



No. 256 August 2009

Free TV reviews its Code of Practice

Free TV Australia (the commercial TV industry association) reviews its self-regulatory Codes of Practice every 3 years or so. This time around it's been 6 years since we've been invited to put pen to paper and tell the industry how we think they've been performing.

Submissions on the draft revised Code will be received by Free TV until September 25. They tell us that they hope to complete the public consultation phase, get ACMA's approval and have the new Codes out there by the end of this year. So get cracking!

There are some issues that cause ACCM concern. These include

- a) freeing up the promotion of MA 15+ program and movies. It's intended that these will now be subject only to the same restrictions as M promos - and they have been a very long standing issue for many parents who object to being ambushed by such promos in programs of lower classification. [and beware don't take the explanatory notes around this issue at face value]
- b) the complexity of the clauses governing when M promotions can be screened and what images they may contain
- c) allowing each day time zone on the new multi-channels to be PG (no G time zones)
- d) no changes to accommodate community concerns about raunchy erotic music video clips in G and PG time
- e) the complexity of the advertising codes at times when children are watching
- f) the definition of the age of a child varies throughout the document.

The Code review documents and Explanatory notes can be found at Free TV web site

http://www.freetv.com.au/Content_Common/pg-2009-Code-Review.seo

Note: some of the explanatory notes are misleading.

Land of the Lost classified 'M' in NZ

A classification of 'M Contains offensive language and sexual references' was issued in July by New Zealand's Chief Censor Bill Hastings for the feature film *Land of the Lost*.

"Following several complaints from members of the public about its original PG rating, I decided to call *Land of the Lost* in for classification by my office" said Mr Hastings.

The film had been given a PG rating in Australia and New Zealand automatically adopts G, PG and M ratings from Australia and issues a matching New Zealand label. "This system is not perfect," said Mr Hastings, "but there is an inbuilt safety valve - if members of the public are concerned about a film's rating they can ask me to review it."

"School holidays are coming up and it is important that parents have accurate information about the films they let their children go to" said Mr Hastings. "An 'M' rating means *Land of the Lost* contains some material more suitable for mature audiences."

The Australian Classification Board received 19 complaints about its rating of

the film in the two weeks after its release.

For more information and the NZ Board decision go to <http://www.censorship.govt.nz/news-archive-current-LandoftheLost.html>

National Preventative Health Strategy released

Health Minister Nicola Roxon released the Strategy, the result of months of research and work by the National Preventative Health Task Force headed by Prof Rob Moodie

The Strategy provides a blueprint for tackling the burden of chronic disease currently caused by obesity, tobacco, and excessive consumption of alcohol.

Among other moves the report calls for higher taxes on alcohol and cigarettes and the phasing out over four years of the advertising of energy-dense, nutrient-poor food and drink before 9pm on free-to-air and pay TV, and the phasing out of toys, celebrities and cartoon characters to promote food and drink.

<http://www.preventativehealth.org.au/internet/preventativehealth/publishing.nsf/Content/national-preventative-health-strategy-11p>

FESTIVAL OF DANGEROUS IDEAS OCTOBER 3-4

DOES ONLINE NETWORKING HARM CHILDREN'S BRAINS?

Featuring Baroness Susan Greenfield

Sydney Opera House 1pm, 4 October 2009

More details & bookings:

<http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/whatson/onlinenetworking.aspx>

FREE TV REVIEWS CODE NATIONAL PREVENTATIVE HEALTH STRATEGY

EDITORIAL: NEW CHILDREN'S TV STANDARDS TV SEX & PARENT MEDIATION

NZ RECLASSIFIES FILM REDUCING IMPACT OF TV VIOLENCE



no. 256 August 2009

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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ACCM 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.

ACCM's services are supported by grants from the
**South Australian
 Government**

ACCM's Web Page and Broadband access are supported by its Internet Service Provider

Internode

Publication and printing of *small screen* is supported by

Nickelodeon



EDITORIAL



Barbara Biggins
 OAM
 Hon CEO

ACMA releases the new CTS: the good, the bad and the not so sure.

Our views about the long awaited outcome of the review of the Children's Television Standards by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) are very mixed.

ACMA made some welcome decisions (see below). However, we were disturbed by ACMA's position that it would not implement further general restrictions on food and beverage advertising. ACMA said "it is not a health body and must rely on evidence from the health research sector".

Firstly, this flies in the face of the evidence presented to it by organisations such as the Coalition on Advertising to Children, which comprises some very prestigious health, including health research bodies. Further, in the same month, the National Preventative Health Taskforce recommended that food advertising to children be phased out.

