



Parents of young children want less media violence

Earlier this year, to establish a baseline for evaluation of its new resource, *Choosing fright-free, fight-free viewing*, YMA conducted a survey of 65 parents with young children, from three early childhood settings in metro Adelaide, to determine their views on media violence.

Here is a summary of the findings:

- Overall, participants expressed strong agreement that violence in the media has a negative effect on children.
- All participants either fully agreed or agreed to some extent that children can learn to be aggressive by watching violence on TV or in movies.
- 95.4% fully or partially agreed that children can learn to be aggressive by playing violent computer games.
- 95.4% fully or partially agreed that viewing violence can make children scared of the world they live in.
- 64.6% disagreed that when violence is shown as funny, or in a cartoon, it doesn't hurt children.
- 86.2% disagreed that so long as the hero is attractive and good triumphs over evil, media violence doesn't do any harm.
- 89.2% agreed that watching the TV news, including violent footage of world or local events, is a problem for young children.
- 92.3% agreed that there is too much violence in the media.
- 92.3% agreed that they try to limit the amount of violent media to which their children are exposed.
- 86.2% agreed they were concerned when children's viewing times are interrupted by violent footage, in news breaks or TV News promos.

Web Filter trial

The Federal government has released the findings of a web filtering trial conducted in Tasmania by the Australian Communications and Media Authority. Twenty six ISP based filtering products were submitted for trial, but only six made the final test.

Results were mixed. The report states that between 88 per cent and 97 percent of illegal or inappropriate content was blocked. However, while all six tested products, which were not named, were able to block entire networks of non-Web protocol traffic, such as instant messaging and peer-to-peer networks, none could identify illegal or inappropriate content over those networks.

The next step will be to assess filtering products in a live pilot with ISPs and internet users.

According to a report in *The Australian*, Internet Industry Association chief executive, Peter Coroneos said that his organisation

was in discussions with ISPs to develop a uniform approach to federal policy on the regulation of internet content. He said that with overseas providers helping to regulate content it was important that the industry in Australia took an active role in government attempts to implement an election promise by imposing a filtering regime. He pointed out that if the industry did not cooperate, they would not be in a position to complain about the outcomes of government policy.

The full report can be found at http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/_assets/main/lib310554/isp-level_internet_content_filtering_trial-report.pdf

The story in *The Australian* can be found at <http://www.australianit.news.com.au/story/0,24897,24092793-15306,00.html>

The high price of food marketing

The US Federal Trade Commission has recently released a report on food marketing to children and adolescents. At the request of Congress, FTC subpoenaed 44 food and beverage companies to find out how much money is spent targeting young people with food marketing.

The FTC identified \$1.6 billion as the amount spent by these food and beverage companies on marketing directly to children in 2006, but that figure, however huge, is not a true reflection of children's experience of that marketing. The figure did not include food advertising and product placement during general audience programming watched by children, such as American Idol and The Simpsons which typically have larger child and teen audiences than programs considered children's shows. It also does not include the value of toys offered with fast food meals for children and other cross-promotional advertising.

To read the full report go to: <http://www.ftc.gov/os/2008/07/P064504foodmktngreport.pdf>

Stop press
Just out - For Your Information:
Australian Privacy Law and Practice
See page 2



So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids

Jean Kilbourne & Diane Levin

"The book deals with children from infancy through adolescence and is very much about boys as well as girls. It is for parents, teachers, and everyone who cares about children. Diane and I have been concerned about these issues for years and hope the book will spark a lot of discussion and action." Jean Kilbourne

<http://www.sosexysosoon.com/>



no. 244 July 2008

small screen

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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

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

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Contributions are welcome.

Young Media Australia's services are supported by donations and a grant from the

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

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

"Tell someone who cares."

In July the Advertising Standards Bureau (the AANA's selfregulatory arm) commenced a public education campaign to let people know that there's a place where they can raise their concerns about all forms of advertising.

