

Independent. Bold. A Voice for Women and Girls.

Dear Committee Secretary,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide a submission to the Environment and Communications References Committee in relation to harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the internet.

The Victorian Women's Trust has long been deeply concerned about the pervasive influence that pornography is having on our society.

In this submission, we frame pornography as one increasingly large influencer in the development of relationships between young people that can lead to attitudes which harm themselves and those around them.

The Trust has supported various projects that have targeted the mitigation of harms to young individuals through access to pornography on-line.

These harms to young people through access to pornography include:

- the development of violent supportive attitudes towards women by young men;
- young men (as the main consumers of mainstream, hardcore pornography) using pornography as a sexual educator;
- increasingly violent, unsafe and aggressive sexual practices being performed by young men towards their sexual partners;
- unrealistic expectations about how women's and men's bodies should look; and
- a problematic understanding of consent .

As the pornography industry consolidates and extends its vast reach and influence, and our ability to police young individuals' access to pornography diminishes, this issue demands a proactive and society-wide approach. The federal and state governments must lead on this solution by:

- investing in a nation-wide sex education curriculum to highlight issues around consent, respect and empowerment;
- starting a national conversation, genuinely and openly critiquing negative and violent parts of the pornography industry, and encouraging Australians to take a healthy sexual path;
- empowering and resourcing the Office to the Children's eSafety Commissioner to include reporting and addressing pornographic content online; and
- including the issue of pornography in the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.

All of us have the ability to empower those negatively affected by pornography, whether they be young men who develop violent supportive attitudes or young women and others who lack the tools needed to protect themselves against harmful relationships. Our young people are depending on us to help them mitigate all possible harms done by pornography, and the time for action is now.

Yours sincerely,

Casimira Melican

Research and Policy Officer

Mary Crooks AO

Executive Director

Our Context Framework and Experience

In the Trust's 2015 submission to the Victorian Royal Commission on Family Violence, we reflected on the ways in which violent and disrespectful attitudes towards women are fostered. "They are shaped by our society, learning from our cultural script, adopting stances that are legitimated and socially condoned." Pornography is one element of that script, one element whose problematic and harmful themes are rarely critically engaged with by our society.

The Women's Trust has a long history of addressing violent supportive attitudes towards women. In 1993, VWBT granted \$19,000 to the Women's Coalition Against Violence to research, write and publish the book, *Blood on Whose Hands?*, the first public account of intimate partner homicides in Victoria, exposing the up-til-then private nature of the public's response to domestic violence.

In 2009 the Trust designed and launched an innovative, web-based violence prevention program for boys and young men – *Be the Hero!* The project was rolled out in partnership with YWCA Victoria from 2009 to 2012. The project drew a great deal of its inspiration from the work of globally-respected anti violence campaigner, Dr. Jackson Katz and his "bystander" model that encourages boys and young men to build their lives to be free of violence. In this approach, men play the crucial leadership role in violence prevention. They challenge the beliefs and attitudes of their male peers and foster the critical self-examination that triggers changes in behaviour.

Rosie Respect is our harm prevention initiative that seeks to build the capacity, strength, empowerment, education and resilience of young girls with support from the National Australia Bank and the US Consulate. *Rosie* has a particular focus on healthy and respectful relationships with resources such as the video 'Is Your Relationship Healthy?', information on what an abusive relationship looks like as well introducing girls to issues around consent, sexuality and gender.

In February 2016, we were awarded a \$360,000 grant from the William Buckland Foundation to roll out our new initiative *Club Respect* to assist sporting clubs across Victoria and beyond to challenge, erode and marginalise violent attitudes and violent behaviours. Our program *Club Respect* will deliver strategic educational tools, helping sporting clubs to embed a culture of respect and harm prevention in all of their practices to tackle the root causes of violent attitudes, especially towards women.

Violence and Pornography

Our society is currently hoping that young people can effectively navigate their adolescence, defining their identity, exploring their sexuality and developing healthy and respectful relationships with one another that set a positive pattern for life.

As young Australians are accessing pornography at ever increasing rates, fuelled by the "triple A engine of pornography": accessibility, affordability and anonymity, violent supportive attitudes towards women are encouraged to grow and perpetuate.

