

Scared, sleepless and hostile: Children, violent/frightening media and public policy

Tuesday 1 March 2011, 9am - 5pm
 NSW Teachers Federation Conference Centre
 37 Reservoir Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

Have we been ignoring evidence of damaging mental and physical impacts of scary and violent media on children and young people? Is it time to act? Can our regulatory/ classification systems become more effective in protecting children and in supporting parents? Leading Australian and US researchers will review the research evidence in these fields, the present structure of classification and ratings systems, and discuss recommendations for change. Speakers and their topics are:

- **Dr Sarah Blunden** (Aus) – The interrelationship between media usage and sleep
- **Professor Ed Donnerstein** (USA) – The mass media as a risk factor for aggression
- **Richard Eckersley** (Aus) - Young people's wellbeing and complex media effects.
- **Professor Douglas Gentile** (USA) - Researching the effectiveness of media ratings
- **Professor Elizabeth Handsley** (Aust) – Implementing children's rights in relation to media use
- **Professor John P Murray** (USA) – Media violence and brain activation patterns in young viewers
- **Dr Wayne Warburton** (Aus) – Children and scary media content



Sarah Blunden



Douglas Gentile

Professor Alan Hayes, Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, will chair the conference.

Register now - Early bird registration closes on 3 February 2011

http://www.childrenandmedia.org.au/mediachildren/01_18_sydney_conference-prelim.htm

Inquiries galore!

There are four inquiries of interest over the next few months:

1. The Australian Government has announced its intention to conduct a Convergence Review in 2011, in response to trends that are reshaping the media landscape from how it looked in the 1990s, which is when Australia's current media and communications regulatory frameworks were established. Information about this review, including draft terms of reference, a background paper, and how to make a submission can be found on the Department for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy website at http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/convergence_review.

The closing date for comment on the terms of reference is Friday 28 January 2011.

2. A Senate inquiry into the Australian film and literature classification scheme will look at a broad range of issues, including:

- the application of the National Classification Scheme to works of art;
- the impact of X18+ films, including their role in the sexual abuse of children;
- the possibility of including outdoor advertising, such as billboards, in the National Classification Scheme;
- the application of the National Classification Scheme to music videos;
- the effectiveness of the National Classification Scheme in preventing the

sexualisation of children and the objectification of women in all media, including advertising;

- the effectiveness of the National Classification Scheme in dealing with new technologies and new media, including mobile phone applications, which have the capacity to deliver content to children, young people and adults

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/legcon_ctte/classification_board/index.htm

Submissions should be received by 4 March 2011

3. A House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal
 continued on P 2



no. 271 Dec 2010/Jan 2011

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

**Australian Council on
Children and the Media
(ACCM)**

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

ACCM is a national, non-profit community organisation committed to promoting better choices and providing stronger voices in children's media.

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

Contributions are welcome.

ACCM's services are partly supported by a grant 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 a donation from **Nickelodeon**



EDITORIAL

SCAG does the sensible thing.

ACCM welcomes the Dec. 10 decision of SCAG (see article below), to review the guidelines for the classification of computer games. The gaming industry had widely promoted the introduction of an R18+ category for games as a way to better protect children.

However, it seems that the Ministers having been informed by contributions from the 6 panel members invited to the SCAG meeting, including Prof Elizabeth Handsley (ACCM President), and by a demonstration of content of games and films at the R18+ end of the scale, were convinced otherwise.

It's taken a long time for the message to get through that the proposal to legalise an R18+ category simply would permit more extreme sexual, violent and drug-taking content, while games that met MA15+ criteria would remain MA15+.

Prof Handsley debated the issues with ABC's Technology and Games Editor Nick Ross, on Radio National's Life Matters program on

SCAG Ministers' decisions

The Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) met on December 10 in Canberra.

In regard to R18+ Computer Games, Ministers considered further work done to analyse community and expert views, including:

- a national telephone poll conducted during November which provided Ministers with additional community feedback from a random sample of Australians from all States and Territories
- a literature review of research exploring links between computer games and violent behaviour
- a study of parity between computer game classifications internationally
- a panel discussion between representatives in the fields of computer games, psychology and classification, and
- advice from the Classification Board on the operation of the current MA 15+ classification and options for an R 18+ classification.

