

Annual Report 2010 - 2011

Australian Council on Children and the Media

incorporating
Young Media Australia



Australian Council on Children and the Media
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Mission Statement

The Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM) (incorporating Young Media Australia) supports families, industry and decision makers in building and maintaining a media environment that fosters the health, safety and well-being of Australian children.

What we do

The ACCM:

- collects and reviews research and information related to children and the media.
- provides information and advice on the impact of print, electronic and screen based media on children and young people.
- advocates for the needs and interests of children in relation to the media.
- conducts and acts as a catalyst for relevant research.

How we do it

Both directly and via its information and parenting arm, the ACCM:

- provides information including movie reviews to parents and caregivers via the Children and Media website www.childrenandmedia.org.au. Over 60 topics relating to children and media use, are also available in hard copy format.
- provides advice and information via a 24 hour a day / seven days a week, national freecall Children and Media Helpline 1800 700 357. Helpline operators come from a strong child development and parenting perspective and can provide callers with research based information about the media. They can suggest strategies both for supporting healthy media use and minimising harms.
- conducts community seminars on current issues
- represents community concerns about the impact of print, electronic and screen based media on children and young people to legislators, regulators and the media.

Who we are

ACCM:

- is a national not-for-profit community organisation, structured as a company limited by guarantee, and incorporated in Victoria (1957).
- is registered for GST, has tax deductible status and is a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR).
- has a national Board representative of all Australian states and its corporate membership.
- has a comprehensive organisational membership which includes ECA (Early Childhood Australia), ACSSO (Australian Council of State Schools Organisations), APPA (Australian Primary Principals Association), AHISA (Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia), AEU (Australian Education Union), SAPPA (South Australian Primary Principals Association), Federation of P & C NSW (Parents & Citizens), Parenting Research Centre, Metropolitan Health Service (WA) and Council of Mothers' Union in Australia Inc.
- Board members are volunteers and receive no remuneration for their contribution to the organisation.

Organisational Structure

Patrons



Baroness Susan Greenfield



Steve Biddulph

Board of Directors 2010-2011

President **Prof Elizabeth Handsley**

Vice President **Jane Roberts**

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Directors | Helen Walton | New South Wales |
| | Prof Ann Sanson | Victoria |
| | Prof Elizabeth Handsley | South Australia |
| | Jane Roberts | Western Australia |
| | Kym Goodes | Tasmania |
| | Donna Odegaard | Northern Territory |
| | Michael Nuttall | Australian Capital Territory |
| Corporate Members | Marjorie Voss | Queensland |
| | Meegan Maguire | Australian Education Union (AEU) |
| | Dr C Glenn Cupit | Early Childhood Australia |

Appointments

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Honorary CEO | Barbara Biggins OAM |
| Company Secretary | Anne Anastasiou |
| Auditor | Greg Basso & Associates |

President's Message

It is a very great pleasure to be writing this, my first President's report since taking over from Jane Roberts last year. I'd like to begin by paying tribute to Jane's contribution to the organisation over the many years she was President, and Vice-President before that. Jane is a passionate supporter of children's interests, and the organisation has benefited greatly from her expertise and enthusiasm over the years. Thank you, Jane.

Next, please allow me to introduce myself. I am a Professor of Law at Flinders University, and I specialise in constitutional law and media law. I've been actively involved in ACCM since 1999, and over the years my career has developed in a way that has married my community service in the organisation to my research. For example, I have done substantial research on the regulation of food advertising; and I have been the Co-Convenor of the Harvard-Australia Symposium on Media Use and Children's Well-Being, a multi-disciplinary conversation about how we conceive of children's media use issues, and what solutions we might craft if we put our heads together. Perhaps most importantly, though, I am the mother of two girls, born 5 years apart. I have been struck by the differences in the worlds the two of them have been growing up in, and as media is such an important part of that world, it only confirms my commitment to holding the media accountable for the way they shape our children's environment.

This has been a year in which many aspects of media regulation have come under scrutiny, and we still have a way to go before we will see any outcomes. A variety of pressures are being felt in the sector: media expansion; demands for greater self-regulation; difficulties in regulating some forms of media effectively; increasing difficulties for parents in ensuring a safe and beneficial media environment for their children but greater demands that they take most of the responsibility for doing so. There has been heated debate about how one proves the existence of a risk of harm to children from media use, and how one balances children's needs and adults' interests in relation to media availability and consumption. As has been the case for many years, there has been much government support for protections in areas of new media, and little in relation to older media.

