



The corporate takeover of childhood: who's paying the price? The 3rd Australian Conference on Children and the Media

Presented by **Australian Council on Children and the Media & the Children and Families Research Centre, Macquarie University**

Our society has many ways of convincing children that their happiness, and their very identity, depend on what they buy and what they own. The evidence shows that consumerism doesn't make children happier or healthier. This raises the question: How can we make sure healthy child development is given due consideration in exploitative commercial environments? This conference will explore the issues, review the research and discuss possible remedies

Speakers: Prof Stephen Kline (author *Globesity*), Jane Caro (Gruen Planet), Prof Rob Moodie, Prof Elizabeth Handsley, Prof Douglas Gentile, Dr Wayne Warburton, Dr C Glenn Cupit, Prof Sharon Beder (author *This little kiddy went to market*), Dr Wendy Varney, Julie Gale (KF2BK) and Sarah Court (ACCC)

Friday 9 March 2012, 9am - 5pm

Telstra 242 Conference Centre

242 Exhibition Street (cnr Lonsdale St), MELBOURNE

EARLYBIRD REGISTRATIONS CLOSE 16 JANUARY 2012

www.childrenandmedia.org.au

Holiday movies

ACCM reviewers are busy reviewing the movies likely to attract children over the Christmas holiday period. As usual they are looking out for violent content and anything else which may scare or disturb children and the *Know Before You Go* reviews also advise parents about sexual references, product placement and coarse language.

Parents should be aware that the latest movie in the popular *Twilight* series is likely to attract tweens and teens. *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1*, was originally rated MA15+ by the Australian Classification Board on 9 November. After an appeal, it was reviewed by the classification Review Board and reclassified, unaltered, as M on 14 November. ACCM's reviewer warns that it is by far the most disturbing of the *Twilight* films so far and not suitable for children under 15. It has disturbing themes and scenes of childbirth.

Other films reviewed so far, with our reviewers' advice, are:

- *Santa's Apprentice* (G) Parental guidance recommended under 6 due to some disturbing scenes
- *Arthur Christmas* (G) Parental guidance recommended under 5 (Scary scenes)
- *Jack and Jill* (PG) Not recommended under 8, Parental guidance recommended 8-13 (Violence and crude humour)

Reviews coming soon include:

- *Puss in Boots*
- *The Adventures of TinTin*
- *Happy Feet 2*
- *Dolphin Tale*
- *We bought a zoo*

Full reviews can be found on the ACCM website at:

http://www.youngmedia.org.au/media-children/07_04_choose_films.htm

STOP PRESS

New report: TV and young children.

On Thursday 8 December *Australian Research Alliance Children & Youth (ARACY)* published a comprehensive report 'Television and young children – Quality, choice and the role of parents: what the experts and parents say'. The report was developed by ACCM and co-author Margaret Chandler presented the findings at a free webinar.

As part of the report, researchers spoke with Australian parents and grandparents of young children aged 2-8. They found that parents agree with the experts that they need quality TV. However, not all parents are aware of the essential role they must play to make sure TV is a positive in their child's life. Parents worry that television is bad for children, but many let them watch what they want and only half have rules about what children watch.

The full report and discussion of the issues on the *ARACY Children and media blog* can be found at www.aracy.org.au





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EDITORIAL

Is Australia good to kids?

Traditionally Santa rewards good kids, and ignores the bad. If Australia were to be rated on how it treats its kids, would it be rewarded or ignored?

Of course we can claim that we don't have child slave labour, we don't send children up chimneys or down mines. Most children have access to food and safe drinking water, and clothes. They can attend school, have their health checked, play sport, and have access to a wide range of entertainment and many consumer goods.

But are they happy? A number of surveys indicate that Australian children are not doing well in the happiness stakes. Mission Australia's recent study (see Clips and Cuts) showed that body image was the third highest concern of children. Social commentator Richard Eckersley, speaking at the second Australian Conference on Children and the Media in March this year said "The orthodox view is that young people have never been healthier; mortality rates continue to fall, and most report that they are healthy, happy and satisfied with their lives. This perspective tends to run counter to claims of media harm. However, a wider analysis of data on young people's health suggests it is declining, especially through increased rates of mental illness and obesity. The media are implicated in these trends in multiple and complex ways"

Where is this unhappiness coming from? Why are children so concerned about their self image? In almost all the media to which children are exposed (and for hours each day), children are bombarded with both overt and covert commercial messages for things they "need" to buy. Do they understand the sources of these messages, and can they cope? And what is the impact on children's health and wellbeing, and developing sense of self and of where happiness really lies?