Ads have appeared on commercial TV, radio, in newspapers, on the internet and on billboards from July 13, and are said to be in response to community surveys that showed that awareness levels of the ASB should be improved. A spokesperson for the ASB said that they'd welcome feedback from the community on their revamped information system.

Along with this, the ASB had earlier (in April) proudly announced a new independent review system for decisions made by the Ad Standards Board, who hear complaints about advertising. The Hon Deidre O'Connor, a former Chair of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, and former Justice of the Federal Court will be the reviewer. The introduction of a review process is to be welcomed, but the fees that are payable, if one wishes to apply for a review, are not. An individual must pay \$500, and incorporated associations (such as YMA) would have to pay \$1000. A bit of a disincentive- and doesn't show a lot of care for the concerns of the community!

In addition, the applicant for a review must be one of the original complainants. And reviews are all about process- there must either be new evidence, or the ASB must be shown to have taken into account something they shouldn't, or not

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Just out - for Your Information: Australian Privacy Law and practice

Parents and carers of children and young people are increasingly concerned about the risks associated with use of modern technology. We are well aware of the dangers of stalking, cyber-bullying and commercial exploitation, but linking all of these is the issue of privacy. Just what kind of information should young people make available in public fora such as chat rooms and social networking sites, and what information should others be able to demand?

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) has been looking at these questions as part of its study on privacy laws. These laws were drafted at a time when information sharing was much more cumbersome; now there is a need to look at just what is happening and how best to protect children's and young people's reputations and personal information.

It is surprising to learn just how willing children and young people are to share the intimate details of their lives with other people they

taken into account something they should have. There is no review of the merits of the decision.



Barbara Biggins
OAM
Hon CEO

And we are still wondering why the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communication and the Arts' report on the sexualisation of children chose to place so much reliance on the AANA's revised Code on Advertising to Children to fix the issues. The ASB has been well pleased with what it sees as "the Committee's endorsement of the current selfregulatory system as both cost-effective and appropriate" but the provision in the new version of the Code does not come close to addressing community concerns as they were stated in submissions to the inquiry.

Show you care. Use the ASB's complaints systems if there are ads you don't care for.

Web links

Advertising Standards Bureau:
<http://www.adstandards.com.au/pages/page38.asp>

Media release re independent reviewer

http://www.adstandards.com.au/pages/images/04-08_Independent_reviewer.doc

ASB Reviews: process and costs

<http://www.adstandards.com.au/pages/page64.asp>

might not even know, or to publish abusive or insulting comments about employers, teachers, or even clients in public fora. Surprise turns to shock when we hear of the practice of 'sexting' - using a mobile phone to send a sexually explicit photo of yourself to another teenager you fancy.

This is before we even reach the issue of what children and young people do with images of each other - for example the recent case where teenagers recorded footage of a physical fight between two girls and posted it on the internet. The question is how best to help children and young people avoid making mistakes that could dog them for the rest of their lives.

The obvious place to start is with young people themselves, and this is exactly what the ALRC has done with a dedicated web site to find out how children and young people think about privacy and communications technology, and why they do the things they do.

Two key findings of the ALRC were that, while children and young people are relatively tech-savvy, they: (a) often failed to read the Privacy

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Clips 'n' Cuts

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Alarm at teenage 'sexting' traffic

The Age, 10 July 2008

By **LUCY BATTERSBY**

AN EXPLOSION of teenage sex texting is alarming teachers, police and youth counsellors.

The new mobile phone phenomenon, dubbed "sexting", led to 32 Victorian teenagers being charged with child pornography offences last year.

Cyber-bullying expert Kate McCaffrey warns that most parents remain oblivious to the threat to children, while school principals describe phone-based bullying as "explosive".

The full extent of sexting has not been quantified, but a survey by a teenage girls' magazine found 40% of respondents had been asked to send sexual images of themselves.

Police say sexting rates are already high, while Kids Help Line says nearly half their bullying-related calls can be attributed to cyber-bullying.

Sexting involves taking or sending an explicit photo of oneself and forwarding it to friends or potential suitors.

