-appropriate, educationally sound and aligned with the Australian Curriculum".
   - The review noted that in the *All of Us* teaching resource, "activities in three of the lessons (Lessons 2, 6 and 7) may not be suitable in all contexts, but their suitability falls within the reasonable range of teacher judgment."
   - The review found that the *OMG I'm Queer, OMG My Friend's Queer* and *Stand Out* resources were "not suitable for primary schools" or "suitable for use by older secondary school students".

   Given the objective of the program and the findings of the review, ACYP would not construe the program, as it was reviewed, as "sexualisation of children".

2. *In answering the above question, please advise whether in your view, it is possible that the material may have constituted sexualisation of children in circumstances where the program was delivered without regard to the age-appropriateness of the program.*

   Response

   It is important that programs are delivered to children and young people in an age-appropriate way. As ACYP have noted, the review of the *Safe Schools* program found that some of the materials were better suited for older students. As a

consequence, the Federal government determined that the distribution and promotion of the program materials be restricted to secondary school settings only.

ACYP understands from the review that there is no obligation on schools to use the *Safe Schools* resource, even if they have signed up and received the associated training and resources. Schools retain the discretion to make the decision about whether to use the program, what elements of the program are used and in what way it is used. In addition, teachers delivering the program can exercise their judgment and make modifications to the lessons included in the *All of Us* teaching resource.

Given the varied implementation and flexibility of the program it is not possible to determine in a blanket way whether it may have constituted sexualisation of children.

3. *In delivering programs of the nature of "Safe Schools", what is your view of the manner in which parents ought be consulted prior to the delivery of that program.*

   Response

   The Federal government determined, following the review of the *Safe Schools* program, that parents be appropriately empowered and engaged by the program, through agreement of relevant parent bodies for schools; requiring parental consent; providing information about the program to parents; and providing an official resource for parents.

   ACYP endorses these strategies for involving parents.

   The aim of the *Safe Schools* program is to create safe and supportive school environments for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse people by reducing homophobic and transphobic bullying and discrimination in schools. It is known that because of the bullying and discrimination experienced by children and young people in these population groups, they have poorer mental health outcomes and higher rates of self harm and suicide[1].

   This is an issue that has an impact on the community and it is an issue which the community has a shared responsibility. The involvement of parents could strengthen the outcomes of what the *Safe Schools* program aims to achieve. Parents and carers can make a valuable contribution through the engagement with their children's school. There may however be some individual cases where the engagement of parents may not be suitable for the welfare of the student. This is a complex and sensitive area that schools and teachers negotiate using their skills and experience, with assistance from support staff and services on a case by case basis.

4. *Attached is a copy of the guidelines issued by the Department of Education in relation to the use of controversial material in schools. Is it your view that those guidelines are sufficient, if not, what amendments would you make to the guidelines?*

[1] Rosenstreich, G. (2013) LGBTI People Mental Health and Suicide. Revised 2nd Edition. National LGBTI Health Alliance. Sydney

Response

ACYP considers the guidelines to be sensible and sufficient, noting that the guidelines are currently being reviewed as part of the Department of Education's regular policy review process.

Outdoor Advertising

5. *Please advise whether, in your view, it is appropriate that the outdoor advertising industry remains self-regulated.*
6. *If not, why not? What recommendations would you make in relation to the potential for further regulation of the outdoor advertising industry?*

Response to Questions 5 and 6

The advertising industry, including outdoor or out of home advertising, is currently self-regulated under a national scheme of industry codes and initiatives. The self regulation scheme is administered by the Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB), whose work is not underpinned by any government legislation. If the NSW Government wishes to pursue regulation of the industry, further advice may be required to determine the extent of the jurisdiction's regulatory powers.

Children and young people are exposed to advertising through a vast range of media, including traditional print and television media, digital media through the internet and social media, as well as outdoor advertising. Therefore, changes to the regulations of advertising should be considered in an integrated way.

The Queensland Government, in 2014, following an inquiry into sexually explicit outdoor advertising was considering enforcement options to penalise advertisers that do not comply with the determinations of the Advertising Standards Board. If the NSW Government was to consider a similar option, ACYP would be pleased to work with the Department of Justice on these matters.

ACYP notes that the Advertising Standards Bureau regularly commissions research on community perceptions of advertising. This includes the recent one on *Community perceptions of advertising directed primarily to children* (December 2015). This report found that "the Board's determinations about whether an advertising or marketing communication was directed primarily to children were generally in line with community perceptions."

The series of ASB commissioned research on community perceptions of advertising normally involve a sample size of 1,200 adults. The research reports from 2009 to 2013 has consistently found that the highest topic of concern with paid advertising is "sex, sexuality or nudity", with 20 to 26 per cent of the respondents electing this as something that they have been concerned or offended about paid advertising in the last 12 months[2]. It is not clear what actions the ASB or the Australian Association of

[2] Advertising Standards Bureau (2013) *Community perceptions of exploitative and degrading images in advertising*, page 47, accessed at

National Advertisers has done to address these ongoing concerns. It should be noted that it is not detailed which type of media (outdoor, print, online) the concerns were in relation to.

ACYP notes that the most recent research in 2015 did not ask the question about respondents being concerned or offended about paid advertising, in the same way. Instead it asked the respondent "have you recently been exposed to any advertising that you found unacceptable?" Sixteen per cent answered that they were recently exposed to unacceptable advertising and that the concern for 26 per cent of these people was related to sex, sexuality or nudity[3].

It remains unclear as to whether there is sufficient community awareness about their right to make a complaint about advertising they have a concern with or find offensive. The industry maintains that a low level of complaints that they receive is not due to a lack of awareness.

The ASB research reports from 2009 to 2013 show that 62 to 67 per cent of respondents are aware that ASB is the complaints organisation for advertising. The 2015 ASB report shows that the awareness of respondents drops significantly when they are not prompted with a list of choices about who to complain to. For the 2015 survey, respondents were asked, without any prompts, to identify an organisation that handles advertising complaints; 67 per cent said there was none or that they did not know[4].

ACYP would support measures that ensure the community and children and young people are better informed about their right to make a complaint about advertisements.

Online Pornography

7. *Would you support a recommendation that the NSW Government looked to implementing a system similar to that in the United Kingdom, where online users need to opt-in to receive pornographic content, rather than opt-out of receiving that content.*

Response

ACYP would support efforts to provide consumers with an unavoidable choice to opt in or out of family-friendly network-level filtering services.

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https://adstandards.com.au/sites/default/files/2015_community_perceptions_on_advertising_directed_primarily_to_children_web_final.pdf

[3] Advertising Standards Bureau (2015) *Community perceptions of advertising directed primarily to children*, pages 59-60, accessed at https://adstandards.com.au/sites/default/files/2015_community_perceptions_on_advertising_directed_primarily_to_children_web_final.pdf

[4] Advertising Standards Bureau (2015) *Community perceptions of advertising directed primarily to children*, page 60.

The Commonwealth's Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner (the Office) was established in 1 July 2015 as a one-stop-shop for online safety of children and young people. The responsibilities of the Office include:

- providing a safety net for Australian children who have been a victim of cyberbullying and are not satisfied with how a social media service has dealt with their complaint; and
- administering the Commonwealth's Online Content Scheme, which investigate valid complaints about online content, and takes action on material found to be prohibited or potentially prohibited.

The Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner has commented on internet filtering in its submission to the Australian Senate Environment and Communications References Committee's recent inquiry into the *harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the* Internet. Its submission noted that there is currently a range of Australian telecommunications providers and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that offer optional parental control tools and commercial filters, some of which are available free of charge. The submission also noted that while the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner promote the use of these tools, "greater awareness of the use and access to these types of tools through improved industry cooperation and campaigns could assist Australian families in managing internet use at home."

ACYP supports this position.

8. *Are there any additional measures which you would recommend, that the government adopt for the purposes of providing further assistance for the education of parents in respect of online use by their children?*

   Response

   The Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner has developed a range of educational resources which are available on their website. This includes a set of online safety resources, entitled *iParent*, targeted to the needs of parents and carers. The Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner has also actively engaged with Australian children, their families and schools about online safety maters through its education and complaint handling functions.

   In December 2015, the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner convened a consultative working group on the issue of the availability of pornography online and children's access to it. The group highlighted the need for the identification and development of evidence-based resources to assist parents and young people in engaging in discussions about this and related issues and understanding the potential consequences of certain behaviours. The group identified a set of principles for effective approaches:

   - messaging that contextualises parents' fears
   - acknowledging the importance of parents' influence

- using communication channels that parents use and trust
- promoting intergenerational dialogues
- harm minimisation and understanding young people's practices online
- targeting groups who are vulnerable offline and those in transition years (9-11 years) with age appropriate information and resources
- acknowledgment that the digital world is an integral feature

ACYP supports the findings of the consultative working group and will continue to work with the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner on these issues.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE IMPACT OF PORNOGRAPHY ON THE SEXUALISATION OF CHILDREN

JANUARY 2016

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Executive Summary

Background

This review was commissioned by the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP) and conducted by the Burnet Institute. The review summarises current evidence about pornography and the sexualisation of children and young people. It aims to describe the trends in children's and young people's exposure to pornography and the impact of pornography on their health and wellbeing. Measures for preventing exposure to pornography and related harms will be discussed.

We conducted a comprehensive search of academic and grey literature and synthesised evidence qualitatively. Prominence was given to research relating to children and young people in the Australian context; however, when this was unavailable, we included research relating to young adults and international studies. We have focused on internet pornography where possible.

Sexual development and sexualisation

The American Psychological Association (2010) defines sexualisation as when:

- a person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics; or,
- a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; or,
- a person is sexually objectified—that is, made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; or,
- sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person (e.g. a child).

It is important to draw a distinction between healthy sexual development and inappropriate (and potentially harmful) sexualisation of children. Developing a sexual identity is an important aspect of adolescence, however it is when (age-)inappropriate sexualisation occurs that normal sexual development can be hampered (American Psychological Association, 2010).

Whether viewing pornography is a developmentally appropriate for children and adolescents is not clear. A sexual development framework endorsed by the South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault & Family Violence describes viewing pornography as a 'concerning' behaviour up to the age of 18 (South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault & Family Violence, 2012). The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault states that "chronic preoccupation with sex and pornography" is developmentally inappropriate at ages 13 to 18 years, however, no information is provided on the appropriateness of occasional pornography use (Stathopoulos, 2002). The NSW Department of

Family and Community Services guidelines do not specifically mention pornography, however, they state that it is normal for children aged 11 to 12 to show "an interest in other's bodies particularly the opposite sex that may take the form of looking at photos or other published material"(NSW Department of Community Services, 2008).

The extent of sexualised media

Reviews have shown that sexual content is widespread in television programming, movies, music videos, magazines, and advertisements. Children may be sexualised in or by the media through exposure to sexualised representations of adults and adult behaviour, or by the portrayal of children in ways designed to draw attention to adult sexual features and behaviours that the children do not yet possess.

In addition to traditional media, Australian children and teenagers now have greater access and exposure to the internet and social media. For example, 90% of Australian children aged 5-14 access the internet (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012) and 98% of Year 10, 11, and 12 students use social media regularly (Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society, 2014). The internet and social media are now a critical source of young people's information about sex. Recent Australian research has identified that the internet is the most commonly used source of sexual education information for young people. (Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society, 2014; Lim et al, 2014).

Social media not only expands access to sexual content, but users, adolescents included, often engage in self-sexualising behaviour by posting their own sexualised content. Studies from the USA and Netherlands have found that between one quarter and one third of adolescents display sexual references on their social network profiles (Doornwaard et al, 2014; Moreno et al 2009a; Moreno et al 2009b; Baumgartner et al, 2015). A survey of Australian high school students found that 31% of boys and 16% of girls had used a social media site for 'sexual reasons' (Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society, 2014). Forty percent of Australians aged 16-29 years have reported sexting, the sending or receiving of sexually explicit material via communication technology (Yeung et al, 2014).

The impact of sexualised media

Research shows that adolescents who consume sexualised media are more likely to engage in intercourse and other non-coital sexual activities earlier (Bleakley, et al., 2008; Brown & Bobkowski, 2011; Brown et al., 2006; Collins et al., 2004; Escobar-Chaves et al., 2005; Martino, et al., 2005; Parkes, et al., 2013). There are concerns that children or adolescents who are exposed to sexualised

media might be more likely to engage in objectification of women and sexual violence, however, there is only limited evidence to support this.

Children's exposure to sexualised media has been associated with psychological and physical harms including body-image issues, appearance anxiety, self-objectification and in extreme cases, eating disorders (i.e. anorexia, bulimia). In particular, sexualised media is associated with the 'thin-ideal' which represents women's bodies according to narrow, and sexualised standards of attractiveness. Recent Australian research showed that in both adolescent and tween girls, time spent on social media was significantly and positively associated with internalisation of the 'thin-ideal' body (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013, 2014b). Evidence suggests that exposure to the 'thin-ideal' in traditional media leads to self-objectification in adults, adolescents and children (Benowitz-Fredericks, et al., 2012; Clark & Tiggemann, 2006, 2008; Jongenelis, et al., 2014; Wang, Peterson, McCormick, & Austin, 2014).

Young people's beliefs about sexualised media

Debates around sexualised media are dominated by the voices of parents, lobbyists and government groups, and few research studies have engaged children and young people (Lumby and Albury, 2010). International qualitative research with young people has identified several themes regarding young people's beliefs about sexualised media;

- *Media as a source of information.* Girls (age 10-13) have described the important role of magazines in learning about different aspects of sex and sexuality; they described *Girlfriend* as akin to an older girlfriend who can offer the wisdom of experience, 'inside information' and know-how (Jackson & Westrupp, 2010).
- *Children as knowledgeable consumers.* Several studies show that children and adolescents are eager to portray themselves as knowledgeable consumers eager to make their own choices about consumption of sexualised media (Buckingham et al., 2010; Jackson & Vares, 2015a; Tsaliki, 2015). Teenagers also demonstrate media literacy and awareness of the debate surrounding the sexualisation of popular culture.
- *Morality.* Buckingham and Bragg (2010) commented that teenager's discussions about sexualised media revealed that they were often more 'moralistic' and 'prudish' than many adults. Adolescent girls have described complex and contradictory expectations they are expected to navigate as they consume media: morality and age-appropriateness on one hand, and sexual agency and independence on the other (Jackson & Goddard, 2015).

Exposure of children and young people to pornography

According to a large Australian study, the number of adults recently exposed to pornography has increased over time (Richters et al., 2014; Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society, 2003). A 2010-11 Australian survey found that 6% of 11-12 year olds, 11% of 12-14 year olds and 29% of 15-16 year olds had seen images or video of someone having sex in the past 12 months (Green, et al., 2011). In Burnet Institute's forthcoming study among Australians aged 15-29 years, 98% of male participants and 68% of female participants had viewed pornography in the past 12 months.

The age of first pornography exposure appears to be decreasing: 79% of Australian pornography consumers had first seen pornography by age 16 in the early 2000s (McKee, 2010). The commonly cited age of first exposure, 11 years, is not supported by research and appears to be perpetuated anecdotally (Lubrove, 2005). In Burnet Institute's forthcoming study, the median age of first viewing pornography was 13 for male participants and 16 for female participants.

Several studies have examined the content of available online pornography. Analyses indicate gender inequality is common in online pornography involving heterosexual encounters; male actors are more likely to be portrayed as dominant and female actors are more likely to be portrayed as submissive (Klaassen & Peter, 2014). A minority of the videos sampled (0-3.8%) depict overt violence or aggression (Gorman et al., 2010; Klaassen & Peter, 2014; Vannier et al., 2014). These small frequencies are after excluding spanking and gagging from definitions of violence (seen in 27% and 19% of videos respectively; Klaassen & Peter, 2014; Vannier et al., 2014). This is in contrast to the commonly cited statistic that 88% of pornographic videos contain acts of physical aggression; this percentage came from a 2010 study of pornographic DVDs with a broad definition of aggression and is unlikely to reflect aggression and violence in free online pornography (Bridges, et al., 2010). Depictions of persuasion or pressure to engage in sex were seen in 16% of videos, most commonly verbal, and 11% of videos depicted a show of force by male actors when female actors resisted their sexual acts (Gorman et al., 2010; Vannier et al., 2014). Condom use is rare in depictions of heterosexual sex (approximately 2% of videos; Gorman et al., 2010; Vannier et al., 2014).

Little research indicates what types of pornography children and adolescents are exposed to. One study found that 18% of adolescents have been exposed to affection-themed pornography, 18% have been exposed to pornography with themes of dominance, and 10% have been exposed to violent pornography (Vandenbosch, et al., 2015). Approximately 6% of Australian 11-16 year olds reported seeing violent pornography in the past year (Green et al., 2011).

