



## Managing the media: do parents find it easy?

According to a recently released report, "The vast majority of parents say that their children's television viewing, gaming, internet use and mobile phone use is easy to manage".

This summary statement appears in the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) report *Media and Communications in Australian Families 2007: report of the Media and Society Project* published in Sydney in December. The finding above was part of a community research project in which 751 Australian families with children 8-17 yrs were surveyed about their use of, and attitudes to, media.

The broad finding above does not fit with the experience of organisations such as Young Media Australia, especially in relation to young children (the study did not look at under 8s), and also given many parents' concerns about the marketing associated with all those media.

The picture of "easy management" is not so clear cut when the figures behind the summary are examined.

In relation to individual media, only 36% of parents said TV was very easy to manage; 40% said the same in relation to mobile phones, 39% for video games, and 37% for the internet. Only when those parents who found it "fairly easy" to manage media were added in, did the combined percentage rise to 65% of all parents. So around 35% of parents of children over 8 yrs (assuming a small % of "no opinion") found it fairly or very difficult to manage media. Interestingly, that percentage rose with family income.

When asked to rank which media were hardest to manage, 26% parents said TV, 30% mobiles, 29% games and 32% internet.

Other findings of interest were that parents were more likely to have rules about the amount of time spent, or when, media were used (74% for TV and 64% for games) than about content, (45% had rules for TV content and 48% for games.)

Parents' concerns about each type of media showed 30% had concerns about TV; 28% re games and 24% about mobile use. Only 14% of parents thought TV had many positive benefits, compared to 53% for the internet, 20% for mobiles and 4% for games.

The full report can be found at: [http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/\\_assets/main/lib101058/media\\_and\\_society\\_report\\_2007.pdf](http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/_assets/main/lib101058/media_and_society_report_2007.pdf)

## Activists unite against children's channel

On 22 January 2008, *The Sydney Morning Herald* published an article by Patricia Edgar and Barbara Biggins which argued that there are better ways to meet children's needs for relevant, quality and non-exploitative media for children than by spending \$82million on a new children's digital TV channel.

The article received attention from a number of sources. Jenny Buckland, Chief Executive, Australian Children's Television Foundation and Kim Dalton, director of ABC Television responded to the article in a letter published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 25 January, arguing that as children all over the world turn away from free-to-air television, digital channels are "the future of home-grown, culturally relevant programs". The *ScreenHub* news bulletin (<http://www.screenhub.com.au>) for 25 January reported:

*Patricia Edgar and Barbara Biggins are the two most terrifying activists in children's TV. Edgar is the legendary ex-leader of the ACTE, while Biggins runs a lobby group from South Australia called Young Media Australia. They are incensed by the way that the ABC promotes merchandise on kids' programs..... The ABC is unamused and reckons they are just plain wrong.*

Links to the article and responses, and more details of YMA's argument against a children's digital channel can be found on the YMA website at [http://www.youngmedia.org.au/what-snew/inthenews.htm#jan08\\_02](http://www.youngmedia.org.au/what-snew/inthenews.htm#jan08_02)

## Virtual playgrounds for the young

According to Brooks Barnes, writing in the *New York Times*, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/31/business/31virtual.html>) some of the Web's fastest growing businesses are virtual worlds for children.

Although Second Life and other virtual worlds for adults have fallen short of commercial expectations, children's sites such as Club Penguin and Webkinz are proving much more popular. For example, Club Penguin where members pay \$5.95 a month to care for penguin characters and play with them, attracts seven times more traffic than Second Life. Money is made by such sites through charging subscriptions and fees for onsite activities and/or by advertising.

Children's entertainment companies, spotting a business opportunity, are working fast to develop new sites. These include several sites based on Disney movies and a string of worlds developed by Nickelodeon. Toy manufacturers such as Lego and Mattel are also involved.

The appeal of virtual worlds for children includes the ability to be in charge of decision making and shopping with digital money.

Parents and advocacy groups are becoming increasingly concerned about the growth of virtual worlds for increasingly younger children. Some sites are now aimed at preschoolers, with pictures being used to control actions so that reading is not needed. Privacy and safety are a growing concern, although many companies have introduced controls which protect children.

Nevertheless, exposure to advertising for movies and other products, enticement to spend real money to participate on some sites and increasing screentime being spent by children in worlds constructed by the media and marketing industries are a considerable concern, according to the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood

<http://www.commercialexploitation.org/>



no. 238 Dec 07/Jan 08

## small screen

**Editor:** Barbara Biggins OAM  
**Compiler:** Caroline Donald  
**Editorial Board:** Barbara Biggins,  
 Jane Roberts, Judy Bundy,  
 Elizabeth Handsley.

*small screen* is published at the beginning of each month and reports on the events of the previous month 11 issues per year (Dec/Jan double issue)  
 Published by

*Young Media Australia*  
 PO Box 447  
 Glenelg 5045  
 South Australia  
 info@youngmedia.org.au  
 www.youngmedia.org.au  
 Tel: +61 8 8376 2111  
 Fax: +61 8 8376 2122  
 Helpline: 1800 700 357

YMA is a national, non-profit community organisation. Its mission is to promote a quality media environment for Australian children.

No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission of the Editor. Contributions are welcome.