This is because the pornography industry is massively expanding its sphere of influence, and entering the lives of children and young people with markedly more violent and degrading portrayals of sex where images of rape, coercion and abuse are commonplace.

Although not all pornography is violent and abusive, 80 per cent of the most mainstream, easily accessible and most frequently watched pornography depicts violence and aggression of some kind,ⁱ often directed towards women. So while young women are not the major consumers of pornography, pornography's impact on their body image, agency and sexuality is far-reaching and profound.

A 2012 study published in the Medical Journal of Australia suggested that 28 per cent of 9 to 16-year-olds have seen sexual material online; for 15 to 16-year-olds the percentage is 73 per cent.ⁱⁱ Other Australian research found of 13 to 16-year-olds, 93 per cent of males and 62 per cent of females had seen pornography online.ⁱⁱⁱ

So how does pornography viewing affect children and young people?

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection has articulated the internalisation of pornographic content:

"In the past, people thought that because children didn't understand sexually graphic information they weren't affected by it. Today, we know differently. Research has shown that while children do not have the emotional maturity, experience or knowledge to understand sexual content, they may unconsciously store the experience in their brains and try to make sense of what they have seen. It can be quite stressful and they will sometimes find ways to act it out to try to make sense of it. Impact can vary depending on the child, the content viewed and the circumstances around how it was viewed."^{iv}

Young people need to be taught to critique what they are seeing in pornography and empowered to choose how it shapes their sexuality and relationships towards others. They also need to be able to seek help when they are being negatively impacted by pornography they see online. In this submission, we frame pornography as one increasingly large influencer in the development of relationships between young people that can lead to attitudes which harm themselves and those around them. We must ensure that young people experience a positive transition to sexuality and healthy, respectful relationships can be achieved *despite* the influence of increasingly pervasive, hard core, violent pornography.

Pornography as a default sex educator for young people

Maree Crabbe and Dave Corlett conducted path breaking research and produced a documentary film *Love and Sex in the Age of Pornography* to engage public discourse on the pervasive impact of pornography in partnership with the Trust. David Corlett has noted, 'the reality is that hard core, and pervasive violent pornography is impacting on many young people's sexual imaginations, expectations and experiences. In so doing, it is failing to portray anything of the complexity of sexual decision-making, negotiation and consent, making it a poor – even dangerous – sex educator.' Maree has stated that 'porn is arguably the most prominent sexual educator for many, perhaps all young people.'^v

The pornography industry is not designed to be a sex educator for young children. In *Love and Sex in the Age of Pornography* one porn producer describes the motivation behind pushing the boundaries of violence and extremism in mainstream pornography:

"We want to see someone have an experience like they've never had before. That's what's visually interesting. That's why rough sex and strong sex works, because it's incredible to look at. As human beings we wanna see stuff like that."^{vi}

So, as the pornography industry continues to push the boundaries for *entertainment* purposes we cannot assume that pornography is going to get less violent.

Additionally, due to the staged nature of pornographic production and its reliance of visual perfection, distorted and unrealistic views of how the human body should look and function can be easily absorbed by young children and adolescents who are accessing pornography.

One female respondent in *Love and Sex in the Age of Pornography* pointed out the physical differences between the pornography world and her world, “Those women in the videos are very different to the women I know in my life”.^{vii} Without the ability to critique pornography, these unrealistic messages are unquestionably absorbed by young people.

While the full social implications of young people’s experimentation with porn culture is not clear, it is clear that, as a sex educator and communicator of physical standards, porn will not assist in nurturing young people’s capacity for healthy and respectful intimate relationships, or in curbing the already alarming rates of sexual violence in the community.

Reality and Risk-Educating young people and the wider community about pornography

The *Reality and Risk* project was brokered and co-funded by the Victorian Women’s Benevolent Trust and led by Maree Crabbe and Dave Corlett on behalf of Brophy Youth and Family Services in 2008/09 & 2013/14.

Reality and Risk drew from the VicHealth Framework for the Prevention of Violence Against Women to create educational resource kits aimed at individuals and organisations including teachers, school nurses, student counsellors, youth workers, sexual assault counsellors, police, doctors, psychologists, family violence workers and health promotion workers to build community capacity to address the influence of explicit sexual imagery present in pornography. (We have attached Maree Crabbe’s Final report to our submission for use by the Committee.)

