melinda tankard reist
writer · speaker · advocate
melindatankardreist.com
About Melinda Tankard Reist

“Melinda Tankard Reist has a simple message which is powerfully delivered. With her prodigious intellect, sand blasted sense of humour and immaculate research she puts a much needed spotlight on the erosion of childhood, the pornification of our environment and the commodification of young people... Intelligent, passionate, brilliant, fearless... I could not recommend her more highly”

- Dr Michael Carr- Gregg, Adolescent Psychologist

Melinda is an author, speaker, media commentator, blogger, thought leader and social entrepreneur.

She has written/edited five books including the best selling Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls, now in its 9th printing, Big Porn Inc: Exposing the harms of the global pornography industry (co-edited with Dr Abigail Bray) and her new release Prostitution Narratives: Stories of survival in the sex trade (co-edited with Dr Caroline Norma).

Melinda is a regular guest on morning television, a regular contributor to the ABC and has also appeared on Q&A, The Gruen Sessions and many other TV and radio programs. Melinda is co-founder of the grassroots campaigning movement Collective Shout: for a world free of sexploitation, exposing corporations, advertisers and marketers who objectify women and sexualise girls to sell products and services.

An ambassador for World Vision Australia, Compassion Australia, Hagar NZ and the youth mentoring Raise Foundation, Melinda is named in the Who's Who of Australian Women and the World Who's Who of Women. She has recently been appointed Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Ethics and Culture, University of Notre Dame Sydney.
Presentations

“Melinda is probably the world’s best presenter on the damage advertisers and pornography do to our children and teens - often when we don’t even know. Her highly visual presentations will knock your socks off. You will be left angry in the very best way and be so much better equipped to talk to, and protect, your kids.”

– Steve Biddulph AM, Author Raising Girls and Raising Boys

“The best speaker we have ever had.”

– Antionette Jones, Mitcham Girls High School, Adelaide

“Melinda Tankard Reist has had a transformational affect on our school.”

– Stephanie McConnell, Principal, Turramurra High School

Melinda specialises in presentations for students, teachers and parents.

• Girls 7-8, 9-12;
• Boys Yr 9-12
• Co-ed sessions by request
Navigating a Sexed-up World

‘Thin, Hot, Sexy’: Helping young women dissect negative cultural messages and rise up to make a difference

Melinda will take your young women on a tour of media and popular culture in a dynamic, multi-visual presentation.

She will unpack with students the images and ideas they receive every day from toys, games, music videos, advertising, marketing, clothing, magazines and explicit sexual imagery and challenge the implicit message that their value and worth lie solely in their bodies and physical appearance.

Melinda will help your students understand how these messages contribute in harmful ways to their views of themselves, their bodies, relationships and sexuality, negatively affecting their physical, emotional and social development.

She will then explore how girls can respond personally and collectively to address a pornified world, providing positive and inspiring examples of young women taking action for social change and cultural transformation.

This presentation will promote and enhance:

• Critical media literacy skills
• Positive mental health
• Porn harms literacy
• Personal development/health
• Respect-based relationships
• Values-based approach to sexuality
• Enhance healthy choices
• Social justice outcomes
Navigating a Sexed-up World

How can boys rise above toxic messages about masculinity and become men of integrity?

Young men are bombarded with hyper-sexualised messages and images in media and popular culture. The lives of young men are increasingly socialised, conditioned and informed by exposure to porn related content online.

They are exposed to this content not only before they have had sex, but often before their first kiss, with average age of first exposure 11. Young people are even creating their own pornography through sexting using smart phones and social media platforms.

In a dynamic multi-media presentation which includes first person stories of young men, Melinda will explore with male students how exposure to sexual imagery is contributing to a distorted view of bodies, relationships and sexuality.

She will propose that boys are being raised in a callous and brutalised version of masculinity through these toxic messages, hampering their ability to form healthy respect-based relationships and offer strategies for changing this.

In a pornified cultural landscape, how can young men stand against the tide, resist the ‘bystander’ effect, challenge violence against women and choose to grow into men of integrity?

"In my nine years at TSS I have never seen the boys so engaged or so empowered to act & change the culture they are operating in. I was really moved by how many of our students passionately voiced their opinions on the topic of both male and female sexual objectification."

– Corinne Russell, teacher, The Southport School, Queensland
Changing Attitudes

Students were asked if the forum had changed/added to their perspective on the following discussion topics. Melinda’s presentation on healthy relationships rated 90%.

“After listening to the presentation, I feel like that the key elements of the message struck a chord with many of the boys. It was great to see that many were beginning to realise the huge responsibility that we as young men bear in regards to respecting women as equals”

- Rob Abrahams, Year 12 student, Wesley College, Perth

This presentation will promote and enhance:

- Critical media literacy skills
- Positive mental health
- Porn harms literacy
- Personal development/health
- Healthy masculinity/respectful relationships (challenge ‘bystander’ effect)
- Values-based approach to sexuality
- Enhance healthy choices
- Social justice outcomes

“We received overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding your ‘Healthy Relationships’ presentation. Teachers, students, volunteers and special guests all commented on how insightful, eye opening and authentic it was.”

– Marco Capobianco, Manager Director, Conviction Group.
Healthy relationships

What does this culture teach you about what it is to be a man?
You’re OK just the way you are

A presentation for primary school level using multimedia to explore messages children receive about their bodies and worth in an age-appropriate way. Melinda will help your younger students identify and separate good messages from negatives messages and recognise that they are valuable and acceptable as they are. A special activity to end the session provides a fun and interactive way of reinforcing key learnings.

