



No. 272 February 2011

Conference report: Scared, Sleepless and Hostile

An impressive cross-section of the stakeholders interested in the impacts of violent and scary media on children's mental health and associated public policy considerations met in Sydney on March 1.

Those attending included children's health, welfare and education professionals, industry associations, regulators and classifiers, policy makers, community organizations, academics and students, and most gave glowing feedback about the worth of the day, the debate and discussions.

The conference was most ably and amiably chaired by Prof Alan Hayes, Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies. The opening speech, which set the conference in the context of Australian children's health and wellbeing, was delivered by Dr Lance Emerson CEO of the Australian Research Alliance on Children and Youth.

The mix of overseas and Australian speakers provided world class overviews of the risks to children's mental health posed by ongoing exposure to violent and scary media. The whole program made a significant contribution to issues relevant to Australia's present reviews of its classification systems. The sponsorship of the conference by the Minister for Home Affairs, was well justified and most welcome.

ACCM asked one of the post graduate student attendees to give her impressions of the conference. Simone Mohi, a psychology honours student at Macquarie University) had this to say:

"As a recent graduate I relished the opportunity to attend my first ever conference. Leading Australian and international speakers presented their latest research findings on the effects of today's media environment on children and youth.

The conference was both informative and relevant for people such as parents, teachers and researchers interested in the wellbeing of children and youth. The conference content was varied yet cohesive and accessible to a wide audience. A key message I took away was that the increasing penetration into our lives by the media leaves children in particular, vulnerable to any influences it chooses to exert, and that many of these influences are detrimental to individual and societal wellbeing.

Professor John Murray presented a neurologically based context for the theme of the conference when he spoke about the effects of TV violence on children's brain activity and how exposure to TV violence strongly activates the emotional centers of the brain while it under-activates areas of executive function. This results in poor reasoning about the consequences of violent acts.

lighted the impact of fear producing media on children. For instance a child's interpretation of reported news events is different to that of adults and, multiple reporting, of say a natural disaster, may be perceived as a series of occurrences. Children see things differently from adults.

Dr Sarah Blunden's health oriented perspective revealed the negative impact of late night TV viewing on children's sleep. Teenagers are the most sleep deprived group in our community and insufficient sleep impacts on brain development.

Richard Eckersley's approach took the focus off the individual and highlighted how the media occupies a powerful position within society, and that individuals are mostly unable to divest themselves from its influence. He recommended that communities and governments stand together and insist on greater

regulation of media as a matter of urgency.

Last but not least Professor Elizabeth Handsley presented arguments from a legal perspective. She supports the idea that public policy makers need to respond to issues involving the negative im-

act of media on children through legislation.

Notwithstanding a rich variety of relevant detail and the broad scope of presentation content, by conference end a single, powerful message was clear: when it comes to children and media consumption the time is ripe for a radical rethink. In a best-scenario outcome this will effect change in national policies relating to children's media consumption and flow on to greater societal awareness and more enlightened parenting and education practices.

I think I speak for most of the delegates when I say that the conference was an exceptional experience and one that I look forward to repeating next year."



The speakers at the conference from left: Wayne Warburton, Douglas Gentile, Richard Eckersley, John Murray, Sarah Blunden, Ed Donnerstein and Elizabeth Handsley.

Dr Douglas Gentile's absorbing presentation revealed the need for improved evidence-based classification systems for children's media. It concluded that these systems need to become more protective for children and better able to guide parental choice.

The audience was very engaged by Professor Ed Donnerstein who vigorously supported the weight of evidence about the impact of media violence, and described how exposure represents significant risks to child and adolescent health and, particularly at young ages, how this can have lifelong consequences.

Dr Wayne Warburton's compelling presentation 'Not the Six o'clock News: Children and violent or upsetting media content', high



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EDITORIAL

Signing up for R18+ in regional Australia ???

The R18+ games lobby has been running a PR campaign that seemingly has no end.