Dr Michael Flood, the Associate Professor in Sociology at the University of Wollongong said of the project, “*Reality and Risk is a project at the leading international edge of community-based efforts to address the harms associated with pornography, particularly those associated with children’s and young people’s exposure to pornography.*”

Giving young people the opportunity to talk about pornography without stigma, shame or embarrassment is a crucial way to educate them about the possible harms of pornography and the ways it can influence their sexual, physical and emotional development without them even knowing it. The Australian Psychological Society has argued that media literacy programs 'decrease the likelihood that sexualised scripts will be encoded, and ... empower young people to become active rather than passive consumers of media.'^{viii}

There is a need to address our current experimentation with young people and pornography and empower them to consume pornography ethically. By absorbing porn as the primary source of sex education, young people are demonstrating society's failure to provide adequate education around sex and respectful relationships.

C word in discussions around porn is missing-Consent

Our *Rosie* blog recently addressed one glaring omission in current mainstream sex education for school students: consent. Recent survey results of young Australian women's experiences of sex education at school showed that 63 per cent of young women and girls were not taught about consent.^{ix} This is in the context of a VicHealth survey which found that 22% of male respondents aged 16-24 believe that women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes' and 60 per cent of respondents put the responsibility for consent on the girl.^x Research by harm prevention initiative *The Line* found that one in four young people they surveyed thought it was normal for men to pressure women into sex.^{xi}

These statistics are consistent with feedback from our harm minimisation initiative aimed at young men *Be The Hero!*. One participant reflected on the lack of consent in relationships depicted in pornography and a clear message he learnt from his *Be The Hero!* training: *'women being persuaded, meaning that the person she loves is using his love against her... 'what if' questions pop in her head and ends up just going "okay" even if she doesn't really want to. If she says no it means no-guys shouldn't persuade women at all to do things that they might not enjoy.'*

Consent is a crucial tool for young people to keep themselves safe and ensure that their sexual relationships are always based on trust, communication and pleasure.

Pleasure is a key factor for young people in navigating their sexual experiences. We wrote in our *Rosie* blog, 'Girls should know that sex is meant to be fun and pleasurable for everyone involved!' This is an incredibly important message that can empower girls to make sure their sexual experiences are about respect and staying safe.

Educating everyone about respectful sex and relationships early is the best defence against any unwanted sexual experiences later on. Workplaces, university, college campuses, and training institutions can be tough places to navigate if girls don't have the right idea about consent and clearly understand sexual assault.^{xii}

If girls are taught to expect pleasure from sex they can learn to speak up when things aren't feeling good or comfortable, thereby reducing the possible harms that sexual behaviours learnt from pornography can have on them and their sexual partners.

The research has been done – the time is for action.

Young people need support to make choices about their sexuality that is based on equality, dignity, and respect. A national public conversation about pornography that is honest and authentic, moving beyond moral outrage and the powerful urge to banish pornography from our society needs to begin.

A holistic approach to education and dialogue is a powerful antidote to counter the harms to many young people if they continue to rely on pornography to inform their knowledge and attitudes towards sex, sexual relations and respect for women. We need to mobilise the community – parents, teachers, leaders to further develop resources that help young people navigate healthy relationships. We need programs rolled out that empower young people with choices and promote healthy youth development, relationships, and sexuality.

All of us have the ability to empower those negatively affected by pornography whether they be young men who develop violent supportive attitudes or young women who lack the tools needed to protect themselves against harmful relationships. Imagine if every individual in Australia was in a healthy relationship based on consent, pleasure and respect. The positive impacts to our society would be immeasurable.