Stephen Kline, Professor of Communication at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, has recently published *Globesity, food marketing and family lifestyles* in which he critically examines the debate about whether the modern child is a savvy consumer or a vulnerable child, using the ethical frames of 'informed choice and consent' in consumer decision-making. He concludes that as 'consumers in the making' young children are not fully cognizant of persuasive intent and all children are susceptible to persuasion, therefore, children warrant being treated as special cases, for their vulnerability to be acknowledged, and for them to be protected from the risks communicated by marketing. He argues that children's special status as vulnerable consumers in the risk society has made them "canaries in the coal mine of twenty-first century lifestyle politics". (Kline, 2010)

Some marketers claim that we need to expose children to advertising in order to 'toughen them

up'. Jennifer Hill says that "the depictions of the child consumer have been fashioned in a way that makes marketing and advertising towards children appear as a benign, even liberating undertaking... marketers have touted the belief that children are better equipped to resist the power of advertising than their counterparts of several decades ago ... the free market teaches children to be savvy, discerning consumers." (Hill, Jennifer 2011)



Barbara Biggins
OAM
Hon CEO

As Hill concludes, "to resist and reject the undesirable aspects of consumer culture is challenging, particularly after parents and children have been socialised and steeped in the culture from childhood.... Many of us fail to detect the degree of effect that consumerism imparts."

There's worldwide concern about these effects, and indeed a forthcoming UK conference is calling it a new category of child abuse. (Is Corporate and Commercial Exploitation of Children and Young People a Form of Significant Harm? www.ncofca.org.uk)

At ACCM's next conference on March 9, *The Corporate Takeover of childhood: who's paying the price?*, we'll be examining the psychological and physical impacts of consumerism on children, and taking up some of the challenges. We sorely need to if Australia is to be seen as being good to its kids.

REFERENCES

Hill, Jennifer (2011) "Endangered childhoods: how consumerism is impacting child and youth identity" *Media Culture and Society* 33: 347

Kline, Stephen (2010) *Globesity, food marketing and family lifestyles*. US, Palgrave Macmillan.

And the awards go to....

Two organisations working against the commercialisation of childhood have announced the winners of annual awards.

The US based Campaign for a Commercial Free childhood (CCFC) has announced the winners of its annual TOADY (Toys Oppressive And Destructive to Young Children) Award. An "iPad" for babies, has won!

More information can be found on the TCCFC website

<http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org/actions/toady2011winner.html>

Meanwhile the Australian organisation, *Parents Jury* has announced the winners of its seventh annual *Fame and Shame* awards for food advertising to children, chosen by parents vote.

The results for attributes such as *Pester Power*, *Smoke and Mirrors*, and *Bad Sport* can be found at :

<http://www.parentsjury.org.au/>

Teen gamers addicted

Experts warn of growing mental health disorder

DISTRESSED families are flooding psychiatrists with pleas for help for children dangerously hooked on computer games and the internet.

The condition known as "pathological internet misuse" is growing so rapidly among adolescents and young adults that it could soon be formally recognised as a mental health disorder.

International mental health experts are considering including "video game addiction and internet addiction"

cont ...

they have been up much of the night playing video games such as Minecraft.

Australian mental health specialists believe formal recognition of internet addiction will put pressure on governments to make more treatment options available.

Sydney psychiatrist Philip Tam believes internet addiction should be classified as a disorder. Dr Tam, a leader in the field, said a website would be launched this week to help carers, families and



in the next edition of globally recognised *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* "to encourage further study".

One Sydney mother said her 13-year-old son was so addicted to computer games

counsellors "address the growing and complex problem of internet addiction".

The Network for Internet Investigation and Research in Australia will be run by specialists with a "common passion in assessing, treating, researching and educating the public and professionals" about internet addictions.

"... such conditions are complex in nature and often overlap with common mental health disorders," he said.