It was decided that Ministers:

- will consider draft guidelines to be developed for classification of games at their next meeting, including a possible R18+ classification, taking into account concerns raised by Ministers relating to the difference in nature of film and games; and the interactivity of games; and that there will continue to be a refused classification category, and
- do not support the dilution of the refused classification category. The Operation of the National Classification Scheme Ministers agreed on the need to reform the National Classification Scheme to accommodate and better anticipate technological and other developments. Ministers

Dec 10. By program's end, Ross was conceding that "Elizabeth Handley [sic], vice-president of the Australian Council on Children and the Media ...makes the point that an R18+ rating wouldn't actually change the existing MA15+ guidelines



Barbara Biggins
OAM
Hon CEO

- something that would likely concern current R18+ proponents who believe MA15+ guidelines would be rewritten should R18+ be introduced Handley's point ...hasn't been significantly addressed by R18+ proponents. If MA15+ doesn't change with the introduction of an R18+ classification, then there's surely little point in having R18+: a handful of games (historically less than 20 over five years) may become infinitesimally more violent but if the next Call of Duty is rated MA15+, then underraged kids will still be playing it." <http://www.abc.net.au/technology/articles/2010/12/10/3090036.htm>

Let's hope a few more well-meaning proponents of the "R18+ will better protect children" line will also see the light.

agreed to the Commonwealth referring the matter to the Australian Law Reform Commission

In regard to the classification of mobile phone applications & online games, Ministers considered the difficulties raised by industry and the Classification Board relating to the classification of online computer games including mobile phone applications that are games and asked officers to urgently develop alternative options for an interim solution.

Inquiries galorecontinued from P 1

Affairs inquiry into the regulation of billboard and outdoor advertising will look at the extent to which the current arrangements for the regulation of billboard advertising continues to be an effective method for managing this form of advertising in Australia in line with Australian community expectations. More details can be found at

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/spla/outdoor%20advertising/tor.htm>

Submissions are due on Friday 18 February 2011

4. The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) has been asked to conduct a review of classification in Australia. The review will consider changes in technology, media convergence and the global availability of media content. The proposed terms of reference for this review and other details are available on the Classification Board website at

<http://www.classification.gov.au/>

The closing date for comment on the terms of reference is Friday 28 January 2011.

Clips 'n' Cuts

small screen no. 271 Dec 10/Jan 11

Era draws to a close for Mr Squiggle's animator

HE was the cheery pencil-nosed puppet who lived on the moon, turned scribbles into masterpieces and had a pet rocket. But the man behind the legendary *Mr Squiggle*, Norman Hetherington, has died at the age of 89.

On air for more than 40 years, *Mr Squiggle* was Australia's longest-running children's television series. It featured a marionette who visited his friends — Grumpy the blackboard, Gus the Snail and Bill the Steam Shovel — from his home at 93 Crater Crescent on the moon.

Hetherington, who both created the show and operated the puppet, died in the early hours of yesterday morning after a long battle with prostate and bone cancer.

His wife, Peggy — who wrote scripts for the series — was "far too upset" to talk with *The Australian* yesterday. However, former *Mr Squiggle* producer and long-time family friend Beverley Gledhill said Hetherington had a "magical gift". "Anyone who had anything to do with Mr Squiggle just loved him. It was just fantastic; he became a real person," Gledhill said.

"So many people have had Mr Squiggle in their lives... Norman brought a whole new age of puppeteering to a generation."

First appearing on July 1, 1959, Mr Squiggle would create pictures with his pencil nose from "squiggles" sent in by viewers.

Often Mr Squiggle drew his pictures upside-down. He was always helped by his human female assistant, the most famous of whom was Jane Fennell, known as Miss Jane. His female counterpart would often have to calm the puppet down, with his frequent distractions.

Peggy and Norman's daughter, Rebecca Hetherington, featured as Miss Rebecca in the final years of *Mr Squiggle* before the last episode was shot on July 9, 1999.

Hetherington began his career as a cartoonist at *The Bulletin* before appearing in the first television broadcast on the ABC in 1956 with his puppets Nicky



Hetherington and Squiggle

and Noodle. He then went on to pen *Jolly Gene & His Fun Machine* for the Seven Network in 1957 before beginning a lifetime journey with *Mr Squiggle*.

Hetherington was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in

'Anyone who had anything to do with Mr Squiggle just loved him'

BEVERLEY GLEDHILL
PRODUCER AND FRIEND

1990 "for services to children's programs and puppetry".

Last year he was presented with the coveted Jim Russell Award by the Australian Cartoonists Association for "outstanding contribution to Australian cartooning".

Pat Lovell, who played Miss Pat between 1960 and 1975, said she was "very sad" to hear of Hetherington's passing.