Recommended Actions

State and federal governments are the best placed to provide the policy and practice initiatives across the nation that enables:

1. **Young girls** to be supported through Government funded programs which invest in empowering them to be resilient, safe and in healthy and ethical relationships;
2. **Young men** to be engaged in conversations through programs which examine the ways in which pornography can distort reality in regard to sexual practice and the objectification of women. They need to be taught to flag negative behaviours in themselves and among their peer group. Young men also need safe spaces in which they can explore their own sexuality, consent and respectful relationships;
3. **Parents** to be brought into conversations around pornography. Topics such as how to protect young children from pornography using tools such as internet filters; how to discuss pornography with children who have been inadvertently exposed to it; how to seek specialist help if their children display sexually violent behaviours; how to have frank and positive conversations with their children about pornography; who to ask for help if they feel uncomfortable about discussing these topics with their children;
4. The **media** to be engaged in generating the kind of cultural shift needed to eliminate men's violence against women. In our submission to the Royal Commission on Family Violence we highlighted the powerful role that the media plays in sensationalising violence against women, "where murder is often sensationalised as a tragic ending to an argument rather than an escalation of abusive behaviour." Sensationalising pornography has equally negative effects and the media play a crucial role in turning the conversation towards harm minimisation and empowerment;
5. Investment in a nation-wide sex education curriculum that highlights issues around consent, respect and empowerment. There are some research driven, evidence-based, multidisciplinary programs that have been developed by cutting edge Australian and international educators which can fill gaps in the current sex education materials;
6. A dialogue to engage all stakeholders in effectively review the existing sex education materials, identify the current gaps in programs and dissecting the reasons behind the resistance to using the tools we have;
7. The development of a new national curriculum which genuinely and openly critiques the negative and violent parts of the pornography industry, and encourages Australians to take a healthy sexual path;

- 8.** The design and delivery of a sophisticated and effective national advertising campaign which overcomes any resistance to action and galvanises individuals to take up Government initiatives around pornography;
- 9.** The resourcing of the Office to the Children's eSafety Commissioner to include reporting and addressing pornographic content online, providing a resource to young individuals, parents and the wider community to enhance their existing work on children's online safety;
- 10.** Inclusion of the issue of violent pornography and its effect on violent supportive attitudes towards women in contemporary Australian society in the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.

Appendix

FINAL REPORT – Victorian Women’s Benevolent Trust Reality & Risk: Pornography, young people and sexuality Brophy Family and Youth Services

What has the project achieved?

How does this compare with the original approved application? Number of participants/beneficiaries? What has been the impact beyond the organisation?

Reality & Risk has achieved all that it aimed to and more. Consistent with the VicHealth Framework for the Prevention of Violence Against Women on which the project model was based, *Reality & Risk* has sought to address the influence of pornography using multiple reinforcing strategies with a range of target audiences. The project was funded to develop community education resources that address the influence of pervasive, often aggressive pornography, and to engage in public discourse through a range of media, including a documentary film for broadcast.

1. Development of Education Resources

The project originally anticipated developing separate education resource kits for young men and young women for use in secondary schools. Through broad consultation – with the project Reference Group and with schools, community organisations, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and curriculum developers based at universities – we decided to change the format of the education resources in order most effectively to deliver our aim to have high quality resources with mainstream uptake and sustained use.

Given the sensitive nature of the material to be taught, combined with the different levels of maturity and exposure of students, the project came to the position that effective education to address the influence of explicit sexual imagery (including both pornography and sexting, the latter of which has grown in its significance as an issue during the course of the project) through student learning will have three, mostly sequential, components:

1. **Foundational learning:** this is curriculum that does not specifically mention explicit sexual imagery but assists younger students to develop basic understandings and skills, such as critical media literacy skills and the capacity to understand gender and power. This was outside of our project’s scope, and is provided through a range of existing resources.
2. **Integrated learning:** this includes curriculum addressing any of the related topic areas – for example, sexuality, respectful relationships, or cybersafety education – that makes mention of explicit sexual imagery as an integrated part of broader learning activities. When we began our work on *Reality & Risk*, very few resources included content addressing pornography and/or sexting.
3. **Specific learning:** curriculum specifically addressing explicit sexual imagery and its influence. While the need for education specifically addressing the influence of pornography is increasing recognised internationally, this approach, understandably, remains politically sensitive and very few specific learning resources exist, even now. A number of stakeholders have expressed concern that it is difficult for government-funded curriculum to be seen to take this approach. While *Reality & Risk*’s aim is to create resources for mainstream uptake, the project is not subject to the same political constraints, and therefore has the freedom to develop resources to meet the growing demand for such resources.