A particular focus, both for public debate and for ACCM's advocacy, has been classification of content. There has been a dizzying array of overlapping reviews and inquiries, but on the upside we have had many opportunities to put forward our views about the need for a system that protects children and gives good information to parents. We have made submissions to the Australian Law Reform Commission and to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, and been involved in various capacities in the relevant Ministers' deliberations over the introduction of an adult classification for computer games, including when I was invited to attend their meeting in Canberra last December as part of a 'representative panel'.

Our position has been that the introduction of the much-vaunted 'R18+' classification would not provide improved protection for children, as the gaming lobby have persistently argued. It seems that just about everybody, including the gaming lobby, believes that the material available in the MA15+ classification is too violent, but the answer to that is to change the MA15+ classification, not to add another classification on top in the hope that the material in question will magically migrate to it, just because it is there.

The Ministers appear to have accepted at least the first part of this proposition, and they have been discussing some changes to the MA15+ guidelines for games, albeit alongside the addition of an R18+ classification. At the time of writing we are still unsure what will emerge from these

discussions, but we are not convinced that the new draft guidelines will have a significant impact on what passes muster under the MA15+ classification. However we can be sure that the addition of R18+ will lead to at least some higher-impact material becoming legally available in Australia.

We have also made submissions to the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety; the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy's review on convergence; and the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs' inquiry on billboards and outdoor advertising. We were quoted 3 times in the latter report.

Another important aspect of ACCM's activities is the provision of information to parents, carers and the professional and broader communities. This has included a number of seminars and conferences:

- In Perth, last August, at the invitation of WA Department of Communities, we ran two parent seminars and staff training workshops.
- In Sydney, in March, we cooperated with Macquarie University's Children and Families Research Centre to put on the 'Scared, Sleepless and Hostile' conference. The focus of local and overseas experts was on the creation of fears and anxieties and what classification and/or regulation can achieve.
- In Melbourne, in May, we ran another seminar of the sexualisation of girls.

With the continued support of the South Australian Attorney-General, we have continued the Know Before You Go (KBYG) movie review service. We also received support from Lions of Richmond to produce brochures for parents. To our regular activities of maintaining our website, running our helpline and producing our monthly newsletter, *small screen*, we have added an E-Bulletin service.

There have been significant developments on our Board this year, and we have been pleased to welcome new appointments for the ACT, Northern Territory, Queensland and Tasmania. We held a Board think-tank in November, during which we reviewed our service focus (namely that it should be on young children); and our corporate communication – with new directions in building our public profile, increasing promotion of the organisation, and building our networks and cooperative projects. The development of the E Bulletin is an outcome of this process.

We have been pleased to have an opportunity to strengthen our relationship with the Australian Research Alliance on Children and Youth (ARACY) which commissioned us to do a project on young children and television. This occupied the organisation for an intensive 5 months with focus groups in 2 states and the production of a comprehensive literature review. Discussions are now under way to take that project to the next stage, and I have agreed to chair the project development committee.

Further in my role as President I attended a forum on children's television that the Australian Communications and Media Authority put on in Sydney in June, and I have continued to give numerous interviews in a range of different kinds of media (as have other ACCM spokespeople, notably Glenn Cupit and Rita Princi).

ACCM continues to occupy an interesting place in public discourse; while we are widely accepted and respected as the peak organisation on children and the media, there are also those in the

community who assume that we are conservative religious wowsers, and dismiss us on that basis. I am constantly at pains to point out that our mission is to support a healthy media environment, with the emphasis on health – physical, mental and emotional – as judged by rigorous scientific standards. Holding the media accountable in that process is not a moralistic endeavour – even though the way society treats children is a profoundly moral issue. Needless to say, we are non-sectarian and politically unaligned – which is fortunate as it means we have friends (and detractors) on both sides of politics!

In closing I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the team at ACCM, meaning the Board, the Executive Committee and especially the office staff. Life is not easy working in the community sector, especially where funding is uncertain. However we are truly blessed with a staff who are not only skilled and experienced, but passionate and loyal. Thank you Anne, Caroline, Clare, Marion ... and thanks extra-specially to Barbara, not least for prompting me to get this report in on time!