Jocelyn Brewer, a member

he had attended school only intermittently over the past two years and violently resisted attempts to remove him from the screen.

"He starts punching holes through the walls, throwing things around and threatening you ... all this has to do with the most addictive game *World of Warcraft*," she said.

Parents have told of children as young as 10 being found asleep at their home computer when they are due to leave for school because

of Philip Tam's expert group, said girls also could "become obsessed with Facebook".

"There's a massive divide (between teachers and parents) in expertise about kids' use of technology," she said.

TELL US

What's been your experience?

24-hour news
adelaide.now.com.au

The Advertiser, 28 November 2011

Pioneer in education

A FORMER Thinker in Residence whose tenure sparked the creation of a State Government super-department has died in Canada, aged 84.

Dr Fraser Mustard, a world expert on childhood development, was a South Australian Thinker in Residence in 2006-07.

Premier Jay Weatherill said his report was "instrumental" in setting up the state's Department for Education and Child Development, which overlooks learning for all SA minors.

The Advertiser, 19 November 2011

Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee

The Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee is inquiring into the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games)

Amendment (Online Games) Bill 2011. Report date: 14 March 2012. Submissions: online at the website or emailed to legcon.sen@aph.gov.au by 13 January 2012; information:

www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/legcon_ctte.

Tel: (02) 6277 3560.

The Australian, 23 November 2011

SMALL TALK

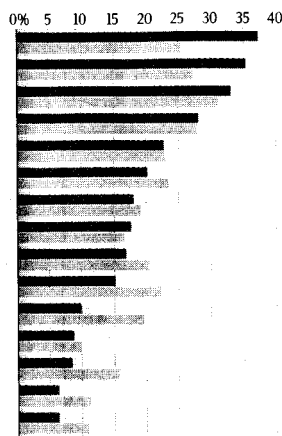
THE third Australian Conference on Children and the Media will be held on March 9 in Melbourne. Speakers include *Gruen Planet's* Jane Caro, who will talk about industry perspectives on advertising and marketing to children, and *Globesity* author Professor Stephen Kline.

The Australian, 28 November 2011

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE WORRY ABOUT

● 2011 ● 2010

SCHOOL OR STUDY PROBLEMS
COPING WITH STRESS
BODY IMAGE
FAMILY CONFLICT
BULLYING/EMOTIONAL ABUSE
PERSONAL SAFETY
DEPRESSION
THE ENVIRONMENT
DRUGS
SUICIDE
ALCOHOL
DISCRIMINATION
PHYSICAL/SEXUAL ABUSE
SELF-HARM
SEXUALITY (RELATIONSHIPS, HEALTH, IDENTITY)



Source: Mission Australia

Young stressed over looks, learning

STEPHEN LUNN

YOUNG women are far more worried about their bodies than even two years ago.

And anxiety about succeeding at school has increased for all young Australians over the past few years.

The findings in Mission Australia's 10th National Survey of Young Australians, published today, give pause for thought about the intensifying pressures teenagers face and who is there to help. While parents are the first port of call for most young people wanting to discuss their problems,

one in five 11 to 24-year-olds say they have no one to turn to.

The survey, which asked 46,000 young people to rank 15 issues according to which most concerned them, found "school/study problems" was the biggest issue. It was included by 37.3 per cent of respondents in their top three.

Second was "coping with stress" — at 35.4 per cent — just ahead of "body image" at 33.1 per cent.

Just four years ago, only 18.6 per cent of respondents put "school/study" in their top three, and 20.3 per cent cited "coping with stress".

But for young women, body image has also become one of the top three issues. It was included by 27.4 per cent of those surveyed in 2009 and by 42.5 per cent this year.

Mission Australia spokeswoman Eleri Morgan-Thomas said the most disturbing aspect of the body image finding was that young women were aware of efforts to promote positive body image but still fretted about their own bodies.

"They say 'I shouldn't be self-conscious about my body, I know the photos in the magazines are Photoshopped, but even so I'm still worried about it'."

The Australian, 30 November 2011

Nanny us over junk food

The Advertiser, 19 November 2011

SHOULD the Government decide what we watch on TV? I'll bet most of you would say no.

No one wants Julia Gillard on the couch next to us, grabbing the remote control and dictating what programs we can watch. (I'm tipping she would probably ban *At Home With Julia*.)