"Norman was an incredibly competent puppeteer; he was one of the best I have ever met," Ms Lovell told *The Australian*. "He was the most dedicated man and I think really loved children — that's why he did it for so long. He can't be replaced — he is irreplaceable."

Hetherington is survived by his wife, Peggy, children Rebecca and Simon, and several grandchildren.

LANAI VASEK

The Australian, 7 December 2010

Sport site bans alcohol ads

ADVERTISING: One of Australia's most popular sports websites has banned alcohol advertising in a move some predict could be the thin end of the wedge for alcohol sponsorship of sports in Australia.

SportingPulse is a community site for grassroots sporting organisations and boasts 1.8 million unique browsers each month. It has announced it will no longer take advertising from alcohol companies after a study revealed the impact excessive drinking was having on community sport. SportingPulse is affiliated with News Limited, publisher of *The Australian*.

Nick Maywald, chief executive of SportingPulse, said the decision had been made after consultation with dozens of sporting organisations that use the site as a marshalling point for their members.

The move follows a decision earlier this year to partner with the Australia Drug Foundation's Good Sports program.

Mr Maywald said a change in the advertising model of the

company had led to SportingPulse being besieged by alcohol companies wanting to connect with consumers, but internal concerns about the site's links with junior sports had resulted in the decision to ban the companies.

He said while it may take several years, he believed it was the beginning of a movement by mainstream sports away from a reliance on alcohol sponsors.

"I have to feel good about setting a precedent for community sport," Mr Maywald said. "I have been in this space for 10 years and, at the end of the day, community sport and alcohol, it's not a good mix."

The website shares 50 per cent of its revenues with community sports organisations.

"One of the things that has led us down this path is that we changed our business model two years ago to put 50 per cent of the funds back into sport," he said. "We then started to get a lot of attention from advertising agencies and brands."

SIMON CANNING

The Australian, 6 December 2010

UNITED STATES Lights, action, Barbie

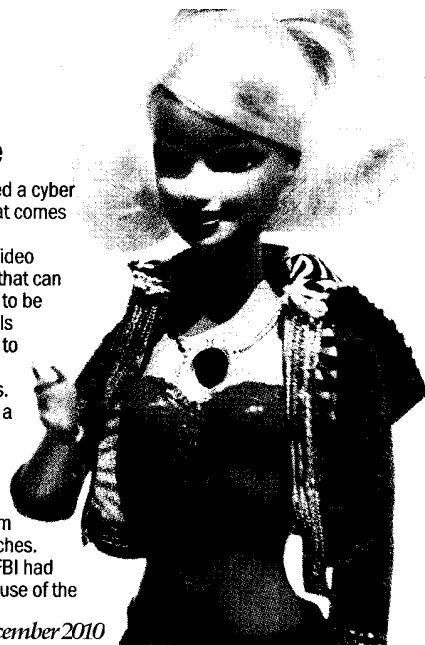
SAN FRANCISCO. The FBI has issued a cyber crime alert on a new Barbie doll that comes with a hidden video camera.

Mattel's Barbie Video Girl has a video camera lens built into its necklace that can record up to 30 minutes of footage to be downloaded on a computer. Officials warn that it could possibly be used to produce child pornography, but say they don't have any reported crimes. The FBI's Sacramento office issued a report with the warning last month.

FBI spokesman Steve Dupre says the alert was inadvertently sent to the media but was meant for law enforcement agencies advising them not to overlook the doll during searches.

A Mattel spokeswoman said the FBI had confirmed no reported incidents of use of the doll for criminal activity.

The Age, 9 December 2010



Packed to the rafters with product placement ads

RICHARD CLUNE
IN SYDNEY

A CAN of Coca-Cola sitting on the bar at Summer Bay's surf club or Julie Rafter feeding her family Kellogg's for breakfast — Channel 7 is set to rake in hundreds of thousands of dollars in product placement.

In an Australian TV drama first, the network has signed a multimillion-dollar deal with UK company MirriAd to digitally place products in its popular shows *Packed To The Rafters* and *Home and Away*.

"We've come to an agreement to use one of our 'hubs', a bit of technology, on their

premises and they can then analyse any shows they like and any shows they think are appropriate for this style of advertising," MirriAd CEO Mark Popkiewicz said from London.

Mr Popkiewicz expects the first digitally placed products to appear in coming months.