Thanks to all members and other supporters, and let's hope for an even better year in 2011-12.

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Handsley
October 2011

ACTIVITY REPORT

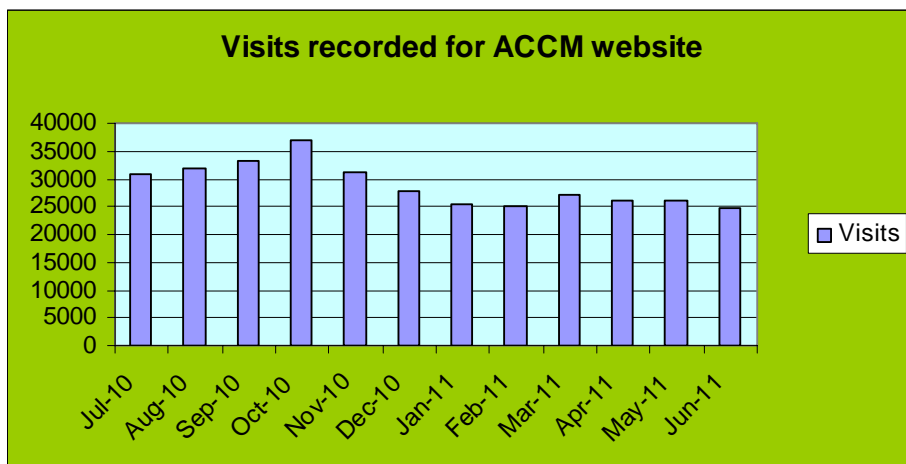
Information collection, review, and distribution

Research collection and review

This core activity of ACCM continued, with current research findings providing the evidence base for ACCM projects, parent strategies and ACCM advocacy. The latest research is reported in *small screen*, a regular *E-Bulletin* and on ACCM's Web site. Growing numbers of studies support ACCM's platform that media use, particularly in early childhood needs to be managed with considerable care, to prevent the risk of harm to children's cognitive and social development.

Children and Media Website

In the last twelve months interest in ACCM's website has remained fairly constant with noticeable traffic increases coinciding with the seminars and conferences held in November and March. The Children and Media website has continued to be updated with news, research developments and the *Know Before You Go* Movie Review Service.



Children and Media Helpline 1800 700 357

The Children and Media Helpline has been maintained this financial year, and the service continues to be conducted on our behalf by the Children's, Youth and Women's Health Service Parent Helpline using ACCM information and strategies. We thank them for their ongoing commitment to the service.

small screen

The publication of this unique monthly review of developments in children's media in Australia and overseas, plus the latest research citations, continued with the support of a donation from *Nickelodeon*. This news digest is distributed within Australia to members, subscribers, politicians and media; and overseas to researchers and libraries.

ACCM – E-Bulletin

This new email based publication is emailed fortnightly to those who are interested in seeing the latest news articles, research, movie reviews, events, due dates for submissions and more.

ACCM’s Knowledge Base

ACCM’s evidence base underpins a number of activities and endeavours including the following:

Know Before You Go Movie Review Service

In February 2011 ACCM entered its sixth year of funding from the SA Attorney General for its *Know Before You Go* Movie Review Service. This ongoing funding has provided much valued security and continuity for this highly valued service. These reviews are printed regularly in OSHC (Out of School Hours Care) newsletters, and in the Adelaide Guardian monthly newspaper. Testimonials received this year include:

“Thanks again for all your help. Your reviews are so informative”

"As a Junior Primary teacher and a grand parent, thank you for this very valuable resource. It is reassuring to have this independent information at my fingertips"

"I am the mother of 3 boys and find your reviews easy to use in choosing appropriate films and DVDs for the holidays"

"A great service – I wish you did video game reviews as well"

"I use my mobile phone to check the ACCM website while I am in the DVD store with the kids – especially if we are having trouble choosing a movie that is suitable for the whole family – a much needed service – thanks!"

Partnership with the Sunday Mail

Since December 2009 ACCM has supplied weekly *Know Before You Go* Movie Reviews to the Sunday Mail which publishes them under the title OK FOR KIDS.