There is, however, a role for tighter government regulation of TV advertising, particularly junk-food commercials aimed at kids.

Let's face it, that's what most of the ads seem to be these days.

Any regulation of the fast-food industry leads to accusations of an out-of-control nanny state.

I don't get it.

Sometimes when parents aren't doing their job, they need nannies to step in and help them manage the kids.

That's what needs to happen in this case.

In our house, the kids see ads for fast food or the latest trendy new snack and within seconds are pestering us to buy the new Mars Bar-flavoured deep-fried triple beef burger with bonus toy.

Yes, parents can say no. We all need to do a bit more of that. It's the role of govern-

ment, however, to help parents make good decisions. This is one instance where multi-national corporations rather than parents are calling the shots.

Too many fat kids are paying the price.

As CSIRO research commissioned by the SA Government shows, voluntary regulation of fast-food advertising is a farce.

The study showed a voluntary bid to cut all junk-food advertising during C-rated

calling on the food and grocery industry to do the right thing.

It's like asking a bar owner to oversee a voluntary ban on drinking. It's just not going to happen.

If Health Minister John Hill is really serious about addressing this problem, he must move away from voluntary codes and look at actual bans during both C and G-rated shows.

The Government also should crack down on prod-

uct placement in TV shows commonly watched by children has been a waste of time.

The problem, as most parents would spot immediately, is that most kids watch prime-time TV, which does not have such restrictions. So although they don't see junk-food ads during *The Shak*, they do see them during *Junior Master Chef*.

This is why fast-food companies love self-regulation. It doesn't work, and it gives them a way to look good while doing nothing.

It is no good, however, for the State Government to keep

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sumption of unhealthy food in teens.

Its research, involving 12,000 Australian high school students aged 12 to 17 years, found many teens like to try new products they've seen advertised.

The study also found greater exposure to commercial TV, print and billboard advertising and online marketing were linked to a greater consumption of unhealthy food, especially snacks full of sugar, fat and salt.

As a result of the study, to be published early next year in the international journal

Appetite, researchers want the regulation of junk-food advertising to include not only television but also print and online sites as well.

It's a good idea. Mr Hill said he would host a national seminar to look at those issues next year.

He must be willing, however, to include compulsory bans rather than just voluntary codes.

Otherwise, what's the point?

A few decades ago, there were tobacco ads on TV, in movies and on billboards. Now all such ads are banned and even the sight of a cigarette pack in a shop is prohibited in many states.

Why not go down the same path for advertising and promotion of greasy, fatty, salty, sugary food and drinks aimed at children?

If it's a choice between the junk-food industry and the nanny state, I'll pick the nanny any day.



Kids' fast food so bad it's 'abuse'

SUSIE O'BRIEN

SOME popular kids' fast food meals have nearly triple the saturated fat as well as twice the salt recommended for children's meals, new research has found.

The findings have prompted *The Biggest Loser* trainer Michelle Bridges to declare that parents who feed their kids lots of fast food are akin to child abusers.

The Advertiser can reveal for the first time in Australia that the worse fast food companies are McDonald's and Hungry Jacks.

Some of their children's meals have more than 1000 kilojoules more than what should be consumed in one sitting. Some have more saturated fat and salt in a serve than kids aged four and eight should eat in an entire day.

Cancer Council NSW assessed 199 children's meals from Chicken Treat, Hungry Jacks, KFC, McDonald's, Oporto and Red Rooster.

PAGE 27: Nanny us over junk food

The Advertiser, 19 Nov 2011

UNLESS FORCED TO, NETWORKS WON'T SHOW LOCAL CONTENT

Quotas should apply to digital multi-channels too

GEOFF BROWN

MAT Baxter's recent piece (Media, October 17) about local programming no longer requiring content regulation was at best simplistic and at worst disingenuous.

First, a correction. The ABC and SBS have never been subject to the Australian Content Standard under the Broadcasting Ser-

cont ...

lian programming. It's an obligation they have to carry in exchange for a free public spectrum licence, something that always seems to be forgotten in these kinds of debate.

The Screen Producers Association of Australia is pushing for content quotas on one mandated multichannel for each of the networks, among other suggestions for regulatory mechanisms after analogue is switched off in 2013.