Young Media Australia's services are supported by grants from the

**The South Australian Attorney General's Department and**

**The Telstra Foundation**

Young Media Australia's Web Page and Broadband access are supported by its Internet Service Provider

**Internode**

Publication and printing of *small screen* is supported by a donation from  
**Nickelodeon**



## EDITORIAL

### Archbishop calls for national inquiry on consumerism and children



*Our guest editor is Dr Philip Freier, the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne. This is an edited version of an article which was published in The Age on 17 December 2007.*

Our society is far too lax about the widespread exploitation of childhood and teenagers through advertising and consumerist expectations that are resulting in serious levels of depression among young people.

In the lead-up to the federal election, I called for a national inquiry into this disturbing situation, and now that our new Government is in place, I renew that call.

I remind our national leaders that there has been a fourfold increase in depression among young people in the past 30 years in this country, with an estimated 100,000 young people now suffering depression. I am told that 20,000 prescriptions are written annually for antidepressants for children and young people.

As many as one in five are suffering from some sort of eating disorder, with children as young as 12 vomiting and fasting to lose weight. And with what has been called the "pornification" of the public space, we have created a culture that is toxic to children, sexualising them before they are physically or psychologically ready.

In some suburbs, children are confronted daily by huge billboards advertising brothels as they travel to and from school. As they watch television, read newspapers or the advertising material that pours through the letterbox, they see endless idealised, airbrushed images that project unrealistic body shape expectations. In the shops, they are tempted by make-up, underwear and clothes designed to convince little girls that, long before they reach puberty, they need to project themselves as "hot".

All this creates a level of peer pressure that

is extremely hard to resist, both by children and parents. Even the most careful parents find it extremely difficult to steer their children away from these unhealthy influences.

There was much talk about the economy and economic management during the election campaign, but very little said about the kind of society we want to be.

Rightly, there is a growing concern about climate change, but what about society change?

One barometer of the health of our society is the mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people. All the signs are that this is under threat.

Children have a right to their childhood, but we are stealing it, particularly because our society encourages the media, the advertising world and the internet to pressurise children and young people to be obsessed with body image, fashion and sex.

We need a national inquiry because we need the evidence not just to alert us to the problem - we know there is a problem - but to help us maximise the healthy nurture and training of young minds from childhood to adulthood. We need to understand the causes behind what is happening to our young people, and to understand what we, as responsible adults, can do about it.

The terms of reference must be far-reaching, because we need to investigate all the issues we anecdotally blame for the anxiety and depression suffered by our young people. For a start, I would hope an inquiry would examine the way that advertisers are able to market to children with seemingly little restriction.

Let's all be concerned about the toxic effect of contemporary society on our children.

Dr Philip Freier  
 Archbishop of Melbourne.

### TV watching & hypertension

Acknowledging the strong link between television viewing and obesity in children and adolescents, researchers from the University of California set out to identify whether TV watching is associated with hypertension (elevated blood pressure) in obese children.

A total of 546 subjects aged 4 to 17 years who were already being seen at pediatric centres for their obesity, were evaluated.

Children watching 2 to 4 hours of television daily were two and a half times more likely to have elevated blood pressure than those watching less than 2 hours. Children watching 4 or more hours were 3.3 times more likely to have elevated blood pressure. This was seen as a serious

problem in view of the dangers of raised blood pressure for cardiovascular health.

The researchers do not identify any causal factors, but suggest that food intake during TV watching, the types of foods advertised, a sedentary lifestyle and psychological stress may play a part.

The researchers suggest that the results of this research indicate a need for increased physician and parental compliance with AAP guidelines for TV viewing.

Pardee, P et al (2007) Television viewing & hypertension in obese children. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Vol. 33, No. 6, Pp439-443.

# G-rated? Just kidding

The Sunday Times, 16 December 2007

## Sex, violence in movies, DVDs

By SUSIE O'BRIEN

POPULAR movies and DVDs marketed at children contain violence, killing, swearing, sex and nudity.

As the summer movie season heats up, child development experts have rated 13 out of 14 recent "G" movies as inappropriate for children.

Movies rated G contain violence, disturbing scenes and sexual themes or images, according to new reviews on the Government-funded parenting website raisingchildren.net.au.

They include *Surf's Up*, *The Game Plan*, *Arthur* and *The Invisibles*, *Flicka* and *Meet the Robinsons*.

Reviewers have also found popular Christmas-themed offerings such as *Fred Claus*, *The Nativity Story* and *Santa Clause 3* aren't appropriate for children under eight.

Some of summer's biggest kids' movies, including *Daddy Day Camp* and *Fred Claus*, are rated PG and contain disturbing scenes, coarse language and violence. Others, such as *Georgia Rule* and *Across the Universe*, are rated M, but include popular young actors Evan Rachel Wood and Lindsay Lohan.

Jane Roberts, president of Young Media Australia, said

the marketing onslaught involving fast-food tie-ins, toys and branded clothing meant children as young as four wanted to see movies rated PG and M. Among them are *Spider-man 3*, *The Simpsons Movie*, *Transformers* and *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*.

But Ms Roberts said parents could get help from the raisingchildren.net.au website, which now included movie reviews by child development experts from Young Media Australia.

It included current movies and had a back-catalogue of popular children's DVDs.

Ms Roberts said parents "know their child best and these reviews give you the information to make the right decision for them".

Warren Cann, executive director of the Parenting Research Centre, which produces the raisingchildren.net.au website, said parents wanted to protect children, but also enjoy the movies.

"Parents just want to do their best and we are trying to make it easier for them," Mr Cann said. "The reviews include ideas to discuss with your children, which is a good way for families to debrief after a movie."