The impact of pornography on young people

Young people have reported using pornography for sexual education in several studies (Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS, 2012; Svedin et al., 2011; Rothman, et al., 2014). There is a growing body of evidence correlating pornography exposure with sexual behaviour.

Several cross sectional studies support a relationship between pornography use and initiation of sexual behaviours at a younger age (Häggström-Nordin, Hanson, & Tydén, 2005; Morgan, 2011; Svedin et al., 2011; Weber et al., 2012). There is a moderate amount of research on the association between young people's pornography use and STI transmission risk behaviours; adolescents who use pornography are more likely to report condom non-use (Luder et al., 2011), more lifetime sexual partners (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009), group sex (Rothman et al., 2012), using drugs or alcohol during sex (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009), increased sexual permissiveness (Baams et al., 2015; Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009; Owens, et al., 2012), the belief that sex is primarily physical/casual (Peter & Valkenburg, 2010), more positive attitudes towards casual partners/one night stands (Peter & Valkenburg, 2008b), and getting ideas for real-life sex from pornography (Böhm, et al., 2014). There is some evidence indicating a relationship between pornography and heterosexual anal intercourse (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009; Häggström-Nordin et al., 2005). Other studies have found no relationship between pornography use and risky sexual behaviour in adolescents (e.g. Owens et al., 2012). In a longitudinal study of Dutch adolescents and adults, use of pornography increased sexual risk behaviour among adult men, but not adult women or adolescents (Peter and Valkenburg, 2011).

Research indicates that pornography use may negatively impact upon relationships and sexuality in adolescents. More frequent pornography use has been associated with relationship dissatisfaction and problems and sexual dissatisfaction (Mattebo, et al., 2013; Brown & L'Engle, 2009; Morgan, 2011; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014). Evidence supporting a relationship between pornography use and impaired sexual performance is mixed (Landripet & Štulhofer, 2015; Ley, Prause, & Finn, 2014). There is a growing, although mostly anecdotal, body of evidence to support the idea that pornography might also have a positive effect on sexual and relationship satisfaction for some.

Longitudinal research in the US indicates that pornography exposure is associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in sexually aggressive behaviour among adolescents (Brown & L'Engle, 2009; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2013; Ybarra, et al., 2011). A meta-analysis of non-experimental studies indicates that, in general, there is a small, but significant association between pornography use and attitudes

supporting violence against women, although this study did not report differences by age (Hald et al., 2010). Exposure to pornography among adolescents is also associated with more negative and objectifying attitudes to women (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009; Brown & L'Engle 2009).Research has emphasised that the association between pornography use and attitudes supporting violence against women are largely related to pre-existing risks for sexual aggression (Hald et al., 2010; Malamuth, Hald, & Koss, 2012). The relationship between pornography use and violence is strongest for the use of violent pornography.

Higher frequency of pornography use has been associated with poorer mental health in some studies (Svedin et al., 2011; Tylka, 2015). Pornography addiction, although frequently discussed, is not formally recognised as an addictive disorder by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5). However, studies of adults support an addiction framework from a biological perspective. Some teenagers have reported feeling that their pornography use was habitual or compulsive (Mattebo et al, 2013; Damiano et al, 2015).

Findings regarding pornography's impact on body image are contradictory, although negative associations between pornography use and body image seem to be found more commonly among boys than girls (Peter & Valkenburg, 2014). Pornography has been suggested as a factor influencing trends in pubic hair removal and labiaplasty, however, no research to date has examined this relationship.

Young people's beliefs about pornography

In a study of Australians aged 9-16 who were asked 'what things on the internet bother people about your age?', pornography was listed by 27% of participants (Green et al., 2013). In a qualitative study of adolescent and young adult Australians, participants reported being exposed to pornography they did not wish to see, and also reported concern over possible relationship problems (Walker, 2015). In contrast, qualitatively, adolescents reported pornography as entertaining and stimulating (Rothman et al., 2014). Young adults generally report significantly more positive effects of pornography than negative effects, particularly among young men (Hald & Malamuth, 2008).

A New Zealand qualitative study showed that most young men were unable or reluctant to think critically about pornography (Antevska & Gavey, 2015). There is also general observation of a 'third person effect', in which young pornography consumers recognise that pornography consumption might be harmful for other people, but don't believe it affects them personally (Watson & Smith, 2012; Häggström-Nordin et al., 2005).

Preventing harms of pornography and sexual media: restricting content

There are several ways to restrict the content of pornography and other sexual media in order to limit what young people are exposed to. Australian law prohibits people under 18 from viewing pornography and legislation imposes tight control upon where, how, and what kind of pornography can be made in Australia. Film and publications are subjected to classification schemes prior to sale in Australia. Despite these measures, Australians can access pornography not subject to Australian laws, via the internet.

Internationally, some jurisdictions have attempted to legislate certain aspects of pornography production. California recently ruled to mandate condom use in all films and the United Kingdom banned depicting behaviours including spanking, 'fisting', 'face-sitting' and female ejaculation.

In Australia, exposure to general media is governed by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) for television, radio, and online content, the Advertising Standards Bureau for advertisements, the Australian Classifications Board for films, video games, and magazines, and the Australian Record Industry Association for recorded music. These classifications act to restrict access to sexual material by children via the media.

Preventing harms of pornography and sexual media: reducing access

There are various mechanisms for preventing and limiting children's and adolescent's access to pornography and other sexualised media;

- Age verification software (used by some pornography websites) aims to prevent underage users from access pornography, such as requiring users to select 'yes' to the question 'are you aged 18 years or older?'
- Filtering, or censorship, of the internet aims to control access to information that is considered inappropriate or harmful. Internet filters can be applied voluntarily at an internet service provider, organisational, household, or device level.
- Parents and guardians can take actions to monitor their children's access to online pornography through setting rules and restrictions on internet use.

However, current implementation of these approaches is not highly effective; age verification systems are simple to bypass and most children report no problems circumventing filters to access pornography. Additionally, these measures may backfire. Health information and sex education pages are often blocked by internet filters and the casting of parents as gate-keepers of the internet may make children reluctant to talk to their parents about risks or problems encountered online

(Richardson, et al., 2002; Livingstone & Bober, 2006; Fleming et al., 2006). While these approaches may not be highly effective in stopping a motivated young person from accessing pornography, they may play a role in reducing accidental exposure.

Preventing harms of pornography and sexual media: education, awareness and treatment programs

Despite legislation, regulation and interventions targeting access to pornography, the near ubiquitous rates of pornography exposure and use indicate that it is impractical to completely stop adolescents from accessing pornography. Educational and awareness initiatives aim to influence how young people perceive pornography, encouraging them to think critically about the content, analyse how pornography influences their understanding of sex and sexuality, and self-regulate their use.

Australian students and parents report a high level of acceptability for inclusion of pornography-related curriculum in school-based sexual education. As school-based sexual education is neither standardised nor compulsory in Australia, it is unknown whether schools are discussing pornography in their classes, and – if they are – how they teach the subject and how effective the teaching is. There are a growing number of pornography education programs becoming available to Australian schools (e.g. Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2014; Reality & Risk, n.d.), however, these have yet to be formally evaluated.

Parents and guardians have a vital role in educating young people about pornography and sexual media. There are several Australian online resources for parents and others concerned about online safety; many provide advice on how to discuss pornography with children. When parents are actively involved in discussing pornography use with their children this may lead to the children holding less positive attitudes to pornography, which are in turn associated with less future use of pornography (Rasmussen, Ortiz, & White, 2015).

A number of awareness movements (e.g. Collective Shout, Reality & Risk, Fight the New Drug) have been formed to raise awareness of the harms of pornography and sexual media in the general community. The efficacy of their work has not been formally evaluated so their success is unclear.

For some individuals, problematic pornography use may be addressed through psychological intervention and treatment. Evidence supports the use of formal psychological intervention in treating problematic pornography use among adult populations, however, no known research has involved adolescent populations.

Methodological issues in pornography research

There are some gaps in existing pornography research that should be noted. Firstly, comparison between different studies is difficult due to inconsistencies in defining key concepts. A review of pornography research found that 84% of studies provided no definition of pornography and 95% of studies measured pornography use with non-standardised questions (Short et al, 2012).

A causal relationship between pornography viewing and outcomes is difficult to prove as both behaviours must surely be mediated by the choice to watch pornography – for example, those people more interested in sex and with stronger sexual desires are more likely to both engage in sexual behaviour and to watch pornography. The relationship does not seem to be straightforward, but is mediated by a range of personal and situational factors.

Australian pornography research thus far has relied on cross-sectional studies and convenience samples, which provide poorer quality evidence. Internationally, the majority of longitudinal evidence linking pornography and sexual behaviour thus far comes from a single Dutch study (Peter & Valkenburg, 2011); replication of findings in other cohorts is needed.

Other concerns which limit the available evidence include the ethical and logistical problems of conducting sensitive research with children and adolescents, lack of clarity about the place of pornographic interest in normal sexual development, and a lack of studies designed to investigate positive effects of pornography.

There are major knowledge gaps in peer-reviewed literature concerning pornography in general, but especially in how early exposure might impact children and adolescents. Research in an Australian context in the era of social media is particularly lacking. There is also a need to rigorously evaluate programs designed to reduce or prevent pornography-related harms and exposure in children.

Conclusions

Consumption of pornography is common among young people in Australia and appears to have increased over time. Pornography and other sexualised media have been raised as a concern by researchers, the media, educators, psychologists, physicians, parents, and by children and young people themselves. Most research points to an association between sexualising media (including pornography) and negative outcomes such as poor body image, negative attitudes towards women, and risky sexual behaviour. Further research is needed to determine the efficacy of interventions, such as educational programs, designed to reduce access to pornography and prevent negative outcomes related to pornography use among children and young people.

1 Introduction

1.1 About this review

This review was commissioned by the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP) in June 2015 and conducted by the Burnet Institute between June and December 2015. The purpose of the review was to summarise current literature about sexualisation of children with a particular focus on the exposure of children and young people to adult pornography. The review will report on the current evidence describing children and young people's exposure to sexualising media and pornography, the impact of sexualising media and pornography on their health and wellbeing, and research into measures for preventing potential harms of sexualisation and pornography.

We conducted a comprehensive search of academic and grey literature and synthesised evidence qualitatively. Prominence was given to research relating to children and young people in the Australian context; however, when this was unavailable, we included research relating to young adults and international studies.

The following age group descriptive terms are used in this review. They should be considered approximate age ranges as individual studies utilise different age inclusion criteria.

Children:	0-12 years
Pre-teens or Tweens:	9-13 years
Teenagers or Adolescents:	12-19 years
Young people:	15-25 years
Adults:	18 years and older
Young adults:	18-29 years

1.2 Normal sexual development

It is important to draw a distinction between healthy sexual development and inappropriate (and potentially harmful) sexualisation of children. Consumption of sexualised media and pornography is highly normalised, and arguably a normal part of sexual development (Sabina, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2008). Children are naturally curious about their bodies, sex and sexuality; they experience thoughts and feelings which can be sexual in nature. In their report outlining the harms of sexualised media on children, The American Psychological Association note that developing a sexual identity is an important aspect of adolescence, however it is when (age-)inappropriate sexualisation occurs that normal sexual development can be hampered (American Psychological Association, 2010). In order to understand the impact of these media on the healthy sexual development of children, it is important to first understand what is meant by 'normal' or developmentally appropriate sexual behaviour; this has been a topic of contention among sex researchers (McKee, 2010). A

comprehensive summary of appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviours, as described by the South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence (SECASA), is presented below in Table 1. Other sources, including the NSW Department of Family and Community Services, the Raising Children Network, and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, describe similar behaviours (NSW Department of Community Services, 2008; Raising Children Network, 2015; Stathopoulos, 2002).

The SECASA guidelines consider viewing pornography a 'concerning' behaviour up to the age of 18, urging monitoring of the frequency and persistence of related behaviours (South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault & Family Violence, 2012). The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault states that "chronic preoccupation with sex and pornography" is developmentally inappropriate at ages 13 to 18 years, however, no information is provided on the appropriateness of occasional pornography use (Stathopoulos, 2002). The NSW Department of Family and Community Services guidelines do not specifically mention pornography, however, they state that it is normal for children aged 11 to 12 to show "an interest in other's bodies particularly the opposite sex that may take the form of looking at photos or other published material"(NSW Department of Community Services, 2008).

1.3 Sexualisation and pornography

The "sexualisation of children" is an issue which attracts ongoing community concern and debate. The American Psychological Association (2010) define four mechanisms of sexualisation:

- a person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics;
- a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy;
- a person is sexually objectified—that is, made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; and/or
- sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person (e.g. a child).

Table 1. Developmentally based sexual behaviours—inappropriate and appropriate, ages 0–18

Age	Age-appropriate sexual behaviours	Concerning sexual behaviours	Very concerning sexual behaviours
	Sex play and sexual behaviour is normal in children. Does not require intervention. Children readily take redirection of these behaviours.	*Behaviours that signal the need to notice the frequency and persistence of these behaviours. If a child or young person exhibits several of these behaviours and/or these behaviours continue despite clear requests to stop, seek professional advice.*	*Indicative of very concerning sexual behaviour. These behaviours require immediate professional advice, particularly if the sexual behaviour is accompanied by secrecy, anxiety, tension, coercion, force, compulsion and threats. Some of the behaviours listed become criminal offences when the child reaches the age of criminal responsibility.*
0-4	• Touching or rubbing her/his own genitals • Likes to be nude • Showing others his or her genitals • Playing doctors or nurses, mummies or daddies • Touching or looking at private parts of other children or familiar adults • Using slang words for bathroom and sexual functions	• Persistent masturbation which does not cease when told to stop it • Forcing another child to engage in sexual play • Sexualised play with dolls e.g. 'humping' a teddy bear • Touching the private parts of adults not known to the child • Chronic peeping behaviour	• Persistently touches or rubs self to the seclusion of normal childhood activities, hurts own genitals by rubbing or touching • Simulating sex with other children with or without clothes on • Oral sex • Sexual play involving forceful, anal or vaginal penetration with objects
5-7	• Self-touching including masturbating • Show me yours/I'll show you mine with same age children • Like to hear and tell age appropriate dirty jokes • Playing mummies and daddies • Kissing/holding hands • Mimicking or practicing observed behaviours e.g. pinching a bottom	• Continually rubbing/touching own genitals in public • Persistent use of dirty words • Wants to play sex games with much older or younger children • Continually wants to touch private parts of other children • Chronic peeping behaviour	• Touches or rubs self persistently in private or public to the exclusion of normal childhood activities • Rubbing genitals on other people • Forcing other children to play sexual games • Sexual knowledge too great for age • Talks about sex and sexual acts habitually
8-12	• Occasional masturbation • Show me yours/I'll show you mine with peers • Kissing and flirting • Genital or reproduction conversations with peers • Dirty words or jokes with peer group	• Attempting to expose others' genitals • Sexual knowledge to great for age once context is considered • Pre-occupation with masturbation • Single occurrence of peeping, exposing, obscenities, pornographic interest • Stimulating foreplay or intercourse with peers with clothes on	• Compulsive masturbation, including task interruption to masturbate • Repeated or chronic peeping, exposing, obscenities • Chronic pornographic interest • Degradation/humiliation of self or others using sexual themes • Touching genitals of others without permission • Sexually explicit threats • Forced exposure of others' genitals • Simulating intercourse with peers with clothes off • Penetration of dolls, children or animals
13-18	• Sexually explicit conversations with peers • Obscenities and jokes within the cultural norm • Sexual innuendo and flirting • Solitary masturbation • Kissing, hugging, holding hands • Foreplay with mutual informed consent and peer aged partner • Sexual intercourse plus full range of sexual activity	• Sexual preoccupation or anxiety • Pornographic interests • Promiscuity • Verbal sexually aggressive themes or obscenities • Invasion of other's body space	• Compulsive masturbation (especially chronic or public) • Degradation/humiliation of self or others using sexual themes • Chronic preoccupation with sexually aggressive pornography • Child pornography • Attempting to expose others' genitals • Touching others' genitals without permission • Sexually explicit threats, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual harassment • Sexual contact with significantly younger people • Sexual contact with animals • Forced penetration

South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence (2012)

Children may be sexualised by the media directly, through portrayal of children replicating adult sexual behaviour or appearance, or indirectly, through premature exposure to adult notions of sexuality in advertising, popular culture, or adult pornography (Rush and La Nauze 2006a, Rush and La Nauze 2006b). Sexualisation is largely considered to be driven by the media and marketing; advertising, magazines, television and music are frequently described as 'sexualised.' The rise of the internet has created social media; an environment that is increasingly described as 'pornified' (Stelio 2015). The internet has also allowed an unprecedented ease of access to children and young people of any age to a near infinite collection of pornography. Although the concern regarding sexualised culture is not new, the expansion of online pornography has given a new voice of protest to the debate.