Secondly, ACMA is charged with the responsibility to see that children are protected from harm. This means that it is obliged to make judgements across a range of child health, welfare and development areas. If it does not have the expertise in-house, it needs to import it- carefully. We think that ACMA was badly advised in relation to the evidence on food ads. It could certainly do with more child development expertise in place on staff, to ensure that ill-informed judgements about what may or may not have an adverse impact on the child audience, are less frequent.

Our score card

On the plus side, ACMA has:

- retained the quality quotas for C (children's) and P (preschool) programs, and the criteria for assessing them
- allowed the screening of C programs in blocks of not less than 1 hr
- retained P time bands for weekdays
- tightened up the definition of "premium offers"
- restricted the use of characters and personalities in ads directed to children in C programs

On the negative side, ACMA has:

- refused to accept the evidence that food advertising influences children's eating preferences, to the extent that food ads need to be restricted
- refused to accept the argument that the CTS provisions should apply not only in C programs but also in C time bands
- not accepted that many P programs are advertising vehicles, even if ads themselves are not permitted in P programs

On the 'not so sure' side, ACMA has:

- opened the way for future consideration of assessment of C programs by other than ACMA staff and consultants.
- not ruled out the implementation of tradeable obligations when a children's channel is established

Body image and eating disorders: Research and practice forums

Thursday 8 October 2009, 9.30am to 3pm &
 Friday 9 October 2009, 9.15am to 3pm

Queen Victoria Lecture Theatre,
 Women's and Children's Hospital, North Adelaide, SA

Key note speaker on both days:
Professor Susan Paxton, La Trobe University

President, Academy for Eating Disorders and Member of the
 Federal Government's National Advisory Group on Body Image

More details, including program:

<http://www.phcris.org.au/publications/ebulletin/documents/2009/BodyImageForum09.pdf>

Cut junk food ads 'to save millions'

Adam Cresswell
Health editor

RESTRICTING television advertisements for junk food aimed at children would be one of the most cost-effective public health measures governments could make, yielding huge savings from preventing fat kids turning into sickly adults.

In the first analysis of what costs and savings would accrue from restricting junk food TV advertising to children, Australian researchers found that a ban would cost just \$3.70 for each extra year of disease-free life gained, as children avoided the chronic diseases of adulthood that are strongly linked to excess weight.

Even that modest cost would be vastly outweighed by the savings, eventually expected to reach \$300 million every year as pressure was taken off the health system, experts from Melbourne's Deakin University found.

The findings, published online by the *International Journal of Obesity*, are likely to irritate Australia's processed food industry and alarm broadcasters.

Food companies have been fighting hard to avoid some of the prescriptive regulations imposed in other countries — including advertising restrictions and so-called "traffic light" nutrition information panels.

From the start of this year, the Australian Food and Grocery Council launched a "responsible children's marketing initiative", under which 16 food and drink manufacturers have committed not to advertise to children, "unless they promoted healthy dietary choices and a healthy lifestyle consistent with scientific standards".

AFGC chief executive Kate

Carnell said she did not believe there was "any definitive evidence linking advertising with obesity".

"But there's a community expectation that advertising when children are likely to be watching TV on their own should be restricted to healthier food, and that's why the industry has removed ads for high-fat, sugar and salt products (during children's peak viewing times)," Ms Carnell said.

In June, a federal parliamentary committee inquiry into obesity warned the industry to make product ingredients healthier, label them more clearly and market them more responsibly or face mandatory regulation.

Boyd Swinburn, senior author of the new study and director of the WHO Collaborating Centre in Obesity Prevention based at Deakin University, said the industry's scheme had, "so many loopholes ... clever marketers would be able to drive a truck through them".

Although a ban was also opposed by those who feared a collapse in revenue for broadcasters, Professor Swinburn said ad revenues increased in the UK after British regulator Ofcom began phasing in restrictions on junk food advertising in 2007, despite the global financial crisis.

"This is far and away the most cost-effective intervention (for tackling childhood obesity) that we have modelled," Professor Swinburn said.

"We know from experience that banning marketing does have an important impact. This is the first time it's been quantified in Australia ... for policymakers to make decisions, they need to have the data about the likely effectiveness and cost."

Editorial — Page 13
The Australian, 13 August 2009

Parents alien to their kids' lives

Stephen Lunn
Social affairs writer

OUR children's entire life experience is being shrunk down to the classroom, television and computer games just at the time they need more emotional maturity to cope with the difficult choices facing them.

And parents, while aware of issues such as cyber-bullying, the impact of violent images on young boys' behaviour and the sexualisation of children at an ever younger age, are hopelessly ill-equipped to cope with the technology so influencing their children's lives.

