

Letters to Editor
The Sunday Age, Melbourne
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We the undersigned group of 12 professionals working in the fields of child health, welfare, education and media, have long been concerned about the impact of sexualised images of the young in the media.

We note the recent articles published by *The Sunday Age*, which have highlighted the concerns of parents, and have also indicated that the advertising industry is starting to respond (8/4/07). We write to applaud *The Sunday Age* in its determination to monitor the situation to see if real progress is achieved.

For this to happen it is necessary for the advertisers and marketers, and the general community, to really understand that real harm can be done to children's development through such media portrayals of the young. It's not enough for the AANA to respond only because of public pressure.

Children need to be protected from sexual exploitation by adults and should be able to develop their own understanding of sexuality in a safe way, and when they are emotionally ready for this. Marketing to, and media representations of children in age-inappropriate ways send a clear message to the community that this is acceptable, and can contribute to the increasing rates of child abuse. And there is much more to the story.

Perhaps *The Sunday Age* could convene a roundtable of children's professionals, [advertisers and marketers](#) where the facts of life could be explained?

Yours sincerely

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Prof Dorothy Scott. Director, Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia

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