Detective Sergeant Campbell Davis, of the Victoria Police internet child exploitation team, said girls were especially targeted, and the third-generation of mobile phone technology, or 3G, which can send large image files straight to the internet, was exacerbating the problem.

"It is a very powerful technology and we need to teach our children how quickly images can be forwarded," he said.

Any image that depicts a minor in a sexual activity or indecent manner is considered child pornography, and anyone who passes on or receives those images is liable to face criminal charges.

A survey by *Girlfriend* magazine found that four in 10 readers had been asked to forward a nude photo of themselves.

Anger over 'fat' claims

TORY SHEPHERD
HEALTH REPORTER

PARENTS and experts have lashed out at Nintendo's Wii Fit for wrongly telling kids they are fat.

The Wii Fit, an interactive computer game, uses height and weight measurements to determine Body Mass Index.

It then classifies users as underweight, ideal weight, overweight or obese.

The data helps the user work out an exercise program.

BMI does not distinguish between muscle and fat, so healthy people sometimes are mistakenly classified as overweight.

Childhood obesity expert Dr Jim Dollman said BMI should not be used on individuals at all, let alone children.

"Because weight is affected as much by what we call the fat-

free mass as it is by the fat tissue, then it's a very poor indicator at the individual level," he said. "It is fraught with all sorts of problems. The risk of misclassification is very much higher at the individual level and therefore I can't even believe that they are doing it."

Nintendo spokeswoman Heather Murphy said the Wii Fit manual made it clear BMI was based on adult measurements.

The Advertiser, 19 July 2008

Artists to develop child-art protocols

Corrie Perkin
National arts writer

PETER Garrett has asked the arts community to draft a set of protocols for artists who depict children, amid concerns that Kevin Rudd would have taken a much harder line.

The move follows some deft behind-the-scenes negotiating in recent weeks on behalf of the Arts Minister to defuse in cabinet the volatile issue of naked children represented in art.

Mr Garrett on Friday wrote to the Australia Council and Screen Australia — the Government's peak funding bodies for the arts, film and television — asking them "to develop a set of protocols to address the depiction of children in works, exhibitions and publications that are recipients of government funding".

As the former lead singer of Midnight Oil and more recently as Opposition arts spokesman, Mr Garrett was a prominent supporter of artists' rights to express themselves.

His low profile during the recent furore over Bill Henson's photographs of a naked 13-year-old girl in May, then *Art Monthly Australia's* decision to use an image of a naked five-year-old girl on its cover earlier this month, incurred the wrath of many observers who felt he should speak publicly on the issue.

Mr Garrett's handling of the controversies was in sharp contrast to the Prime Minister's public responses, which included calling the Henson works "revolting".

It is understood that Mr Garrett was deeply anxious about the issue's potential long-term effect on artists, as well as the spectre of censorship.

Australia Council chief executive Kathy Keele yesterday confirmed the letter had been sent to council chairman James Strong requesting a set of protocols by January 1.

Ms Keele said the council would hold discussions with a wide range of interest groups including artists, lawyers and children's rights specialists.

"I fear a lot of people might be thinking censorship, but I don't think that has to be the outcome," she said yesterday.

"I'm optimistic the consultations will be enlightening."

Ms Keele said the challenge was to maintain the funding of excellent art projects "while at the same time reflecting community concerns for the protecting of children in the showing of these images".

National Centre for Australian Studies deputy director David Dunstan said the Government's decision to hand the matter over to its funding body experts was logical.

"Otherwise it just becomes something that can be manipulated by politicians and political groups for their own advantage," he said.

"These issues can take the form of moral panics, and they don't necessarily result in good debate, good legislation and good public practice. And there is panic currently over the sexualisation of children.

"It would seem, given the sensitivities, this is a logical way to go. It's very important it be kept out of populist politics."

The Australian, 21 July 2008

No problem in axing children's television

SO some children's television shows may be axed if snack advertising is banned (*The Advertiser*, yesterday).

