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## **The objectification of women and sexualisation of girls in the media and popular culture**

### Synopsis

Hyper-sexualised messages and images are entrenched in media, popular culture and the public space. There is growing concern about the impact on young women especially of stereotyped and normative sexualised representations of women and girls. Many believe this is contributing to an environment which is increasingly harmful to women, by presenting their value in terms of their looks and sexual attractiveness.

As well, young women are facing unprecedented social pressure to conform to an idealised body type in a sex-saturated culture which values women who are 'thin, hot and sexy'. This is having negative impacts on their health, with links made to eating disorders, depression, anxiety, self-harm, low-self-esteem and poor academic performance.

Taking students and staff on a visual 'tour' of 140 images from media, popular culture, billboards, magazines, music video clips, games and fashion, Melinda Tankard Reist helps her audience explore the way these messages shape and mould young women's ideas of themselves, their bodies, and their relationships. She will help students and staff find ways to address this: how to help girls rise above the airheaded cult of celebrity, fashion and outward appearance and discover their true value and worth. Significant time will be allowed for engagement and discussion with students and a short film titled 'Ruby Who' about a little girl weighed down by the pressures of a commercialised world and who overcomes them, will be shown.

### **Melinda Tankard Reist**

Melinda Tankard Reist is a Canberra author, speaker, media commentator, blogger and advocate for women and girls. Her third book is *Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls* (Spinifex Press, 2009), now in its fourth printing. Her new book, co-edited with Dr Abigail Bray, and due for release in September, is *Big Porn Inc: Exposing the harms of the global pornography industry*. It is also published by Spinifex Press.

Two years ago Melinda initiated a new grassroots campaigning movement, *Collective Shout: for a world free of exploitation*, to expose corporations, advertisers and marketers who objectify women and sexualise girls to sell products and services. Collective Shout has achieved significant wins against major companies in a short time.

Melinda is a regular guest on Channel 7's Morning Show, and has also appeared on ABC Q&A and The Gruen Sessions as well as a variety of other TV and radio programs. She is also a regular contributor to ABC The Drum Unleashed, and other on-line opinion sites. Melinda is named in the *Who's Who of Australian Women* and the *World Who's Who of Women*.

[www.melindatankardreist.com](http://www.melindatankardreist.com)

[www.collectiveshout.org](http://www.collectiveshout.org)