This review focuses on exposure and use of adult pornography (i.e. pornography depicting adults) as opposed to child pornography (i.e. abuse materials depicting children). Pornography is highly varied in terms of content and mode of viewing (Short, et al., 2012). Pornography may include erotic text, images, or video, it may be accessed via the internet or more traditional media, and it ranges in level of explicitness. In this review we have focused on internet pornography where possible. Research issues related to the definitions of sexualisation and pornography are discussed further in section 5.

2 Sexualised media

2.1 The extent of sexualised media

In their 2006 report 'Corporate Paedophilia,' Rush and La Nauze highlight multiple examples of sexualised content targeting Australian children across a range of media. They describe two types of sexualised media; the exposure of children to highly sexualised representations of adults and adult behaviour, and the portrayal of children in ways designed to draw attention to adult sexual features and behaviours that the children do not yet possess.

Reviews have shown that sexual content is widespread in television programming, movies, music videos, magazines, and advertisements (Escobar-Chaves et al., 2005; Rush & La Nauze, 2006). While no systematic analyses of the prevalence of sexualised media over time have been conducted, several studies have indicated that sexual content has increased in both frequency and intensity over time within selected media (Bleakley, Jamieson, & Romer, 2012; Graff, Murnen, & Krause, 2013; Hatton & Trautner, 2011).

In addition to exposure via traditional media, Australian children and teenagers have access to, and are using the internet more than ever:

- In April 2012, 90% of Australian children aged 5-14 had accessed the internet in the previous 12 months, which increased from 65% in 2006 and 79% in 2007 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012)
- The percentage of Australian teenagers who used their phone to access the internet rose from 16% in 2009 to 56% in 2013 (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2014)
- From 2010-14 Australian the average time spent online for 10-13 year olds increased from 639 minutes to 819 minutes per week (Roy Morgan, 2014)
- 98% of Year 10, 11, and 12 students use social media regularly; including 91% who use facebook regularly (Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society, 2014)

The internet and social media are now a critical source of young people's information about sex. In addition to pornography (discussed in section 3), there is evidence that young people use the internet for sexual education. Recent Australian research has identified that young people now prefer the internet to traditional media as a source of sexual education. Forty-four percent of high school students reported that they had used the internet as a source for sexual health information. Other common sources included; 43% a school program, 41% a female friend, and 36% from their mother (Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society, 2014). Lim et al (2014) found that the

internet was the source young people (aged 16 to 29) were most comfortable with for sexual health education; 85% reported being comfortable or very comfortable accessing sexual health information from websites, compared to from a doctor (81%), school (73%), and the mainstream media (67%). Fewer reported being comfortable getting information from social media; Facebook (52%), apps (51%), SMS (44%), and Twitter (36%).

2.1.1 Social media, self-sexualisation, and sexting

Social media has become an integral part of managing one's identity and maintaining social relations, particularly among children and adolescents (Mascheroni, Vincent, & Jimenez, 2015). With the advent of new media, not only is adult sexualised content increasingly accessible to children (Rush & La Nauze, 2006a) but users, adolescents included, often engage in self-sexualising behaviour, posting their own, user-driven sexualised content (Mascheroni et al., 2015; Starr, 2015). Mobile communication and social network sites serve as a vehicle for self-presentation and offer two key differences in functionality from more traditional forms of media: two-way, near instantaneous sharing of information, and the ability to engage in and control the construction of your own online identity. This ease of transmission drives the socially constructed desirability of messages depending on the amount of positive (and negative) feedback the message receives.

'Sexting' is a phenomenon that has gained prominence and notoriety over the past decade, whereby users send risqué and sexual photographs and videos of themselves to each other either by mobile messaging or other messaging platforms. 'Sexy' photos are often highly approved, which may influence others to imitate this behaviour and post their own 'sexy' photos. Australian research has shown that 40% of young people (aged 16 to 29) report sending or receiving sexts (Yeung et al, 2014). Young people in this study perceived sexting to be a normalised aspect of sexual interaction which mainly resulted in positive outcomes, such as flirting and sexual experimentation.

Sexual displays on social media may also play a role in creating behavioural norms (Doornwaard et al, 2014). Studies from the USA and Netherlands have found that between one quarter and one third of adolescents display sexual references on their social network profiles (Doornwaard et al, 2014; Moreno et al 2009a; Moreno et al 2009b; Baumgartner et al, 2015). A survey of Australian high school students found that 31% of boys and 16% of girls had used a social media site for 'sexual reasons' (Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society, 2014). Research has shown that the influence of peers, particularly need for popularity, is a strong predictor of posting sexual pictures (Baumgartner et al, 2015).

2.2 The impact of sexualised media on young people

This section describes evidence of how this sexualised media might affect children and adolescents physically, psychologically and sexually. The major issues identified are distorted sexual socialisation and body-image issues including associated anxiety and disordered eating.

Rush and La Nauze (2006a) outlined two major concerns about sexualised media leading to sexual harm in children and adolescents. First, they suggested that exposure to sexualised media is associated with abnormal sexual socialisation in children, which leads to early initiation of sexual contact and distorted attitudes towards healthy sexual relationships. Second, they suggested that sexualisation makes children more vulnerable to and promotes paedophilia (but they present little evidence to support this concern, so the majority of this discussion relates to the first).

2.2.1 Sexual socialisation

Research shows that adolescents who consume sexualised media are more likely to engage in intercourse and other non-coital sexual activities earlier (Bleakley, et al., 2008; Brown & Bobkowski, 2011; Brown et al., 2006; Collins et al., 2004; Escobar-Chaves et al., 2005; Martino, et al., 2005; Parkes, et al., 2013). Research has also established that people who initiate sexual activity earlier in life generally continue to engage in more risky behaviours, increasing their susceptibility to unwanted pregnancies and acquisition of STIs (Ma et al., 2009; O'Donnell, et al., 2001; Rosenthal et al., 2001).

Another concern is that children or adolescents who are exposed to sexualised media might engage in risky or violent sexual or other relationship-related behaviour, such as dating violence. There is some evidence to suggest that the regular exposure of adolescent boys to sexualised media normalises the 'ideal' sexualised woman, increases their objectification of women, assigns more importance to girls' sexual body parts, and ultimately influences their courtship attitudes and beliefs and interpretation of sexual signals (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007; Ward, et al., 2015). The sexualised content explored within these studies includes some pornographic material, which is discussed in Section 3.

It is possible that objectification of women could manifest itself as sexual or dating violence either during adolescence or later in life, but Manganello (2008) noted that there is little research exploring how sexualised media consumption might be associated with dating violence. In the US 'Growing up with Media' study, young people aged 14–21 who had more frequent exposure to sexual media in general (including pornography) were more likely to report ever having had sex, coercive sex victimisation and attempted/completed rape, but not necessarily risky sexual behaviour (Ybarra, et

al., 2014). A 2013 Canadian longitudinal study confirmed an association between cumulative exposure to aggressive (but not necessarily sexualised) media and dating violence (Friedlander, et al., 2013).

Research into the relationship between sexualised media and sexual socialisation is predominantly among adolescents. The one known exception surveyed 815 Australian mothers of 4–10-year-old girls about a range of behaviours exhibited by their daughters, finding that many girls engaged with older teen culture and used a variety of beauty products, but few exhibited more overtly sexualised behaviours (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014a).

2.2.2 Mental health and psychological distress

While not the primary focus of their review, Rush and La Nauze (2006a) note that children's exposure to sexualised media can lead to psychological and physical harms including body-image issues, appearance anxiety, self-objectification and in extreme cases, eating disorders (i.e. anorexia, bulimia). Women's bodies depicted in the media are getting thinner over time and women are frequently objectified (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Gill (2009) in Jackson et al., 2013; Papadopoulos, 2010). Objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) proposes that women who are constantly exposed to these 'thin-ideal' representations of female bodies internalise the idea that these bodies are not only normal and essential to happiness, but view their own bodies as objects to be evaluated according to narrow, and sexualised standards of attractiveness, and evidence suggests this effect has become more pronounced in recent decades, particularly in adult women (Grabe et al., 2008). The leading cause for concern is that this 'thin ideal' reduces confidence and comfort in one's own body, which can lead to negative emotional outcomes including shame, 'appearance anxiety' and disordered eating behaviours (American Psychological Association, 2010; Rush & La Nauze, 2006a).

Overall, the evidence suggests that exposure to the 'thin-ideal' in traditional media leads to internalisation and self-objectification in adults, adolescents and children (Benowitz-Fredericks, et al., 2012; Clark & Tiggemann, 2006, 2008; Jongenelis, Byrne, & Pettigrew, 2014; Wang, et al., 2014). Longitudinal studies conducted in Australia, Spain and the US offer the strongest evidence that exposure to media can elicit body image issues and eating disorders in adolescents (Field, et al., 1999; Martínez-González et al., 2003; McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2005; Van Den Berg, et al., 2007). Whereas the ideal female body is portrayed as thin, the key characteristic of the 'ideal' male body is generally muscular, and often equated with being sexually attractive (American Psychological Association, 2010). Adolescent boys are affected in a similar way to girls by the media they consume

through a multi-faceted process of internalisation of the 'muscular-ideal' and mediated via body surveillance and self-objectification (Saling, et al., 2005; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013).

The relationship between exposure to sexualised media and involvement in teen culture, appearance concerns and self-objectification is not a linear one, and is undoubtedly mediated by other factors, notably parental and peer influence (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006, 2008; Tiggemann & Slater, 2014a). Parents themselves are not immune from the influence of these media, and may also influence their children (Anschutz, et al., 2009; Clark & Tiggemann, 2006; Francis & Birch, 2005; Starr & Ferguson, 2012; Van Den Berg, et al., 2010).

Body issues, self-objectification and self-sexualisation are prevalent in social media users also. Feedback received or posted on personal photos or the photos of others posted online is closely related to young people's body image issues. Recent Australian research showed that in both adolescent and tween girls, time spent on social media was significantly and positively associated with internalisation of the 'thin-ideal' body (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013, 2014b), which suggests that user-driven attitudes and behaviours on what is desirable can have negative outcomes on users when this socially constructed ideal is unattainable for most people (Jong & Drummond, 2013).

2.4 Young people's beliefs about sexualised media

A major concern from critics of the 'sexualised media' debate is that for the most part, the voice of parents, lobbyists and government groups appear to dominate the debate, and children are rarely given a voice (Egan & Hawkes, 2009). The danger of this is that unfounded assumptions based on anecdotal evidence from a solely adult perspective can lead to misleading conclusions. Lumby and Albury (2010), in their submission to the 2008 Australian Senate *Inquiry into the sexualisation of children in the contemporary media environment*, proposed the need for more methodologically and empirically sound Australian research to be conducted with children under the age of 12, into their experience of media targeted to them, as well as broader representations of children in media and advertising materials targeted at adults. In response, the Australian Senate recommended that the National Health and Medical Research Council (or other appropriate body) commission a 'major longitudinal study into the effects of premature and inappropriate sexualisation of children' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008). While such a study is yet to be commissioned in Australia, there is a small but growing international body of research that considers the voice of children and adolescents and how they interpret sexualised media and popular culture.

New Zealand-based researchers Jackson and Vares recently published a series of papers based on their *Girls, 'tween' popular culture and everyday life* study, in which they interviewed adolescent girls about

navigating the world of mainstream media and popular culture (Jackson & Vares, 2015a, 2015b; Jackson et al., 2013; Jackson & Westrupp, 2010; Vares & Jackson, 2015a, 2015b). They conducted focus groups with 71 girls aged 10 to 13, and participants also completed video diaries so that researchers could identify the girls' knowledge (or lack of) about their use of media and their understanding of sexualised media. In 2001–03, UK researchers David Buckingham and Sara Bragg undertook a seminal study on sexualised media and children, including qualitative interviews and fieldwork with parents and children (Buckingham & Bragg, 2003). While this research is nearly 15 years old, the conclusions are still relevant to the current Western media landscape. Key outcomes from this study are summarised in the following sections, with updated Australian and international literature included in support (Buckingham et al., 2010; Tatangelo & Ricciardelli, 2013; Tsaliki, 2015).

2.4.1 Media as a source of information

Jackson and Westrupp (2010) conducted focus groups to examine girls' opinions on the sexual content in *Girlfriend*, a popular Australasian tween magazine. Pre-teen participants in particular identified the magazine as informing them about many different aspects of sex and sexuality, highlighting the significance of the magazine as a sexual learning tool. The girls described *Girlfriend* as akin to an older girlfriend who can offer the wisdom of experience, 'inside information' and know-how (Jackson & Westrupp, 2010). For example, the magazine includes a section about and written by boys, for girls to access sexual information about themselves and insights into boys' sexuality, which the girls found informative. Some participants also appreciated the 'responsible' inclusion of safe-sex education in *Girlfriend,* yet at the same time portrayed *Girlfriend's* educative approach to safe-sex education as immature. They made the comparison to *Cosmopolitan* (aimed at a slightly older demographic) which is, according to the participants, 'way more mature' (Jackson & Westrupp, 2010, p. 370) and more 'sophisticated' as the readership 'all have sex' which is how women 'are meant to be' (Jackson & Westrupp, 2010, p. 371). By doing so, the girls indicated that 'sexually active' is associated with sophistication, maturity and desirability as a woman, which aligns with the notion that sexualised media promotes the idea that to be a successful woman you need to be sexually attractive, available and active. It is also worth noting that while pre-teen girls (and possibly boys) might still find magazines informative, as described in section 2.1, recent Australian research has identified that young people now prefer the internet to traditional media as a source of sexual education (Lim, et al., 2014).

2.4.2 Children as knowledgeable consumers

In 2010 research commissioned by the *Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee about the prevalence of sexualised products and goods aimed at children*, sought to give voice to young

people and assess their views about the potential sexual connotations of the products they consume (Buckingham & Bragg, 2010). Over 100 children, aged 9 to 17, were interviewed. The children consulted were eager to portray themselves as knowledgeable consumers as they "rejected the idea that they were passive victims of the marketing of sexualised goods" (p. 7). The young participants also thought "adults make too much fuss about sexy products" (p.60) and that "children and teenagers should have opportunities to make their own decisions" (p.64) about whether they want to consume sexualised goods and content (Buckingham et al., 2010).

Evidence suggests that teenage girls possess a level of knowledge that challenges the traditional arguments in the contemporary discourse. They demonstrate their 'media literacy' as they discuss how popular culture icons influence young fans, and demonstrate a level of insight by noting the pressures faced by themselves and other young girls to look thin like their role models (Jackson & Vares, 2015a; Jackson et al., 2013; Tsaliki, 2015). For example, girls interviewed by Jackson et al. (2013) discussed their views and knowledge about the ways pop stars and models achieve 'perfection', (i.e. airbrushing, make-up and surgery) and at times demonstrated savviness and knowledge in navigating marketing schemes companies employed in trying to sell beauty products (Jackson et al., 2013). However, participants also admitted that an understanding of these concepts doesn't preclude them from being influenced by them or 'feeling bad' when they don't measure up to the portrayed 'normal' beauty standards (Jackson & Vares, 2015a). It also appears that teenage girls are aware of the debate surrounding the sexualisation of popular culture and familiar with 'adult' discourses surrounding the perceived negative effects of such a culture (Tsaliki, 2015). These outcomes highlight the complex relationship young people have with sexualised media. While they might still be influenced by the media, young people are somewhat aware they are open to influence, and often display cynicism and scepticism at the marketing ploys employed.