The blunt warning comes from leading writer on children's issues Maggie Hamilton, who will tonight address a Young Media Australia seminar in Melbourne exploring the sexualisation of childhood, and girls in particular.

"Young kids have a rapidly diminishing life experience. They watch junk on TV or DVDs, they play computer games rather than interact with their community, with people of different ages, or with nature. There is an increasingly manufactured fantasy world," Hamilton told *The Australian*.

"As a result, cognitively they are increasingly immature just when we're exposing them to things way beyond their age.

"And as parents we're frighteningly behind the eight ball because we just don't deal that well with the technology, phones, computers and the like," the author of *What's Happening to Our Girls* says.

"This is critical, because as a

result kids at younger and younger ages see their parents as more and more irrelevant. Even at primary school they get that mum and dad are living in a parallel universe. They see their parents not being able to use a mobile phone or a computer the way they can," she says.

Even parents who believe they are "with it" don't understand the full extent of the battle for their children's minds, driven in no small part by advertisers looking for access to their parents' wallets.

"Parents say 'I've got the computer in a central place in the home', but their children still access pornography or X-rated text messages on phones, or their friend's phone or computer. Why are we so hopeless? Because the technological changes have happened so quickly, and because we're all too busy."

In the wake of the Senate's inquiry into the sexualisation of children in the media, the conference will examine whether any progress is being made.

Hamilton says parents should be prepared to use current events to engage their children on tricky issues before they arise in the child's own life.

"Take the Kyle and Jackie O situation. Don't be preachy about it, but ask them for an answer about how they might feel if they were a girl in that situation. When we do this we help them to develop the script for what they're going to say in their own tricky situations."

The Australian, 3 August 2009

Call for more ads and adult shows on digital TV

Amanda Meade

THE commercial networks are lobbying to screen an extra 30 minutes of advertising a day on their digital channels and want rules that mean only child-friendly material may be screened during the day to be relaxed.

The broadcasters also want the government to make a parental lock-out mechanism mandatory in all new digital television sets so children will be safe in this less-regulated environment, which will enable stronger programs and promotions to be shown during children's viewing times.

Free TV Australia is conducting a tri-annual review of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice and has released the proposals in a draft code that can

be commented upon by the public until September 25.

The bold pitch to the broadcasting regulator for more freedom on their multi-channels — which will be standard in all households by 2013 — is designed to allow the networks to behave more like their competitors on pay-TV.

The surprise multi-channel amendment to the code might put the networks on a collision course with the Australian Communications & Media Authority, which has the power to veto the proposed code.

The chairman of the authority, Chris Chapman, has already pressured the networks into tightening their corrections policy for news and current affairs after repeated breaches of the code by *Today Tonight* and *A Current*

Affair. During his two years in the chair, Mr Chapman has taken a tougher attitude to the networks' approach to current affairs and issues of privacy and inappropriate language. "This is an important opportunity for viewers to comment on the rules that will affect what they see on commercial free-to-air television in the coming years, including on the new digital multi-channels," Mr Chapman said.

On the main channels, Ten, Seven and Nine, advertising is currently restricted to 15 minutes an hour, but Free TV wants to add at least an extra minute each hour as well as the right to discount from the total any program promotions that are shorter than 10 seconds. "We have a very complicated code and we do not want to

go through all the regulations for these new channels, in what is essentially a new service," the chief executive of Free TV Australia, Julie Flynn, told *Media*.

"When pay-TV started they were given a whole lot of regulatory exemptions because they were a new service, and that's all we're saying."

Free TV represents Seven, Nine, Ten, WIN, Prime and Southern Cross, and has recently added SBS 2, One HD from Ten and Go from Nine.

By 2013 when analogue television will disappear, the multi-channels will be the standard in all homes.

The TV code of practice is drafted by the industry and then approved by ACMA, which determines if it complies with current

community standards. The code gives viewers a guide to what is suitable for adults' and children's viewing and outlines a complaints handling process.

The proposed code says multi-channels should be allowed a simplified time zone system under which programs up to a PG (parental guidance recommended) classification may be shown between 5am and 9pm; and on school days M (mature) programs may be shown between noon and 3pm.

"With the availability of a parental lock mechanism in many digital set-top boxes as additional protection for viewers, Free TV is confident that extended PG time zones on digital multi-channels will provide appropriate community safeguards," the proposed

code says. While Foxtel has a parental lock-out system, there are no safeguards for digital free-to-air television.

"We think the parental lock-out system is really important to empower parents to control what their children are watching," Ms Flynn said.