■ STM Entertainment: Movie guide

### RATING MOVIES AND DVDs YOUR CHILDREN WILL WATCH THIS SUMMER

Movie name	Rating	Genre	Young Media Australia reviewers say
<i>The Game Plan</i>	G	Comedy	Not recommended for children under eight. Violence, mild coarse language
<i>Bratz</i>	G	Teen comedy	Sexualised references, sexual activity, nudity, mild coarse language
<i>Happy Feet</i>	G	Animation	Animal distress, sexual references, nudity, violence
<i>Surf's Up</i>	G	Animation	Not recommended for children under eight. Verbal harassment, bullying, sexual references, violence
<i>Fred Claus</i>	PG	Comedy	Not recommended for children under eight. Disturbing scenes, sexual references, coarse language, nudity
<i>Ratatouille</i>	PG	Animation	May offend children under eight. Animal distress, violence
<i>Shrek the Third</i>	PG	Animation	May disturb children under eight. Violence, bullying, sexual references
<i>The Simpsons Movie</i>	PG	Animation	Not recommended for children under eight. Violence, sexual references, nudity, coarse language
<i>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix</i>	M	Fantasy	Extreme violence, sexual references
<i>Norbit</i>	M	Comedy	Violence, crude sexual images and activity, low-level coarse language
<i>Transformers</i>	M	Science fiction/action	Not recommended for children under eight. Violence, sexual references



## Community to benefit from changes to internet and mobile content regulation

### Outsourcing his praise

BUT it hasn't been all good news for Aunty. The new head of children's, **Tim Brooke-Hunt**, was interviewed on Radio National's Media Report last week and he made some rather inflammatory remarks. He told **Antony Funnell**: "As a general intention, we would rather engage with the independent sector because quite honestly, I think that's where the best shows come from. I think that's where the greatest level of creativity resides, and I think it's where the best value program making comes from." ABC staff who make *Play School* and *Bananas in Pyjamas* and their union were outraged and the director of television **Kim Dalton** had to be called in to calm things down. "Tim could have made it clearer that he was not referring to children's television as a whole," Dalton said in a lame apology.

The Australian, 13 December 2007

A proposed uniform approach to managing access to age-restricted electronic content should benefit the community and create a more streamlined regulatory framework for providers of internet and mobile content, ACMA recently sought comments on the proposed approach ahead of the introduction of the new framework in January 2008.

The proposal involves creating a new Restricted Access Systems Declaration, as well as amendments to the *Telecommunications Service Provider (Mobile Premium Services) Determination 2005 (No.1)* and the *Telecommunications Numbering Plan 1997*.

The new declaration would, for the first time, combine the rules about controlling access to age-restricted internet content hosted in Australia with that of mobile content and newer types of content—for example, live streamed content—under a single framework.

The Restricted Access Systems Declaration sets out obligations for processing applications for access to age restricted content, verifying an applicant's age and providing a

means of preventing others from accessing content. These processes are supported by industry compliance plans and record keeping requirements.

The declaration is designed to achieve and balance two key objectives in the legislation—the public interest in appropriately managing access to content to which age restrictions apply and avoiding the creation of excessive and unnecessary administrative overheads for businesses providing that content.

The draft amendment to the Mobile Premium Services Determination removes content-related provisions for mobile phones, which are to be consolidated under the new regulatory framework.

ACMA sought comments on whether the remaining customer protections in the Mobile Premium Services Industry Scheme, which address prices, terms and conditions for mobile premium services, should be covered by a consumer code.

Comment was also sought on a draft amendment to the Numbering Plan that would require age-

restricted content delivered by premium short message service (SMS) and multi-media messaging (MMS) services to use numbers beginning with 195 and 196.

The proposed changes follow passage of the *Communications Legislation Amendment (Content Services) Act 2007*, which created a new Schedule 7 to the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* that will replace, to a large extent, the current online content regulatory framework in Schedule 5 from 20 January 2008. The new schedule provides for the prohibition or restriction of access to certain classifications of content over a broad range of content services delivered over mobile devices and the internet.

The main elements of the new content regulatory framework are:

- a prohibition on X18+ and RC content
- a prohibition on R18+ content unless it is subject to appropriate access restrictions
- a new prohibition on MA15+ content, unless it is subject to appropriate access restrictions
- a requirement for providers of

hosting services, live content services, link services and commercial content services, if providing R18+ and MA15+ content, to have access restrictions in place and

• the issuing by ACMA of 'take down' or 'access removal' notices to remove access to content that is the subject of a complaint.

The framework also provides for a co-regulatory approach, with industry codes to address issues including the classification of content, procedures for handling complaints about content and increasing awareness of potential safety issues associated with the use of content services.

Comments on the draft Restricted Access Systems Declaration closed on 16 November 2007 and will close on 29 November for the draft amendment to the Mobile Premium Services Determination and the draft variation to the Numbering Plan.

The draft documents and associated consultation papers are on the ACMA website at [www.acmagov.au](http://www.acmagov.au) (go to About ACMA: News & media centre > Issues for comment).

# The growing scourge of obesity

**C** The Advertiser, 22 December 2007  
**HILDHOOD** obesity is the one of the most serious health issues facing the developed world. It is sadly ironic that in a global community where so many people, particularly children, are suffering hunger and malnutrition, almost one third of children in Australia are seriously overweight.

The *Australian Medical Journal*, which describes childhood obesity as modernity's scourge, says that in the past decade the number of overweight children has doubled and the number of obese children has trebled. State Health Minister John Hill says 234,200 South Australians are obese.

Childhood obesity leads to a variety of medical problems including diabetes, hypertension, musculoskeletal discomfort, sleep apnoea, heat intolerance, asthma, shortness of breath and heart conditions.

