

# Women's Equality Party

## Submission to the Advertising Standards Authority in regards to the request for guidance to address the use of gender stereotypes in advertising

### Executive Summary

1. Equal Media Treatment is one of seven core goals of the Women's Equality Party (WE). We all know that the picture of women presented in the media is false. It has to change to ensure our girls and boys grow up comfortable in themselves. It has to change so women can be heard, and to make sure women get an equal chance to shape the way our society thinks.

2. The Women's Equality party exists to make gender equality normal in our society. WE are pleased that the new guidelines from the ASA take seriously the harm caused to society when people are portrayed stereotypically

3. WE believe that equality in the has the potential to transform our world towards a more equitable society. Everything from violence against women to gendered education models currently fostered by our media, with advertisements being a leading culprit of projecting these 'ideals.' WE are disappointed the ASA fails to note the direct connection between these very serious and real issues and their perpetuation by the advertising industry.

4. In a country where 1 in 3 children aged 5-6 say their ideal body shape is thinner, and where 75% of girls aged 8-10 say they are treated differently to boys, we can no longer afford to depend on advertisers 'goodwill,' 'self regulation,' or their 'sense of responsibility' towards the public. For example, we are disappointed that Protein World's controversial "Beach Body Ready" campaign was not banned for its body shaming attitude, despite widespread protest. *It is therefore our concern that many of the CAP and BCAP rules proposed in this consultation are too nebulous to provide any real change.*

### About the Women's Equality Party

5. The Women's Equality Party is a new collaborative force in British politics, uniting people in the shared determination to see women enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men, so that all can flourish.

6. WE are non-partisan and our members are drawn from across the political spectrum. WE do not take a party line on issues outside our remit: to bring about equality for women.

7. Equal Media Treatment is of the seven core goals of the Women's Equality Party.

### Introduction

8. WE welcome the ASA inquiry into gendered advertising and on its influence both the media and the economy, and the opportunity to provide evidence and practical recommendations.

9. WE also hope that advertisers will not see these new guidelines as a limiting, but instead an opportunity to display more creativity in the way that they sell their products.

10. Finally, WE believe that advertising as a whole has a duty to create content that will build up and encourage, not knock down and belittle people because of their gender or any other factor.

## Recommendations

11. WE require a warning notice to be included on any images of models with a very low unhealthy body weight.

12. WE wish to see a mandate in Advertising Standards Authority guidelines on airbrushing to require disclaimers notifying viewers or readers that a person's image has been altered, including an explanation as to why the image has been retouched. No airbrushing of children's bodies will be permitted.

13. WE ask the ASA to provide more concrete definitions of "anything that is likely to cause serious or widespread offence."

14. Likewise, WE request that the ACA provide a clearer understanding of what constitutes "physical, mental or moral harm". Without these boundaries clearly defined, there is an absolute possibility that 'harm' will merely be defined by advertisers.

15. WE find the statement "Advertisements must not cause serious or widespread offence against generally accepted moral, social or cultural standards," deeply problematic. In a world that is already so dependant and accepting of gender stereotypes this guideline does little to push gender equality forward. A few decades ago what was considered socially acceptable, such as racism, is now abhorrent. To merely set your guidelines on what is okay now is simply a weak guideline.

16. WE are equally disappointed that there is no mention of disability in this consultation. While disability affects all genders and is not strictly a gendered issue, advertising can use disability to break down gender stereotypes. For example, showing male and female paralympic athletes empowers all genders in the belief that they can achieve their best.

17. There is also no evidence in this consultation as to how outcomes will be measured and how advertisers will be held accountable. Without clearly understanding the entire process which the ASA is undertaking, any suggestions given here are in a bit of a vacuum.

18. We would encourage the ASA to present these new guidelines as a form of creativity rather than censorship. If a product is worth selling and is economically viable it should not be dependant on gendered stereotypes and tired assumptions in order to sell.