



MEDIA RELEASE

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Community calls for ban on sexist ads

MELBOURNE – 5 December 2017

A coalition of community groups, academics and activists has today called for the elimination of sexist advertising and more positive, diverse and realistic representations of women and girls in the media and public space.

More than 80 people took part in a community conversation hosted by Women's Health Victoria, Plan International Australia and the City of Melbourne as part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

An expert panel spoke about how sexualised images of women and girls in public space can make women and girls feel uncomfortable and unsafe, and reinforce gender stereotypes that drive violence against women.

'Ads that sexualise and demean women contribute to social attitudes which support and normalise men's violence against women', says Rita Butera, Executive Director of Women's Health Victoria. 'It's concerning that images that would be considered sexual harassment in the workplace are acceptable if they are on billboards in public spaces.'

The panel highlighted the powerful role that advertising plays in shaping attitudes about gender and the role and value of women, and the need for the advertising industry to lift its game in terms of how women and girls are portrayed.

Women's Health Victoria and Plan International welcome the Victorian Government's commitment to reviewing laws around sexist advertising as part of the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy. Now we are calling on the Victorian Government to take a step further and ban sexist advertising in Victoria.

'The self-regulatory framework for advertising is weak', says Hayley Cull, Head of Advocacy at Plan International Australia. 'Very few complaints about sexist ads are upheld. We are calling on the Victorian Government to follow the example of countries like the UK, France and Iceland and introduce a statewide ban on sexist advertising. Girls have told us that this would make a real difference to their lives, as these ads can strip away their confidence and feed a culture where violence against women and girls is seen as socially acceptable.'

-ENDS-

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About Women's Health Victoria: Women's Health Victoria (WHV) is a not-for-profit, state-wide women's health promotion, information and advocacy service, focused on improving the lives of Victorian women. WHV collaborates with women, health professionals, policy makers and community organisations to influence and inform health policy and service delivery for women. The work of WHV is underpinned by a social model of health and a commitment to reducing inequities in health which arise from social, economic and environmental determinants. **For more information, visit www.whv.org.au**