2.4.3 Morality

Participants in Jackson and Goddard's (2015) study touched on a range of key issues as they discussed controversial entertainer Miley Cyrus and her involvement in a risqué *Vanity Fair* photoshoot at the age of 15 (Jackson & Goddard, 2015). The girls universally expressed their disappointment in and disavowal of Cyrus' actions (unequivocally rejecting the idea they would imitate such behaviour) and suggesting her actions were distasteful and age-inappropriate, whilst simultaneously demonstrating an understanding of independence and sexual agency when they concede Cyrus' independence and ability to make her own decisions, especially considering her status as a celebrity. This conversation highlights the complexities adolescent girls are expected to navigate as they consume media: morality and age-appropriateness on one hand, and sexual agency

and independence on the other. It is suggested that when the girls view the 'raunchy' videos of the female pop stars whose music they like, they enter a taboo domain, crossing the boundary from 'innocence' to an adult, somewhat 'immoral' sexual world. However it is important they position themselves so as not to be seen enjoying or imitating the sexuality, or they run the risk of being labelled as 'bad' or breaking a theoretical moral code (Jackson & Goddard, 2015; Jackson & Vares, 2015b). Buckingham and Bragg (2010) commented that teenager's discussions about sexualised media revealed that teenagers were often more 'moralistic' and 'prudish' than many adults. Herein we see the complex and often contradictory landscape young girls are expected to navigate: sexual agency and independence to make one's own decisions, versus the 'moral code' girls and women are expected to adhere to within this agency.

2.5 Summary

Sexualised content is prevalent in the Australian media landscape, much of which is accessible to children and adolescents, and to a lesser extent, directed at or features children. The public discourse about the inappropriate sexualisation of children raises the concern that unregulated consumption of sexualised media leads to the internalisation of the unattainable 'ideal' body standards (for both boys and girls) and that women are sex objects, purely there to look sexy and be sexually available for boys. This can lead to self-loathing, body-image and self-esteem issues, disordered eating, and inappropriate early sexual activity. However, a major assumption of each of these concerns is that children are naïve and vulnerable victims of the media, who have no control over their actions and this attitude fails to account for the complexity children face when navigating the contemporary media landscape (Jackson et al., 2013). Adolescent girls interviewed across multiple studies display a level of critical cynicism and scepticism in their understanding of the tricks used to make pop stars appear 'perfect' or by companies to convince them to buy their products, a level of insight that might be overlooked in the wider sexualisation discourse. Despite awareness of this, they still acknowledged that they may be susceptible to media influence.

The increasing popularity of social media has opened new avenues for exposure to sexualised content. Many young people report using the internet for sexual health information (Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society, 2014; Lim et al, 2014) as well as sharing sexual images of themselves on social media (Doornwaard et al, 2014; Moreno et al 2009a; Moreno et al 2009b; Baumgartner et al, 2015). The impact of these new media on the sexualisation of children and young people remains unclear.

3 Pornography

3.1 The extent of online pornography

3.1.1 Review of literature on the exposure of children and young people to pornography

Exposure to pornography

Available data indicate that *lifetime* pornography exposure is fairly common among young Australians; data obtained as part of Burnet Institute's forthcoming cross-sectional study of Australians aged 15-29 years, 100% of male participants and 81% of female participants had ever viewed pornography. Older estimates of lifetime exposure indicate lower rates than this (Flood, 2007; Flood & Hamilton, 2003).

The age of *first* pornography exposure appears to be decreasing: since the 1950s, the percentage of Australians viewing pornography before age 16 (the age of consent in most Australian states) has increased from 37% in the 1950s to 79% in the 1990s to early 2000s (McKee, 2010). The commonly cited age of first exposure, 11 years, is not supported by research and appears to be perpetuated anecdotally (Lubrove, 2005). In Burnet Institute's forthcoming study, the median age of first viewing pornography was 13 for male participants and 16 for female participants. US research indicates that boys are more likely to be exposed to online pornography at an earlier age than girls (Sabina et al., 2008).

According to a large Australian longitudinal study, the number of people *recently* exposed to pornography is increasing. In 2012-13, 63% of men and 20% of women aged 16 years and over had seen pornographic material in the past year (Richters et al., 2014). In comparison, in 2001-02, 17% of men and 12% of women had visited a sex website on the internet (Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society, 2003). In our forthcoming study of Australians aged 15-29 years, 98% of male participants and 68% of female participants had viewed pornography in the past 12 months. The most commonly reported frequency of use among male participants was 'weekly' (44%), and 'less than monthly' among female participants (34%); thirty-seven percent of male participants and 4% of female participants aged 15-29 years watched pornography daily.

No known longitudinal estimates of pornography exposure are available for children and younger adolescents in Australia. A cross-sectional 2010-11 national Australian survey (Table 2) found that 6% of 11-12 year olds, 11% of 12-14 year olds and 29% of 15-16 year olds had seen images or video of someone having sex in the past 12 months (Green, et al., 2011). Sixteen per cent of boys and 13% of girls aged 9-12 reported seeing sexual images on websites in the past 12 months compared to 45% of boys and 39% of girls aged 13-16 years. It is unclear how often these participants were

exposed to pornography; it is possible that younger participants were only exposed once or twice, whereas older participants were exposed more often.

Table 2. Types of sexual images seen online by Australian children and adolescents in last 12 months

	Age				
	9-10	**11-12**	**13-14**	**15-16**	**All**
Image or video of someone naked	N/A	11	14	45	24
Images or video of someone's 'private parts'	N/A	8	14	29	17
Images or video of someone having sex	N/A	6	11	29	16
Images or video or movies that show sex in a violent way	N/A	4	8	7	6
Something else	N/A	2	3	6	4
Total seen sexual images online	11	17	25	56	28

Green et al. (2011)

Research generally does not distinguish accidental versus intentional pornography exposure. Internet users may be accidentally exposed to pornography via methods such as improperly 'tagged' photos in image searches, 'pop-up' advertisements, spam emails and social media viruses. Young Australians have reported accidentally accessing pornography through processes called 'mousetrapping' and 'page-jacking', where users become 'trapped' on certain websites or follow a seemingly official link and are redirected to a pornographic website instead (Walker et al., 2015). Accidental exposure rates appear to be high (in a 2003 study by Flood and Hamilton, 84% of boys and 60% of girls aged 16-17 had been exposed accidentally to sex sites on the internet); however, older participants and boys are more likely to deliberately access pornography (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007).

How young people view pornography

In our forthcoming study, young people most commonly viewed pornography by streaming or downloading on a computer (47%) followed by viewing on a phone (33%); only 3% most commonly viewed pornography via DVD, webcam, magazine or book. In comparison, over 70% of *Pornhub* traffic from young adults worldwide comes from a mobile device such as a smartphone or tablet (Pornhub Insights, 2015). It has been reported anecdotally that the rise of social media – with varying levels of anonymity, censorship and moderation – has allowed easy sharing of pornography among users (e.g. Reddit forums, Tumblr blogs). Twitter is a popular outlet for pornography actors to promote their work, and pornographic websites are increasingly behaving like social networks, encouraging users to share, 'like' and comment on content (Perraudin, 2014). Use of social media for

sharing pornography among young people has been reported in qualitative research (Walker et al., 2015) but it is unclear to what degree social media is being used for pornographic purposes.

Reasons for viewing pornography

Motives for intentionally viewing pornography can be broken down into four broad factors: relationships (both within sexual relationships and non-sexual relationships i.e. bonding with friends), mood management (e.g. managing arousal, curiosity, boredom), fantasy, and habitual use (Paul & Shim, 2008). Generally, boys and young men report more motivation to use pornography, although girls and young women report more motivations with increasing age (Paul & Shim, 2008).

Pornography consumption by boys and young men has been highly normalised in Australia; recent qualitative research indicates that most young Australians believe consumption of pornography among young people is ubiquitous (Walker et al., 2015). Most adolescents believe their male peers watch pornography, although they perceive use to be significantly less common among their female peers (Flood & Hamilton, 2003). Both teenage boys and girls report peer group pressure to watch pornography, and boys in particularly are likely to believe pornography is 'cool' and share pornography among their friends (Bryant, 2009; Walker et al., 2015; Weber, Quiring, & Daschmann, 2012).

3.1.2 Review of literature analysing content of adult pornography

What does online pornography typically depict?

The field of literature exploring the content of online pornography is limited; these offer a glimpse into common content, but cautious interpretation of data is required due to methodological limitations of the analyses; essentially, due to the vast repository of online pornography, it is difficult to capture systematically, and some definitional issues persist. Available studies indicate that pornography depicts some behaviours that some adults do not consider mainstream, do not consider enjoyable, and/or perceive as risky in terms of sexual health.

Online pornography depicting encounters with two or more people most commonly involves mutual genital stimulation (present in 53-90% of videos), vaginal intercourse (68-88%), fellatio (79-86%), kissing (41-45%), cunnilingus (37%) and anal intercourse (15-32%; Gorman, et al., 2010; Vannier, Currie, & O'Sullivan, 2014). Less common are depictions of annilingus (14%), use of sex toys (4%) and depiction of paraphilias (3%; Gorman et al., 2010; Vannier et al., 2014). Condom use is rare in depictions of heterosexual encounters (approximately 2% of videos; Gorman et al., 2010; Vannier et al., 2014) but more common in depictions of men having sex with men, where unprotected anal

intercourse appears approximately as frequently as anal intercourse with a condom (34% vs. 36% respectively; Downing, et al., 2014).

Analyses indicate gender inequality is common in online pornography involving heterosexual encounters, more commonly seen in websites aimed at men than those aimed at women (Shim, Kwon, & Cheng, 2015). Less than a quarter of videos focus on mutual satisfaction (Gorman et al., 2010) and male actors are four times as likely to be shown during orgasm as female actors (Klaassen & Peter, 2014). Male actors are more likely to be portrayed as dominant and female actors are more likely to be portrayed as submissive (Klaassen & Peter, 2014). Approximately half of videos feature female actors eager to perform whatever sex acts male actors desired, with female actors being frequently objectified (Gorman et al., 2010). Depictions of acts many people consider to be degrading are not uncommon; for example, in one analysis, 45% of videos contained male actor(s) ejaculating onto the face of the female actor ('cumshots'; Gorman et al., 2010).

A minority of the videos sampled (0-3.8%) depict overt violence or aggression (Gorman et al., 2010; Klaassen & Peter, 2014; Vannier et al., 2014). These small frequencies are after excluding spanking and gagging from definitions of violence (seen in 27% and 19% of videos respectively; Klaassen & Peter, 2014; Vannier et al., 2014). This is in contrast to the commonly cited statistic that 88% of pornographic videos contain acts of physical aggression; this percentage is derived from a 2010 study of pornographic DVDs with a broad definition of aggression and is unlikely to reflect aggression and violence in free online pornography (Bridges, et al., 2010; McKee, 2015). While most videos involve no violence or aggression, Klaassen and Peter (2014) found that the majority of female recipients in their analysis responded either neutrally or positively to aggressive acts. Videos depicting violent acts as (apparently) consensual can have negative outcomes if viewers are misled into believing that aggressive or violent acts are ‘normal’ or desired by most sexual partners, and imitate this behaviour.

It appears that portrayals of (apparently) non-consensual sex are relatively rare in online videos (Klaassen & Peter, 2014); however, Vannier et al. (2014) found depictions of persuasion or pressure to engage in sex in 16% of videos, most commonly verbal, and Gorman et al. (2010) found 11% of videos depicted a show of force by male actors when female actors resisted their sexual acts. There is certainly a market for pornography depicting non-consensual sex; Gossett and Byrne (2002) studied a sample of 31 free pornographic websites focusing on rape and forced sex, the majority of which contained images of one or more women being assaulted by a male perpetrator. It is likely

that much more of this content has become available since this study was completed in 2002, but is yet to be confirmed with up to date research.

It is difficult to ascertain or identify which sexual behaviours are 'normal' or 'common' in society as it is often subjective and differs from person-to-person; however these analyses indicate that pornography often depicts a large variety of sexual behaviours which may not be widely practised or desirable, particularly in terms of gender roles and STI transmission risk behaviours. Depictions of physical aggression, violence and non-consensual sex certainly exist, although they may not be the focus of the majority of free online videos. There is a lack of research into paid pornography, pornography on social media, the encrypted and largely anonymous 'dark web', and 'revenge porn' websites where sexually explicit photos or videos are distributed without consent of the subjects.

Pornography content viewed by young people

Little research indicates what types of pornography children and adolescents are exposed to; this is a key knowledge gap, particularly in Australia. According to global Pornhub.com statistics, the most popular search terms among young adult users are 'lesbian', 'step mom', 'teen', 'milf' and 'squirt'. Contrary to older *Pornhub* users, younger users worldwide are more likely to search for 'hentai' (Japanese-style animated pornography), specific pornography actors, 'teen', 'ebony' (pornography featuring black female actors) and 'step mom' (Pornhub Insights, 2015). However these statistics fail to capture pornography viewing that is not necessarily searched for (e.g. watching videos featured on a website's home page), content of videos unrelated to search terms, pornography viewed across other websites and platforms or accidental exposure to pornography. International longitudinal research indicates that 18% of adolescents have been exposed to affection-themed pornography (pornography depicting affectionate sexual acts, typically non-violent and non-degrading), 18% have been exposed to pornography with themes of dominance, and 10% have been exposed to violent pornography (Vandenbosch, et al., 2015). Younger adolescents are more likely than older adolescents to be exposed to affection-themed online pornography compared to online pornography with themes of dominance or with violent content (Vandenbosch, 2015).

Exposure to violent pornography does occur, but does not appear to be particularly prevalent among young Australians, with approximately 6% of 11-16 year olds seeing violent pornography in the past year (defined as 'images or video or movies that show sex in a violent way'; Green et al., 2011). Violent genres are not found in the top 10 *Pornhub* searches among young pornography users (Pornhub Insights, 2015); however, qualitative research indicates that some young Australians believe gratuitous violence towards women is a staple of mainstream online pornography (Walker et al., 2015). Young men appear to view 'extreme' content as 'normal'; qualitative research in New

Zealand describing experiences with pornography indicates that many young men have viewed extreme or violent content in the past (when they didn't necessarily seek it out), will watch it if they stumble across it and believe it is consensual, and are desensitised to the content (Antevska & Gavey, 2015).

'Deviant' pornography use does not appear to be common among young people, evident in that a large proportion of young people have never been exposed to it; internationally, lifetime exposure to deviant pornography appears more common among young men than young women, with 32% and 18% ever being exposed to bestiality and 15% and 9% ever being exposed to child pornography respectively. However, the number of times participants had seen such images in their lifetime was very low on average, indicating they may have been accidentally exposed (Sabina et al., 2008). In a Swedish survey of 18 year old males, frequent users (daily or almost daily users) were 3-4 times more likely than infrequent users to have ever viewed violent pornography or bestiality, and over six times as likely to have ever seen child pornography (Svedin, Åkerman, & Priebe, 2011). A younger age of use of pornography predicted a later transition into deviant pornography (Seigfried-Spellar & Rogers, 2013).

3.2 The impact of pornography on young people

There is a general consensus that pornography can influence young people across several domains. Wright proposed the '$_3$AM' model which describes how pornography can influence ideas about sexuality and sexual encounters that follow predictable sequences. According to Wright's model, sexual media can provide consumers with new sexual ideas, reinforce ideas they were already aware of, and encourage the utilisation of these sexual ideas by portraying behaviours as normative, acceptable and rewarding' (Wright, 2014). This process is influenced by outside factors and individual differences. That is, pornography's influence on a viewer's understanding of sexuality and sexual encounters may be influenced by factors such as the viewer's gender, age, identification with the material and existing ideas, their sexual arousal, the content of pornography viewed, frequency of viewing, personality traits and aggressive tendencies (Malamuth & Huppin, 2005; Wright, 2014).

The following section summarises what is known about the impact of pornography on children, adolescents and young adults across several domains including sexual socialisation, mental health, and gender-related impacts, discussing any effects (positive or negative) described in the literature. As noted earlier, for obvious ethical reasons, there is a paucity of experimental research into the impact of pornography on children and adolescents (McKee, 2010). The majority of research into the potential impact of pornography uses either adult or older adolescent populations. There is also little research specific to an Australian context; where this exists, it will be highlighted.

It is important to note that while many of the studies mentioned in this section have found links between use of pornography and certain effects, most rely on research designs that cannot determine cause and effect (e.g. cross-sectional or qualitative analyses; Horvath et al., 2016; Lim et al., 2015). These studies are useful as they provide information on general population trends and associations at one point in time, but the strongest level of formal evidence is provided by longitudinal studies of the long-term impact of pornography on adolescents (Horvath, Alys et al. 2016). Most longitudinal research referred to herein is derived from a single, albeit large and representative study of Dutch adolescents aged as young as 12 years at baseline, which commenced in 2009 (Peter & Valkenburg, 2011) .