The simple truth is, were there no regulation, there would be very few Australian programs on free-to-air commercial networks. To see this obvious fact writ large,

services Act 1992. However, there is discussion about subjecting both public broadcasters to the same local content quotas as the commercial free-to-air networks.

Second, the notion that because Australian programs rate with Australian audiences, there's no longer any need for quotas confuses two issues and does not represent the commercial realities in Australian network television.

There's never been any doubt Australian audiences want to watch Australian shows, but that doesn't mean to say they would be commissioned if there were no regulation. Imported shows, as

look at the programming for the existing multi-channels. Trawl through the TV guides and see how much Australian programming is on 7Two, Gem, Go! 7Mate, Eleven, etc. Hardly any. Why? Because there is no local content requirement on multichannels.

The networks don't have to show Australian programs so they don't. And because these channels are rating, their profits increase even further and the overall Australian programming on our screens is diluted.

The convergence review, a far-reaching and possibly game-changing review of all content

Baxter points out, can be acquired for a fraction of the cost of Australian programming. That doesn't mean to say that imported shows are produced any cheaper in their originating territories; on the contrary, they cost far more than Australian shows to produce, particularly those from the US.

The difference is that the costs of these imported shows are almost always covered by their home territory broadcasters, whereas in Australia, they are not.

Australian networks are the most profitable in the world, and still they moan about the level of licence fees they pay for Austra-

regulation and mechanisms to protect local content, will examine whether quotas should be reinforced for advertising, which would prevent importation of generic ads with just local voiceovers — of course, no need to use talent, to use creative brains to produce anything distinctive or specific, to use local directors and crew, just more coins in the already over-inflated coffers of Madison Avenue, not far from Wall Street.

Geoff Brown is executive director of the Screen Producers Association of Australia. Its annual conference starts today in Sydney

The Australian, 14 November 2011

TV wants classification freedom

MICHAEL BODEY
REGULATION

TELEVISION networks have railed against proposed changes to the classification process and are seeking an exemption from the universal system put forward by the Australian Law Reform Commission.

The television sector has expressed its concerns about key reforms proposed in the ALRC's issues paper on the National Classification Scheme Review, including the overriding principle of a "uniform approach to the same or similar content, regardless of the medium of delivery".

Submissions officially closed on Friday, but the ABC and SBS

have won an extension until November 30. More than 1000 submissions were received in the review, one of six the government is staging into the media industry, including the Convergence Review and the independent print media inquiry.

Representatives of the ABC and SBS met with the ALRC last week to "seek clarification" about some of the issues from the ALRC's comprehensive paper.

Media understands they expressed their concerns about the "one-classification-system-for-all-media" approach outlined in what was perceived to be a particularly prescriptive issues paper.

It is believed the commercial TV networks agree with ABC and SBS's major contention that the

Calls for a more neutral approach

A GRAPHICAL analysis of more than 1000 submissions to the ALRC's National Classification Scheme Review issues paper suggests the most effective means of controlling access to content was parental supervision and filtering, and not overarching regulation.

The textual analysis of submissions by ALRC Commissioner, Professor Terry

Flew produced an analytical "concept tree" that found the term "adults" related to concepts such as "freedom", "government" and "censorship" while the term "children" related to "protect", "violence", "offensive" and "illegal".

Most respondents answered "no" when asked if all content should come under one system, suggesting a desire among submissions for a more platform-neutral approach to classification.

review's aim of what one executive described as a "nice, neat, convergent system" for classifying content need not apply to the TV sec-

tor, which self-regulates its content under the Australian Communications and Media Authority's watch.

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Nor, they will argue, is unification of classification practical in a fragmenting media landscape.

"TV's working well," said a participant in the talks, who asked for anonymity because they are not authorised to comment.

"They're using a sledgehammer to fix problems that apply to film, videogames and other content."

Media has been told the ALRC was "alive to the problems" being expressed by the broadcasters and its issues paper was not "set in stone".

One of the key recommendations from the ALRC was to abolish the current M rating for mature audiences. The recommendation proposes amending the categories for media content under a new Media Content

Act. The categories would include: C (content specifically for children); PG8+ (content appropriate for children aged eight or older, with parental guidance); T13+ (content appropriate for teenagers, similar to the US's PG13+ category); and MA15+ (mature audience), in addition to the current G and R18+ categories.

