

The Hon. T.A. JENNINGS (17:19): I rise today to support this bill on classifications and, specifically, on parental guidance classification in relation to teen magazines, which has been put to the council by the Hon. Michelle Lensink.

The Greens are happy to support this bill because we supported the call for such a classification during this recent state election. I will note that I had the privilege of attending a YWCA forum on 114 reasons why young women should be interested in voting, which highlighted a range of issues that were of concern to women, particularly young women, in South Australia and, indeed, this was one of the key issues.

I will note that the Minister for the Status of Women (Hon. Gail Gago), former member the Hon. David Winderlich and the Hon. Robert Brokenshire were also present at that forum. We listened with great interest to the voices of young women as represented by the YWCA, who had done a survey regarding the sexualisation of girls. The survey found that 96.9 per cent of those surveyed thought that the number of sexualised messages that girls are exposed to is increasing; 88.1 per cent had seen a sexualised message which concerned them in the week prior to completing the survey; and 38 per cent believed that girls are first exposed to potentially harmful sexualised images prior to the age of five. That is quite concerning and I am sure that the bill before us is just one of the many things that can be done to address that issue.

As we know, teen magazines are currently unclassified and self-regulated, and the age groups that these magazines target are often far below what magazines state as their target age. As a young teenage girl once myself, I know that it was a great cachet to be reading Dolly when you were in primary school and to be reading Cosmo once you were in high school. The stated target age of those magazines does not fit into those particular categories, and yet I know I was not alone in that reading at both of those school levels.

Parents have a right to know what is in the content of the magazines that they purchase for their children, as do guardians, but I think it is important to give those parents an indication of what the content is without their having to go scouring through their children's schoolbags or drawers to see what it is that they are reading. I think that this PG rating would give an indication of the content of the magazine and how age appropriate it is, so the parents can be forewarned.

It will not stop young girls or, indeed, young boys, from reading these magazines, and they will do so for a range of very positive, educational and informative reasons. It will, however, give parents and

guardians some support in knowing whether the magazine that their daughter or son is having access to may be worthy of having a conversation about or their investigating its content. The messages in these magazines are often related to self-image and body image, and things that are very important to teenagers; that is, whether they are attractive to members of the opposite or the same sex, and, of course, their emerging sexualities.

I would stress that the Greens do not support this bill as any form of censorship. We congratulate these magazines for often doing a great job in providing information to young girls and boys who often read their girlfriend's or sister's magazines. I have been reading Girlfriend, Dolly and also a UK-based magazine, Bliss. I also make particular mention of a magazine called Deadly Vibe which is aimed at Aboriginal Australian teenage girls. The content of these magazines is not so dissimilar from what I remember as a teenage girl.

Not only is there the issue of 'What happens if I kiss a boy, will he then not go out with me' and all those sort of issues, which, no doubt, will remain the mainstay of these magazines, but also we have progressed a little way since I was a teenager. There is a lot of information about cyberstalking, about how to be safe on Facebook or other internet social networking sites, and things that I did not have to worry about as a younger girl.

It is great information. They have psychologists in here, doctors in here; of course, I grew up with the Dolly doctor, as countless Australian girls did. In fact, there is a sealed section in this month's Girlfriend magazine, and on the front cover of that sealed section I note that a reader survey says that 50 per cent of their readers are a little worried about getting an STI. So, clearly the information in here is valuable to those young people who are exploring their sexuality. In terms of the advice offered in here, it is very much about safer sex practices and not risking certain behaviour if you do not need to, and it is very much about building up their self-esteem.

There is just one other factor that, I think, applies a lot more in our culture than existed when I was a teenage girl; that is, of course, the issue of body image and self-esteem. I want to commend all the magazines I previously mentioned for having wonderful information about body image and self-esteem. The one I have in front of me, Girlfriend magazine, has an untouched, au natural picture of one of the current Eclipse stars. In fact, in this piece they go to great pains to have a little self-respect and reality check note on it, indicating that in the movies she stars in she wears particular coloured contact lenses which she is not wearing for this particular photo shoot, and also that they have not airbrushed or photo shopped the image in any way.

These magazines have done a lot to educate and raise awareness and media literacy in young women and boys about how other parts of the magazine industry often do airbrush and photo shop images to make people feel inadequate. Of course, the advertising industry, particularly, goes to great lengths to make people feel as if they need to change their behaviour or purchase a product in order to have better self-esteem. It would be a wonderful thing if that issue did not exist, but I commend those magazines for addressing it.

I also point to the fact that this is not a new issue for parliamentary debate. The senate inquiry of 2008 focused on girls' magazines; indeed, that senate committee recommended that publishers consider providing reader advice, based on the Office of Film and Literature systems of classification and consumer advice, on magazine covers indicating the presence of material that may be inappropriate for children. So this is not a radical suggestion that has come from both the YWCA and the Hon. Michelle Lensink.

The committee goes on to say that it considered parts of the material contained in the aforementioned Girlfriend magazine (of course, not the one I have in front of me), and considered that material to be sexually explicit. A number of examples of such material were, as it noted, also from sealed section advice columns and, as the Hon. Michelle Lensink noted in her second reading contribution on this bill, included advice on oral sex and anal sex, and questions about whether or not oral sex could be performed if someone had braces, and so on. These matters may seem trivial to us in this chamber, but they are issues of great importance to young people. If members can cast their minds back, they would at least be able to say that their brothers and sisters, or friends, may have had similar concerns when they were young people growing up and exploring their sexuality.

As I said, the recommendation that a PG classification be looked at for magazines is not a radical one and it is certainly not a new one, and I hope that this bill goes some way towards kick-starting a process where we see it come into effect. These magazine classifications would act as a guide for parents and guardians. It would make them more aware of the content that children are consuming, and allow them to be prepared to discuss the issues with their children at a crucial point in adolescence. As I said, forewarned is forearmed, so if you know what these magazines have in them, and you have been alerted to the fact by the PG rating on the cover, you will be ready for those difficult questions when they come, or will be able to create a safe and supportive environment in which to have those conversations. With those comments, I indicate that the Greens support this bill and look forward to the continuation of the debate.