Overweight children are subjected to ridicule and social isolation and suffer decreased self-esteem and reduced confidence.

Research in the United States indicates they are more likely to take up cigarette smoking and drink excessive alcohol in their adult life.



**Health Minister John Hill says 234,200 SA children are obese.**

The pressures and costs these issues will ultimately place on the national hospital and medical systems are transparent and unambiguous. Just as the dangers of childhood obesity are well documented, so are the causes. It is a preventable medical problem.

Unlike AIDS, another relatively modern medical phenomenon, childhood obesity can be treated and cured.

What is lacking is personal discipline and community resolve.

Childhood obesity, and its associated medical problems, is a product of our radically changing lifestyle. Children have abandoned exercise in the streets and local parks to instead play with home computers and video games.

Cheap and convenient fast foods have, in part, replaced balanced family meals. In single-parent households or in families where both parents work, children can become undisciplined snackers.

While some school tuckshops are responsible, many still serve food high in fat, carbohydrates and sugar.

School sporting and physical education activities are limited. Television advertising promotes food which, when eaten regularly, can lead to weight problems.

A higher proportion of overweight children come from lower socio-economic families, perhaps because nutritious food is more expensive and dietary issues are less well understood.

While freedom of choice is desirable, it is perhaps time that legislative measures were introduced to minimise some of these factors.

Increasing physical activity at schools, as well as increasing awareness of the importance of exercise at home and controls on tuckshop food are achievable.

Limiting food advertising on television is repugnant but what was done with cigarettes may now be appropriate to curb poor eating habits.

If urgent action is not taken, future generations will rightly question how this identifiable and preventable health issue was allowed to occur in an aware and responsible society.

■ Responsibility for all editorial comment is taken by The Editor, Melvin Mansell, 31 Waymouth St, Adelaide, SA 5000

## MOVIES

The Advertiser, 5 January 2008

# Wizards, pirates, ogres and a cartoon family break box office records

**ANDREW FENTON**  
 MOVIE WRITER

**FOR** the first time ever, four films broke through the \$30 million barrier at the Australian box office in 2007.

*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* took \$35.5 million to take the top honour, closely followed by *Shrek The Third* with \$33.7 million and *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* on \$33.4 million.

The Johnny Depp adventure flick was the most popular in the world in 2007, taking a whopping \$1.1 billion across the year.

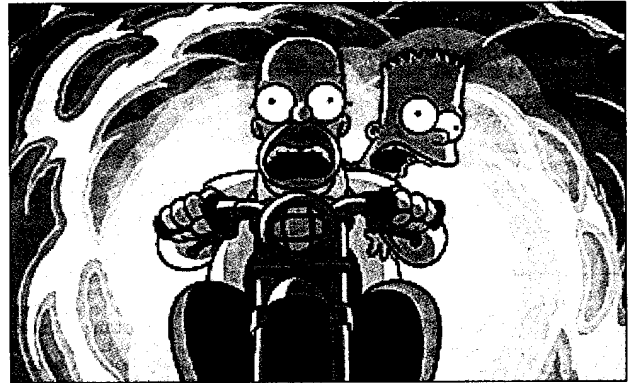
*The Simpsons Movie* shrugged off criticism the show's creative team were in a slump by taking \$31.4 million.

*Transformers*, which took \$27.9 million, marked the beginning of a profitable new franchise. Expect its sequel, due in mid 2009, to perform even more strongly.

*Spiderman 3* grossed \$23.9 million, while the year's best reviewed blockbuster, *The Bourne Ultimatum* took \$21.9 million.

The only Australian film in the top 10 was Dr George Miller's *Happy Feet*, which took \$20.7 million in 2007. However, between its release on Boxing Day 2006 and January 1, 2007, it grossed an additional \$11 million, making it the third highest-grossing Australian film in local box-office history behind the Miller-produced fantasy film *Babe* (\$36.8m) and Paul Hogan's *Crocodile Dundee* (\$47.7m).

The 2007 top 10 was rounded out



**WHAT A RIDE:** Homer and Bart, in a scene from *The Simpsons Movie*.

### TOP 10 GROSSING FILMS OF 2007

- *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. \$35.5m.
- *Shrek the Third*. \$33.7m.
- *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*. \$33.1m.
- *The Simpsons Movie* \$31.4m.
- *Transformers* \$27.8m.
- *Spiderman 3*. \$23.9m.
- *The Bourne Ultimatum* \$21.9m.
- *Happy Feet* \$20.9m.
- *Night at Museum* \$17.5m.
- *Wild Hogs* \$17.2m.

Source: Motion Pictures Distributors Association of Australia.

with *Night at the Museum*, with \$20.7 million and *Wild Hogs*, with \$17.2 million.

If you discount the effect of inflation, the local box office is on track to equal or fall just shy of the best year on record, 2004, when cinemas took \$907.2 million.

The official figures won't be re-

leased for another fortnight but preliminary tallies show an increase at the box office in 2007, compared with 2006, which was the second best year on record with \$866.6 million.

Interestingly, the number of films released fell slightly, from 337 in 2006 to just 315 films last year.

## NEW LAWS

# Online curb on children

**NEW** restrictions on online chatrooms, websites and mobile phone content will be introduced to stop children viewing unsuitable material.

From January 20, new laws will be in effect, imposing tougher rules for companies that sell entertainment-related content on subscription internet sites and mobile phones.

It is the first time content service providers will have to check people accessing MA15-plus content are aged over 15.