3.2.1 Sexual socialisation

Sexual education

Burnet Institute's forthcoming research indicates that on average, young Australians are first exposed to pornography 2-3 years before their first sexual encounter. As is the case with sexualised mass media, adolescents may therefore view pornography as a form of sexual education, whether they intentionally seek out 'educational messages' or not. In a study of young Australians aged 15-29, participants were asked to identify where they had received 'sexual health information' in the past. Sixty-four per cent reported receiving sexual health information from pornography, which was slightly less common than school (69%; Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS, 2012) and less common than the internet in general (this was the most popular source, with 85% of the sample receiving sexual health information from the internet, although it is possible there was some overlap between these two sources). In a study of Swedish adolescent boys, 38% of frequent users agreed with the statement, 'Pornography is one of the best remedies for young people to learn something about sex' compared to 18% of infrequent or nonusers (Svedin et al., 2011). Similarly, adolescents in the US have reported watching pornography for instructional purposes (Rothman, et al., 2014).

Among both adolescents and adults, using online pornography has been shown to be more common among people with non-heterosexual orientations (Albright, 2008; Peter & Valkenburg, 2011) indicating that pornography offers an avenue for exploration and experimentation regarding behaviours that are not widely accepted or part of mainstream understandings of sex and sexuality. For example, in a qualitative study of same-sex attracted adolescent boys, participants reported using pornography to learn about sexual organs and function, the mechanics of same-gender sex, to learn about sexual performance and roles, and to understand how sex should feel in terms of pleasure and pain (Arrington-Sanders et al., 2015).

Sexual behaviour

Though contentious, masturbation is usually viewed in the context of healthy sexual development (in Table 1, self-touching/masturbation are listed as developmentally appropriate from a young age); despite this, young people primarily learn about masturbation through the media and peers, rather than formal sex education, and have reported difficulties balancing contradictory messages about pleasure and stigma, particularly for adolescent girls and young women (Kaestle & Allen, 2011). As pornography is regularly used as a masturbatory tool, it might play a role in encouraging curiosity, self-exploration and pleasure-seeking during adolescence and young adulthood – that is, masturbating to pornography as a teenager is not necessarily problematic. However, anecdotal evidence indicates a relationship between pornography and compulsive masturbation (NoFap, 2011), although it is unclear if pornography use leads to compulsive behaviours or people with compulsive tendencies seek out pornography. Further research is ultimately needed.

Several cross sectional studies support a relationship between pornography use and initiation of sexual behaviours at a younger age (Häggström-Nordin, Hanson, & Tydén, 2005; Morgan, 2011; Svedin et al., 2011; Weber et al., 2012), including Burnet Institute's forthcoming study in young Australians; viewing pornography at 14 years-of-age or younger was associated with having a younger age at first sexual intercourse. International longitudinal research has found that early exposure (Brown & L'Engle, 2009) and frequent exposure to pornography (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013) are both associated with initiation of sexual behaviours at a younger age. However, this relationship might be influenced by pubertal status and sensation seeking. The exact mechanism of this relationship is unclear, however one suggestion is that it is related to hormonal changes and learning sexual norms portrayed through pornography (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013).

There is a moderate amount of research on the association between young people's pornography use and STI transmission risk behaviours; in general, adolescents who use pornography are more likely to report condom non-use (Luder et al., 2011), more lifetime sexual partners (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009), group sex (Rothman et al., 2012), using drugs or alcohol during sex (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009), increased sexual permissiveness (Baams et al., 2015; Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009; Owens, et al., 2012), the belief that sex is primarily physical/casual (Peter & Valkenburg, 2010), more positive attitudes towards casual partners/one night stands (Peter & Valkenburg, 2008b), and getting ideas for real-life sex from pornography (Böhm, et al., 2014).

In longitudinal research involving Dutch adolescents, it was found that more frequent use of online pornography stimulated sexual preoccupancy (Peter & Valkenburg, 2008a); further, the effect

seemed to snowball, as the more often participants thought about sex, the stronger their interest in sex became, and the more frequently they became distracted because of their thoughts about sex. The influence of pornography on sexual preoccupancy was mediated by the degree of sexual arousal experienced both male and female adolescents (Peter & Valkenburg, 2008a). Similarly, Svedin et al. (2011) found that frequency of exposure plays a role in sexual arousal among adolescent boys with 42% of frequent pornography users experiencing sexual lust almost all the time, compared to 12% of infrequent users.

A recent meta-analysis indicates that the number of young heterosexual men and Europeans reporting anal intercourse in their lifetime has increased since the mid-1970s (Owen, et al. 2015). There is some evidence indicating a relationship between pornography and heterosexual anal intercourse. As discussed in section 4.1, anal intercourse features in up to a third of videos of primarily heterosexual encounters (Gorman, et al. 2010, Vannier, et al. 2014). International cross-sectional research has identified links between general and frequent pornography use and anal intercourse among adolescents (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009; Häggström-Nordin et al., 2005). A recent qualitative study of 130 English participants aged 16-18 discussed adolescents' and young adults' views around heterosexual anal intercourse, which participants often attributed to young men being influenced by depictions of anal intercourse in pornography. Few female participants reported finding anal intercourse pleasurable and several male participants reported pressuring or coercing their female partners into anal intercourse (Marston & Lewis 2014). While the media has suggested an increase in girls and women presenting to medical care with internal damage caused by anal sex (Smith, 2015), no formal research has yet been conducted into this phenomenon.

These relationships are likely influenced by perceived realism of pornography and other individual differences (Baams et al., 2015; Peter & Valkenburg, 2010). Other studies have found no relationship between pornography use and risky sexual behaviour in adolescents (Owens et al., 2012). For example, in a longitudinal study of Dutch adolescents and adults, Peter and Valkenburg (2011) found that the use of pornography increased sexual risk behaviour among adult men, but not adult women or adolescents.

Findings for adult populations are more consistent: a recent systematic review of studies involving adult consumers indicates that generally, there are links between pornography consumption and greater unsafe sexual practices and more sexual partners, although this research is in its infancy and lacks generalisability (Harkness, et al., 2015). Among young adults, pornography use has been associated with more lifetime sexual partners and unprotected/intoxicated casual sex among young

adults (Braithwaite, et al., 2015). Frequency of pornography use and number of pornography genres viewed have both been associated with sexual preferences for types of sexual practices presented in pornography among young adults (Morgan, 2011; Sun et al., 2014). Viewing pornography involving condom non-use has been consistently associated with engaging in sexual risk behaviours in real life among young men who have sex with men (Nelson et al.; Rosser et al., 2013; Træen et al., 2013). However, qualitative research indicates that many young adult consumers are able to differentiate between sex depicted in pornography and real life sex, and view pornography as a fantasy (Böhm et al., 2014).

Sexting

Anecdotal and qualitative evidence suggests pornography may have some influence on the rise of sexting behaviour (Walker et al., 2015). Extremely little research has been conducted into the relationship between pornography exposure and sexting behaviours, with only one study identified at the time of writing: sexting behaviours have been associated with the consumption of pornography in Belgian adolescent boys and girls (Van Ouytsel, Ponnet, & Walrave, 2014). In our forthcoming research, first viewing pornography before age of 14 and viewing pornography at least weekly were both associated with ever having sexted. It is also unclear whether online pornography consumption is associated with non-consensual sharing of sexts.

Relationships and sexual satisfaction

Research indicates that pornography use may impact upon relationships in adolescents. In cross-sectional research, more frequent pornography use has been associated with relationship dissatisfaction (Brown & L'Engle, 2009), and relationship problems in adolescents (Mattebo, et al., 2013). In cross-sectional research of young adults, greater pornography consumption is associated with reduced commitment to romantic relationships (Lambert, et al., 2012), poor relationship quality (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014) and less relationship satisfaction (Morgan, 2011). Research into young women has indicated that their male partners' frequency of pornography use is negatively associated with their relationship quality, and more perceptions of problematic use are correlated with self-esteem and sexual satisfaction; further, previous partners' use of pornography predicted relationship anxiety, negative affect (i.e. negative emotions such as nervousness, anger and distress) and low self-esteem among young women (Stewart & Szymanski, 2012; Tylka & Kroon Van Diest, 2015). Honesty regarding pornography use has predicted greater relationship satisfaction and lower levels of distress among female partners of men who use pornography (Resch & Alderson, 2013). However young men rarely report being completely open with female partners about their

pornography consumption, even when both partners are interested in pornography and willing to watch together (Böhm et al., 2014).

Available research emphasises the potential harms of pornography use on sexual satisfaction. In cross-sectional research of adolescents, more frequent pornography use has been associated with less sexual satisfaction (Brown & L'Engle, 2009) and a reduction in sexual interest towards potential real-life partners (Damiano et al., 2015). Adolescents have expressed concerns about performing for the same duration as male performers in the pornography they watch (Lofgren-Martenson & Mansson, 2010). In cross-sectional research involving young adults, high pornography use has been associated with sexual dissatisfaction in young adults (Morgan, 2011; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014) and less enjoyment of sexually intimate behaviours with a partner (i.e. kissing during sex or cuddling) among young men (Sun et al., 2014). Among young Korean adults, use of degrading or extreme pornography has been associated with preferring pornography over real-life sexual encounters (Sun et al., 2014).

Evidence supporting a relationship between pornography use and impaired sexual performance is mixed. Four recent studies of young European men indicate that there is little evidence to support a relationship between pornography use and male sexual health disturbances including desire, erectile dysfunction or orgasmic difficulties (Landripet & Štulhofer, 2015). However, other studies have found that excessive use can lead to reliance on pornography to maintain sexual arousal and sexual dysfunction (Ley et al., 2014) and frequency of use is associated with young men deliberately conjuring images of pornography during sex to maintain arousal (Sun et al., 2014). These relationships are supported by a significant base of anecdotal evidence (e.g. NoFap) .

Pornography might also have a positive effect on sexual satisfaction for some. There is a growing, although mostly anecdotal, body of evidence to support the potential benefits of pornography use. For example, among adolescent boys in Sweden, 68% of infrequent users and 84% of frequent users respectively agreed that pornography can stimulate people's sex lives (Svedin et al., 2011). Some studies indicate pornography use is associated with less sexual anxiety in young adults (Watson & Smith, 2012). A majority of young men, and almost half of young women, report circumstances where pornography use is acceptable in the context of a relationship, albeit with conditions (Olmstead et al., 2013). Among adults, shared pornography use has been associated with higher relationship and sexual satisfaction than solitary use (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Maddox et al., 2011).

Sexual violence

Longitudinal research in the US indicates that pornography exposure is associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in sexually aggressive behaviour among adolescents (Brown & L'Engle, 2009; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2013; Ybarra, et al., 2011). For example, in one study, adolescents who intentionally accessed violent pornography were six times more likely to be sexually aggressive than those who were exposed to nonviolent pornography or no pornography (Ybarra et al., 2011). Cross-sectional research indicates that male adolescents who watch pornography are nearly two and a half times more likely to report instigating sexual violence (DAPHNE III European Commission, 2015) and highlights an association between pornography consumption and sexual coercion among young men and sexual victimisation among young women (Simons, et al., 2012). Among adolescent sexual offenders, those who used pornography were more likely to display aggressive behaviours than those who did not use pornography; furthermore, adolescent (but not adult) exposure to pornography has predicted the extent of victim humiliation among adult sexual offenders (Alexy, et al., 2009; Mancini, et al., 2012). In general, pornography use might facilitate the likelihood of future sexual aggression, but the association is complex and mediated by individual factors including deviant sexual arousal and antisocial attitudes (Kingston, et al., 2009).

A meta-analysis of non-experimental studies indicates that, in general, there is a small, but significant association between pornography use and attitudes supporting violence against women, although this study did not report differences by age (Hald et al., 2010). This relationship was stronger for violent pornography than any pornography use. It remains unclear whether violent pornography affects adolescents' attitudes towards violence against women as there is less available research into this area. One cross-sectional study found a significant association between Canadian adolescent boys' frequent consumption of pornography and agreement with the acceptability of holding down a girl and forcing her to have intercourse (Flood & Hamilton, 2003). Cross-sectional research from Germany indicates that adolescents' use of violent pornography (but not pornography use in general) is linked to a greater acceptance of sexual aggression, which is mediated by a greater prominence of risk elements of sexual aggression in their sexual scripts (Krahé, 2014). While these results are novel, further research is ultimately needed to support this relationship. Furthermore, research has emphasised that the association between pornography use and attitudes supporting violence against women are largely related to *pre-existing risks* for sexual aggression (Hald et al., 2010; Malamuth, et al., 2012). Exposure to pornography strengthened attitudes supporting violence against women in an experimental setting, but only among men low in the 'agreeableness' personality trait; this was also related to sexual arousal, highlighting the importance of individual differences and pre-existing character traits (Hald & Malamuth, 2015).

Taken together, these studies indicate that there are associations between pornography use, sexual violence, and attitudes supporting sexual violence, but these relationships are stronger for the use of violent pornography. More research is needed, particularly on the relationship between pornography and attitudes supporting violence against women among adolescents.

3.2.2 Gender-related impacts

Impacts of pornography on gender-based attitudes have been described in the literature. Exposure to pornography among adolescents is associated with agreement with the idea that 'women are sex objects' among both boys and girls (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009) and that early exposure to pornography is associated with less progressive gender role attitudes (Brown & L'Engle 2009). This association could be mediated by frequency of viewing pornography; 15% of Swedish adolescent boys who watched pornography frequently agreed with the statement 'I think pornography degrades women' compared to nearly 30% of those who watched pornography infrequently or not at all (Svedin et al., 2011).

Studies of young adults indicate links between pornography exposure and inner conflict about adhering to gender roles (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014), lack of intention to intervene as a bystander regarding sexual assault (Foubert & Bridges, 2015), and belief in myths about rape and sexual assault (Foubert, et al., 2011). Qualitatively, young Australians have reported links between exposure to pornography, young men's sexual expectations, and pressure on young women to conform to these expectations (Walker, et al. 2015; Crabbe & Corlett, 2011). Young women reported concern over young men's exposure to pornography characterised by women's degradation, which might influence their sexual expectation and desires, and pressure felt by peers to engage in degrading, painful or violating sexual activities that partners had seen in pornography (Walker et al., 2015).

Again, the relationship between pornography and gender-related impacts are likely influenced by individual factors including personality, sexual arousal (Hald & Malamuth, 2015), type of pornography viewed (Shim, 2007), political affiliation, formal education, living in a rural area (McKee, 2007), and alcohol intoxication (Davis, et al., 2006).

3.2.3 Mental health and psychological distress

Little research has been conducted into the relationship between pornography exposure and mental health in children; available studies focus on distress rather than more specific mental health concerns. In a survey conducted in 2010-11, nearly two-thirds (64%) of Australian children and adolescents who reported ever seeing sexual images online reported not being bothered or upset by

this exposure (Green, et al. 2011). However, the youngest participants (aged 9-10 years) were most likely to be bothered or upset by the experience (91%; Green, et al., 2013). In international adolescent populations, pornography use has been associated with low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, behavioural issues and substance use (Wolak et al., 2007; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2005).

A growing body of evidence with young adult populations indicates that distress and other negative mental health outcomes are related to frequency of use rather than any exposure, although findings are not consistent with regards to gender. In a Swedish study, nearly twenty per cent of daily pornography users had depressive symptoms, significantly more than infrequent users (12.6%; Svedin et al., 2011). Frequency of pornography use has been associated with negative affect (Tylka, 2015), depression and stress among young men (Levin, et al. 2012) and depressive symptoms in young women (Willoughby, et al., 2014).

Pornography 'addiction'

It is possible to use pornography excessively and experience negative consequences (sometimes described as 'problematic pornography use'; PPU); however, there is debate about classifying pornography 'addiction'. Pornography addiction, although frequently discussed, is not formally recognised as an addictive disorder by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5), and therefore does not have diagnostic criteria. This is likely because research into the addictive nature of pornography is still recent, though it is gaining traction. Regardless, studies of adults support an addiction framework from a biological perspective. For example, a recent brain study suggests that moderate pornography viewing is associated with intense stimulation of the brain's reward system, which may lead to wearing of these systems and a higher need for novel stimulation, although this may be a precondition rather than a consequence of pornography consumption (Kuhn & Gallinat, 2014). Another brain study of men with compulsive sexual behaviour indicated dissociation between sexual desire ('wanting' pornography) and 'liking' pornography. That is, people with PPU may want or desire pornography without 'liking' it any more than the average user. These findings suggest there are similar neurological processes involved compared to those seen in substance use disorders (Voon et al., 2014). Further research indicates that PPU is driven by factors such as cue reactivity (reactiveness to pornography; i.e. degree of arousal), degree of craving, compulsive tendencies, psychological symptoms and thirst for novelty rather than frequency of viewing (Brand et al., 2011; Egan & Parmar, 2013; Grubbs, et al., 2013; Laier, et al., 2013).