What's the problem with that? It gives the children an extra hour or so a day to go outside and run around, do homework, practise music or read a book.

I guess the problem is that only some television shows may be dumped — the Australian ones, giving more time for (American) programs. So how about we axe more children's TV altogether?

Do they need hours of artificial stimulation when they get home from school?

■ **LEONIE MOORE**, Blackwood.

The Advertiser, 19 July 2008

Keyboard kids losing art of writing

Gerard Noonan
Social Issues Editor

MORE than 150,000 students in years 11 and 12 at schools across NSW have a problem. Almost all are skilled users of computer keyboards. Most can easily outperform their elders when it comes to text messaging on their mobile phones.

NOTEWORTHY MOVE
Voice-recognition technology comes to the classroom. – Page 2

But within the next year or so all of them will have to sit 15 to 20 hours of examinations for the Higher School Certificate, and the exams will be almost

entirely handwritten. Unless they have a proven disability and cannot write on the day of the exam, the only acceptable exam paper is one handed up in an individual's handwriting.

The disjunction between the acquired skill of keyboarding and the need to handwrite exams has led some schools to
Continued Page 2

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incorporate handwriting lessons in years 11 and 12 as students find they have to relearn the art of using a pen and paper quickly – lost after years of using computers, laptops and mobiles.

The senior English teacher at Barker College, on the North Shore, Sue Marks, says she has had top students forced to do remedial courses to get their handwriting legible enough for HSC examiners to read.

Sydney Grammar will not accept typed essays in the later years of high school. The headmaster, John Vallance, says the school places a very strong emphasis on ensuring every student can write legibly.

"Handwriting is an important expression of a student's personality, which is certainly not demonstrable through keyboarding," Dr Vallance said. "It's a skill this generation should not lose."

But inevitably there will be pressure for change. The NSW Board of Studies, which supervises the curriculum in all NSW schools – public and private – also sets and supervises the year 10 school certificate exams as well as the final year HSC.

Earlier this year it gathered 80 educators from across the schooling system and from the universities to explore issues surrounding the use of keyboards and computers in exams.

There is a limited use of computers in public exams: the year 10 school certificate exam in computing skills, for instance,

utilises computers and teachers "e-assess" students using a multiple choice format.

So far the board has resisted a wholesale conversion to the use of computers in exams and for e-assessment. The general manager, John Bennett, said the board was not looking for immediate change. "It is unlikely computers would be suitable for exams in all subjects, but we anticipate that in five years we will see computers used for some parts of some exams."

But Dr Bennett said several matters were far from settled: which students had access to the technologies in schools and at home; how fair it would be to make it standard practice when some students from poorer households did not have easy access to computers; and guarding against cheating.

Whether the pace of technological change and the changing expectations of students and their parents will allow such a leisurely waiting period remains to be seen.

The urgency has been underscored by the determination of the Federal Government to lavish more than a billion dollars on providing a computer for every school student in Australia – a policy causing some heartburn across the system as the distribution hits the problem of who will pay for the training, networking and upkeep of millions of computers in 9000 schools.

One US study of students in years seven and eight suggested



Testing times ... for the role of handwriting in exams.

"state paper and pencil tests may be underestimating the abilities of millions of students annually".

The 2000 study noted one principal fear is that students who wrote regularly on computers lost penmanship skills that might lead to lower scores on a new state test.

But another, earlier US study noted an odd phenomenon: that exam markers seemed to have higher expectations from word-processed essays than for handwritten ones. The hypothesis was that examiners were more inclined to expect a fully polished product when it was word-processed, and tended to

forget they were reading drafts written under time pressure.

In a separate study, when handwritten exam papers were transcribed into typed scripts and the papers remarked, they received significantly lower scores than the original.

While the cautious toe-dipping of NSW Board of Studies is mainly directed at issues such as equality and practicality, there are other concerns among senior educators about the onslaught of technology-driven methods on the very process of learning and thinking among young people.