Free TV is also proposing an amendment to the code to permit "promotions for M or MA programs at any time" except during C (children's) and P (preschool) programs and a tightening of the complaints system.

Comments may be submitted online at www.freetv.com.au.

New reality TV rules — Page 33
Mark Day — Page 36

The Australian, 24 August 2009

Canberra still mute on chef's TV tirade

Simon Canning

THE federal government has failed to act on the recommendations of a Senate inquiry into TV standards prompted by foul-mouthed chef Gordon Ramsay, more than 14 months after they were first handed down.

The inquiry, launched after the celebrity chef was recorded saying f—k more than 80 times in a 40-minute episode of Ramsay's *Kitchen Nightmares* on the Nine Network, attracted global media attention.

However, Media has learned Communications Minister Stephen Conroy has failed to respond to the Senate committee recommendations, which included calling for a review of the communications watchdog's role, streamlining the viewer complaints process and requiring parental locks to be installed on digital TVs sold in Australia.

Among other recommendations of the bipartisan committee were that the Australian Communications and Media Authority adopt a "three strikes" approach to broadcasters breaching standards multiple times, and that ACMA sample programs to check they meet classification standards.

The revelation comes as ACMA has launched an investigation into the treatment of the public on commercial radio in the wake of the Kyle and Jackie O affair, in which a teenage girl was quizzed about her sex life during a segment when she was strapped to a lie detector. Public outrage erupted after the girl said live on air that she had been raped as a 12-year-old.

Last night, Opposition communications spokesman Nick Minchin said the government should act on the recommendations as a matter of urgency, saying its failure to respond showed "contempt" for the viewing public and the Senate committee.

"It is extraordinary that the government has taken 14 months and still not given any response," Senator Minchin said. "It (the government) has taken its eye off the ball."

Senator Minchin described the recommendations as sensible. "I think they are not overly onerous on broadcasters, but will give the public much greater comfort," he said.

"The government should comply and publish a response to the recommendations as a matter of urgency."

He accused Senator Conroy of being consumed by the launch of the national broadband network and allowing other issues to be put on the back burner.

Last night a spokesman for Senator Conroy's office would not say when the government would table its response to the inquiry.

"I can say that the government is very well advanced in its

Impact of violence on young Australians

Have your say about the impact of violence on young Australians. A new public inquiry by the House of Representatives Family and Youth Committee will examine how social and economic factors, including illicit drug use and alcohol abuse, contribute to violence among young Australians. The inquiry will also explore strategies to reduce violence and its impact on young people. Submissions are due by Friday, 23 October 2009. For more information visit www.aph.gov.au/fchy or email fchy.reps@aph.gov.au or phone (02) 6277 4566.

The Australian, 19 August 2009

Call for review

AN urgent review of broadcast anti-terrorism standards has been called for after the communications watchdog probed satellite broadcasts of senior Hezbollah figures and discussions about jihad and martyrdom into Australia.

ACMA found the broadcasts did not breach the broadcast anti-terrorism standard, but Opposition communications spokesman Nick Minchin said the decision last week showed the broadcasting standards were not working.

"This case demonstrates that the anti-terrorism broadcasting standard appears to be far too narrow in its focus and application," Senator Minchin said.

"I call on (Communications Minister) Senator Stephen Conroy to assure Australians that the government... will take all necessary steps to ensure that viewers are not exposed to content that in any way promotes radicalism, including terrorism."

Simon Canning

response to this inquiry," the spokesman said.

The Senate committee called for stations to appoint dedicated staff members to handle complaints and for ACMA and Free TV Australia (the commercial TV industry body) to review current evening time zones for shows in light of the changing viewing patterns of children.

It also called for datacasting to be used to give better program descriptions, for the reasons for program classifications to be investigated, and for classification watermarks to be shown throughout a TV show.

Kyle and Jackie O were taken off the air two weeks ago and return to 2Day FM tomorrow, where they will be forced to work with a seven-second delay common on talkback radio.

A spokesman for ACMA said that it expected to complete its investigation by December.

ACMA chairman Chris Chapman said the authority had become aware of broader concerns about the use of stunts and prank calls on commercial radio.

"The strength of community concern expressed about the practices of some live-hosted entertainment programs, and the ACMA's own assessments, indicate that there is emerging evidence that the current regulatory arrangements may not be keeping pace with industry practice and community standards," Mr Chapman said.

Meanwhile, Free TV Australia on Friday called for public submissions to its own three-yearly review of the TV Codes of Practice, which it said "has been widely published and is operating well".