"TV is a reflection of our lives and having brands as part of the show we love is perfectly natural. I agree the balance has to be kept right and we have to make sure the right brand is in the right place — not too many, just get it right," he said.

Seven's head of drama John Holmes denied concerns about

the new technology, which could see the Rafters' dining-room table crammed with products that were not present at the time of filming.

"This won't impact on me or the drama department," he said, adding he had the right to veto any images deemed inappropriate.

The Sunday Mail, 2 January 2011

games

mike
wilcox

To satisfy those baying for blood

The fate of R18+ classification is closer to being decided but it may take longer to enact.

THE introduction of an adults-only classification for video games is on the agenda for the meeting of state and federal attorneys-general tomorrow in Canberra but there is no certainty a decision will be made or that it could even be acted upon for months.

Observers say that even if the proposed R18+ classification were approved, it could take at least a year for governments, game publishers and retailers to introduce the system.

Should this classification be introduced, it would no longer be necessary for developers of games such as *Left 4 Dead 2* to create toned-down versions that meet the MA15+ classification. Australian gamers would also start seeing titles such as *Deadly Premonition* by Rising Star Games, which chose not to release the game in Australia.

Tony Reed, the chief execut-

ive of the Game Developers' Association of Australia, which represents more than 50 companies, says the association supports the introduction of the adult category because it would limit the availability of unsuitable video games to minors.

"We need parity across the classification system, so video games are viewed with the same guidelines as books and films," Mr Reed says.

The public consultation and inquiry process over the potential overhaul of the censorship system has been lengthy.

The classification ministers had sought a report on links between aggressive behaviour and violent video games, which the federal Minister for Home Affairs and Justice, Brendan O'Connor, says had been inconclusive. "I'm keen to proceed with making this important decision, based on solid and



The attorneys-general will discuss whether to introduce an adults-only rating for games.

robust evidence," Mr O'Connor says. "This comprehensive review adds to the material ministers can rely on to make their decision."

This will be hopeful news: following the release of a discussion paper by Mr O'Connor this time last year calling for public comment, 98 per cent of the 60,000 respondents were in favour of the classification.

A former deputy director of the Office of Film and Literature Classification, Paul Hunt, says a decision will be made when all the attorneys-general are ready and not as a response to public pressure.

Victoria's participant at the meeting, Attorney-General Robert Clark, has only been in the job a little over a week. His predecessor Rob Hulls had been instrumental in setting up the public consultation process for the review.

Even if a decision is made, the work must continue in each state. "Then you have the potential spanner in the works when the legislative changes go to Parliament," Mr Hunt says.

"While all the attorneys-general and the federal government might agree to it, the legislation may be put aside for some reason for further discussion or investigation, which would delay the process. While I'm not saying that is likely, it is certainly possible."

He says any classification decision could be reversed.

"Any decision is likely to stand for a while but, at the end of the day, if for some reason they decide that it was a bad idea, then they do have the power to change their decision."

"Politically, it might look a bit silly but they can certainly change it if they want to."

The Age Green Guide, 9 December 2010

Battle looms on games rating

WEST Australian MPs want to scuttle a push by the Gillard government for the introduction of an adults-only classification for video games.

Canberra will launch the bid to ban the sale to children of games with one-on-one killing such as *Call of Duty* at a meeting of state and federal law officials this week.

The bid to introduce an R18+ rating could collapse if any states veto the plan.

South Australia has previously opposed such a step and a group of WA parliamentarians is urging state Attorney-General Christian Porter to block the move.

Home Affairs and Justice Minister Brendan O'Connor said the R18+ rating would provide better guidance for parents and keep unsuitable material from children and teenagers.

"Children and teenagers shouldn't be exposed to the gratuitous sex, violence and adult themes that are contained in some computer games," he said in a statement yesterday. Mr

O'Connor said "dozens" of games now classified as MA15+ in Australia were available only to adults in other countries.

"If the new category is introduced, it could result in computer games that are currently classified MA15+ being reclassified R18+, providing a new level of protection for children."

A decision on the matter is expected on Friday at a meeting of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General.

Mr O'Connor yesterday released the results of Galaxy research to back the commonwealth case. The survey suggests strong support for an R18+ classification.

Federal opposition legal affairs spokesman George Brandis said Canberra must ensure consistent treatment of films, DVDs and games.

Under the plan, games that are currently refused classification that do not meet the standard required for R18+ classification will remain banned.