Barker's Dr Marks said: "The process of writing – whether it be by hand, or on a computer keyboard – is closely connected with the process of thinking. Research points to the fact that thoughts are generated, not merely recorded, through the process of writing. So my fear, in relation to the rise of abbreviated forms adopted by many when emailing, text messaging and instant messaging, is that the capacity for deep thinking, fostered through writing, will be eroded."

Dr Marks said it was not that writing using these technologies was inherently detrimental to deep thought. "In my view, as society becomes more and more dependent upon technology, it will become increasingly important for clear and cohesive writing to be taught in schools."

"If this is not the case we run the risk of students' writing – and thinking – reflecting their text-messaging practices and becoming

little more than a series of truncated ideas. Many of today's students are quite capable of sophisticated thought, but as grab-bites become the norm in modern communication technologies, it is vital that the skills involved in producing thoughtful, developed compositions, reflective of higher order thinking, are fostered in our schools."

It is a view shared by Roslyn Arnold, honorary professor of education and social work at the University of Sydney, whose original PhD was on school children writing development. Professor Arnold argues that it is the act of writing that actually creates, not simply reflects, thought.

While keyboarding did not necessarily have a detrimental effect on writing, just focusing on the speed of communicating could rob a student of the opportunity of deep reflective composing, she says.

Students themselves are ambivalent about the issue.

Marianthe Varipatis of Hurstville, a year 11 student at Bethany College, says she almost always completes her assignment on her home computer and hand in typed scripts.

Most students at her school do the same, she says, but all her exams have been pen-and-paper affairs.

"Your hand starts to kill after a while in exams," she says.

"I'm so used to writing in exams, but it would be good if something like that [computer-based exams] came up."

Sydney Morning Herald, 28 July 2008

13-year-olds in cyber sex scandal

By LUCY BATTERSBY

THE FBI has been called in to help save a 13-year-old Melbourne girl from a cyber-bully, who was posting sexually explicit photographs of the victim on a fake MySpace page.

The victim, who had taken explicit photographs of herself and then sent them to her 17-year-old former boyfriend, approached Bacchus Marsh police two months ago to complain that another 13-year-old girl had accessed the photos

and was displaying them on a fake MySpace account.

Police enlisted the FBI and Australian Federal Police to act as a liaison to obtain computer-based evidence and close the site via MySpace in the US.

Bacchus Marsh police may charge the boyfriend with procuring child pornography and sexual penetration of a child under 16. The girl who created the false account has been officially cautioned.

The ordeal confirms an emerging trend among ado-

lescent girls to send sexy images of themselves to boyfriends and friends, according to the editor of *Girlfriend* magazine, Sarah Oakes. Oakes says she was shocked to find that four out of 10 girls had been asked to send nude photos of themselves over the internet, when *Girlfriend* conducted a poll on cyber-bullying among its readers in 2007.

Police said yesterday that any explicit image could constitute a serious criminal offence and would be investigated.

The Age, 3 July 2008

Industry hits back on calls for bans

Lara Sinclair

ADVERTISERS are striking back at calls for advertising bans to combat social problems such as child obesity.

They are planning a global marketing push, beginning in Australia, aimed at improving the industry's image.

Australian advertisers say they risk being blamed for a range of social ills if they continue to be seen as glorified salesmen.

As part of the push, the industry — often valued at \$12 billion, the amount advertisers spend in mainstream media annually — will promote itself as a \$30 billion marketing communications sector that makes a \$200 billion contribution to the economy when flow-ons from its activity are considered.

Local advertisers will this year trial the marketing and research program, created for Australia in conjunction with the World Federation of Advertisers. Other countries are expected to use it later.

"The economic value of the industry is seven times the \$30 billion spent on marketing communications, according to the formula we've taken from the Association of National Advertisers in America," said Collin Segelov, executive director of the Australian Association of National Advertisers.

The program is one of the final initiatives of Mr Segelov, regarded as one of the key architects — with AANA chairman Ian Alwill — of the industry's so far successful attempts to avoid increasing restrictions on advertising that have been applied in countries such as Britain.