The Australian, 17 August 2009

Code of conduct on way for internet ads

Lara Sinclair
Internet

ONE of the fastest-growing yet most opaque sectors of the \$1.7 billion internet advertising industry is poised to clean up its image with the launch today of a new industry body representing advertising networks.

As many as 14 advertising networks — sales organisations that sell advertising on third-party websites, many of which are too small to have their own salesforce — are due to meet in Sydney to establish a local version of IASH (representing Internet Advertising Sales Houses).

The Australian understands all the networks that sign up to become part of IASH will need to abide by an industry code of conduct to outlaw questionable advertising practices, such as running ads on adult, gambling or peer-to-peer websites.

Media buyers have been pushing for a more regulated advertising network sector in Australia, which two years ago was reported to be growing at 80 per cent a year — faster even than

search engine advertising. In Australia the size of the ad network market is unclear, but in Britain, as much as 70 per cent of the online display advertising sector — which last year was worth \$465 million in Australia — is believed to comprise performance advertising, much of which is booked by advertising networks.

Kerry Field, from media agency MindShare, said the new code of conduct would be based on that of IASH in Britain.

"For me absolutely the number one priority is the code of conduct," Ms Field said. "They just need to make sure they enforce it."

The new body will supersede an earlier industry body — IANA (Internet Advertising Networks of Australia), which was set up two years ago by four networks: Ad2One, Max Interactive, PostClick and 3D interactive. They are expected to be among the core signatories today, along with other networks including Microsoft's performance network DrivePM and AdConion.

The Australian, 6 August 2009

'No place is safe' from cyber-bullies

Stephen Lunn
Social affairs writer

CYBER-bullying follows kids home, leaving those on the receiving end with no place to escape, Education Minister Julia Gillard said yesterday in launching a program to combat the growing social problem.

Ms Gillard said the government would spend \$3 million examining the safety of children in e-communications, including cyber-bullying, and study whether existing cyber-safety programs in schools work.

The announcement comes only a few weeks after the death of Geelong schoolgirl Chanelle Rae, 14, whose mother Karen said took her own life after reading something posted about her on the internet.

"There have been some very tragic examples here in Victoria and it's a problem right around the nation," Ms Gillard told ABC's *The Insiders* program yesterday.

"It's a new problem. Bullying has always been with us in the

playground. The thing about cyber-bullying of course is it follows you home.

"So for kids it feels like there's no safe space."

She said two recent government research studies into covert bullying revealed the problem was under-reported. Further, there had been a disturbing increase in incidents of cyber-bullying (threats and intimidation in emails and on social networking sites) in recent times, she said.

Adelaide psychologist Rita Princi said cyber-bullying had become an increasingly prevalent issue in her practice. "I've seen quite a few students recently from all-girl schools. They might have drunk too much and a photo of them might have gone up on the internet. They don't want to go to school," she said.

The government's anti-cyber-bullying pilot, which will roll out in 150 schools across the country, will report its findings by June next year.

Editorial — Page 13
The Australian, 3 August 2009

Under-age hard sell



The Australian, August 11

Sexualisation of children

STEPHEN Lunn has rightly observed the insidiousness of the various electronic babysitters ("Under-age hard sell", Features, 11/8). And Steve Biddulph, the barometer of parental sentiment, has eloquently captured every facet of this malaise.

My seven-year-old daughter has had the ability to read competently since she was four. With this gift comes an inquiring mind. Nonetheless, how can a profit-seeking corporation create a predicament for parents when their child asks about a billboard-sized invitation to longer-lasting sex? When the only mechanism to impose limits on the content of outdoor advertising is public complaint, is this really a self-regulation success story? And why isn't a complaint upheld when a consumer questions the appropriateness of a national retailer advertising underpants for 8 to 10-year-old girls emblazoned with "I know what boys like"?

These are the questions we should be asking our government. The marketing fox has been in charge of the consumer hen house for too long. If the advertising of junk food to children is a health issue, why should we not show the same guardianship when it comes to the sexualisation of children, which is a physical and mental health issue.

Chris Parkinson
Geelong West, Vic

STEPHEN Lunn is absolutely right. I am a very angry parent. In fact, I'm seething. For years my wife and I have worked tirelessly to protect our four children from the mindless, infantile advertising agencies trying to capture their hearts and minds. It angers me that the obviously male-driven marketing companies treat family, women and children with so little respect.

Perhaps even more disturbing is that we are all complicit. From the men who laugh at the beer advertisements to the mothers rushing off for their plastic surgery.

David Borshoff
Cottesloe, WA

The Australian, 13 August 2009

Bad week for . . .