Without formal diagnostic criteria, it is difficult to ascertain prevalence of pornography 'addiction' or PPU, especially among adolescents, and estimates naturally vary. One third of Swedish 16 year old boys who watch pornography daily report watching more pornography than they actually wish to

watch (approximately 3% of teenage boys in the sample; Mattebo et al., 2013) Among Italian adolescents, 22% defined their pornography use as 'habitual' and 9% reported a kind of 'addiction' (Damiano et al., 2015). Among young German adults, 35% of men and 9% of women have sometimes felt it was hard to control their consumption, and 52% of men and 25% of women have resolved in the past to limit their consumption (Böhm et al., 2014); many men reported concerns about becoming 'addicted' to pornography. In a large US study, 2% of adult users met the threshold of compulsive use established in previous research (Albright, 2008).

Body image

Findings regarding pornography's impact on body image are contradictory. Qualitatively, Australian and Swedish adolescents and young adults reported concerns about pornography influencing body image for girls. Congruent with findings related to sexualised mass media (outlined in section 3.2) girls felt that an 'ideal' body is represented in pornography and they feel pressure to achieve these bodies (Lofgren-Martenson & Mansson, 2010; Mattebo, et al., 2012; Walker et al., 2015). Contrarily, a recent longitudinal study of Dutch adolescents indicated that neither exposure to online pornography, nor frequency of use predicted girls' body dissatisfaction (Peter & Valkenburg, 2014). However, more frequent exposure to online pornography was associated with boys' dissatisfaction with their body in general and their stomach size in particular, but not their penis size (Peter & Valkenburg, 2014). The authors suggested these findings were related to patterns of use; girls are typically more critical of pornography than boys, and have less exposure to pornography. Research with adult populations has produced mixed results. Several cross-sectional studies suggest a relationship between pornography use and body image for men; pornography use has been found to be associated with dissatisfaction with muscularity, body fat and penis size in young men in general (Cranney, 2015; Tylka, 2015), and social physique anxiety in gay men (Duggan & McCreary, 2004). Young US women reported that previous partners' pornography use directly predicted interpersonal sexual objectification and eating disorder symptomology, and indirectly predicted body shame (Tylka & Kroon Van Diest, 2015); however this is debated, with other research finding no relationship between breast-size dissatisfaction and pornography use in adult women (Cranney, 2015).

Concern has been raised about the impact of pornography on expectations about the appearance of the vulva, creating a new 'genital ideal'. Pubic hair removal has been observed since ancient times but is widely normalised today (Ramsey, et al., 2009); young Australian women regularly remove at least some of their pubic hair (approximately half remove all of it), most commonly related to beliefs about sexual attractiveness, femininity and hygiene (Tiggemann & Hodgson 2008). However, more recent trends in pubic hair removal have been anecdotally associated with a lack of pubic hair seen

in pornography which may influence expectations about the acceptability of pubic hair (Richman 2013, Saunders 2013). Since the 1970s, pornographic images have shown a gradual erosion of pubic hair (Ramsey et al., 2009); Vannier et al. (2014) found that 61% of female pornography actors in online videos had no pubic hair and 30% had groomed pubic hair. No known research has explored the *direct* link between pornography and pubic hair removal, although some research indicates a relationship between pubic hair removal and personal media consumption, male partner(s) preference, pressure from others and compliance with social norms (Braun, et al., 2013). Although not necessarily physically harmful, removal of pubic hair without proper skin care can result in irritation and increase the risk of STI transmission via skin abrasion (Ramsey et al., 2009). More concerning is the potential impact of pressure from male partners for women to look a certain way, as controlling behaviours related to bodies and sexuality can be a form of domestic abuse (Domestic Violence Prevention Centre, 2013; Edwards, 2015).

Also of concern are trends in labiaplasty, a surgical process which alters the labia minor and labia majora. The number of Australian adult women having labiaplasties subsidised by Medicare has more than tripled in the past decade, although the number of women opting for private treatment is unknown, as is the number of women undergoing labiaplasty for cosmetic versus non-cosmetic reasons (Cornwall, 2014). The average age of patients has dropped from 35 years to 28 years in the UK (Express, 2013). Newspaper reports suggest girls as young as 13 have been requesting the surgery in Australia (Dingle, 2012). Although the size and shape of labia can vary considerably between individuals, critics of labiaplasty have argued that the depiction of an 'ideal' or 'neat' labia in pornography is causing women to think their vulvas are unattractive or abnormal (Bisceglia, 2014; Dingle, 2012). It is also known that common practice is to digitally edit images of vulvas to remove visible labia, to retain 'soft core' classification under Australian censorship laws. While preliminary research into this relationship in Australia and other countries suggest that the majority of women are generally content with the appearance of their vulvas, approximately a third of women seeking labiaplasty have experienced negative comments towards their labia in the past and 8.7% of women have indicated they were somewhat likely or very likely to consider the procedure (Jones & Nurka, 2015; Veale et al., 2014). Pornography has been associated with openness to labiaplasty but has not predicted vulva satisfaction (Jones & Nurka, 2015). The relationship between pornography and vulva satisfaction in younger populations is currently unknown. In August 2015, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners introduced world-first guidelines designed to help doctors navigate women's concerns about the appearance of the vulva, which recommends discussing the impact of pornography on perceptions of 'normal' labia (The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners,

2015). Since introducing stricter guidelines, Medicare claims for labiaplasty have fallen by 28% (Corderoy, 2015).

3.2.4 Young people's beliefs about pornography

Available reports indicate that – as explored in section 3.5 in the discussion of sexualised media – young people are not simply passive consumers of pornography and its messages, although attitudes are mixed. In a study of Australians aged 9-16 who were asked 'what things on the internet bother people about your age?', pornography was listed by 27% of participants, the most second most common concern mentioned after bullying and related behaviours (Green et al., 2013). In contrast, qualitatively, adolescents reported pornography as entertaining and stimulating (Rothman et al., 2014). In general, adolescent boys report more positive attitudes towards pornography than adolescent girls; however, girls have increasingly positive attitudes as they grow older (Sabina et al., 2008). This might be related to the social stigma surrounding masturbation and sexual pleasure for adolescent girls, and the normalisation of pornography use as a "boy's habit."

Among young adults, several qualitative studies indicate that many young people view consumption of pornography as inevitable and ubiquitous, largely about pleasure and curiosity and part of growing up (Antevska & Gavey, 2015; McKee, 2007; Watson & Smith, 2012). Young adults generally report significantly more positive effects of pornography than negative effects, particularly among young men (Hald & Malamuth, 2008). People who have positive attitudes towards sex report more motivation to use pornography (Paul & Shim, 2008).

In some studies, young people have acknowledged that pornography consumption may be problematic. Attitudes towards pornography tend to be more negative among young people who are religious, less sexually active, and have viewed pornography less often (Watson & Smith, 2012). A minority of young people (approximately 5% of young men and 13% of young women in a US sample) believe that pornography use is never acceptable (Olmstead et al., 2013). Others hold more nuanced views; for example, in a US study of young adult men, between 20-80% of the sample viewed pornography as problematic depending on the domain of interest, most commonly if use is affecting mental health and relationships (Twohig, et al., 2009). In a qualitative study of adolescent and young adult Australians, participants reported being exposed to pornography they did not wish to see, and concern over pornography-related relationship problems (Walker, 2015). Young men have also reported fears of losing interest in sex and loss of sexual function (Böhm et al., 2014).

However, there is an apparent lack of critical thinking about these issues among some young pornography consumers. In a qualitative interview with young adult men in New Zealand, (Antevska

& Gavey, 2015) participants indicated a role of detachment when viewing pornography; they did not necessarily support gender inequalities they had observed pornography, but instead treated the issues with a kind of 'banal' acceptance. Most young men in the study were unable or reluctant to think critically about the material they described. Among German young adults, female consumers reported more critical attitudes towards pornography than men, commonly refusing to watch films with content they considered degrading (Böhm et al., 2014). Both young men and women reported desires to watch pornography where actors appeared to be enjoying themselves. However, in this study, most respondents were able to think critically about pornography when prompted.

There is also general observation of a 'third person effect', in which pornography consumers recognise that pornography consumption might be harmful for other people, but don't believe it affects them personally (Watson & Smith, 2012), For example, in a study of Swedish high school students, 71% believed that pornography influenced the sexual behaviours of peers but only 29% believed it influenced their own behaviours (Häggström-Nordin et al., 2005). Regardless, adolescents and young people generally set standards about what they find appropriate or objectionable and likely expose themselves to media that is congruent with their beliefs (Bryant, 2009).

3.3 Summary

The research reviewed indicates that pornography is highly prevalent, accessible and normalised, and associated with adverse outcomes for adolescents and young adults across several domains. The levels of evidence available for each domain are summarised in Figure 1. Briefly, there is longitudinal evidence available indicating pornography may increase sexual permissiveness, perceived realism of pornography, preoccupation with sex, sexual aggression, some sexist attitudes and some body image concerns, and decrease age of first sexual experience. There is cross-sectional evidence indicating pornography is associated with use as sexual education, an increase in heterosexual anal sex, relationship and sexual problems, interest in degrading sexual acts, and depression, and pornography 'addiction' may exist. Qualitative evidence indicates pornography may be used in positive ways (e.g. exploring sexuality and identity), but may increase concerns over appearance of genitals (e.g. influencing rates of labiaplasty).

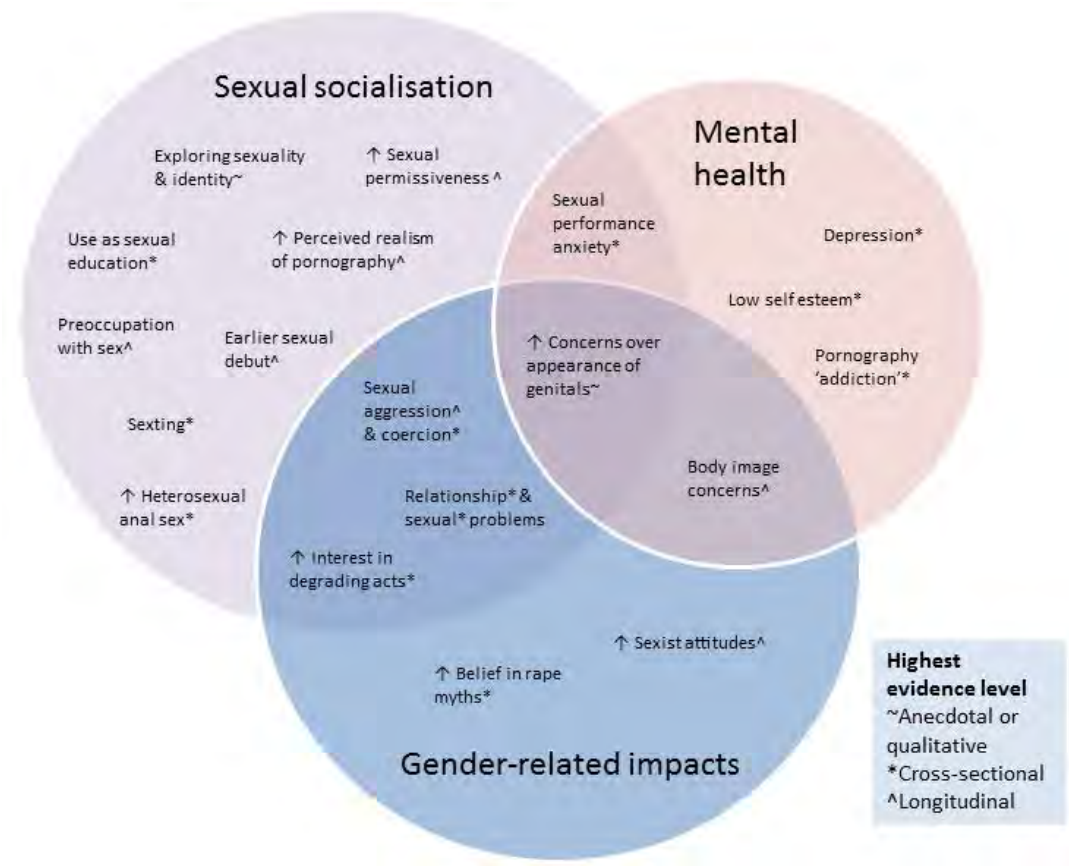

Figure 1. Pornography's potential impact on adolescents and young adults

There is still more research needed to explore the relationship between pornography and sexual curiosity and pleasure, sexting, and genital appearance. There is also a lack of research into lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex populations, as available studies which address sexual diversity are limited to men who have sex with men. Further, there is a lack of research using systematic measures over time, and a lack of quality data with regards to content watched by young Australians. There is also extremely little research on children and younger adolescents; these studies are limited to broad questions about exposure, concern and short term distress.

Taken together, these studies indicate that pornography may impact on the sexualisation of children and young people; however, it is unclear whether or not this relationship is causal. Adverse effects appear to be mediated by a myriad of other factors prevalent in wider society, and the relationship is not a simple exposure-outcome relationship. Adverse effects seem to be more prevalent among male consumers and among frequent users rather than infrequent or casual users; however, these effects are also dependent on individual factors and pre-existing attitudes. Several studies have emphasised that some harms are specific to type of pornography viewed, such violent pornography.

4 Preventing harms of pornography and sexual media

Sexualised media and pornography have the potential to elicit negative outcomes in viewers. This section will discuss interventions to prevent these harms, weighing up their potential utility. Both sexually explicit media (pornography) and non-explicit sexualised media will be discussed when relevant; however, the focus will be on online pornography.

4.1 Interventions restricting content and legality of sexual media

4.1.1 Legislation and regulation relating to pornography in Australia

It is legal to possess most types of pornography in most areas of Australia (Stardust, 2014) yet Australian law prohibits people under 18 from viewing pornography (Mason, 1992). However, online pornography production and sale is subject to a multifaceted regulatory framework. Relevant legislation imposes tight control upon where, how, and what kind of pornography can be made in Australia, with penalties of fines and imprisonment. In Australia, the regulation of pornography involves some Commonwealth laws but is mainly regulated on a State and Territory level. In many states it is illegal to produce and distribute pornography, including New South Wales and Victoria. Some producers and actors travel to the ACT in order to film and sell material. Pornography producers have lobbied for uniform legislation at a national level to avoid confusion (Stardust, 2014).

Publications are classified by the Office of Film and Literature Classification, for New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the Territories. Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland operate their own schemes. Publications are generally rated according to three levels of classification: unrestricted, restricted publication category 1, and restricted publication category 2. In general, restricted category 1 publications may only be exhibited in a public place if in a sealed package and not be sold or given to a minor other than by a parent or guardian. Restricted category 2 publications may only be exhibited in restricted publications areas and only sold to a person who has made a direct request for the publication, and delivered in opaque wrapping. Classification may be refused and these publications cannot be sold in Australia (Mason, 1992). Pornographic magazines are generally rated in the restricted categories.

The Australian Film Censorship Board classifies films for all jurisdictions (Mason, 1992), although each State and Territory has its own legislation and not all categories used by the Film Censorship Board are accepted in every jurisdiction. Sexually explicit films classified in Australia are generally rated ‘R’ or ‘X’ (both considered 18+ restricted) if it deals with matters of sex and the regulatory board believes it is unsuitable for viewing by minors. Classification may be refused (RC; Refused

Classification) if the film is against standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adult persons. A film is classified X18+ if it contains real depictions of sexual activity between consenting adults, but any film containing violence (including sexual violence, sexually assaultive language, demeaning content), fetishes (e.g. bondage, spanking, 'fisting' or incest fantasies) and depictions of performers aged under 18 years (including adult actors portrayed as minors) will be RC. If a film is RC, it cannot be sold, exhibited or possessed for the purposes of sale anywhere in Australia (Mason, 1992; Stardust, 2014). The sale of X18+ films is prohibited in all states except the ACT and prescribed areas of NT. Adult retail outlets that sell X18+ films face penalties of imprisonment and/or fines (Stardust, 2014); however, this law is rarely enforced.

These strict classifications have been criticised for lacking nuance and failing to consider the context when assigning a rating to a sexually explicit film; for example, no consideration is given to whether an X18+ film may provide sex education, represent diversity, or have artistic value. Strict and confusing legislation means that many Australian-based producers only create pornography to be distributed online, which allows producers to avoid many – but not all – of restrictions. It is illegal for any Australian server to carry X18+ or RC material, meaning that producers must host their content on overseas servers, and so pornography produced in Australia is usually advertised and sold to international consumers. However, Australian pornography distributed this way can still be investigated by the Australian Police Force.