The logo for the Sunday Mail, featuring the words "Sunday Mail" in a white serif font on a blue rectangular background.

Raising Children Network

ACCM has continued to supply movie reviews to the Raising Children Network (RCN). In the 2010 – 2011 financial year, ACCM supplied a total of 69 *Know Before You Go* Movie Reviews for reproduction on RCN’s website.



Fact Sheet Development

ACCM continues to distribute existing fact sheets and brochures. *TV and your Child* was reprinted with funds received from the Lions Club of Richmond (SA) put picture, as was *Too Much Too Soon*. Other brochures in constant distribution include the *ACCM general brochure*, *Know Before You Go* and *Fight Childhood Obesity*.

Distribution of DVD resources

ACCM continues to distribute the DVD and booklet package *Healthy Viewing for Healthy Eating* to interested organisations. This resource was originally developed in 2006-2007 with funding from the Telstra Foundation.

ACCM also continues to distribute the DVD and booklet package *Choosing Fright-free Fight-free Viewing* to interested organisations. This resource was originally developed in 2006-2007 with funding from the National Community Crime Prevention Program.

ACCM in the Community

ACCM Conferences (reports of these can be found on the ACCM website)

On March 1st, over 100 representatives of the media, health and education professionals, advertisers, regulators, and community organizations attended a full day seminar called *Scared, Sleepless and Hostile: children, violent/frightening media and public policy*, held at the NSW Teachers Federation Conference Centre, Surry Hills. This seminar was chaired by **Professor Alan Hayes**, Director, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Guest speakers included **Dr Lance Emerson (CEO ARACY)**, **Prof John P Murray**, **Dr Douglas Gentile** and **Prof Ed Donnerstein** from the US, and Australians **Dr Wayne Warburton**, **Dr Sarah Blunden**, **Richard Eckersley**, and **Prof Elizabeth Handsley**. The conference was jointly organised by The Australian Council on Children and the Media and the Children and Families Research Centre at Macquarie University.

ACCM is grateful to the Minister for Home Affairs for supporting this conference.



ACCM Seminars

Perth Seminar: Sexualisation of Children and the Media.

Two seminars and a workshop were held in Perth on 24th & 25th August 2010. Over the two days over 550 people attended with an overwhelmingly positive response. These events were funded by the Department of Communities: Parent WA. Guest speakers included Julie Gale - Founding Director of Kids Free 2B Kids, Dr C.Glenn Cupit - Senior Lecturer in Child Development at the University of South Australia and Steve Biddulph - Author and Family Psychologist (via video presentation).

Melbourne Seminar: Bratz, Britney and Bralettes: The sexualisation of children in the media.

A seminar was held in Melbourne on 19 May, 2011 at the Performing Arts Centre of Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School, Ivanhoe. The seminar was co-presented by the Australian Council on Children and the Media and Kids Free 2B Kids. The event was well received and highlighted parents' interest in this area.

This seminar, which was for parents, teachers and health professionals included some of the best Australian speakers in this field including **Steve Biddulph - Author and Family Psychologist (via video presentation), Julie Gale - Founding Director of Kids Free 2B Kids and Dr C. Glenn Cupit - Senior Lecturer in Child Development at the University of South Australia.**

ACCM would like to take this opportunity to again thank the international guests, researchers, speakers, organisers and volunteers involved in each conference and seminar during 2010 and 2011.

ACCM Projects

In late 2010 ACCM was engaged to conduct a literature review, a parent survey and focus groups to inform planning of the ARACY **Young Children and Media Project**. The report of these activities will be published by ARACY in late 2011.

Advocacy

Submissions

ACCM has researched, prepared and lodged four submissions during the 2010-2011 period. The full list of submissions is:

- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs: Inquiry into the regulation of billboard and outdoor advertising, February 2011.
- Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee: Inquiry into the Australian film and literature classification scheme, March 2011.
- Department of Broadband, Communications and the Information Economy: Comment on the framing paper for the Convergence review, June 2011.
- Australian Law Reform Commission: National Classification Scheme Review (IP40), July 2011.

Media Interviews

Professor Elizabeth Handsley, Wayne Warburton, Dr C. Glenn Cupit and Rita Princi have had a high level of participation in National and State media discussions including a number of televised interviews.

