



## **The Foundation for Responsible Robotics releases first consultation document, “Our Sexual Future with Robots”**

We are pleased to announce that after a well attended press conference at the Science Media Centre in London, the FRR today released our first consultation report titled

“Our Sexual Future with Robots“. The sex robot report discusses seven questions about the possible impact of sex robots, from a multi-disciplinary perspective.

This is a consultation document, not an opinion-piece, meant as a preliminary step to engage policy makers, academics, tech-industry, and the general public about our sexual future with robots. We will collect feedback from all those providing us with input and publish a follow up document. Please feel free to send us your comments.

### **Executive Summary**

In 2017 most liberal societies accept or tolerate sex in many different forms and varieties. Sex toys and masturbation aids have been used for centuries and can be easily purchased in many countries. Now the sale of robots developed for sexual purposes is fast approaching. A number of companies such as Realbotix, Android Love Dolls, True Companion and the Sex Bot have begun to take shipping orders. Most of the robots are gendered as female models with pornographic bodies although some are male. If this turns out to have market success, we can expect more companies to follow suit.

There has been little or no preparation for the potential societal consequences. Robots designed for sex may have powerful impacts on society compared with other sex aids. They could be used as robot ‘prostitutes’ working in bordellos, sexual companions for the lonely or the elderly in care homes or as a new means for sexual healing. On the darker side, they could be employed to satisfy rape fantasies or even to satisfy paedophilic desires. In response, the FRR has issued the first major consultation report on our sexual future with robots. The aim is to provide the public and policy makers with an objective summary of the issues and the various opinions about what could be our most intimate association with technological artefacts. We do not contemplate or speculate about distant future robots that could have all manner of imagined properties. We focus instead on significant issues that may have to be dealt with in the foreseeable future.

The report examines the state of the art in sex robots and the relationship to parallel developments in sextech such as teledildonics. This leads us to expect the remote use of sex robots for couples and groups and the use of AI for heightening orgasms. The report then focuses on seven questions that need to be asked about the technology:

#### **1. Would people have sex with a robot?**

The success of silicon sex dolls for sexual gratification has set a clear path for the role of robotics in the future of sex. Public polls and indirect measures suggest that there would be a market for sex robots. A small to medium percentage of people indicate that they would consider having sex with a robot. There were a smaller number of women than men but still a significant number showed interest. We cannot say yet how large the market will be. It could be a niche for fetishists, a new paraphilia, or societal norms could alter to allow their use to become widespread.

#### **2. What kind of relationship can we have with a robot?**

We turn to moral philosophers, scientist and sex workers to compare differences between human relationships and what robots offer. Robots cannot feel love, tenderness, or form emotional bonds. All that can be afforded at this time are fictive relationships based on pretence

and fantasy – a willing suspension of disbelief. The best that robots can do is to ‘fake it’. They will not have the full presence and engagement required for ‘complete sex’ in which we desire to be desired. But anthropomorphic features and ‘faking it’ might be enough for some people as evidenced by existing fictive relationships between a few men and their silicon sex dolls.

### 3. Will robot sex workers and bordellos be acceptable?

We look at evidence from the success of brothels with sex dolls – the precursors of sex robots. These started in Asia, were quickly accepted, and the numbers are now increasing. A Lumidoll brothel has recently opened in Europe with big plans for expansion. The same bordellos could gradually upgrade their stock with robotic dolls without raising any further eyebrows.

### 4. Will sex robots change societal perceptions of gender?

There is little question that creating a pornographic representation of women’s bodies in a moving sex machine will objectify and commodify women’s bodies as well as perpetuate the notion of easy sex on demand. However, the big question is, what additional impact on societal perception will this create within an already burgeoning adult industry that thrives on such objectification and commodification? It may be an amplifier but we just don’t know yet.

### 5. Could sexual intimacy with robots lead to greater social isolation?

The majority of experts reviewed in the report provide strong arguments that sex robots could lead to some form of social isolation. This is contrary to what the manufacturers of sex robots tell us. The CEO of RealBotix says that he has been making sex dolls for many years especially to alleviate the loneliness of those who, for whatever reason, have problems relating to human intimacy. The public survey data shows mixed opinions.

### 6. Could robots help with sexual healing and therapy?

No one is claiming that sex robots would be a panacea for all sexual concerns or difficulties. It is possible that the use of sex robots in some therapies could potentially help with sexual healing. For example, it may be beneficial to use a robot for personal private practice in the treatment of problems such as impaired sexual functioning or social anxiety about sex. All adults are entitled to a sex life and sex robots have also been proposed as a means of gratification for the disabled and the elderly. This idea poses some complex ethical issues, particularly with the elderly in care homes, that should be resolved before use.

### 7. Would sex robots help to reduce sex crimes?

Child sex dolls have already been developed for paedophiles to use and there are the beginnings of sex robots that are resistant to sexual advances to enable the enactment of rape fantasies. The question of using these as a means to prevent first offences or recidivism has led to severe disagreements. Some believe that expressing disordered or criminal sexual desires with a sex robot would satiate users to the point where they would not have the desire to harm fellow humans. Alternatively, many others believe that this would encourage and reinforce illicit sexual practices and make them more acceptable. Allowing people to live out their darkest fantasies with sex robots could have a pernicious effect on society and societal norms and create more danger for the vulnerable.

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#### *Note to editors*

*The Foundation for Responsible Robotics (FRR) was founded on December 15 2015 to shape the future design, development, implementation, and use of robotics in a responsible way. We facilitate this through: organizing workshops to bring multiple stakeholders together; writing reports to educate the public on the latest robotics innovations; and public-private collaborations to encourage transparency in industry. See [responsiblerobotics.org](http://responsiblerobotics.org)*

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