

Dear Prime Minister / DCMS

As organisations working to end discrimination and violence against women, we call on you to ensure that **the sexualisation of women in the media** is addressed as part of your **prevention work against violence against women and girls, and as part of any review into the culture and ethics of the press.**

This is logical and important.

In broadcasting we already have a **watershed** which **prevents sexualised images from being broadcasted before 9pm.**

The **Sex Discrimination Act 1975** further **prevents sexualised images from being displayed in the workplace** due to the intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment that these images create.

Yet, in a situation unusual to the UK, **sexualised images of topless women**, often as young as 18, saturate **national tabloids** which are **displayed at child's eye level, sold without age-restriction**, and are read and left lying around in the public domain where children travel and congregate.

This lack of a consistent approach in relation to the sexualisation of women in the media is contradictory and it undermines the Government's commitment to tackle the **ever-increasing sexualisation of children and young people** which **objectifies women and girls**, and **grooms boys and men** into thinking it is acceptable to view and treat women and girls as sex objects.

These attitudes have been recognised by the **End Violence Against Women Coalition** as providing a **'conducive context' for violence against women**, and the need to address the sexualisation of women in our national press forms part of the **UK Governments' international obligations** under the legally binding United Nations Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which has repeatedly called on states – including the British Government - **to take action against the sexual objectification of women in the media and popular culture.**

The Liberal Democrat Party Conference voted in favour of **tackling the projection of women as sex objects in newspapers.** We call on the **Coalition Government** to put this policy into practice.

Specifically we call on the Government to ensure that:

- **Sexualised imagery which would not pass for pre-watershed material on the television, such as Page 3, should not be printed in newspapers which are not age-restricted and are displayed at child's eye level.**
- **Sexualised imagery in newspapers which would not be considered suitable for the workplace under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, such as Page 3, should not be printed in newspapers which are universally accessible, sold in family newsagents and supermarkets, and read in public places.**
- **Newspapers or lads' mags which continue to print sexualised images of women which would not pass for pre-watershed television viewing, and would not be permitted in workplaces under the Sex Discrimination Act, should be subject to binding codes in relation to their sale and display so that they are covered up, age-restricted and put on the top shelf.**
- **All Local and National press should stop carrying ads for the porn and sex industries, such as ads for 'massage parlours', 'escort agencies', sex chat lines and webcam pornography.**

To **give readers a greater voice** in relation to the culture and ethics of the press, we further call for the **inclusion of the category of 'groups' as a basis of complaint** in the Press Complaints Commission Codes of Practice **so that it is possible to take action against any form of persistent stereotyping or discrimination** on the basis of a group identity.

We would like to point out that in 2006, largely because of OBJECT's work in coalition with key MPs, Parliament **already voted through the first reading of a Bill calling for a socially responsible, independently regulated, gender aware press**, specifically to address the sexual objectification of women.

Recent events have highlighted the urgent need to examine the ethics of our press and to take action.

We ask you to use this opportunity to **ensure that the sexualisation of women in our tabloid press is placed firmly on the agenda** as we work together for a press which is socially responsible and which adheres to common principles of equality.

We hope for your support on this matter and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you.