KIDS addicted to mobile phones: after Australian research linking phones with poorer performance in a range of thinking tests. The study, online in *Bioelectromagnetics*, involved 317 year 7 students from 20 Melbourne schools. The heavier their weekly mobile usage, the faster but less accurate they were on (cognitive) tasks. The memory and learning accuracy problems were also related to their SMS usage. This suggests the cognitive effects are unlikely to be due to radio frequency exposure, the authors say. The behaviour changes may have been learned through frequent mobile phone use.

Bioelectromagnetics
2009;doi:10.1002/bem.20534
(Abramson M, et al)

The Weekend Australian, 8-9 August 2009

Cheap and tacky is good value when there's so much

WHAT appeals to small girls is a mystery to me, in much the same way as my nieces look at me as a being from another planet, where everybody is old.

I used to think Hannah Montana, was a piece and I am sure if I keep drinking hard the memory of seeing *High School Musical Three* with my nieces will fade; after all, it was only last summer. That's the movie I want to forget, not the nieces. I am still thinking of what I can make them watch in revenge. (I'm thinking ABC TV arts programs.)

I am also a bit hazy as to why pre-teens think Smiggle stationery shops are so exciting and as to the attractions of Build-A-Bear, if they build it I won't come.

But while I am a little light-on for insight into what appeals to young girls, I do know opportunism when I see it. (Journalism will do that to you.) This is why it did not take me

STEPHEN MATCHETT
THE WRY SIDE



long when Bella PR sent me a press release to work out what the Moxie Girlz are all about. (The eagle-eyed editors have not knocked off early, it's the way the brand name is spelled.)

And what I am seeing with Moxie Girlz is opportunism so outrageous it would make Brian Burke blush, cynicism so concentrated that it makes the members of the NSW cabinet appear as if they care about something other than their superannuation after they lose the next election, manipulation so mean-spirited it makes Kyle and Jackie O look as if they respect the people they humiliate.

Girls? Players on a teen tennis circuit? Hannah Montana's backing singers?

Not quite: they're dolls. Dolls that look like no child who lived outside a marketing department's imagination, dolls that can be kitted out (what a surprise) with their own accessories. Dolls that are "age appropriate", which presumably means they look more like prepubescent girls than Paris Hilton, but not especially human.

While these dolls do not have big breasts and lascivious looks, with their great manes of hair and eyes that take up most of their faces they resemble Japanese cartoon characters.

And what's more, the Moxie manufacturer is donating a percentage of its sales to a teen save-the-whale campaign.

Ticks all the boxes, doesn't it? The dolls are whale friendly. They are packaged with a press release that says girls, sorry girls, can do anything. And they don't look like the Pussy

Cat Dolls, who manage to make flesh, and lots of it, look plastic.

It's impressive marketing, designed to cash in on parental concern about the way sex permeates music and products pitched to teens, and lord preserve us, their younger sisters. And there is certainly nothing wrong with letting pre-teens believe that they do not need to conform and can achieve whatever they want; it makes a change from what they hear from the mean girls who run things at school.

But these are messages that are pitched to address understandable parental anxiety, messages that children need to hear from humans, not dolls.

The Moxie Girlz range is undoubtedly excellent value for money for people who like this sort of thing, but to me it is a product that looks cheap, in every sense of the expression.

The Australian, 19 August 2009

A self-important boor

KYLE Sandilands and the so-called Jackie O of Sydney's 2Day FM radio station are people who, in their seemingly addictive need for bigger and better ratings, have acted in a despicable manner which falls well below even the abysmal standards of what purports to be entertainment in these days of sensationalism and pandering to the lowest common denominator.

To exploit a 14-year old girl, with the apparent connivance of her own mother, in their straight-to-air exposure of the girl's already sad history in matters sexual is beyond belief ("Kyle and Jackie O suspended from air", 3/8). The mother would seem to be at least morally guilty of her own daughter's psychological abuse. Sandilands presents as a self-important and unrepentant boor. And O, as a woman, should be especially ashamed of her own part in this sordid affair.

Will Sandilands and O's respective reputations suffer in the longer term as a result of this matter? I doubt it. But, then, we all know what really seems to count these days: "I don't care what you say about me, just make sure you get my name right."

Trevor Corbell
Nairne, SA

THE incident involving a 14-year-old girl's being given a lie-detector test on a Sydney radio program reinforces the lessons taught by the Bill Henson affair. Children and under-age adolescents are not capable of giving informed consent in situations involving the possible exploitation of their sexuality, and parents should not have the power to do so on their behalf.