CHRISTIAN KERR, AAP
The Australian, 6 December 2010

Rethink on film ratings

MARK DODD

AUSTRALIA is set for an overhaul of its national classification system covering films, DVDs, publications and computer games — a long overdue move driven by dramatic changes in media technology.

Details of the review, to be conducted by the Australian Law Reform Commission, were announced yesterday by federal Attorney-General Robert McClelland and Home Affairs Minister Brendan O'Connor.

Current classification categories would be part of the review, Mr O'Connor said. "When the National Classification Scheme began, classifiable content and

the way it was delivered to consumers was relatively static," he said. "Today, films can be watched in a cinema, on DVD, on TV or downloaded. Many games include significant film segments to tell stories, and some films have interactive content."

The review comes in the midst of a debate about legalising the sale of violent video games previously unavailable in shops.

Mr McClelland decided earlier this month to draw up guidelines for the creation of an R18+ classification but angered many family and Christian groups.

On December 10, a meeting of Australia's attorneys-general failed in a bid to agree on an adult classification for video games.

The Australian, 22 December 2010

Agreement to review planned filter laws

ANDREW COLLEY
CENSORSHIP

THE federal government is on track for an April start to its review of classification laws needed for its planned internet filtering legislation.

A spokesman for Home Affairs Minister Brendan O'Connor said state and territory censorship ministers had agreed to the review at Friday's meeting of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General in Canberra.

He said the ministers had agreed to refer the review, which is needed before the government can complete its filter legislation, to the Australian Law Reform Commission.

The ALRC was yet to receive terms of reference for the inquiry but a commission spokeswoman said it wouldn't be able to start work on it until at least April.

The commission works only on two reviews at any given time.

"The review was agreed to by ministers at SCAG on Friday and it will involve the entire classification system," Mr O'Connor's spokesman said.

If passed into law, the filter legislation, a 2007 Labor election promise, would require internet companies to block content placed on black lists of material refused classification (RC).

The government was expected to put its filter legislation before parliament late this year, but facing pressure from anti-filter

activists and academics who said its scope was too broad, Communications Minister Stephen Conroy decided in July to put it on hold while he sought a review of RC content.

Senator Conroy's intended targets for the legislation include child pornography and content that incites racial hatred, crime and terrorism; and material that would be refused classification in films, books and magazines.

But some academics raised concerns that under the scheme in its current form, news and current affairs could be censored.

In March, UNSW Journalism and Media Research director Catharine Lumby said that "using the RC category and applying it across this new environment is crazy. It's irrational and it's not good public policy".

The internet industry has been fighting the legislation but in July Optus, Telstra and Primus voluntary agreed to start blocking a list of child pornography sites from mid-next year.

The Internet Industry Association recommended that other ISPs follow suit in an effort to head off a mandatory legislation scheme.

"Our objective here is to take advantage of the window that's been offered through the deferral of the legislation to try and take some of the political heat out of the issue once and for all," IIA chief Peter Coroneos said.

Internet giant Google has retained a firm anti-filter stance. *The Australian, 14 December 2010*

Critic's view

paul kalina

Me and My Monsters

Channel Ten, 8pm

I'M LOOKING forward to the day Australia signs a TV co-production treaty with North Korea or Albania, if only to see the most overused recipe of the "co-pro pudding" reinvented. The old family-moves-abroad chestnut would require a reasonable amount of tweaking should anyone try to set a show in either of those places. However, it fits this British-Australian kids' show like a glove. Unbeknown to the Carlson family, which has reluctantly relocated from Australia to London for high-flying dad's new job, they have moved into a haunted house, much to the pleasure of tyke Eddie (Macaulay Keeper), who takes great delight in the three monsters that have taken over the house's basement. Monsters only in the sense that Humphrey B. Bear was a real grizzly, they're overgrown buffoons with a healthy appetite for goofiness, noisy farts and practical jokes, and bear the unmistakable stamp of the Jim Henson Creature Shop with their offbeat, silly, mischievous yet engaging antics. Given the production-line dross that passes for kiddie material these days, this live-action comedy qualifies as top-shelf entertainment. The 13-episode series was filmed in Sydney.

The Age Green Guide, 16 December 2010

Has the baby rattle gone the way of the dinosaur? Last week I spotted three bubs in prams watching movies on iPhones.

Barbara Worrall, Mosman, NSW

The Australian, 14 January 2011

Studying how youth communicate

JILL ROWBOTHAM

JANE Burns wants to reach the 70 per cent of young people with mental health problems who never seek help, and the federal government has just funded a big project to help her do it.