Much of it has misled many well meaning people (who are rightly disturbed about children's access to very violent computer games) by telling them that having an R18+ category for would somehow provide better protection for children. This was far from the truth, because the proposal under discussion would merely have legalised R18+ level games (with more extreme content).

The only way children will be better protected is if the classification guidelines for all levels of games are completely revised, and take more account of the evidence from from exposure to violent and other extreme materials. Perhaps that will be the outcome when the Ministers responsible have finished their consideration of a new set of draft guidelines, and this may be in July.

In the interim, we have noticed a continuous series of similar articles in regional papers in NSW and Victoria, all telling the same story- that people are signing petitions because they want an R18+ classification, and one regional town after another has gathered among the highest numbers of signatures supporting this. All accompanied by a photo of the local friendly game store manager.

NEW! ARACY children and media blog

The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) has launched a new children and media blog where interested people can share resources and articles, talk about their experiences and participate in informal dialogue.

Leanne Drewitt who oversees ARACY's Young Children and the Media project is interested in using the blog to explore the effects of media on young children; what type of content is developmentally appropriate for children; how we can provide parents with resources and tools to help them make informed choices about media; how to monitor and limit children's exposure to inappropriate media; and how we can encourage the media industry to understand how important it is to think of the developmental needs of children they are targeting.

To participate, go to: <http://www.aracy.org.au/blog/blog-children-media/?p=75>

ACT students learn to resist sexualisation

According to Noel Towell, writing in the Canberra Times, school children in the ACT are being taught how to resist being sexualised by the media.

Children's Minister Joy Burch. told the Legislative Assembly that children from preschool to Year 10 were involved in a curricular activity that taught them to critically examine media content, including material

So far since 28 January, the same story (only the faces and stats change) has been run in Port Macquarie, Rouse Hill, Tuggerah, Erina, Tweed City, Mt Druitt, Plumpton, St Marys, Castle Hill, Cannington, Forrest Chase, Grafton, Wendoureeh, Melton, Macarthur, Camberwell, Knox, and Frankston, and still they come.



Barbara Biggins
OAM
Hon CEO

Petition organiser and Pal Gaming Network Director Roland Kulen is quoted in almost every story, expressing his frustration that there was as yet no R18+ classification, saying how much it would help parents, and what a bad thing it was that Australia was the only developed country with no R18+ for games.

So who funds this misleading propaganda campaign? Are regional papers supporting it? Or do they never read each others' papers??

How about regional NSW and Victorian papers put their weight behind a public education campaign that helps parents understand the meaning of the classification system (and in particular that MA15+ has legal force and means not suitable for those under 15 years), and the risks of harm from repetitive playing of violent games.

that sexualises children. The program in use in ACT schools is called Every Chance to Learn.

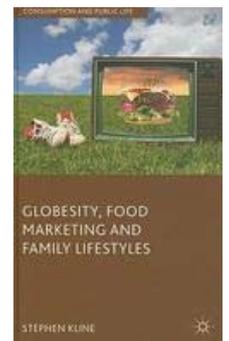
<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/students-learn-about-sexualisation/2080178.aspx>

New book

Globesity Food Marketing and Family Lifestyles

Steve Kline

Palgrave Macmillan UK



Exploring children's special status as 'vulnerable' consumers, this book provides new evidence of both the systemic bias created by food marketing in the USA and the UK, as well as the processes through which marketing comes to influence children's discretionary choices in the context of branding and parental mitigation of lifestyle risk taking.

<http://www.palgravemacmillan.com.au>

Clips 'n' Cuts

small screen no. 272 February 2011

Technology the modern bogey

STEPHEN LUNN
SOCIAL AFFAIRS WRITER

PARENTS are finding it harder than ever to buffer their kids from the chaos of modern life, with the future influence of new technologies on childhood development the big unknown, a leading child health expert warns.

Stephen Zubrick, chairman of the scientific advisory group of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, says parents continue to raise resilient children in the face of work and time pressures, but technology is the X-factor.

"Parents are less able than ever to provide a buffering for their held games, and one in 10 have a mobile phone.

Parents are generally relaxed about the march of technology into family life, LSAC's 2009-10 Growing Up in Australia annual report shows.