As a result of this thinking, and of opportunities to contribute to mainstream educational resources being developed by others, including for tertiary students, *Reality & Risk* has focused its work to deliver education resources in two ways: by pursuing opportunities to integrate our work into broader sexuality and relationships education resources using an integrated learning approach, and developing education resources specifically addressing the issues, using both integrated and specific learning approaches.

Contributions to other resources

Reality & Risk has contributed to three broader relationships and sexuality education resources. The project developed materials on the influence of explicit sexual imagery that were included in:

i) *Sexuality Education Matters*, a pre-service teacher training resource developed by Deakin University for the Department of Health. The inclusion of a module about sexualisation and the influence of pornography on young people's sexual development, developed in conjunction with *Reality & Risk*, assists to build capacity to address these issues in future graduates at the optimum time – before they begin their work in schools. See: <http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts-ed/education/teach-research/health-pe/projects.php>

ii) *Catching On Later*, the latest Department of Education and Early Childhood Development sexuality education resource for Years 7-10, written by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) at La Trobe University and released in December 2013. See: <https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/pages/View.aspx?pin=5QSZG4>

iii) *Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping Out Against Gender Based Violence*, a respectful relationships education resource for Years 9 and 10, written by Deakin University for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and released in June 2014. See: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/pages/respectrel.aspx>

iv) *Voices of Sexuality Education: Contemporary sexuality education: Challenges and opportunities*, a resource created by Melbourne University's Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health, to support pre-service sexuality education teachers, current teachers and health workers to understand a range of contemporary sexuality education issues. See: <http://www.cersh.com.au/voices/#slide1-5> and <http://www.cersh.com.au/voices/#slide1-6>

The inclusion of *Reality & Risk's* contributions in each of these resources is a significant step towards addressing the influence of pornography on young people's understandings of sex and gender in mainstream educational contexts, and is a direct result of the project's consultations, advocacy and training.

Development of *Reality & Risk's* whole school resource

Following our research and consultations, the project has produced a stand-alone resource that supports secondary schools to address the influence of explicit sexual imagery using the best practice principle of a whole school approach. The resource, *In The Picture*, includes resources for policy development, equipping staff, parent education, community partnerships, creating supportive school contexts, student education and evaluation. It is delivered as a DVD and includes:

- PDF manuals for school leaders (480 pages), teachers (365 pages) and staff coordinating parent and community partnerships (129 pages)
- Video clips of interviews – with young people and performers and directors from the pornography industry – for use with students (11 clips with accompanying questions) and as part of a parent education event (7 clips with supporting leaders' notes, preparation guidelines and promotional materials)
- PowerPoint presentations to support the video clips
- Customisable (Word) resources (189 pages).

Due to the comprehensive nature of the resource, which was beyond our original proposal but informed by our research and consultations, we successfully sought some supplementary philanthropic funding to support its development. To our knowledge, *In The Picture* is the first of its kind in the world, and we have received interest in it from around Australia and from other countries.

In The Picture is currently being implemented in a number of schools in various parts of Victoria and Australia.

2. Engagement in Public Discourse

The centrepiece of this component of the project was the production of a documentary film for broadcast. The film, *Love and Sex in an Age of Pornography*, was first broadcast nationally on SBS in July 2013. *Love and Sex* seeks to engage a mainstream audience in a journey of discovery about the influence of widely accessible, increasingly aggressive pornography on young people's sexual imaginations, expectations and experiences. It generated significant media and public interest and, at the time of its premiere broadcast, was the highest rating program on SBS2 since SBS relaunched the channel for a youth audience, attracting 202,000 viewers nationally. It was also the most viewed SBS2 program via online streaming during the week of broadcast, and the third most streamed program across all SBS channels. The film was streamed online about 70,000 times. The film's ratings came in well above (173%) the consolidated average for SBS2 in the 9.30pm time slot.

Since its broadcast on SBS, *Love and Sex* has also gone international, with broadcasts in Germany, Israel, Poland, New Zealand and Brazil, and had repeat broadcasts in Australia on SBS and on Foxtel.

Reality & Risk has had a range of other successful engagements in public discourse. Its work has featured on radio and in articles in print and online media in Australia and around the world, including this feature article in Fairfax media nationally: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/the-problem-with-porn-20130521-2jyud.html>. A list of media engagement is included as a separate attachment to this report.