The Co-operative Research Centre for Young People, Technology and Wellbeing was one of four groups funded in the latest CRC round, announced last week by Innovation Minister Kim Carr.

"Young people are communicating in ways we have never imagined," Dr Burns said.

"Research needs to be done to see how they are using technology and how we can use it to empower young people to improve their mental health and wellbeing."

Dr Burns is executive director

of the new CRC and head of research for the Inspire Foundation, the non-government organisation leading the project.

The \$27 million federal allocation, beginning in June next year, will help fund the compilation of the first consolidated Australian data on young people's technology use and research that will help parents, community and professionals respond to their cyber safety and mental health needs.

"We have national data on how they use [technology], but not on how it [affects] them: whether they are safe online and if it makes a difference to their mental health," Dr Burns said.

The centre was one of two new CRCs funded. The other was the CRC for Mental Health, which was allocated \$23m. Two existing

centres were given funding extensions. The CRC for High Integrity Australian Pork was allocated another \$20m and the CRC for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment was given \$29m.

Altogether \$100m was announced for the projects, part of the federal program that seeks to establish long-term collaborations between research organisations and businesses, communities and governments.

According to CRC Association chief executive Tony Peacock, the program has attracted \$3.3 billion of federal funding in its 19-year history and now has 42 centres.

"It began with the Clever Country initiative," Professor Peacock said. "The OECD encourages countries to spend more on research and development and

Australia doesn't spend enough, although it's going in the right direction. We are in the OECD's top third for federal government R&D but in the bottom half for business expenditure on R&D."

Centres can be funded for up to 10 years. When its term expires, a CRC can seek other arrangements, such as becoming a Centre of Excellence under the Australian Research Council, or partnering with organisations such as CSIRO or a university.

There are eight CRCs whose terms ended this year including those specialising in molecular plant breeding, sugar, biosecurity, grain food and irrigation futures and desert knowledge.

The work of the desert knowledge group will continue within the CRC for Regional Economic Participation.

The Australian, 15 December 2010

Squinkies and Zoobles on the march

ANN ZIMMERMAN



A Zooble from Petagonia

THERE'S something you need to know about two of this year's hottest holiday toys: your kids won't let you buy just one.

In the tradition of Hot Wheels cars, Beanie Babies animals and Pokemon trading cards, Squinkies and Zoobles toys have been engineered to make children crave them in great numbers.

There are 180 different Zoobles, tiny plastic animals with big eyes. Zoobles, from the land of "Petagonia", cost about \$US6 and roll up into a ball that pops open.

Even tinier Squinkies number 300 so far, ranging from babies and princesses to fish and elephants. Each fits in a plastic capsule. A pack of 16 sells for \$US10.

Squinkies and Zoobles hit stores in August, and the maker of Squinkies knew it had a hit when Target sold out in a week. It now makes a million figures a month and can't keep up with demand.

A collectible toy that sparks a craze is the industry's Holy Grail. It's the gift that keeps on selling. "More like the gift that keeps on taking my money," says Linda Meadow, a Santa Monica, California, mother of three girls, whose 9-year-old is obsessed with Squinkies.

In a twist on the razor-and-blades business model, Zoobles and Squinkies come with expens-

ive accessories: a Zoobles treehouse is \$US40, a Squinkies dispenser \$US20.

"If you get the fever, it does start to get expensive," says Anton Rabie, co-CEO of Spin Master, the Toronto-based maker of Zoobles and Bakugan, a 2008 line of collectible toys for boys.

The Zoobles' appeal resides in the way the figures transform from spheres and in their characteristics, which recall the Japanese anime style, Mr Rabie says.

It takes more than a long cast of characters for a collectible to spark a craze. Bill Nichols, head of Blip Toys, of Minnetonka, Minnesota, the maker of Squinkies, says his toy owes much of its appeal to little girls' love of highly detailed objects.

Ripping a page from the Beanie Babies playbook, Blip Toys is stoking demand for Squinkies and limiting distribution. It is deliberately producing some figures in small numbers, prompting repeat trips to the store to find them.

Toys "R" Us recognised Squinkies' allure early on and contracted with Blip to be the only store to stock the rare blue monkey and yellow pig Squinkies.

Nichols says creating rare Squinkies is part of the toy's "surprise factor". Some parents call it manipulation.

Toy makers with a hot new collectible worry it will be a one-season wonder. Their customers,

after all, are fickle. Zhu Zhu Pets, the robotic hamsters with individual personalities, while still selling, aren't the sensation they were last year, despite the launch of Kung Zhu Pets' line of fighting hamsters geared to boys.