Bill James
Bayswater, Vic

AUSTERO has finally taken action against Kyle Sandilands and Jackie O for their on-air questioning of a young girl about her sex life. Who is taking action against the woman who subjected her reluctant daughter to the stunt for the sake of a couple of concert tickets?

Peter Hallahan
Coorparoo, Qld

The Australian, 4 August 2009

Kids' pester-power

THE issue with advertising of unhealthy food and beverages to children ("No magic puddings", Editorial, 13/8) is that its nature and pervasiveness increase the degree of difficulty faced by parents in encouraging their children to eat healthily.

Quite simply, food companies continue to run multi-million dollar advertising strategies, targeted at children, because they work. Parents can be overwhelmed in the face of these strategies which rely on kids' pester-power and the lure of convenience in a busy lifestyle to undermine a parent's best intentions.

It's unrealistic to expect parental responsibility alone to solve the issue of childhood overweight and obesity when there are so many factors that contribute to our increasingly unhealthy lifestyles. The solution requires a comprehensive strategy that creates an environment which makes it easier for all of us to make healthy choices about how we eat and how we live, not one that ratchets up the degree of difficulty to a level that sets us up to fail, a degree of difficulty that can be measured in the rising levels of obesity and overweight in our community.

The term "nanny state" is being used in a disparaging way but where children are concerned we should expect the state to help nurture the children who are its future. The government doesn't have to do everything, but it must take the lead to drive the changes that are needed to give parental as well as individual responsibility a fighting chance.

Professor Ian Olver
Chair, Australian Chronic Disease
Prevention Alliance

Weekend Australian, 15-16 August 2009

Time we sent cyber bullies the message

KATE ELLIS



THE old schoolyard adage of "sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you" has always been a tough one to swallow.

Verbal bullying can have the most devastating impact growing up.

But whereas it was once possible to switch off at the school gate as you headed home to the safety of loved ones, now with the prevalence of cyber-bullying in our schools, this isn't the case.

The boom of social-networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, and text messaging, is proof that more and more young people are turning to emerging technologies to stay connected to their friends at any time.

While the internet has opened up a whole new world of possibility for young people, it also has created a very real threat.

The heartbreaking case last month of a 14-year-old Victorian student who took her own life hours after someone threatened to reveal her secrets over the internet, highlights the gravity of the situation.

This story touched thousands of people across the country and brought the issue of cyber-bullying to the fore of many people's minds for the first time. But for young people dealing with it night after night alone in their room, it's an all-too-harsh reality – and one that we, as a government, can't ignore.

The insidious nature of cyber-bullying means that the sanctity of the family home is no longer a safe haven from the school bully – students can now be reached by text message or through social networking sites 24/7. That's why there has to be a co-ordinated approach with



STICKS AND STONES: With new technologies, it's harder to escape bullying

parents and teachers to make sure young people are safe online.

Effective relationships need to be developed to ensure a seamless transition from school to home in the hope of stamping out young people's anxiety about being bullied.

Research recently released by the Federal Government shows the prevalence and impact of covert bullying in schools is under-reported and there has been a concerning increase in cyber-bullying.

It's an issue that needs to be addressed and it's vital our young people are equipped with the skills to deal with the potentially harmful side of new technologies.

Banning computers, mobile phones and blocking access to stop these types of bullies is, unfortunately in this day and age, not an easy task. New technology is now part of our culture for young and old alike. The key, then, is education for all parties and guidance for schools to respond to cyber-bullying. For this reason, the Rudd Government has announced a \$3 million national

pilot project aimed at addressing cyber-bullying. At least 150 schools will be involved in the pilot program, which will be developed and conducted by the Alannah and Madeline Foundation. It will confront safety issues in e-communications and examine the effectiveness of existing cyber-safety programs in schools.

A new Youth Advisory Group made up of 305 young Australians also will advise the Government on online issues such as bullying.

The Cybersmart website (www.cybersmart.gov.au), provided by the Australian Communications and Media Authority, also aims to make it safer for our young people to go online. All of these measures are desperately needed to try to tackle the problem of cyber-bullying and act as a kind of buffer for young people when they're online, because the truth is words do hurt and can leave lasting scars for all involved.

Kate Ellis is the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, and Minister for Sport

The Sunday Mail, 9 August 2009

Social networking

USAGE of social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook has jumped 29 per cent, research from comScore reveals. More than 70 per cent of Australian internet users visited a social networking site in June, totalling 9 million people. Facebook dominated the survey with 6 million visitors, ahead of MySpace with 3.5 million. While Twitter boasted just 800,000 visitors it showed the most explosive growth, up from 13,000 visitors a year ago. While social network sites were dominant, Google sites remained the most visited property on the internet by Australians with 10.7 million visitors in June, 71 per cent of whom were also ranked as social networkers.