Consumer advocacy groups calling for greater regulation of food and alcohol advertising, for example, were unhappy about the perceived influence of the AANA in Canberra under the former Howard government.

While prime minister, John Howard ruled out advertising bans to tackle childhood obesity — a high point for Mr Segelov — and Labor initially appeared set to follow suit, but it has since hinted at a tougher line.

Mr Segelov, who will step down from his role later this year, said Australia had been more successful than other countries in avoiding greater regulation, but the AANA had recognised the need to combat "widespread" negativity about the industry.

"In Australia we seem to regard advertising as a necessary

The Australian, 24 July 2008



Segelov

evil," Mr Segelov said. "We've got to educate people about the social as well as economic benefits of advertising," he said. "Advertising isn't just a good thing because it pays for media," he said. "It informs, educates and drives competition at the consumer price level. There are genuine social and economic benefits."

After a decade of working with the AANA, Mr Segelov leaves his role as executive director at a time of generational change for the organisation.

Mr Alwill, who is also marketing communications head for Nestle, has signalled he will retire from the post, with Commonwealth Bank marketing general manager Mark Buckman and News Limited group marketing and circulation director Joe Talcott understood to be in the running to take over.

This week the AANA began advertising for a chief executive to replace Mr Segelov, a former Network Ten journalist who first encountered the AANA through working on public relations for the advertiser funded self-regulatory body, the Advertising Standards Bureau.

Mr Segelov said the industry had realised its worth and raised its profile in Canberra over the past 10 years.

"A decade ago, politicians and bureaucrats had little time for advertisers," he said. "Now the advertisers' voice is not only heard but respected for being based on a track record of promoting responsible advertising and marketing communications."

He also presided over updated advertising and marketing codes for advertising food and for advertising to children — codes that were dismissed by consumer groups for failing to go far enough to address sensitive issues such as the inclusion of toys as incentives to buy food products.

Mr Segelov said such criticism was hard to take but there was "greater sensitivity" in the Rudd Government to "the social aspects of advertising".

"If advertisers are socially responsible, I think their economic contribution will be very welcome," he said.

SUNDAY TOO FAR AWAY

Commercial television's news credibility is on the line

SOME will point to poor ratings, others to budget cuts and competition from the internet and pay-TV. But a large part of the blame for the decision to axe the Nine Network's flagship current affairs program *Sunday* must rest with those self-professed guardians of the media who railed against the abolition of cross-media ownership rules, but in the process silenced many of those voices they believed they were protecting. By blocking the obvious synergies between the print and electronic media, these Luddites drove down the profitability of print, radio and television organisations. The growth of the internet and, most critically in a media context, broadband, was but a distraction in the war they were waging against the evils of media concentration and foreign ownership.

It was former prime minister Paul Keating who in 1986 blocked one owner from holding both a metropolitan newspaper and a television station in the one city, by arguing it was a choice of being "prince of print or queen of the screen". For 21 years until those rules were finally relaxed in 2007 by former communications minister Helen Coonan, *The Australian* argued against this arbitrary distinction. We called for the creation of a level playing in the media sector for the same reason that level playing fields have been allowed in other areas — namely to ensure competition, maximum choice for consumers and economies of scale. Had Nine been allowed to undertake a profitable merger with a print media organisation or had there been no cap on foreign ownership before 2007, the network might have avoided being in the situation it is in today.

Nine's debt-ridden majority shareholder, CVC, cares more for keeping its head above water than supporting quality news and current affairs. This is clear from the fact that a program such as the *Footy Show* is being given another chance, even though its ratings lag behind Tony Jones's live talkshow *Q&A* on the ABC.