Television networks argued that the T13+ category would limit their ability to schedule adult drama. They cite the ABC1 drama *The Slap*, which under the proposed regime would become an MA15+ program and be prohibited from broadcast before 9.30pm. The drama, finishing this week, screens at 8.30pm.

The networks planned to argue that the new regime would

impede their independence, particularly the maintenance of the public broadcasters' statutory independence, through actions such as the registration of their classifiers as "authorised industry classifiers" who had been trained and approved by the regulator to screen content.

That is a particularly galling prospect for the networks given that their classification departments remain some of the most stable and experienced areas of the industry.

The networks were not expected to argue with the broader principles of the reforms.

The ALRC is due to deliver its final report and recommendations to Attorney-General Robert McClelland on January 30.

The Australian, 21 November 2011

Games consoles key to moving IPTV off the PC and into the lounge room

SIMON CANNING

GAMES consoles are central players in the battle to move IPTV into the lounge room and away from the PC — users spend nearly half their time watching content on them rather than gaming.

David McLean, head of Microsoft's consumer channels group in Australia, said consoles were critical to the future of IPTV.

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Michael Ephraim, chief executive of Sony Computer Entertainment Australia, said that since the launch of the first Playstation console in 1994 the idea of IPTV had been in the company's sights.

"This was always the plan. When we launched the PS1 the vision was that over the next 10 to 15 years these would become multifunction boxes," he said.

While Microsoft launched its Foxtel IPTV application, Sony

Microsoft 12 months ago made Foxtel available through the Xbox and it has launched other content channels since then.

"I think it's a critical component. We are finding now that 40 per cent of the time people are spending on a console is non-gaming — watching TV, watching movies or listening to music," Mr McLean said.

One of the biggest steps to making IPTV more accessible through

consoles was using the Xbox Kinect controller to allow people to navigate using voice and gestures rather than wrestling with a remote.

"It's not about the device, it's about what you can experience from those devices — let the content come to you the way that you want, but then what can you do with that content," Mr McLean said. "I think you are going to see new forms of entertainment being

created through IPTV." Consoles had traditionally tied consumers to a particular genre of entertainment, but now provided access to a variety of genres.

"Consumers are looking for a single place they can go to to get all of the experiences they like and we have seen an explosion in that."

Consoles make IPTV a seamless experience that doesn't force people to jump between a range of applications.

struck early deals with the Yahoo!7 Network and the ABC to run their Plus7 and iView catch-up TV applications.

The console will launch movie download service Quickflix in coming weeks and also has a world movie service, Mubi, along with dedicated video music streams.

"With the IPTV generation it is how they expect to watch content," Mr Ephraim said.

"Streaming is still in its infancy

but the growth is staggering — over the next year or two, awareness is going to skyrocket."

Mr Ephraim said that while early technology adopters and gamers had driven the first two bursts in sales, it was the final third of the market, late adopters, where IPTV and interactive applications through consoles would see the growth.

"We have a lot of forces working in our favour," he said.

The Australian, 21 November 2011

Big screen backs tax breaks for game developers

MICHAELA BOLAND

IF *Happy Feet 2* the movie is eligible for tax breaks then *Happy Feet 2* the computer game should be eligible for something similar.

This is the thinking behind a campaign by the \$100 million computer game development industry that yesterday received an endorsement from Screen Australia chief executive Ruth Harley.

Ms Harley told an audience at the Game Connect Asia-Pacific conference in Melbourne that the sector was being constrained by lack of investment that could be

overcome with federal assistance.

A new report by PricewaterhouseCoopers says: "Over a five-year period from the introduction of the offset there would be an additional investment in the interactive entertainment industry of \$146 million, of which \$100m would come from foreign sources."

This would add \$76m to the GDP and create 383 jobs.

The Interactive Entertainment (Games) Offset report says: "Modelling indicates games developers deserves access to funding offsets, such as those available to film and television makers."

Ms Harley told *The Australian*

the new data reinforces Screen Australia's support for game developers, as outlined in its submissions to both the Convergence Review and the National Cultural Policy. As a statutory body fully funded by the federal government, Screen Australia cannot lobby government but does offer advice.