In the 1930s, a former Hollywood costume designer created the Nancy Ann Storybook Dolls, one of the first toy series expressly designed and marketed to be collected.

Starting in 1968, Mattel's Hot Wheels die-cast cars became hot collectibles for boys; girls were collecting Barbie dolls.

In the late 1970s, "Star Wars" figures became the first licensed-property blockbuster. But few collectible crazes have ever approached the intensity of the Beanie Baby frenzy in the mid-1990s. When Ty Inc began limiting production of some Beanies, and retiring others, fans and investors drove prices even higher.

Spin Master and Blip are working to come up with more ways to keep children hooked. The next iteration of Zoobles will have a line of mama Zoobles with baby Zooblings in their bellies. Squinkies is creating a line for boys with ninja agents, skater dudes, soldiers and a dice game where players compete to win the opponent's figures.

"Girls have a relationship with their toys," Blip's Nichols says. "Boys want to own all of yours."

The Weekend Australian, 18-19 December 2010

Nintendo boss defends health warning

JURO OSAWA
The Australian, 11 January 2011

THE president of Nintendo has acknowledged the company's recent warning against young children playing its new handheld 3D game machine could hurt its sales, but says the 3DS is not a "dangerous" product.

"We are being proactive about informing our customer, even though it may not necessarily be positive for our sales," said Satoru Iwata, Nintendo's president, in a rare interview.

The health-related warning, which said children six years old and younger shouldn't play games in 3D mode on the soon-to-be-released 3DS handheld game device, was meant to be a

precautionary measure to inform customers and also fend off possible litigation, Mr Iwata said.

The company said on its website late last month that looking at 3D images for long periods of time could have an adverse effect on eyesight development. The warning caused a stir, in part because it didn't provide details on the medical evidence.

Kyoto-based Nintendo has become one of the most successful gaming companies in the world. It hopes that the new 3DS will transform the gaming landscape like its Wii home console has done since its 2006 release and help the company regain sales momentum.

Last year, Nintendo reported declines in revenue and operating profit in the April-September

period, signalling that the fast pace of growth, thanks to the Wii and the portable DS, might be fizzling out. Sales of the DS fell 43 per cent during that period, from the same time a year earlier.

The market for games has become more crowded with newcomers: cheaper games are now offered online or as applications for mobile devices, such as Apple's iPhone. Nintendo hopes that the 3DS will help kick-start a new cycle of growth and also remind people that well-crafted games are still worth the money.

Mr Iwata, an unassuming 51-year-old former programmer, joined Nintendo in 2000 and took the helm in 2002 as the company's first president unrelated to its founding family. He has led the

company through a period of rapid growth since then, with the success of its DS and Wii game machines helping the home of Super Mario win a broad customer base, most crucially winning over people who previously had little interest in videogames.

The 3DS goes on sale first in Japan on February 26 and then in the US and Europe in March. In Japan, 3DS will cost about \$US300.

Mr Iwata said the company was sticking with its shipment target of 4 million 3DS units worldwide by the end of March; 1.5 million of those will probably be in Japan. The handheld console is among the first mainstream products to deliver 3D images without requiring special glasses.

One big shift for Nintendo with the launch of the 3DS is that it is working more closely with outside software developers, rather than relying mostly on popular in-house games to drive the initial hardware sales. At a three-day 3DS tryout event this weekend for consumers held in Chiba Prefecture, a Tokyo suburb, visitors tried 16 games for the 3DS, including new titles from the Resident Evil and Street Fighter franchises.

Parents seemed, for the most part, non-plussed about the recent warning. Toshiaki Iwata (no relation), who has a three-year-old, said: "I've heard about the safety concerns but I wonder if there's any clear scientific basis for it. Right now, I'm not so worried about it."

NEW PUBLICATIONS

ADVERTISING

van Reijmersdal, EA; et al(2010)
The effects of interactive brand placements in online games on children's cognitive, affective, and conative brand responses.

Computers in Human Behavior, Vol 26, No. 6, Pp1787- 1794

Spitzer, M (2010)

Impacts to children of TV advertising for unhealthy foods.

Nervenheilkunde, Vol 29, No. 7-8, Pp419

Fried, BG; et al (2010)

Adolescent gambling: Temperament, sense of coherence and exposure to advertising.

