

## Submission to the Senate Committee Inquiry:

Harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the Internet.

Dear Parliamentarians, have any of you ever felt alone? Truly alone? Do any of you know what it is like to feel alone inside your head? Inside your own sense of self? To believe and live your life as though you are the black sheep in the herd, the outlier in the data, or the rotten apple in the orchard? I wonder how many of you remember what it was like to be a teenager. You may look back on that time now and dismiss your fears and worries as being ungrounded and immature, but those feelings were very real at the time and had very real consequences for the people you are now.

Perhaps you do not remember. Perhaps you never felt alone. Perhaps your upbringing was perfectly well-suited to the person you were – a square hole just perfect for a square peg. I can assure you, not everyone had an upbringing like this.

For many young Australians – past, present and future – our socio-political landscape makes it very clear quite early on that not all things are deemed ‘acceptable’, ‘normal’, or even ‘right’.

Imagine being a youth who has to hide who they are for fear of social reprisal. Imagine feeling isolated from your peers, parents, guardians, siblings and anyone dear to your heart because you do not know if you will be greeted or pushed away when you make the brave decision to stop wearing a false mask of normalcy. Now imagine if you were not greeted, not treated with respect, not treated with dignity, not treated as a human being. This should not be too difficult to imagine, esteemed Parliamentarians, for you must simply look at which demographics dominate the youth suicide rate.

You speak of doing good, as all politicians do. You want to protect others, as all good people do. You want to minimise harm, as all protectors do. But what are you protecting against when you place barriers between Australia’s youth and actualising who they are.

Are you protecting against their discovery that they are not alone in this big wide world? Is it a necessary condition of civilised society that youth navigate blind, deaf and dumb without once encountering someone who shares their fantasies, their philosophies, their desires until they reach an arbitrary age several years after their most major stage in their psychosexual development? Am I to believe that the men and women Australians elected to lead insist that community is only valued when it is vast, insincere, impersonal, and so shaped that only square pegs may find a place therein? In which case, I might ask why you favour isolation over integration and ignorance over knowledge.

There are sectors within parliament who decry often and loudly of the sinful nature of pornography. They state that it is demeaning to women while the 2014 best-fit Minister for Women was a man who held questionable views towards equality of the sexes. They state that it is violent while they largely ignore the very real issue of domestic violence and instead insist that same-sex marriage is the greatest evil to ever befall society. They state that it incites abuse towards children while they wilfully and callously send infants to live in squalor and destitution in Australian-funded facilities which do not adhere to Australian law nor to the United Declaration of Human Rights.

I see no reason why these voices should be given any authority on the matter of what is good and righteous when their grasp of basic human decency is flimsy, at best.

Ad hominem aside, to paint all forms of pornography with the same brush is an unwise obfuscation of reality. Not all porn is violent. Not all porn is male-dominated. Not all porn involves sex. Not all porn even involves nudity. In fact, what constitutes as pornography is as widely debated as what constitutes as art, with the one underlying point that anything which can provide sexual gratification can be considered pornographic by the right audience. Definitions can be a sticky business when discussing the finer details of sexual subjectivism. To quote an old saying, 'Any ladle's sweet that dishes out some gravy.' It would be greatly beneficial for everyone involved if you, respected Parliamentarians, learned which ladles exactly you intend to legislate on before branding all utensils as harmful.

For the round pegs, pornography is an outlet through which they can express their true selves, unhindered by society's expectations of conformity. They can find information which would otherwise be impossible to come by, speak with like-minded individuals whom would otherwise stay silent, and come to learn that there are more than just square holes in this world. And they can achieve all this during those integral formative years when they're discovering who they are as sexual beings. Did you, honourable Parliamentarians, never once sneak a peek at a dirty magazine before you turned eighteen? Did it ruin you?

When you take away young people's access to pornography, you are not protecting them from a harm you imagine to exist: you are stifling their sexual development and infringing upon their right to information.

Yours, a voting citizen and a round peg.