The Advertiser, 22 December 2007

## Toys hit the road

**LONDON:** A soft toy designer has come up with a macabre new range of road-kill teddies. The first to be launched is Twitch the Raccoon, which comes with a body bag to keep the maggots out. Twitch also has an identity tag, revealing that he was "run over over by a milk float last Thursday, near the Hangar Lane Giratory system in London". A zip on each side of the toy allows the owner to remove Twitch's innards and stuff them back in again. A tyre print runs across his back. Creators Compost Communications style themselves "toy terrorists". "We squash and burn and bludgeon and maim. But we're also toy fanatics like you. We love toys," says their website.

The Australian, 10 December 2007

# Censoring web access 'too hard'

VALERINA CHANGARATHIL

THE Federal Government's plan to censor internet access in Australia has been dismissed as unworkable by computer experts.

The Government says mandatory ISP filtering - in which internet service providers are forced to automatically provide a "clean" feed of the net, devoid of pornography and violence - will protect children.

Adults could opt out to receive a non-filtered feed.

But internet analysts have warned the plan will simply create an administrative nightmare that leads to more expensive internet access and significantly slower speeds.

The idea also raises ethical and moral concerns regarding freedom of speech and the right of the Government to control what its citizens can see and read.

ISPs are concerned about the increased costs related to new software and equipment, administrative overheads and staffing if Communications Minister Senator Stephen Conroy proceeds with his pledge to introduce mandatory ISP filtering.

SA's Adam Internet has about 75,000 customers visiting an average

*The Advertiser, 5 January 2008*

of 15 to 20 websites a day and managing director Scott Hicks said it would be a nightmare to monitor 1.5 million websites every day.

"Making us so-called content editors makes our life very difficult," Mr Hicks said.

Senator Conroy said the proposal would be implemented in consultation with the industry. The Australian Communications and Media Authority will prepare a "blacklist" of unsuitable sites to be blocked by ISPs - even though hundreds of new sites go online every day.

Young Media Australia president Jane Roberts said the wellbeing of children must come before what adults want.

"As a society that is concerned about its kids, this is one way to promote safety for our children and young people," she said.

However, Australian Privacy Foundation chairman Roger Clark said internet access should be the responsibility of parents, not the Government.

Analysts argue the probability of ensuring 100 per cent clean content is next to nil, with one British ISP firm already reported to have failed in implementing such a scheme.

# Net porn filter plan 'not up to the task'

Fran Foo

THE controversial internet filtering scheme proposed by the federal Government requires a drastic upgrade as it currently would only block a tiny proportion of pornographic websites.

In its current form the scheme would block only about 1000 websites containing child and extreme pornography.

Industry estimates of child pornography sites range from 100,000 to above 30 million.

According to the proposal, first mooted by the Coalition government, the Australian Communications and Media Authority would need to greatly expand its list of banned websites.

Local internet service providers would then have to adhere to the list by blocking the websites in question.

If internet users wanted to have access to certain listed offensive websites, they would have to contact their ISP directly.

At the moment, the ACMA list had 1000 websites, spokesman Donald Robertson confirmed.

One of the drawbacks of the blacklist system is that list is compiled by ACMA based on complaints by the general public. The agency would not move to investigate an illegal website unless it received a complaint.

According to South Australian internet service provider Webshield, ACMA should purchase available software that blocks millions of illegal websites instead of relying on the public.

Webshield managing director Anthony Pillion said: "We have been filtering undesirable websites for three years and we use an American-made software program which has been very effective."

Mr Pillion, who counts 1000 schools and parents as customers, said the software his company employed blocked access to an average of 30,000 websites a second without any sacrifice to broadband performance.

"We use three layers of filtering and there's about a 10-milli-second gap ... it's unnoticeable," he said.

**Australian IT - Page 28**

*The Australian, 8 January 2008*

Amanda Meade

THE family home is increasingly a media-saturated home. A new study has found most Australian families with children older than eight now have three televisions, three mobile phones, a gaming console and internet access.

According to research by the Australian Communications and Media Authority, the modern home has been transformed by the internet, with 98 per cent of families owning a computer.

Nine in 10 family homes with children have the internet, compared to just seven per cent in 1995. Of the families with internet access, 76 per cent now have broadband.

Every day, the average 15- to 17-year-old spends half an hour a day texting friends on their mobile phone.

The Media and Communications in Australian Families 2007 report, released yesterday, surveyed a representative sample of 751 family households with children aged between eight and 17 to gauge media use in the home.

The report found that on average, children in that age group spend an hour and 15 minutes online every day, and more than 42 per cent of all children say they have posted their own content online on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace.

Children - mostly boys - spend an extra 12 minutes a day playing computer or video games than in 1995. They still spend

# Well-connected Tickners are media-rich

Matthew Knott

HER kids think she's a Nintendo-Nazi, but Jackie Tickner is adamant: no video games and no computers on weeknights, except for school work.

But come the weekend, it's game on.

The Tickner family, of Caringbah in southern Sydney, aren't surprised by ACMA's findings that Australian families are increasingly media-rich.

The kids - Daniel, 18, Chris, 16, and their sister Alex, 14 - share a PlayStation and a computer, with each also owning their own mobile phone and iPod.

They all love their gadgets, for different reasons.

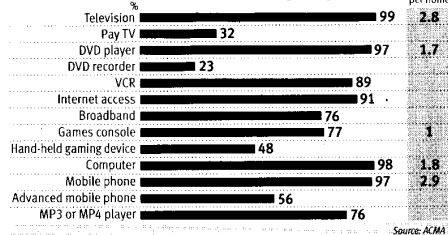
most of their free time watching television - two hours a day - although this is down by 10 minutes on the 1995 figure.