The Australian, 17 August 2009

Suffer the children

WELL said, Alistair Nicholson (Letters, 4/8), the complacency over the exploitation of children is outrageous. This has all gone too far. Offers for longer-lasting sex are plastered around the city for children to read and ponder.

Kyle Sandilands' castigation in response to last week's radio incident came as a relief to many.

But this is only a small step in the right direction. If we settle with this single victory, the momentum will be lost, the issue will fizzle and it will all be ignored until the next tasteless stunt or "child art" exhibition.

Society has become lazy and desensitised; if we want porn on the side of trams, then we get porn on the side of trams. As a result, young children are becoming increasingly aware of sex and body image. Will we just turn a blind eye to it? Forget about Kyle; let's confront those out there who are abusing them.

Timothy Mulherin, Doncaster

The Age, 6 August 2009

Putting the skids on obesity

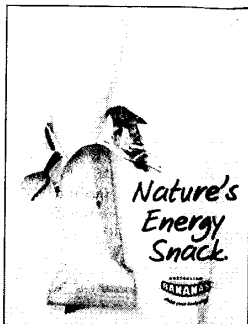
Lara Sinclair

THE \$720 million Australian banana industry will launch an advertising campaign promoting bananas as the healthy packaged snackfood, taking the anti-obesity fight to confectionery and processed snackfood manufacturers.

A \$3m television campaign — the industry's biggest ever — will be launched next month presenting the banana as "nature's energy snack".

The campaign, which aims to build on the long-running "Make those bodies sing" slogan, comes as the snackfood and advertising industries await the outcome of the National Preventative Health Taskforce's recommendations for addressing obesity and other health issues.

The campaign was developed by David Chenu, a former marketer of red meat at Meat & Livestock Australia and now domestic marketing manager for Horticulture Australia, which manages marketing campaigns



Poking fun: Bananas take aim

for a range of agricultural products. "Our aim is to make Australian bananas the number one snack of choice by 2015," Mr Chenu said.

He said that in the process, the campaign aimed to increase the retail value of banana sales — the fruit is already Australia's top-selling — by more than 6 per cent by 2012, which would make it a \$760m industry.

The campaign, which also includes internet widgets, outdoor advertising, radio and in-store signage, plays on the fruit's nickname "na-nas", and unhealthy snackfood "no-nos".

Mr Chenu said it was designed to change consumer behaviour by making 18 to 39-year-olds stop and consider a banana instead of reaching for a processed snack.

"To do that, we are going directly after our competitors and poking a bit of fun at them along the way," he said.

"(Bananas) are one of the biggest-selling items in the supermarket," Mr Chenu said. "Sometimes they'll even out-sell a can of Coke."

The campaign was created by retail agency Eleven Communications. Director of creative strategy Jonathan McCauley said it was designed to leverage public concern over rising obesity levels. "We think with the weight of public opinion we've probably earned the right to poke a bit of fun at the big boys," Mr McCauley said.

The Australian, 17 August 2009

Parent power forces 'edgy' T-shirt retreat

Stephen Lunn
Social affairs writer

CLOTHING company Cotton On has admitted it "crossed the line" and vowed to withdraw a range of offensive children's T-shirts, including one making light of child abuse, after consumers threatened a boycott.

A T-shirt emblazoned with the slogan "They Shake Me" was the last straw for many angry parents, who yesterday bombarded Cotton On with emails and Twitter messages, expressing their disgust and intention to vote with their feet.

Last month, Cotton On stuck by its range of baby and toddler

T-shirts, which included slogans such as "I'm a tits man" and "I'm living proof my mum is easy", saying there was a place for its "edgy" humour that "pushed the boundaries".

Yesterday, Cotton On finally cottoned on to its customers' feelings, offering a contrite apology and a promise to withdraw the offending items from sale.

"Cotton On Kids were unaware until recently that the slogans were being viewed as offensive and that they could progressively cause this extent of angst amongst consumers and social groups alike," the company's statement said.

Weekend Australian, 15-16 August 2009

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Lunn, Stephen (2009)
Under-age hard sell.
The Australian, 11 August, 2009

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www.abc.net.au/rn/scienceshow

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Scharrer, Erica (2009)
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EVENTS

YOUNG FILMMAKERS
SYDNEY WORKSHOP

Three day filmmaking workshop
for 11 – 16yr olds

Dates: 14/10 – 16/10
Time: 10am - 5pm

<http://www.metroscreen.org.au/BookingRetrieve.aspx?ID=61509>