Administration

Board of Directors

The Australian Council on Children and the Media's ten-member board meet by teleconference.

Executive Committee



President Professor Elizabeth Handsley

In addition to representing ACCM in the media, Elizabeth chairs the monthly meetings of the Executive Committee of the Board of the Australian Council on Children and the Media.

The Executive Committee of the Board of the Australian Council on Children and the Media meets monthly in Adelaide. This committee includes three representatives of the Board, representatives of the organisational members and other individuals selected for their expertise, and includes **Kevin Richardson** AHISA, **Heather Walker** SAPPA, **Judy Bundy** ACSSO, **Kate Martin** SAPPA and **Lesley Ey** UniSA. It is supported by the staff of ACCM.

ACCM Staff

Barbara Biggins OAM

Honorary Chief Executive Officer



Barbara has been a volunteer with the organisation since 1973. After periods as President of both the South Australian and Australian Council for Children's Films and Television, she now co-ordinates the day-to-day activities and projects of ACCM, utilising her extensive knowledge and background in Australian broadcasting and regulation. Her dedication to the organisation and leadership of the staff team is invaluable to the running and success of ACCM.



Anne Anastasiou

Administrator and Company Secretary

Anne manages ACCM's resources with great skill and good humour, and has the ability to utilise sometimes small funds very effectively. In recent times Anne has also taken on the role of event manager as ACCM increasingly delivers more seminars. Her organisation and thoroughness have added to the success of these events.

ACCM Staff continued



Caroline Donald
Webmaster and Researcher

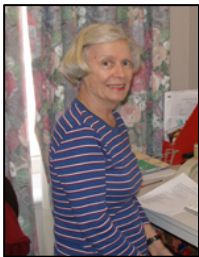
Caroline skilfully delivers one of ACCM's core functions of collecting and disseminating information for both the website, *small screen* and other publications. As well as updating the website she coordinates the movie review team to ensure all G and PG, as well as some M movies, are appropriately reviewed in a timely manner. Her extensive child development expertise is a valuable resource across the organisation and her commitment to the organisation and good humour are much appreciated.



Clare Phillips
Development Officer

In January, 2011 ACCM was fortunate to have Clare join the team at ACCM. Clare enthusiastically works on funding applications, promotions and events as well as delivering the E-Bulletin fortnightly. Her background in public health and knowledge of the issues surrounding children and the media has complemented the work of ACCM and she has quickly become a valuable member of the team.

Office Volunteers



Marion Sullivan

Marion continues her long-standing association with ACCM contributing her invaluable experience obtained during her 38 years of dedicated service in a range of positions. ACCM appreciates her commitment, friendly nature and enthusiasm.

Daniel Coyne

Daniel commenced with ACCM early in 2010 and assisted with a wide range of administrative tasks. In October 2010 he gained fulltime employment with a Law Firm utilising his recently completed Law degree.

Rebecca Sheath

Bec continued to support ACCM by contributing to the content of *small screen* and assisting with other office duties until early 2011.

Acknowledgements

Accommodation

The Australian Council on Children and the Media thanks St Peter's Woodlands Grammar School for providing us with rental accommodation within its Administrative Building. We are very appreciative of the very pleasant environment of the school, and of our relationship with both students and staff.



Support

ACCM thanks the many persons, institutions, and government departments which have provided support over the last year. We could not survive as an organisation without this support.

- The Attorney-General of the South Australia continues to support ACCM's *Know Before You Go* Movie Review Service. Recognition of the need to ensure the continuation of this service is highly appreciated by all at ACCM.



- Internode has continued to host our Web site this year.



- We are grateful to the many individuals whom have provided tax-deductible donations to support our work.
- A donation from Nickelodeon Australia supports the publication and distribution of *small screen*.
- Lachlan Coles (film editor) who has created the highly professional and punchy DVD's used to open ACCM seminars.
- Lions of Richmond provided grants which funded a reprint of the *TV and Your Child* and the *Too Sexy Too Soon* brochure.
- ACCM is grateful to the Minister for Home Affairs for supporting the Children and Media Conference held in Sydney in March, 2011.
- Many more individuals give their expertise, advice and time to assist our organisation to promote healthy choices and stronger voices in children's media.