While the importance of television has diminished as alternatives have increased, researchers warn television still plays a leading role in shaping the way families see the world and that violence on television can be linked to short-term aggression and behaviour changes.

In 1995, just 8 per cent of children had a television in their bedroom. This year that figure

## MEDIA RICH

Penetration of households with children aged eight to 17



While Alex is always playing her Gameboy, her brother Chris uses social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook

to chat to friends and check out new music.

Since finishing high school last month, Daniel has been

Many parents worry more about drugs than about the negative effects of media.

The vast majority of parents say their child's media consumption is fairly easy to control. Parents may be comforted by the fact that although there are more choices for electronic entertainment, children are not spending less time on physical activities.

Electronic media and communication activities, including watching television and DVDs and videos, used to take up about half of their free time. Twelve

hooked on Counter-Strike - an online game where players assume the identity of a terrorist trying to blow up civilians, or the counter-terrorism agent trying to stop him.

"Daniel does have violent games that I don't like - but he's 18 so I'm not too worried about them," Mrs Tickner says.

She is more worried about internet safety risks such as pornography and child predators.

"We've got every blocking device under the sun," she says. "We've never had porn images pop up like other people have."

Her husband, Glenn, also runs virus checks every few weeks.

As the Tickner household

demonstrates, digitally literate families aren't necessarily inactive ones. Daniel enjoys bike-riding with friends, while Alex plays basketball, water polo, netball and indoor soccer.

Chris plays bass in a rock band and is an avid reader of crime and fantasy books.

The family has five television sets, but they're usually switched off. "My kids don't watch a lot of television at all," Mrs Tickner says. "That's probably because we don't have cable TV."

So what's going to be under the tree this Christmas?

The kids have picked out a joint present - a Nintendo Wii console. "Oh, and something else," Daniel adds. "I want money for a new laptop."

Three out of four of the activities kids nominate as their favourite are media-related: watching free-to-air television, listening to recorded music and gaming. But reading and drawing were just as popular as television.

As the new Labor Government has identified, internet access is still an equity issue, with households on lower incomes less likely to be connected.

But the federal Opposition seized on the report as evidence Labor had misled the electorate on the extent of the digital divide.

*The Australian, 18 December 2007*

## Body image becomes the biggest worry for young people

Stephen Lunn  
Social affairs writer

THE danger of unhealthy obsessing about not having the perfect body is a message that should by now be percolating through the minds of Australia's young people — but instead the problem is getting worse.

Concern about how their body looks is now the biggest worry for the nation's 11- to 24-year-olds, male and female, an annual survey of 29,000 young Australians will reveal today.

Last year, body image was the third most pressing issue, behind family conflict and worries over alcohol and drugs.

But when asked to rank 14 issues of concern for this year's survey, 32.3 per cent of respondents put body image in their top three, ahead of family conflict and coping with stress. Body image was a top level concern for 28.1 per cent last year.



Family support: Serena Fayed

"Young women's level of concern about body image has increased from 28.5 per cent in 2006 to 34.9 per cent in 2007," Ms Hampshire said.

### MIND'S EYE

Issues most important to young people, who were asked to rank them in importance from one to three

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Body image	N/A	N/A	28.1%	32.3%
Family conflict	32.2%	34.8%	28.6%	29.3%
Coping with stress	35.1%	32.1%	27.6%	26.9%
School or study problems	28.2%	24.9%	26.4%	25.4%
Suicide#	33.7%	41.3%	28.0%	23.9%
The environment*	N/A	N/A	N/A	23.4%
Bullying/emotional abuse	36.3%	31.4%	27.5%	22.7%
Physical/sexual abuse	29.7%	37.5%	27.9%	21.2%
Alcohol**	N/A	N/A	N/A	20.5%
Drugs**	N/A	N/A	N/A	20.1%
Depression	29.9%	33.6%	25.8%	19.6%
Self-harm#	N/A	N/A	21.5%	14.7%
Discrimination	15.9%	19.9%	18.4%	12.9%
Alcohol and other drug issues	43.5%	33.6%	28.2%	N/A

\* New item for 2007 \*\* Alcohol and drugs were listed as one item prior to 2007

# Prior to 2006, suicide and self-harm were listed as one item

Source: National Survey of Young Australians, 2007

"What we've found is that young people are still taking on the very, very strong message of the body beautiful, the ultra-fit bodies, in the images they see in

the media they consume," said Anne Hampshire from Mission Australia, which conducts the annual study, the National Survey of Young Australians.

"As a consequence, young girls in particular are dieting at very early ages when there is absolutely no need to be doing so.

"We need to be helping our young people understand what is a healthy body image, but this is one of those messy policy areas that cuts across health, families and community and education. It needs urgent attention, but no one is taking responsibility."

Sydney student Serena Fayed, 21, said body issues "always come up in conversations with my friends."

"Friends of mine do have eating disorders, usually because of what they see in the media. They want to look a certain way and dress a certain way. That's fine for them but I don't want it," Ms Fayed said.

"Celebrities is where it starts, but then it comes back to comparing themselves to people that they know."

One bright spot from the

survey was the positive attitude young people have to their families. When asked what they value most, family ranked well above financial security.

"Overall, the results show young Australians place an enormous importance on family and friends, which is very encouraging," Ms Hampshire said.

"No matter how we cut the data, their responses are at odds with how young people are portrayed, as egocentric and problematic. We should be pleased with their values."