Internationally, some jurisdictions have attempted to legislate certain aspects of pornography production. California, one of the world's largest pornography-producing jurisdictions, recently ruled to mandate condom use in all films ('Measure B'), although this was met with many producers moving interstate (Abram, 2013). A recent controversial ruling for online pornography produced in the United Kingdom banned depicting behaviours including spanking, 'fisting', 'face-sitting' and female ejaculation. These measures were designed to prevent production and viewing of violent and aggressive pornography. Critics of this ruling contend that the list of behaviours was chosen arbitrarily and based on moral judgement rather than evidence of the negative health impacts of viewing these behaviours (Hooton, 2014) .

Despite these laws and guidelines targeting producers of pornography, the scope of the internet and popular genres such as amateur pornography means that a significant proportion of online pornography cannot be regulated. While it is difficult for Australian producers to legally produce and sell pornography, it easy for Australians to access pornography not subject to Australian laws, via the internet.

4.1.2 Legislation and regulation related to non-explicit sexual media in Australia

In Australia, exposure to sexual media is governed by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) for television, radio, and online content, the Advertising Standards Bureau for advertisements, the Australian Classifications Board for films, video games, and magazines, and the Australian Record Industry Association for recorded music.

As mentioned above, classification is in place to restrict access to sexual material. Classifications include G (suitable for general viewing), PG (parental guidance recommended for people under 15), M (recommended for viewers aged 15 years and over), MA (restricted to viewers aged 15 years and over, unless accompanied by an adult; Australian Government, 2013). In television, these ratings are used in conjunction with time periods to restrict children's access to material unsuitable for their age group, although M rated material can be screened between 12pm and 3pm on schooldays (with the assumption that children are in school or supervised). However, as discussed in section 3.1, certain sexualised programming (e.g. music video programs rated PG) are sometimes shown at child-friendly times (Ey & McInnes, 2014) and it is impossible to gauge whether parents are supervising their children's TV choices. In cinemas, age verification is legally required for MA films or higher, but not always enforced.

Music is mainly regulated by the Australian Recording Industry Association and the Australian Music Retailers Association (Australian Record Industry Association & Australian Music Retailers Association, 2003). The current classification scheme involves four levels: Level 1) Moderate impact course language and/or themes, Level 2) Strong impact course language and/or themes, Level 3) High impact, not to be sold to persons under 18 years. Music recordings exceeding level three are not to be sold to the public. Complaints are handled by Australian Music Retailers Association. It is unclear how strictly these codes are enforced in selling music. Regardless, most music is available for free and without age verification through radio, the internet or streaming applications.

Publications including books and magazines are required to be classified if they contain depictions or descriptions of sexuality that are unsuitable for a minor. These are usually only seen for sexually explicit magazines, and rarely seen in books, even if they contain sexual themes.

The Australian Association of National Advertiser' Code for Advertising and Marketing Communications to Children indicates that advertising or marketing aimed at children must not include sexual imagery in contravention of Prevailing Community Standards, and must not state or imply that children are sexual beings or that a product will enhance their sexuality (Australian Association of National Advertisers, 2009). Complaints about content of an advertisement are

considered by the Advertising Standards Bureau on a 'case-by-case' basis. However, critics of this process believe this process is not strict enough and many advertisements 'slip through' the code, particularly sexualised images shown in public places, e.g. it is legal to place sexualised advertisements in the vicinity of schools (Kermond, 2012; Roper, 2014).

There are no known restrictions for sale and distribution of children's and young people's clothing in Australia. Complaints are usually directed to the retailer, and discussed in the media and online, often by advocacy groups such as *Collective Shout* (Collective Shout, 2010). Sexualised children's clothing is often only discontinued from a retailer after public outcry.

4.2 Interventions targeting access to online pornography

In Australia, it is legal to view and possess most types of pornography among those aged 18 years or older. Attempts to control access of pornography are usually aimed at protecting children and adolescents from harm. These interventions generally employ a broad brush-stroke approach to regulation and tend to assume that any access of pornography by children and adolescents is harmful. While these approaches may not be highly effective in stopping a motivated young person from accessing pornography, they may play a role in reducing accidental exposure, particularly among younger children.

4.2.1 Filters and censorship

Age verification software

Many pornographic websites use age verification software to prevent underage users from access pornography, such as requiring users to select 'yes' to the question 'are you aged 18 years or older?' or requiring credit card verification. However, the ease of avoiding these systems, and the widespread availability of pornography online, makes true age verification almost impossible to enforce. Experts have recommended steps that could be taken to prevent children from accessing pornographic websites: stricter age verification technologies, plain home pages for pornographic websites (so that visitors are not immediately bombarded with explicit material), and instant help functions for children exposed to offensive material (Flood & Hamilton, 2003). These measures would currently only be possible with the voluntary cooperation of websites.

Filtering and censorship

Filtering, or censorship, of the internet aims to control access to information that is considered inappropriate or harmful. Internet filters can be applied voluntarily at an internet service provider, organisational, household, or device level. Schools and businesses often apply these filters to

prevent access to pornography as well as other sites deemed not appropriate for work or school settings, such as social media. There are three methods of internet filtering:

1. 'Inclusion filtering' creates a 'whitelist' (a list of specific sites that are to be accessible to the user); all other content is then denied;
2. 'Exclusion filtering' creates a 'blacklist' (sites to be blocked); and
3. 'Content filtering' evaluates sites and checks to see if its content matches descriptions (e.g. using keywords; Dombrowski, et al., 2007).

Some peer-to-peer file sharing websites, (i.e. Piratebay.com), are blocked or censored at a national level, largely aimed at reducing internet piracy in Australia; this also blocks downloads of pirated pornography. Other censorship focuses on child pornography, sexual violence and other illegal activities. Some countries take a more restrictive approach than Australia, such as the heavily censored and closely monitored Chinese approach and the Saudi approach which allows access only to government approved sites. The major problem with legal and political filtering of content is that the government is required to make a subjective decision about what is appropriate and what is illegal, obscene or harmful.

The in-effectiveness of these censorship measures is widely recognised. Internet content filters make two kinds of errors: over-blocking (blocking a page that should not be blocked) and under-blocking (failing to block a page that should be blocked; Çankaya & Odabaşı, 2009). A 2002 study found that low-level pornography-blocking software blocked 1.4% of health related information sites whereas more restrictive software blocked 24% of health sites (Richardson, et al., 2002). Of concern, health information pages relating to safe sex, condoms, and homosexuality were much more likely to be blocked by these filters. The same study showed that even the most restrictive setting blocked only 91% of pornographic sites. Further, it is not particularly difficult to bypass filters using a virtual private network (VPN) or proxy server, for example. In a survey of American teenagers, 50 of 51 participants stated no problems circumventing filters to access pornography (Smith, 2013). An Australian study found no correlation between parents installing internet filters and children's exposure to violent and sexual material (Fleming, et al., 2006).

4.2.2 Parent/guardian monitoring and regulation

Parents and guardians can take actions to monitor their children's access to online pornography. On the internet, parents can influence children's media consumption through setting rules and restrictions such as time limits, not allowing smartphones in the bedroom or at school, and not allowing access to certain websites. When parents are paying for children's devices and internet

access, rules can be set and enforced as a condition of their provision. For example, in one study, 63% of parents say they keep an eye on the screen when the child is online, 41% check the computer later to see what the child has been doing, and 25% check their children's emails (Livingstone & Bober, 2006).

However, enforcement of these rules is sometimes difficult. Children are often familiar with methods of clearing web history or using private browsing modes. Both parents and children also report that these methods are difficult to implement, primarily because children are often more knowledgeable about the internet than their parents (Livingstone & Bober, 2006). The proliferation of smartphones and tablets adds a layer of complexity to regulating children's access to sexual content, now that many children and young people have unsupervised access to the internet in their bedrooms. In one study, UK parents claimed they exerted high levels of control over children's internet use; however, many of their children stated they were unaware of these rules (e.g. 86% of parents say they do not allow their children to give out personal information online, but only 49% of children say this is the case; Livingstone & Smith, 2014). Further, the casting of parents as gate-keepers of the internet can backfire by making young people reluctant to talk to their parents about risks or problems encountered online (Livingstone & Bober, 2006). An Australian survey found that only eight percent of teenagers would tell a parent if they came across something upsetting online (Fleming et al., 2006). Children and adolescents may be unwilling to raise concerns or discuss what they have seen online for fear that their parents will remove internet access (Çankaya & Odabaşı, 2009; Livingstone & Bober, 2006).

4.3 Interventions targeted at potential or current users of pornography

Despite legislation, regulation and interventions targeting access to pornography, the near ubiquitous rates of pornography exposure and use indicate that it is impractical to completely stop adolescents and young people from accessing pornography; anecdotally, young people will generally find a way to access material they are seeking. Therefore, there is a need to consider methods of reducing the potential harms of pornography (and sexual media) beyond censorship efforts. Educational and awareness initiatives appear to be the only clear way to influence how young people perceive pornography, encouraging them to think critically about the content, analyse how pornography influences their understanding of sex and sexuality, and ultimately self-regulate or stop their use (Wright, 2014). These initiatives can also include education and awareness about sexualised media in general.

4.3.1 Education about pornography and sexual media

There is no clear definition for 'pornography literacy' or what this involves (Albury, 2014). In an ideal education setting, pornography literacy education might 'permit a dialogue that offers the opportunity for educators to learn more about young people's sexual cultures, and for both teachers and learners to extend their knowledge and understanding of the intersections between mediated representation and lived experiences of sex, sexuality, and gender' (Albury, 2014, p. 176). There is a need to formally teach adolescents and young people about the messages portrayed in pornography and sexual media, its potential harms (and benefits), and allow a safe space that encourages critical thinking (Antevska & Gavey, 2015). Educational initiatives need to address these issues with consideration of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities, influence from parents and peers, and individual differences (Albury, 2014; Pownall, et al., 2012). Further, educational initiatives should be evidence based and formally evaluated.

School-based educational programs and curriculum

Many researchers and advocates recommend teaching media and pornography 'literacy' as part of sexuality curriculum (e.g. Stark, 2014). Media and pornography literacy aims to teach children and young people to think critically about pornography, thereby 'inoculating' them against its potentially harmful impacts (Albury, 2014). As school-based sexual education is neither standardised nor compulsory in Australia, it is unknown whether individual schools are discussing pornography in their classes, and – if they are – how they teach the subject and how effective the teaching is. Media researcher Kath Albury has argued that since pornography is one variable influencing a complex series of messages which may influence young people's ideas about sex and sexuality, there is a need to consider whether simply adding a pornography-based program to an existing sexual education program is sufficient, especially if cultural inequities are not discussed in other areas of the curriculum (Albury, 2014). She also states that there is a need to consider teachers' level of comfort discussing pornography and use creative, engaging methods to teach students (Albury, 2014).

As this is an emerging area of interest for schools, there are no best practice guidelines uniformly accepted. Recommendations from media and pornography researchers include utilising a whole school approach, including professional development for teachers and staff, sequential, age-appropriate curriculum, relevant policies, parent engagement and regular evaluation (Albury, 2014; Reality & Risk, n.d). The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development recommends discussing sexualised media (including pornography) within sexuality education in the primary school setting, although does not provide specific activities or lesson plans related to

pornography (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2011). VicHealth has produced a resource for schools entitled *Building respectful relationships: Stepping Out Against Gender-Based Violence,* which includes teaching and learning activities on topics of gender, power and respect in the realms of sexting, consent and gender inequalities and related media. In this resource, pornography is first mentioned in activities for Year 8s (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2014). Some external organisations such as *Reality & Risk* offer training for teachers and educational resources, mostly aimed at secondary school. The efficacy of these programs is currently unknown and an evaluation of this and other programs is ultimately needed.

Despite a presumably low number of schools engaging in such discussions, Australian students and parents report a high level of acceptability for inclusion of pornography-related discussions in sexual education. A 2003 poll showed that 85% of Australian parents supported the proposal for high schools to educate students about 'the risks of pornography' (Flood & Hamilton, 2003). In 2012, young Australians indicated that they wish to include discussion about the harms of pornography in school based sex education (Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS, 2012). However, some international school-based programs have experienced backlash (e.g. Burns, 2013), and it is likely that introducing pornography education into Australian schools would be met with some controversy.

Young people do report using pornography as a tool to educate themselves in how to have sex (Arrington-Sanders et al., 2015; Svedin et al., 2011; Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS, 2012). Young people have noted a lack of positive sexual information in school programs, stating that curriculum focuses solely on biology and adverse outcomes rather than pleasure (Mitchell, et al., 2014). Educators and researchers argue that more comprehensive sexual education at school would alleviate the need for young people to seek education elsewhere. Teaching young people about pleasure and how to 'be good at sex' might have positive outcomes; however, no research or evaluation of such programs exists.

Some opponents of providing comprehensive sexuality education in schools state that informing students about sexual health and behaviour will cause them to become prematurely sexualised. However, research clearly indicates that comprehensive sexual education has effects including delaying the initiation of sex, reducing the frequency of sex or the number of sexual partners, and increasing the use of condoms or other contraceptive methods. There is very little evidence that any abstinence program delays the initiation of sex (Chin et al., 2012; Kohler, Manhart, & Lafferty, 2008).

The role of parents and guardians in educational initiatives

Parents and guardians may employ tactics to prevent their children from being exposed to pornography; however, they also have a vital role in educating young people about pornography and sexual media. When parents are actively involved in discussing pornography use with their children this may lead to the children holding less positive attitudes to pornography, which are in turn associated with less future use of pornography (Rasmussen, et al., 2015). However, parents do not commonly discuss pornography use with their children, and are no more likely to talk to boys than girls about potential harms (Rasmussen et al., 2015). There are several Australian online resources for parents and others concerned about online safety. However, the accuracy and efficacy of these online resources do not appear to have been formally evaluated, and none provide much information about potential neutral or positive effects of pornography, generally assuming that pornography is intrinsically harmful.

- The Government of Western Australia's *Talk Soon, Talk Often* is a guide for parents on discussing sex and sexuality with their children. It includes recommendations for talking to children about pornography, including suggestions about starting conversations about sex and sexuality from a young age, keeping calm and discussing consent and expectations about sex, and also recommends blocking access to (Walsh, 2011).
- Kidspot Australia, a website for parents by parents, provides one article about pornography for parents and tips for discussing pornography with kids (Coulson, 2013). Their article recommends a whole of community approach, and suggests parents install filters one their children's devices, having an ongoing conversation about sex and sexuality from young age, and having frank and open conversations.
- Australian sexual education website 'Talking the Talk' , run by a sexual health nurse and educator, provides talking points for explaining pornography to children and adolescents about the fantasy of pornography, having open and trusting conversations between parents and children, and explaining real sexual relationships. The sexual health educator runs parent groups on these topics (Hamilton, 2015).
- 'Reality & Risk: Pornography, young people and sexuality', a community-based project has a number of 'tip sheets' and recommends parents encourage critical thinking by discussing underlying messages about power and relationships seen in pornography and the wider media, discussing peer pressure and limiting exposure by keeping devices out of bedrooms and putting time limits on use, acknowledging that filters are not always effective (Reality & Risk, n.d.).

Awareness movements and websites

A number of projects and movements have been formed to raise awareness of the harms of pornography and sexual media in the general community. Awareness movements may reach out to the community via their websites, media releases and appearances, social media use and/or community-based events (e.g. panel discussions, school-based talks). These movements have varying levels of popularity and some involve youth consultation or representatives. Many of these groups portray themselves as anti-pornography. The efficacy of their work has not been formally evaluated so their success is unclear. While websites are a convenient and acceptable method to educate young people about pornography, it should be noted that searching for resources related to pornography tends to yield a high volume of pornographic content that makes educational content difficult to find.

- One of the most well-known Australian movements, *Collective Shout*, is a grassroots campaign against the objectification of women and sexualisation of girls in media, advertising and popular culture (Collective Shout, 2015). *Collective Shout* has a significant reach and has successfully campaigned against many sexualised products and advertisements, e.g. petitioned to stop Coles supermarkets from selling *Zoo* magazine (a 'lad's mag' criticised for misogynistic content). However, *Collective Shout* has been criticised by some for 'slut shaming' women and girls, having a broad definition of sexualisation – for example, assuming that any adult-style clothing automatically 'sexualises' children (No Place for Sheep, 2012), and objecting to Amnesty International's resolution to decriminalise sex work.
- *Reality & Risk* is a community-based project providing comprehensive information about pornography aimed at young people, parents, schools, government and community organisations (Reality & Risk, 2015). The project aims to encourage people to critique messages in pornography, promote understandings of gender and sex that are based on mutual respect and equality, and equip a variety of organisations to address the influence of pornography. The project was developed by Maree Crabbe and David Corlett based on their research with young people, an expert Reference Group and VicHealth's framework for the prevention of violence against women. The project's feature film, *Love and Sex in the Age of Pornography*, prompted significant media discussion on the influence of pornography on young people. Reality & Risk offers guest speaking, training and consultancy and has a resource for sale named 'In the Picture', designed for secondary schools to create a 'whole school approach' to address the influence of pornography.