Ms Harley said one way that game developers could be helped was by making them eligible for the tax offsets available to foreign film and television makers where the game was considered part of the budget.

If the game was not related to a film, the developer could be eli-

gible for offsets in the same way post-production and digital effects work is eligible regardless of whether physical filmmaking takes place in Australia.

Film and television funding in Australia has always been justified by virtue of its economic and cultural impact.

Tom Crago, chief executive of games developer Tantalus Media, said there was no cultural imperative to game-making.

"Certainly there are games that feature Australian content and stories but we're trying to make games that resonate around the world," he said.

The Australian, 16 November 2011

Advertisers need to take heed of online gaming cash cow

ANDREA SOPHOCLEOUS
ADVERTISING

IT is the most popular online entertainment activity among Australians, is worth \$3 billion globally, but local advertisers are paying scant attention to it.

Welcome to the world of social gaming.

Games such as *Farmville*, *Cityville* and *We City*, often played through social networks that allow players to interact with each other online, are global cash cows.

In the US alone, where the market is more mature, revenue will grow from \$US856 million (\$844m) last year to \$US1.32 billion next year, research firm eMarketer predicts.

Newcomer social gaming company VeNa, with offices in Sydney, Auckland and Singapore, estimates global revenue will hit the \$3bn mark this year, increasing to a potential \$8.6bn by 2014.

The sites make money via advertising, charging for goods bought during the game, and subscriptions. Facebook, which hosts many such games and accounts for one-third of revenues, has in part revolutionised the industry.

"Who we used to think of as a gamer has changed. Today, a hardcore gamer is probably your mum," says Joe Cincotta, managing director of Sydney digital agency and app developer Pixolut.

Brands can get involved in social gaming in two ways — with display advertising or integration. McDonald's in the US offers *Farmville* players a digital drink imbuing them with enhanced skills in exchange for tending the burger chain's vegetable fields, as well as free rides on McDonald's hot air balloons and McCafe products.

In China, Unilever created a one-month event in August on



AP

The CityVille game room at Zynga in San Francisco

Farmville Chinese, called Lux Fantastical Manor, where it rewarded players with virtual currency they could redeem for crops inspired by Lux beauty and skincare products.

Australian marketers have yet to embrace social gaming, despite growing participation rates.

Nielsen's Australian Online Consumer Report from February lists online gaming as the most popular online entertainment activity, with 45 per cent playing in the previous 12 months, and 23 per cent playing regularly.

"We know a lot of people are doing it, but it's still a fringe consideration from a media (buying) perspective because people aren't sure how to use it yet," says Andrew Reeves, strategy director at Zenith Optimedia Melbourne.

"Social gaming as an advertising opportunity is about getting in front of the right people and potentially influencing them to buy something or change their perception through brand advertising."

JWT digital creative director Ashadi Hopper says no one is approaching social gaming with scale in Australia. He advises clients to catch up with consumers. "You have to follow the audience,"

he says. "The great thing about social gaming is it's incredibly accessible. More people than ever before are now playing games because social gaming caters for different levels of engagement.

"It's not time sensitive — you can pop in for two minutes, tend to your virtual crop and pop out. It doesn't require a steadfast time commitment."

VeNa chief operating officer James Zipeure, a former digital trading director at Aegis Media, says advertising spending in social gaming by Australian clients lags behind other markets but is growing. "This year should see around \$80m to \$100m in total spent across the sector with \$10m to \$15m being spent on marketing," he says.

Reeves says measuring marketing effectiveness in social gaming is difficult but that the principles of relevance and proximity apply. "The primary consideration with any medium is understanding the consumer and their behaviour. We need a strong rationale for an audience and return on investment, [but social gaming] is an innovation we need to keep on top of."

The Australian, 14 November 2011

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Does excessive play of violent first-person-shooter-video-games dampen brain activity in response to emotional stimuli?

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EVENTS

AFTRS

School holiday program

The Australian Film, Television and Radio School have a broad range of short courses available this summer in *Filmmaking* (including making a music video), *Animation*, *Acting* and *TV Presenting* for children aged 9-12 and teens aged 13-15. There are also holiday courses for adults.

Details of courses for both children and adults can be found at :

<http://www.open.aftrs.edu.au/schoolholidays>