Ms Fayed agreed that family and friends were high up on her list. "They know you best. They are your support and the resources around you.

"I know I have their support in any situation," she said.

Concern about suicide is also falling, with 23.9 per cent of respondents rating it one of their top three concerns, compared with 28 per cent last year.

The Australian, 4 December 2008

# Girls reduced to the sum of their body parts

Our society's stifling and sexualised obsession with physical appearance is causing substantial damage, laments Melinda Tankard Reist

The Australian, 6 December 2007

THE girl stood at the edge of the pool, hesitating. Her family encouraged her to join them. What was wrong? She usually loved the water. But this time it was different. She was wearing a dressing-gown over her bathers. She didn't want to take it off.

"Why don't you want to go in, Lily?" her mother asked.

"Because everyone will laugh at my body and say I'm fat," the girl replied.

My friend's daughter Lily is six. A bigger build than girls her age, but fit and healthy, leaving others behind in school races, she was denying herself the pleasures of a swim because she thought her body would be judged.

So do many others. A Mission Australia national survey of 29,000 young people aged 11 to 24 released this week has found body image is the most important issue for them.

The annual survey, asking young people to rank 14 issues in order of concern, puts body image ahead of family conflict, stress, bullying, alcohol and drugs and suicide.

The results are disturbing but not really surprising. Many girls feel disgusted by their bodies, engaged in constant self-surveillance and self-criticism. Their bodies have become an all-consuming project. One in 100 Australian girls suffers anorexia nervosa. Some estimates put the rate of bulimia at as high as one in five. Children as young as eight are being hospitalised with eating disorders. Some hospitals report there are not enough beds to cope with the numbers.

A recent report found one in five 12-year-old girls regularly used fasting and vomiting to lose weight. One in four Australian girls want to get plastic surgery.

Women's Forum Australia recently produced a YouTube film clip about our new magazine-style research paper, *Faking It*. In it, a 10-year-old girl says women's magazines make her want to be thin. She plans to go on a raw fish diet.

Too many girls are trying to imitate half-starved celebrities and airbrushed models in a quest to be hot and sexy. We have allowed the objectification and sexualisation of girls in a culture that is becoming increasingly pornographic. The embedding of sexualised images of women in society has become so mainstream, it is hardly noticed.

Everywhere a girl looks, she sees sexualised images of her gender. She's expected to be a walking billboard for the brands of the global sex industry. Playboy make-up, porn star T-shirts, padded bras and pole dancing for little girls: they're being groomed to turn tricks in their stripper chic.

The nerve-paralysing poison Botox is being pitched to teenagers as a preventative against wrinkles. Growing numbers are having breast implants. Younger women seek Brazilian waxes because their boyfriends complain they are too hairy and don't match up to how women look in porn. Girls have been reduced to the sum of their body parts.

Research links sexualisation with three of the most common mental health problems of girls and women: eating disorders, low self-esteem and depression. The messages delivered by a culture obsessed with body image and sex limit the freedom of girls to explore other facets of their lives. They need to be encouraged to think for themselves, to be creative and imaginative, find meaning in life and make a mark in the world.

So why aren't we doing more about it?

An urgent whole-of-government and community approach is required, recognising what the research says and taking action. Positive body image programs in schools should be mandatory, teaching media literacy skills that help young people recognise damaging messages from popular culture.

There should also be a crackdown on degrading and objectified images of women in the public domain, including outdoor advertising, and an overhaul of the Advertising Standards Bureau and other regulatory bodies that have failed us so badly.

Catherine, a young Melbourne artist and writer who struggles with an eating disorder, wrote to me: "I feel it's essential that not only girls but women are able to identify the real values we should nurture and the deeply dishonest images and ideas we are fed."

That's where a new campaign has to begin, so that Lily and her friends can go swimming without fearing judgment and shame.

Melinda Tankard Reist is a Canberra author and director of Women's Forum Australia, an independent women's think tank.

## Don't fret: hyper-parenting isn't an Australian affliction

Sherrill Nixon

SWIMMING lessons or music classes? Gymnastics or maths coaching? In this age of hyper-parenting, the "enrichment opportunities" for children are endless as adults fill their preschoolers' days with activities to give them a leg-up in life.

But those who advocate old-fashioned, unstructured play — climbing trees and make-believe — say overscheduling children's activities limits their time to bond with parents and puts too much focus on outcomes.

Now, Australian researchers have entered the debate, using a longitudinal study to explore the links between children's activities and their mental health and language skills.

And the good news is that Australian parents don't need to worry too much.



Preschoolers in Australia aren't being "scheduled" at high levels, and the difference in vocabulary between children who undertake organised activities and those who don't is small.

But Michael Bittman, from the University of New England's school of behavioural, cognitive and social sciences, did find that long hours of watching television and long hours in child care had a detrimental effect on children's

mental health, particularly time in front of the TV. He called for more study on these areas.

"It doesn't look like there's too much hyper-parenting in Australia because the level of organised activities are fairly low," Professor Bittman said.

"They [organised activities] do seem beneficial [to language] but so would doing something less organised. It seems to say you shouldn't fret too much about that, and perhaps in Australia it's not too much of an issue yet."

He conducted the research using a federal government longitudinal study of Australian children, called Growing Up in Australia. The results will be presented to a conference in Melbourne this week dedicated to research arising from the study.

Starting in 2003, the study collects data on 10,000 children every two years.