- *CovenantEyes* is a primarily religious American company and movement selling 'accountability software', a type of Internet usage monitoring software for individuals and families, and describes itself as 'anti-pornography' (CovenantEyes, 2001).
- *Fight the New Drug* is a non-profit American organisation and aims to educate young people about harmful effects of pornography on the brain, on relationships and on society. Their tool 'Fortify' is designed to help people struggling with pornography; the online program runs for 2-5 months (Fight the New Drug, 2009).
- *Your Brain on Porn* aims to educate people about pornography based on scientific research. The website primarily acts as a hub for research on the topic of pornography but also contains information on 'rebooting' (a personal attempt to recover from problematic pornography use, usually involving quitting pornography for a period of time) and other methods to address self-reported pornography addiction (Your Brain on Porn, 2010).
- Burnet Institute's *SCOPE* Project (Social Connectivity: Online Perceptions and Experiences) aims to educate young people about potential harms about pornography without being 'anti-pornography'. *SCOPE* involves a website with links to youth-friendly educational resources and social media tie-ins on topics including online pornography, cyber safety, and technology and relationships (2015).
- Make Love Not Porn (2010) is a website providing information comparing sex in the 'porn world' to sex in the 'real world.' It describes itself as being pro-porn and pro-sex, but aims to stimulate discussion within relationships and encourage people to make their own decisions about what they like instead of relying on pornography.

4.3.2 Treatment options for pornography addiction or problematic pornography use

As mentioned in Section 4.2, 'pornography addiction' is not currently recognised as an addictive disorder. As this is the case, there are no formal diagnostic criteria and a lack of research into the most effective techniques for addressing harms. However some attempts have been made to formally recognise and treat problematic pornography use (PPU), which are summarised below.

Evidence supports the use of formal psychological intervention in treating PPU among adult populations. An integrated PPU recovery approach involves several factors, including coping skills, mental health, relationships and loneliness (Young, 2008). Others have suggested treatment of PPU focus on relapse prevention, intimacy enhancement, reconditioning arousal responses and improving coping skills (Southern 2008). Cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT) is an established and widely-practiced form of psychotherapy which focuses on an individuals' pattern of thinking and associated actions. CBT has shown to be effective in the treatment of individuals with Internet

addiction (Young 2007); however, research has not been conducted on the effectiveness of CBT for problematic pornography use. Some evidence supports the use of other techniques for PPU, including acceptance and commitment therapy, relationship therapy and pharmacological treatment (Bostwick & Bucci, 2008; Crosby, 2011; Ford, et al., 2012). However, most therapists receive little to no training regarding PPU, and therapists' personal attitudes to pornography influence their treatment approach (Ayres & Haddock, 2009). No known research has involved adolescent populations, although there is evidence of PPU in these younger groups (see Section 4.2).

Various 12-step-style support groups for pornography addiction run in Australia and worldwide. The efficacy of these groups is unknown and evaluation is needed. One of the most well-known support groups for problematic pornography use is NoFap (NoFap, 2011). NoFap is a community of members who intend to abstain from pornography use and reduce or abstain from masturbation for a period of time. The support group is mostly based on social networking site Reddit, where members participate in forum-style discussions. As of September 2015, the 'subreddit' has nearly 170,000 subscribers (NoFap, 2011). Rather than offering a single approach, the group provides tools, information and support for members, and emphasises that it is neither religious nor anti-masturbation. As of April 2012, 97% of the community identified as male, 91% were heterosexual men, 44% had never had sexual intercourse and a quarter were currently in a relationship. Of those who had commenced their 'reboot' (a personal attempt to recover from PPU), 46% saw a clear improvement in their sexual dysfunction after abstaining from pornography use.

4.4 Summary

It appears that there is no single, universal approach to reducing the potential harms of pornography and sexual media. It is extremely difficult to prevent exposure to pornography, even with the combined of filtering software, legislation and regulations, and parental monitoring. Educational and awareness efforts may be used to reduce the negative impact of pornography on young people.

Existing educational efforts have not been formally evaluated. However, it appears that a combined approach may be most useful, including school-based sexual education, community involvement, and parental education. Together, these educational efforts can potentially encourage critical thinking about the messages portrayed in pornography and sexual media, and teach children and young people about healthy sexuality and relationships. These efforts would probably be most effective if they recognise that young people have a burgeoning interest in sexuality, and foster an environment which will encourage trust and openness.

5 Discussion

5.1 Research currently underway in Australia

Research into pornography in the Australian context is ongoing. Of these known, ongoing studies, some are specific to pornography and others include pornography as part of a larger scope. Specific studies include The Queensland University of Technology's *Young people, sex, love and the media project*, involving Alan McKee and other media researchers (Queensland University of Technology, 2013), the Australian Institute of Family Studies' *Sexualisation, media, self-concept* study due to be released in late 2015, and The University of Sydney's *The impact of internet pornography*, which includes research into pornography and potential development of online resources for people concerned about problematic use (The University of Sydney, n.d.). Other studies include Burnet Institute's *Sex, Drugs and Rock'n'Roll* project (Burnet Institute, 2015), an annual study involving 15-29 year olds involving questions about sexual health and pornography use, and the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society's *Australian Study of Health and Relationships 2*, a large study of Australians aged 16-69 involving questions about sexual health and pornography use which involves analysis of data from 2012-13 (Australian Study of Health and Relationships, n.d.). No known projects are looking at exposure of children to online pornography. Other educational projects, such as *Reality & Risk* and *SCOPE*, provide opportunities for program evaluation and developing an evidence base around pornography-related interventions and education (Reality & Risk, 2015; SCOPE, 2015).

5.2 Methodological issues in pornography and sexualisation research

5.2.1 Definitional issues

In order to compare the findings of different studies and ascertain trends over time and across population groups, it is important to define key concepts consistently across studies. This is particularly difficult due to the subjective nature of sexualisation and pornography. In research, there are no standardised definitions for these exposures; it can be difficult to define what is sexualised, what is pornography, and what is violent pornography (Lumby & Albury, 2010; McKee, 2015). For example, see section 3.1.2 for descriptions of disparate rates of violence in pornography found depending on definitions of violence. A review of pornography research found that 84% of studies provided no definition of pornography (Short et al, 2012). Among the studies which did provide a definition of pornography, no two studies used the same definition.

In selecting and describing literature for inclusion this review, we made the decision not to attempt to redefine, reclassify or categorise terms such as 'sexualisation' or 'pornographic'; instead we have

taken the terms at face value, and include any primary articles and grey literature that explore their own definitions the concepts. This raises the problem that studies might not be comparable if they each define and classify instances of 'sexualisation' or 'pornography' differently; we note this as a limitation and a knowledge gap for future research to address.

There are also inconsistencies in research measures for describing problematic or highly frequent pornography use. According to Short's (2012) review, 95% of pornography research assessed pornography use with researcher-generated questions. There are validated measures for assessing problematic pornography use (e.g. Hald & Malamuth, 2008), however, these are not widely used (Short, 2012).

5.2.2 Research design issues

A causal relationship between pornography viewing and outcomes is difficult to prove as both behaviours must surely be mediated by the choice to watch pornography – for example, those people more interested in sex and with stronger sexual desires are more likely to both engage in sexual behaviour and to watch pornography. Delineating the effects of different exposures is very difficult; sexualised media and pornography are consumed as part of a constant stream of media inputs as well as societal and cultural moderators. Determining the impact of a single exposure will not accurately reflect the overall and ongoing exposure to the media landscape. Furthermore, research has tentatively demonstrated that the association between sexualised media and/or pornography and negative (or positive) outcomes in children is not a simple exposure-outcome relationship; it is mediated by a range of factors, notably peer and parental influence (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006, 2008; Tiggemann & Slater, 2014a; Peter & Valkenburg, 2008; Hald & Malamuth, 2015; Kingston, 2009).

Viewing pornography is so common in our society (see Section 3.1.1) that some studies are unable to recruit meaningful control groups, limiting the quality of the research. Even studies investigating pornography and outcomes in a dose-response design suffer from a lack of clarity regarding cut-off values for problematic use. While experimental research has been conducted to determine the immediate effects of viewing pornography, these have significant methodological weaknesses and are not generalisable. For example, viewing pornography in an experimental setting is likely to have different effects to viewing pornography by choice. Longitudinal studies with representative samples will provide the best evidence of a relationship between exposure and outcomes; few such studies have been conducted to date, including none in Australia. The majority of longitudinal evidence thus far comes from a single Dutch study (Peter & Valkenburg, 2011); replication of findings in other cohorts is needed. Australian pornography research has relied on convenience samples (e.g. Flood,

2003; Walker, 2015; McKee, 2008). This is problematic as the results may not be representative of the general population, for example, research regarding pornography may disproportionately attract individuals who are interested in pornography and comfortable talking about it.

The changing nature of access to pornography and sexual media also presents problems for research design. The vast majority of pornography is now viewed online (see Section 3.1.1) and therefore past research which focuses on video or magazine pornography is out of date. Additionally, all studies to date investigating trends in sexualised media content over time have utilised traditional media (e.g. magazines); research into changing levels of exposure to sexualised media in the context of widespread new media uptake is urgently needed.

Research with children and adolescents is particularly difficult because of the sensitive nature of the topic. Asking adolescents about pornography and getting parental consent to do so poses ethical and logistical problems, particularly for children under the age of 16 years. However, pornography viewing typically begins from a young age (a median age of 14 years in our unpublished study); it is vital that research does include adolescents before they begin this behaviour in order to provide valid longitudinal comparison data.

Sexuality research with children and adolescents is further complicated by understandings of normal sexual development. As discussed in Section 1.2, it is normal and developmentally appropriate for children and young people to be interested in and participate in sexual behaviours and important that these are not pathologised. Guidelines on normal sexual development do not specify how much interest in pornography is normal for adolescents. (NSW Department of Community Services, 2008; Raising Children Network, 2015; Stathopoulos, 2002; South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault & Family Violence, 2012)

A final methodological concern in existing research is the potential for bias in research design and selective use of evidence. Research has found both positive and negative outcomes relating to pornography consumption, however, most studies (especially quantitative studies) only investigate either positive or negative outcomes, not both. It will not be possible to prove or disprove the existence of positive effects, if rigorous studies are not designed to measure these.

5.3 Limitations and gaps in the knowledge

While there is a vast knowledge base available that explores a range of issues concerning the sexualisation of children, further research is still needed. For peer-reviewed literature exploring how sexualised media impacts children and adolescents, explored in section 3, there is still a noticeable lack of Australian longitudinal data. In response to the 2008 Australian Senate *Inquiry into the*

sexualisation of children in the contemporary media environment, the Australian Senate recommended the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council commission a large-scale, Australian, longitudinal project to explore the effects of exposure to sexualised media in children. In response, the Australian Government replied:

> *The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is Australia's main health and medical research funding body, and is tasked with developing health advice for the Australian community, health professionals and governments, and providing advice on ethical behaviour in health care and in the conduct of health and medical research. The NHMRC has advised that this topic falls outside the range of health and medical research that it commissions. The Government will explore other opportunities for the conduct of the proposed research* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009).

Since then no major research projects have been commissioned. In the same vein, there is a need for further local qualitative research to explore the views of children and adolescents surrounding sexualised media, as recently undertaken in New Zealand (Jackson & Vares, 2015b)

Due to the combined challenges of ethical difficulties in conducting any research involving pornography, especially with children and young people, and the seemingly endless repository of online pornographic material there are major knowledge gaps in peer-reviewed literature concerning pornography in general, but especially how early exposure might impact children and adolescents. Key gaps in the knowledge include exposure to pornography (including accidental and deliberate exposure) by children and adolescents, associations between pornography use and compulsive, addictive or deviant behaviours, and any other general associations between exposure to pornography and positive or negative outcomes, particularly in children and adolescents. Also, a prominent gap in the peer-reviewed literature includes accurate and comprehensive prevalence data on different types of pornography, for example paid pornography (which anecdotally is becoming less common with the plethora of free options available), pornography and non-pornographic sexual content on social media, the encrypted and largely anonymous 'dark web' and 'revenge porn' websites where sexually explicit photos or videos are distributed without consent of the subjects. There is also a need to rigorously evaluate programs designed to reduce or prevent pornography-related harms and exposure in children, such as those outlined in section 5.3.

5.4 Conclusions

Pornography and other sexualised media have been raised as a concern by researchers, the media, educators, psychologists, physicians, parents, and by children and young people themselves. Key

concerns relate to the impact that increasing access to pornography has on sexual development, sexual behaviour, relationships, gender violence and inequity, and mental health. Children and young people, particularly girls, are potentially more vulnerable to these adverse impacts.

Most research points to an association between sexualising media (including pornography) and negative outcomes such as poor body image, poor mental health, and risky sexual behaviour. The research conducted to date is not able to confirm a causal pathway from these media to the outcomes; however, it is unlikely that research will ever be able to do so. Pornography research cannot exclude the possibility that there are many other factors that could be influencing the impacts of sexualised media pornography, or that the causal pathway may be reversed (i.e. poor body image results in greater interest in sexualised media). There are significant research gaps in the Australian context, research with children and adolescents (as opposed to adults), and research focusing on the emerging impact of smartphones and social media.

Strategies for managing the potential adverse impacts of these media include restrictions and monitoring practices designed to prevent or reduce access. In their current implementation, these strategies are relatively ineffective and children and young people can access pornography easily. Education is frequently mentioned as the best response to the problem of pornography, both in terms of improving sexual education broadly to reduce the reliance on pornography for learning about sex, and in terms of educating young people about the use and content of pornography with the aim of preventing its consumption and reducing its impact. To date, there has been almost no research to investigate the use of educational strategies for children and young people relating to sexualised media and pornography.

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Appendix A. Selected key Australian studies about pornography and young people

Walker, S, Temple-Smith, M, Higgs, P, & Sanci, L. (2015). 'It's always just there in your face': young people's views on porn. Sexual Health, 12(3), 200-206. *Qualitative research discussing pornography with young people.*

Richters, J, de Visser, R O., Badcock, PB., Smith, A M. A., Rissel, C, Simpson, JM., & Grulich, AE. (2014). Masturbation, paying for sex, and other sexual activities: the Second Australian Study of Health and Relationships. Sexual Health, 11(5), 461-471. *A large Australian longitudinal study of adults, included questions about pornography.*

Mitchell A, Patrick K, Heywood W, Blackman P, Pitts MK. (2014). National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health 2013. ARCSHS Monograph number 97. *A report detailing repeated cross-sectional surveys of Australian secondary school students. Focus on sexual education, knowledge, and behaviour.*

Albury, K. (2014). Porn and sex education, porn as sex education. Porn Studies, 1(1-2), 172-181. *A commentary about the relationship between pornography and sex education.*

Tiggemann, M., & Slater, A. (2014). Contemporary girlhood: Maternal reports on sexualized behaviour and appearance concern in 4-10 year-old girls. Body Image, 11(4), 396-403. *Reports on a survey of 815 Australian mothers of 4–10-year-old girls about a range of sexual and appearance related behaviours exhibited by their daughters.*

Crabbe, M., & Corlett, D. (2011). Eroticising inequality: Technology, pornography and young people. Redress, 20(1), 11-15. *Qualitative research with young people and key experts. Their research, documentary, and educational program has been highly influential in recent years.*

Green, L, Brady, D, Olafsson, K, Hartley, J, & Lumby, C. (2011). Risks and safety for Australian children on the internet. Sydney: ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation. *A survey of online safety and pornography exposure among Australian children aged between 9-16 years and their parents.*

McKee A, Albury K, Lumby C. (2008) The Porn Report. Melbourne University Press. *Describes the results of a large survey of Australian adult pornography users as well as extensive discussion on the production and consumption of pornography in Australia.*

Flood, Michael. (2007). Exposure to pornography among youth in Australia. Journal of Sociology, 43(1), 45-60. *Statistics on pornography use in high school age children.*

Rush, E, & La Nauze, A. (2006a). Corporate Paedophilia: Sexualisation of children in Australia. Canberra: The Australia Institute. *A frequently referenced report describing a content analysis of Australian advertising material directed at children, concluding that it had become more highly sexualised over time.*