This presentation will help your younger students develop:

- Critical media literacy skills
- Positive mental and physical health
- Personal development
- Respect-based relationships (boundaries/OK to say ‘no’)

“Melinda...was absolutely inspiring. Not only did she enlighten them to the toxic sexualisation of women and girls in today’s society, she gave them positive, affirming messages about how this can be resisted. Every girl was engaged for the entire presentation and, since then, I have even heard them talking about Melinda in the playground! It is so exciting to know that there is someone who is able to get such an important message across to young women. I warmly recommend Melinda to all schools.”

– Rena Hatzi, Menai High School
Too Much Too Young: the sexualisation of children and what we can do about it

Have you noticed that your children seem to be growing up too fast? That they are worried about their appearance and more aware of sexual issues at earlier stages?

Children and young people are bombarded with hypersexualised messages from media and popular culture. Even small children are worried about their looks and physical appearance, shaped and conditioned at the earliest of ages by a dominant message that tells them they have to be ‘hot’ to be liked and accepted.

The lives of young people are increasingly socialised, conditioned and informed by porn-related content online. They are exposed to this content not only before they have had sex, but often before their first kiss, with 11 years being the average age of first exposure. In this pornified landscape, young people are ‘acting out’ through social media and sexting, putting their bodies on display for attention and judgement.

Drawing from current global literature on the subject, Melinda will explore with parents and friends how the proliferation of sexualised images and messages contributes to a distorted view of bodies, relationships and sexuality, hampering their children’s healthy physical, emotional and social development.

How can we address this toxic culture and raise happy, healthy and resilient kids?

“I hesitantly went to Melinda’s talk about children being sexualised in the media thinking it was going to be a sensationalist attempt to make me feel bad as a parent. During her introduction I realised it was the best 50 steps I took from the car to the auditorium and 90 minutes later, I had quantifiable evidence and authentic strategies to help educate my children against the normalisation of women and girls as sexual objects in the media.”

– Heather Douglas, parent
The Sexual World of the 21st Century Adolescent

How exposure to explicit imagery impacts youth wellbeing

Educators and health professionals are noting the impact of growing up in an increasingly pornified world on the welfare of children and young people.

In school settings, children are acting out inappropriately because of pornography exposure, pressuring peers for sexual favours and sexual selfies, engaging in sexualised ‘joking’ and touching.

Drawing from recent global research on the subject, as well as from the experiences of students themselves, Melinda will explore with your educators how the proliferation of explicit images and messages contributes to a distorted view of bodies, relationships and sexuality in children and young people, hampering their healthy physical, mental, emotional and social development as well as their ability to form healthy, respect-based relationships.

How should we as a school respond?

Articles of relevance

Growing up in Pornland
Why are 5-year-olds creating porn themed images at school?
“You can’t just blow this message off”: a male student confronts his peers

“A powerful and passionate advocate in a highly controversial area, listening to Melinda speak is like riding on a roller coaster. You’re going to feel terrified and have your emotions tested as it’s happening, but at the same time, I challenge anyone to leave the presentation and not want to do something more as a result of what you have experienced. After hearing Melinda, I guarantee you really will see the world in a very different way and that’s not always pleasant. It can be confronting for some and that is what I admire so much about Melinda – she never shies away from ‘telling it like it is’ so as to try to ensure change in this area.”

– Paul Dillon, Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia
Everyday Trafficking

Making the links

We like to think of the horrors of trafficking as ‘happening over there somewhere’. But we must acknowledge the everyday drivers of trafficking in our own supposedly liberal enlightened Western democracy.

In this presentation Melinda makes the links between sexualisation and objectification of young girls and the global trade in their bodies. She argues that by permitting the eroticising of children in our own cultures, we are complicit in their being used as sexual commerce in this evil international trade. This presentation helps audiences see how they can act personally and politically to make a change in the world.

A Call to Action

My journey as an activist

In this presentation for select audiences, Melinda shares her journey, exploring her life as an activist from the age of 16. She takes the audience on a tour of her life, her work as a journalist, author, activist, confronting issues including sexualisation of girls, objectification of women, pornification of culture, sexual exploitation and trafficking and violence against women.

Melinda will speak her involvement in projects aimed at improving the lives of vulnerable women and girls, including helping to establish housing and support services for pregnant and vulnerable women and as an ambassador with three international aid organisations and a youth mentoring NGO. The aim of this presentation is to inspire women and girls to action, a rallying cry to engage in cultural change, social transformation and to address injustice at home and globally.

This presentation will help us see how we can act personally and politically to make a change in the world.

Melinda can tailor presentations for your requirements, for example to suit conferences, professional development days, mental health symposiums, mother-daughter breakfasts, retreat days, music & arts festivals etc.
Australia is in the midst of renewed debate on the national scourge of violence against women. This debate is to be welcomed. However what has not been adequately acknowledged is the role of pornography as a driver of this violence.

Melinda will explore what the research tells us about how pornography eroticises and legitimises violence against women and share young women’s experiences of sexual assault, physical injury from porn-inspired sexual acts, unwanted sexual advances, demands for sexual ‘selfies’, and other out-workings of harmful porn inspired behaviours.

She will then look at what we can do personally and politically to change this.
“Melinda’s presentation to our parents, staff and full day workshops to students was inspirational, transforming the attitudes and thinking of all involved.”

- Paul Teys, Principal, Hunter Valley Grammar School
“We loved having you again! Your presentation is so engaging and inspiring; 500 year 10 girls hung on your every word. Your message is always a fantastic introduction to the purpose and themes of Girl Rising Australia and carries so much valuable information for our attendees. I am sure every girl left with something to think about or be challenged by. Thank you for your contribution to Girls Rising 2017!”

– Girl Rising Australia
Additional endorsements

Fill out Melinda’s **booking request form here**