Sydney Morning Herald, 3 December 2007

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

## ADVERTISING

Te'Eni-Harari, T et al (2007)  
**Information processing of advertising among young people: the elaboration likelihood as applied to youth.**  
*Journal of Advertising Research, Vol. 47, No. 3, Pp326-340*

## ADVERTISING - FOOD

Roberts, M et al (2007)  
**A thematic content analysis of children's food advertising.**  
*International Journal of Advertising, Vol. 26, No. 3, Pp357-367*

Delva, J et al (2007)  
**The epidemiology of overweight and related lifestyle behaviors.**  
*American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Vol. 33, No. 4, Suppl. S, Pp S178-S186*

Powell, LM et al (2007)  
**Adolescent exposure to food advertising on television.**  
*American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Vol. 33, No. 4, Suppl. S, Pp S251-S256*

## COMPUTERS &amp; INTERNET

*Journal of Adolescent Health, Vol. 41, No. 6, Suppl. S,*

Williams, KR; Guerra, NG (2007)  
**Prevalence and predictors of Internet bullying.**  
*Pp S14-S21*

Kowalski, RM; Limber, SP (2007)  
**Electronic bullying among middle school students.**  
*Pp S22-S30*

Ybarra, ML et al (2007)  
**Examining the overlap in Internet harassment and school bullying: Implications for school intervention.**  
*Pp S42-S50*

Agatston, PW et al (2007)  
**Students' perspectives on cyber bullying.**  
*Pp S59-S60*

## COMPUTER &amp; VIDEO GAMES

Walsh, David; Gentile, Douglas (2007)  
**12th annual MediaWise video game report card.**  
*National Institute on Media and the Family,*

Dill, KE; Thill, KP (2007)  
**Video game characters and the socialization of gender roles: Young people's perceptions mirror sexist media depictions.**  
*Sex Roles, Vol. 57, No. 11-12, Pp 851-864*

## MEDIA EFFECTS - GENERAL

Barr, R et al (2007)  
**Age-related changes in deferred**

**imitation from television by 6-to 18-month-olds.**  
*Developmental Science, Vol. 10, No. 6, Pp910-921*

## MEDIA EFFECTS - PHYSICAL

Gomez, LF et al (2007)  
**Television viewing and its association with overweight in Columbian children: results from the 2005 National Nutrition Survey: A cross sectional study.**  
*International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition & Physical Activity, Vol. 4, No. 41, ARTN 41 UT*

Rosenberg, DE et al (2007)  
**Covariation of adolescent physical activity and dietary behaviours over 12 months.**  
*Journal of Adolescent Health, Vol. 41, No. 5, Pp472-478*

Zimmerman, FJ et al (2007)  
**Associations between media viewing and language development in children under age 2 years.**  
*Journal of Pediatrics, Vol. 151, No. 4, Pp 364-368*

## MEDIA EFFECTS - PSYCHOLOGICAL

Lei, L et al (2007)  
**Adolescents' paternal attachment and Internet use.**  
*Cyberpsychology & Behavior, Vol. 10, No. 5, Pp633-639*

Lee, SJ; et al (2007)  
**Children's Internet use in a family context: Influence on family relationships and parental mediation.**  
*Cyberpsychology & Behavior, Vol. 10, No. 5, Pp640-644*

Chiou, WB et al (2007)  
**Adolescents' reply intent for sexual disclosure in cyberspace: Gender differences and effects of anonymity and topic intimacy.**  
*Cyberpsychology & Behavior, Vol. 10, No. 5, Pp725-728*

Hofer, T et al (2007)  
**Infants' perception of goal-directed actions on video.**  
*British Journal of Developmental Psychology, Vol. 25, No. Part 3, Pp485-498*

## MEDIA EFFECTS - SOCIAL

Peterson, SH et al (2007)  
**Images of sexual stereotypes in rap videos and the health of African American female adolescents.**  
*Journal of Women's Health, Vol. 16, No. 8, Pp1157-1164*

Greenwood, DN (2007)  
**Are female action heroes risky role models? Character identification,**

**idealization, and viewer aggression.**  
*Sex Roles, Vol. 57, No. 9-10, Pp725-732*

Barradas, DT et al (2007)  
**Parental influences on youth television viewing.**  
*Journal of Pediatrics, Vol. 151, No. 4, Pp369-373*

Ekstrom, K; Tufte, B (eds) (2007)  
**Children, media & consumption: On the edge.**  
 Nordicom.

Liebau, C. P (2007)  
**Prude: How the sex-obsessed culture damages girls (and America too!)**  
 Center Street

## MEDIA EDUCATION

Patten, CA et al (2007)  
**Frequency and type of use of a home-based, Internet intervention for adolescent smoking cessation.**  
*Journal of Adolescent Health, Vol. 41, No. 5, Pp437-443*

## TELEVISION

Funnell, Anthony (2007)  
**The state of children's television.**  
*Transcript of radio program "Media Report" on ABC radio national 6 December, 2007*

## VIOLENCE

*Journal of Adolescent Health, Vol. 41, No. 6, Suppl. S,*

David-Ferdon, C; Hertz, MF (2007)  
**Electronic media, violence, and adolescents: An emerging public health problem.**  
*Pp S1-S5*

Huesmann, LR (2007)  
**The impact of electronic media violence: Scientific theory and research.**  
*Pp S6-S13*

Worthen, MR (2007)  
**Education policy implications from the expert panel on electronic media and youth violence.**  
*Pp S61-S63*

## CONFERENCES

**Consuming Kids:****The Sexualization of Children & other Commercial Calamities**

April 3-5, 2008

Whelock College, Boston, MA

<http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org/events.htm>

