

Submission
No 44

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACTS OF HARMFUL PORNOGRAPHY
ON MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH**

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Date Received: 24 January 2025

Impacts of harmful pornography on mental, emotional, and physical health

Parliament of New South Wales
Standing Committee on Social Issues

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- I am the **lead author of the report *What Do We Know About the Effects of Pornography After Fifty Years of Academic Research?***, emerging from a three-year project funded by the Australian Research Council to conduct an international interdisciplinary review of published research in the area. The full report has been published by Routledge (McKee, Byron, Ingham, & Litsou, 2022) and is attached.
- Our key finding is that there is a **correlation between people who are more sexually adventurous, and people who are willing to say that they enjoy consuming pornography.**
- Beyond this, we found that there is **no established relationship between the consumption of pornography and understandings or practice of consensual sex.**
- There is no established relationship between the consumption of pornography and **pleasurable sexual experiences.**
- There is no established relationship between the consumption of pornography and **levels of knowledge about sex.**
- It is difficult to make more detailed claims because the literature has failed – particularly across disciplines – to reach **a definition of healthy sexual development.**
- Unfortunately this has led to much research in the area taking an implicitly **heteronormative approach to sexuality.** Much research has taken the stance that a number of behaviours – which are not in and of themselves negative – are unhealthy, including anal sex, polyamorous relationships, casual sex and kink. This is unhelpful.
- We recommend that policy responses to pornography employ a multidisciplinary **definition of healthy sexual development that centres on informed consent**, such as (McKee et al., 2010) - attached.
- We also found that a significant proportion of published research **confuses correlation and causality** in discussing pornography and sexual preferences, again limiting its usefulness.
- It is my position that the problem with much commercially available pornography is not that it is sexually explicit, but that it is patriarchal. It consistently privileges male over female sexual pleasure – with a particular **insistence that women can reach orgasm solely by penile-vaginal intromission.** This is statistically incorrect (Shirazi, Renfro, Lloyd, & Wallen, 2018). It would be more healthy for pornography to focus on acts that are more likely to support women in reaching orgasm, such as cunnilingus.

References

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