The demise of programs such as *Sunday* and *Nightline* is just one outcome of the unfinished process of media deregulation in Australia. Ms Coonan's new rules purported to create a regulatory framework for the digital age that would blur the distinction between print, TV and telecom-

munications. They removed certain cross-media restrictions, but maintained the monopoly enjoyed by the three commercial television networks on the basis that without such protection they would not be able to continue to produce the same quality of content. With serious news analysis on commercial television now down to one or two programs such as Ten's *Meet the Press*, and 6.30pm current affairs shows sounding more and more like gossip magazines, the big three are clearly not keeping their side of the bargain. The effects of these policies are particularly noticeable to anyone living in regional Australia. Local news suffered because the new media laws did not go far enough in allowing regional media players to build a critical mass across a range of outlets. The number of content providers catering to quality local news reporting, as opposed to cheaply made low-brow talkback, has been dwindling steadily. The ABC's *7.30 Report* has cut back its state editions, and large urban centres such as Wollongong in NSW are no longer catered for by commercial news programs. Elsewhere the dumbing down of the 6.30pm current affairs slot continues unabated, with much of the content resembling a gossip magazine.

Unfortunately the outlook is grim. Now that quality news and current affairs on commercial television is going the way of the dinosaur, this vitally important field of news gathering and investigative reporting is the sole realm of the ABC and to a lesser extent SBS. That's hardly a guarantee for ensuring a diversity of voices will prevail when it comes to discussing matters of primary importance such as climate change, or for that matter, the role of public broadcasters. It will be very difficult to persuade new start-ups, whether they be in print, radio or television, to invest in news services. The majority of what passes for citizen journalism on the internet is about as informative as a bunch of graffiti on the back of a toilet door, and is increasingly recognised as such the public. Change will come only when the network bosses realise their audiences are smarter and more discerning than they think — but by then it may be too late.

The Australian, 29 July 2008

Splashing out on tweens

PACIFIC Magazines is stepping up in the lucrative tween market, relaunching websites kzone.com.au and totalgirl.com.au. The new sites, which go live on Monday, will be updated daily, offer more prizes and more reader content.

The Australian, 3 July 2008

Weighing up specials

WE are constantly reminded of the obesity epidemic, so it was disappointing to see the "bargain buys" of three major supermarkets this week (*The Advertiser*, 16/7/08) being 30-pack Coca-Cola, 1.25-litre soft drinks and 250g chocolate. How about some specials on real food?

■ JOSEPHINE CULLEN, Hawthorndene.

The Advertiser, 19 July 2008

Rights must yield to common good

THE controversy surrounding the publication of naked photographs of the six-year-old girl in *Art Monthly* magazine (hot on the heels of the nude shots of the 13-year-old by Bill Henson) has got nothing to do with the art/nudity debate.

It is a sign of the moral vacuum that exists in our community regarding the limits of the freedom of expression.

It is a cyclic issue which continues to polarise the community.

Two years ago, the same debate occurred in the context of the publication of 12 cartoons by a Danish cartoonist which depict the prophet Mohammed in a negative light. They caused a furore in the Muslim world. All of the major Australian newspapers (except the *Courier Mail*) decided to not publish the cartoons.

Despite the degree of polarisation in the community regarding the publication of controversial images, ethics does provide concrete answers to such issues.

The starting point is that no right is absolute. It is simply fanaticism to declare that the right to freedom of expression has no limits. All rights must at some point yield to the ultimate moral imperative, which is the common good.

Moreover, no action is intrinsically bad or good. No principle is absolute. Matters are always context-sensitive. Plundering the organs (in the form of kidneys and bone marrow) is permissible if it is done with the



Mirko BAGARIC

consent of the patient, and engaging in conflict that will result in the certain deaths of many innocent people is permissible to save many others. Thus, even ostensibly harmful acts which violate individual rights are permissible if they are for the greater good. A robust right to freedom of expression is an important right. It is a key to advancing the social and moral health of the community.

As a community, we should adopt the presumption that *prima facie* all forms of expression are permissible. This applies even to violent and pornographic images.

Yet, this does not mean that there are no exceptions to this principle. The limits of freedom of expression are not defined by how one characterises or describes an image or form of words. That is why labels such as art are irrelevant.

