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# Pre-teens target of raunchy website



AN internet game in which girls become raunchy virtual characters wearing lingerie, taking the pill and buying Third World orphans has horrified children's groups.

Billed as "Chanel meets Barbie" for "wannabe style icons", the My Minx website, aimed at pre-teens, lets players select their digital avatar's breast size and design their own underwear.

Babies can be bought from the Adoption Centre in the virtual Style City.

Players are encouraged to adopt multiple

Third World children to outdo other "minxes". Using virtual currency called pink pounds, characters can buy condoms and so-called "anti-baby tablets" or attend burlesque and rave-themed parties.

Australian Childhood Foundation chief executive Joe Tucci said the website's creators were profiting from children's developmental vulnerability. "We keep pushing this diet of concepts, ideas and products to engage young people in activities they really don't understand," Mr

Tucci said.

"It is supposed to be fantasy or play but it is still harmful in the long run, because we are introducing children into the adult world and it affects their self-esteem and the way they view relationships as they get older." Julie Gale, director of childhood advocacy group Kids Free 2B Kids, said young girls did not need to spend time on a website created by men and designed to sexualise and minimise a female's worth.

"Responsible parents know where their kids

are playing in the real world and it is important to know where they are playing in the virtual world," she said.

British groups also slammed the website.

My Minx, created by British firm Blighty Arts, was launched in December and has about 20,000 members. Blighty Arts director Christopher Evans defended the game as harmless and reflecting real life.

"We try to protect children too much from the real world for too long," he told Britain's *Daily Mail*.

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WANNABE STYLE ICONS: My Minx website shows characters taking the pill