3. Capacity Building

Complementing and building upon the project's development of education resources and engagement in public discourse, *Reality & Risk* has also sought to build community capacity to address the influence of explicit sexual imagery by equipping teachers, schools and community-based professionals.

The project has delivered training to a wide range of individuals and organisations, including teachers, school nurses, student counsellors, youth workers, sexual assault counsellors, police, doctors, psychologists, family violence workers and health promotion workers.

The project has been a regular contributor over 4 years to Deakin University's pre-service sexuality education course and Melbourne University's Masters in Adolescent Sexuality and Sexual Health. It also developed a 2-day intensive course for sexuality and relationships curriculum writers, which it has delivered to participants from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (La Trobe University), Deakin University, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Family Planning Victoria and the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN). This specialist training has subsequently informed curriculum developed by these organisations.

Beneficiaries and impact

It is difficult to be definitive about the number of participants or beneficiaries of the project due to the extensive nature of its reach and because it is hard to measure attitudinal and behavioural change across such a large cohort of beneficiaries. The project has engaged large audiences in each area of its work by integrating its work within mainstream, government sexuality and relationships resources used by schools across the state and beyond, by exposure in mainstream media and on national television, and through extensive training with a wide range of audiences.

Thousands of young people will benefit from the project's education resources, hundreds of thousands of individuals have been exposed to the project's engagements in public discourse, and approximately 2300 people have benefited from the project's capacity building, including full day training with approximately 490 participants.

Deakin University is conducting research into *In The Picture*'s implementation in secondary schools, which will provide some insights into its effectiveness but the research will take approximately 3 years to complete.

Responses to the project have been overwhelmingly positive, as demonstrated by the stakeholder comments below:

“As a teaching resource, *In The Picture* is quite simply without peer in its attention to detail and generosity; as a 21st Century curriculum document it is unsurpassed in educational quality or academic integrity but as a socially responsive account of our times, it deserves compulsory implementation in schools across the country.”

Natalie Charles

Director of Staff Development

Melbourne Grammar School

“I cannot recommend Maree’s teaching highly enough. It is of an exceptionally high quality.

For several years, Maree has presented as part of our post-graduate course in adolescent sexuality and sexual health. Maree’s presentations have always been positively received and very frequently are referred to as the highlight of the course. Students say they find the material extremely thought provoking and confronting but totally necessary. It helps them deal with the realities of their working environments in contexts such as secondary schools, sexual health clinics, community sector settings and child protection.”

Henrietta Williams

Sexual Health Physician

Senior Lecturer Sexual Health

Melbourne Sexual Health Centre

University of Melbourne

“We were delighted to host Maree Crabbe's workshops on pornography and young people, in several locations across Victoria. Attendees ranged from teachers and health workers to local government representatives, youth workers and police. Responses were highly positive, with participants finding the information and activities relevant and useful.

With the issues affecting so many young people and the adults who support them, it's important that this high quality information be made available to a wide audience, and that more people can be brought into the conversation in a safe and positive way.”

Dr Jessie Mitchell

Manager, Policy and Projects

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

“The *Eroticising Inequality: Pornography, Young People & Sexuality* training is beautifully balanced, covering the research, theory framework and practical application. The narrative offered in the accompanying footage of interviews with those in the industry and young people is compelling, interesting and so insightful. Maree adds to this a robust practical tool kit to engage young people in this critical topic. All of this is delivered in a succinct, sensitive and open manner. I could not recommend this training more highly.”

Annie Rowland

Youth Development Officer

Macedon Ranges Shire Council

“*Love and Sex in an Age of Pornography* is an important film. If you care about, or care for, young people, this film will help you help them. And it will help anyone better understand what is going on, and how and why we might arm people with the ideas to help them thrive.”

Michael Short

Editor, The Zone

Fairfax Media

How has the project benefited other organisations and/or the sector?

Reality & Risk has played an instrumental role in raising awareness of pornography's influence on young people, its relationship to gender-based violence, and the importance that it is addressed in a wide range of contexts. It has built the capacity of many individuals and organisations to address these issues, as discussed in the comments below and above.