Addiction Research & Theory, Vol 18, No. 5, Pp586-598

COMPUTERS & INTERNET

McAfee (2010)

The secret online lives of teens.

www.mcafee.com

Bavelier, D; et al (2010)

Children, wired: for better and for worse.

Neuron, Vol. 67, No. 5, Pp692-701

Law, DM; et al (2010)

To control or not to control? Parenting behaviours and adolescent online aggression.

Computers in Human Behavior, Vol. 26, No. 6, Pp1651-1656

Patchin, JW; et al(2010)

Changes in adolescent online social networking behaviors from 2006 to 2009.

Computers in Human Behavior, Vol 26, No. 6, Pp1818-1821

Wilkinson, D & Thelwall, M (2010)

Social network site changes over time: The case of MySpace.

Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, Vol. 61, No. 11, Pp2311-2323

Buelga, S; et al (2010)

Cyberbullying: Adolescent victimization through mobile phone and internet.

Psicothema, Vol 22, No. 4, Pp784-789

CONFERENCE PAPERS

Innovation and Creativity in

Education – 2nd World Conference on Educational Sciences, in Istanbul, Turkey. Vol. 2, No. 2

Emilia, C (2010)

Promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

Pp1781-1785

Tabone, S & Messina, L (2010)

Personal uses of the Internet and perceptions of parental mediation: a research with children 10 and 11 years old.

Pp2077-2082

Ivrendi, A & Ozdemir, AA (2010)

Mothers' evaluation of cartoons' influence on early childhood children.

Pp2561-2566

Baker, OE & Tanrikulu, I (2010)

Psychological consequences of cyber bullying experiences among Turkish secondary school children.

Pp2771-2776

Luciana, RP (2010)

One minute more: Adolescent addiction for virtual world.

Pp3706-3710

Gokcearslan, AA (2010)

The effect of cartoon movies on children's gender development.

Pp5202-5207

MEDIA EFFECTS - EDUCATION

Harrison Group (2010)

2010 kids & family reading report.

www.scholastic.com/readingreport

Linebarger, DI & Piotrowski, JT (2010)

Structure and strategies in children's educational television: The roles of program type and learning strategies in children's learning.

Child Development, Vol 82, No. 5, Pp1582-1597

Steemers, J (2010)

The BBC's role in the changing production ecology of preschool television in Britain.

Television & New Media, Vol 11, No. 1, Pp37-61

MEDIA EFFECTS – HEALTH

Smith, B; et al (2010)

Parental influences on child physical activity and screen viewing time: a population based study.

BMC Public Health, Vol 10, Art. 593, 8 Oct 2010

MEDIA EFFECTS – SOCIAL

Gentile, D (2010)

Are motion picture ratings reliable and valid?

Journal of Adolescent Health, Vol 47, No. 5, Pp423-424

Hofferth, SL (2010)

Home media and children's achievement and behavior.

Child Development, Vol 81, No. 5, Pp1598-1619

Bazzini, D; et al (2010)

Do animated Disney characters portray and promote the beauty-goodness stereotype?

Journal of Applied Social Psychology, Vol 40, No. 10, Pp2687-2709

VIDEO & COMPUTER GAMES

Desai, RA; et al (2010)

Video-gaming among high school students: Health correlates, gender differences, and problematic gaming.

Pediatrics, Vol. 126, No. 6, PpE1414-E1424

King, Dr. Daniel (2010)

An R18+ classification for video games serves everyone's best interest.

viewpoint. Perspectives on Public Policy, No. 4, Pp39-44

Van Rooij, AJ; et al(2010)

Video game addiction and social responsibility.

Addiction Research, Vol 18, No. 5, Pp489-493

Weinstein, AM (2010)

Computer and video game addiction – a comparison between users and non-game users.

American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse, Vol 36, No. 5, Pp268-276

Mukherjee, S (2010)

Children, gender and videogames: towards a relational approach to multimedia.

Journal of Gender Studies, Vol 19, No. 3, Pp326-327

VIOLENCE

Duncanson, K (2010)

The scene of violence: Cinema crime effect.

Australia and New Zealand Journal of Criminology, Vol 43, No. 2, Pp385-388

Perez-Ugena, A; et al (2010)

Violence on TV: An analysis of children's programming.

Comunicar, No. 35, Pp105-112

CONFERENCES

Growing up solid:

Integrating emotional and mental health throughout infancy, childhood and adolescence

12-14 May 2011, Perth, WA

www.sapmea.asn.au/aaimhi&fcap2011/