Freedom of expression can only be limited in one situation: where the publication would diminish the common good, where each person's interests count equally.

Some degree of speculation is often involved in assessing the impact that a form of expression will have. However, it is clear that physical and sexual integrity are more

important to the human condition than the capacity to say and depict whatever one wants. History also allows us to predict with some degree of confidence the likely impact of extreme forms of images.

Thus, we know that offensive religious images are likely to incite violence and hatred. They need to be banned.

We also know that some people in the community have an indecent tendency to have sex with children. Moreover, they feel justified in engaging in such conduct.

As a community, we need to display a zero tolerance attitude to anything which could even remotely be interpreted as displaying an approving attitude to the sexualisation of children.

Nudity is associated with sex. It is that simple. It is for that reason that we should never condone images of nude children. It can only serve to normalise the association between sex and children. This danger is compounded when, as in the case of *Art Monthly*, the images deliberately depict the child in a provocative manner.

The carnage that will be caused by this grossly outweighs any benefit derived from allowing people who call themselves artists saying and depicting their sometimes misguided views and projects. In the end, it is as simple as that.

■ **Mirko Bagaric** is professor of law at Deakin University and author of, most recently, *Human Rights Charters in Australia* (with Peter Faris, QC).

The Advertiser, 12 July 2008

Push for review on children in art

Ashleigh Wilson

THE NSW Government is pushing for a national review of restrictions controlling images of children in art, following the furore over work by Australian artist Bill Henson.

With the Australia Council for the Arts already developing a new set of protocols for artists, the Labor states were yesterday urged to go further by working together on new classification standards to achieve "greater clarity and consistency".

NSW Community Services Minister Kevin Greene raised the issue at a meeting of his state and federal counterparts in Canberra, saying the debate over Henson's controversial photographs had highlighted deep community concern over the representation of children in art.

"Classifications need to be looked at from all the states of the commonwealth," Mr Greene said. "It can't just be one state."

NSW Attorney-General John Hatzistergos has also written to state and federal ministers calling for the classification system to be strengthened.

Mr Greene's comments came after the Classification Board last week ruled that *Art Monthly Australia* magazine, whose cover image featured a naked five-year-old girl, warranted an unrestricted classification.

The magazine's editor had defended the cover image as a response to the actions of NSW police, who seized more than 20 of Henson's photographs featuring a naked 13-year-old girl from a Sydney gallery in May.

Police later returned the photographs after deciding not to lay charges against

either Henson or the gallery. Federal Arts Minister Peter Garrett has asked the Australia Council and Screen Australia to develop a set of protocols governing the depictions of children in government-funded artworks, exhibitions and publications.

Mr Greene said yesterday it was important to continue public debate about "what is acceptable" in art, and the inappropriate use of images of children. He wanted to give protection to children and the "notion of what childhood is".

"It's not my position to be determining what's art, what's good art and what's bad art," Mr Greene said.

"My concern is to make sure we're very careful in setting the parameters in terms of the protection of the interests of children.

The Australian, 24 July 2008

Porn block trial complete

Fran Foo
Censorship

THE federal government has completed a trial of blocking pornography and other online content deemed inappropriate for children at the internet service provider level.

A report on the participants and results had been sent to Communications Minister Stephen Conroy, Australian Communications and Media Authority spokesperson Donald Robertson said.

Enx TestLab was awarded a tender in January to conduct the closed trials in Tasmania on behalf of the authority.

Tim Marshall, a spokesperson for Senator

Conroy, confirmed receipt of the report but said it was too soon to comment on the findings. "The Minister will consider the report and will make comment in due course," Mr Marshall said.

Leading up to the trial, internet content filtering vendors — both hardware and software — were invited to participate.

The number of participants is unclear but Senator Conroy has said live field trials would follow soon after the Tasmanian test.

Filters based at internet service providers are meant to block inappropriate web pages and automatically relay a clean feed to households. Before last year's federal election, Labor promised to introduce ISP-based filters to make the web safer for children.

The Australian, 1 July 2008

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