“Maree and David have provided advice to Department of Education and Early Childhood (DEECD) in Victoria and myself, to update existing secondary school sexuality education resources and develop new materials in line with their research findings. Their research is significant and has been instrumental in raising the issue with educators across sectors and agencies. Their research presentations have had a significant influence on agencies beginning to address the issues in teaching materials and as part of professional learning for teachers and community agencies that work with schools. They have raised the importance of addressing the issue in the context of gender and violence and the need to build competencies of students and young people.

In addition, their research has illustrated the need to provide critical educational strategies before students are exposed to pornography, currently occurring through online resources such as the Internet.”

Dr Debbie Ollis

Senior Lecturer in Health and Physical Education

Deakin University

“I have been struck by the remarkable strengths this project shows. In particular, *Reality & Risk*:

- Is characterised by a highly energetic and productive work record, with a remarkable range of presentations, meetings, writings and other outputs, reflecting the focus, dedication and professional skills of its two coordinators;
- Is based on a sophisticated, scholarly and politically sensitive understanding of pornography, sexuality and related issues;
- Displays an engagement with policy and programming which is at once pragmatic, strategic and ethically based;
- Is highly timely. It sits in the context of, and indeed is contributing to, growing public conversations about the pervasiveness and impact of pornography in our communities.

Reality & Risk is a project at the leading international edge of community-based efforts to address the harms associated with pornography, particularly those associated with children’s and young people’s exposure to and consumption of pornography.”

Dr Michael Flood

Senior Lecturer in Sociology

University of Wollongong

The creation of a project Reference Group early in the project’s life enabled the project to benefit from the expertise of a range of key individuals, organisations and government departments, and was instrumental in the development of some important relationships, such as those that led to the project contributing to government education resources. It has also enabled the project to share its growing expertise with those individuals, organisations and departments, who, in turn, have facilitated a sharing of the project’s analysis amongst their broad networks.

The project Reference Group has included representatives from the Victorian Department of Human Services, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development, the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, CASA House, the University of Wollongong and Brophy Family and Youth Services.

How has the project results been communicated and/or disseminated more broadly?

The project model itself has included active communication about the issues and dissemination of the project deliverables through:

- development of education resources for use in a wide range of secondary schools and universities
- broadcast and screening of the documentary film and sales of the film on DVD
- media coverage and articles

- presentations and training for organisations including the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Victoria Police Sexual Crimes Squad, Department of Human Services, the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the Association of Women Educators, White Ribbon, Queensland Health, the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, a range of secondary schools, United Nations Women, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States and La Trobe, Deakin, Swinburne, Auckland and Melbourne Universities.
- conference presentations in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Geelong, San Diego, London and Exeter
- advocacy with policy-makers and shapers at state and national levels.

The project has also developed a website, www.itstimewetalked.com, through the in-kind support of Melbourne design company, Amanda Roach Design, www.amandaroach.com.au. The website provides information for young people, parents, schools and community organisations, supporting further dissemination of the project outcomes. We hope the website will make a significant contribution to awareness of pornography's prevalence, nature and influence, and the need for its influence to be addressed.

Endnotes

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- ⁱ 2016, news program, *The Drum TV*, Sydney, February 9.
- ⁱⁱ Guy, RJ, Patton, GC, Kaldor, JM 2012, 'Internet pornography and adolescent health: Early findings on effects of online pornography on adolescents show associations with risky behaviour', *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 196, no. 9, pp. 546 – 547.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Fleming, M, Greentree, S, Cocotti-Muller, D, Elisa, K & Morrison S 2006, 'Safety in Cyberspace: Adolescents' Safety and Exposure Online', *Youth and Society*, vol. 38, pp. 135-154.
- ^{iv} Canadian Centre for Child Protection 2014, *The Door That's Not Locked: For Parents*, viewed online 9 February 2016, <http://www.thedoorthatsnotlocked.ca/app/en/parent/89/playing_in_an_uncensored_world>.
- ^v Bowden, T 2015, 'Hardcore internet pornography 'most prominent sexual educator' for young people, experts say, *ABC*, 5 June, viewed online 23 February 2016, <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-06-04/porn-most-prominent-sexual-educator-experts-warn/6522846>>.
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- ^{vii} Ibid.
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