"Only a relatively small proportion of parents had concerns regarding their child's use of media and technology," it says.

"Parents (of nine- to 10-year-olds) were most concerned about their child playing electronic games (21 per cent), followed by their TV watching (18 per cent), internet use (16 per cent) and DVD watching (10 per cent)."

One in four children of that age group were getting less than the

HIGH-TECH AND KIDS Parents' biggest worries

Activity	Percentage
Playing Electronic games	21%
Watching Television	18%
Internet	16%
DVDs	10%

9-10 year-olds

Source: LSAC

children from the chaos of life. Yet children's development feeds off reliability and dependability," Professor Zubrick said. "In every era, recommended 10 hours of sleep on school nights, and 36 per cent on non-school nights, the report shows.

Melbourne mother of two Sally Fenemor said it was difficult to get her nine-year-old son Eddie to bed early because his day was so full.

"I find it hard to fit everything in — his sport, after-school activities and homework — and my work as well. And he wants to stay up as late as his older brother," Ms Fenemor said.

"At the same time, he's tired from all the outdoor activities he does and it's not worth having him tired for the next day, so I'm pretty strong on bedtimes."

Ms Fenemor keeps a close eye

parents have faced an unknown, and technology is the big unknown in this era. It's developing so fast we're barely able to keep up. But parents need to be looking at what it brings to the table that's good, what needs to be managed, and what is damaging."

The LSAC study, which has tracked the development of nearly 10,000 families since 2004, will report this week that a third of nine- to 10-year-olds use a computer to send or receive emails at least once a week. 11 per cent visit social networking sites and a third play games on the internet.

One-third of children this age have access in their bedrooms to games machines, including hand-on computer games. "Sometimes I think I'd be best just to ban it completely," she said. "We didn't have it when we were kids, and still managed to have fun.

"But that's not realistic, so I just look to strike a balance, and steer them as hard as I can away from anything that's violent, which is a particular concern for me."

LSAC's latest survey informs the ABC series *Life at 5*, which begins this week.

"This report gives valuable insights into the everyday lives of families and helps us design policies and programs that will make a difference," Families Minister Jenny Macklin told *The Australian* at the weekend.

The Australian, 14 February 2011



SUSAN MAUSHART

Game on

IN THE MULTI-PLAYER game we call life, your avatar looks depressingly lifelike, keeping score is a bitch and once you get to the next level, you simply pay more tax. Is it any wonder so

many grown-ups are starting to prefer computer games? Recent figures show — cue SFX of cheesy digital gunfire — that the average gamer is 35 years old, and one in four is over 50.

And if that's not enough to make you press pause, consider that, according to research published in the scientific journal *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, 61 per cent of CEOs and other senior executives routinely take daily game breaks at work. It's almost funny, until you start to think about Sol Trujillo's "Grand Theft Auto" score.

Yet according to a new book by Jane McGonigal, director of game research and development at the Institute of the Future, gaming is not a shameful habit that will cause us, in some creative or cognitive sense, to go blind. On the contrary, she argues, the future of the planet depends on us all keeping our hands firmly on our joysticks. (Also our fun-buttons, of course —

The future of the planet depends on us all keeping our hands firmly on our joysticks — and our fun buttons

four out of 10 gamers are female.) In *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*, McGonigal observes that we increasingly prefer games to reality not because we are avoidant, self-indulgent wankers — necessarily — but for a much simpler reason. Because games are better. And they are better not because they are more "fun" but because they are harder work. McGonigal points to research that shows "fun" actually has a mildly depressing effect on mood. Psychologically speaking, only hard work in which we totally immerse ourselves — she calls it "blissful productivity"; others call it "flow" — can advance us to the highest level.

As Timothy Leary was to LSD, so McGonigal is to the Nintendo Wii. "It's time to get over any regret you might feel about spending so much time playing games," she writes expansively, for games "augment our most essential human capabilities — to be happy, resilient, creative..." Not to mention quixotic. For McGonigal is nothing if not game. And heaven knows she earns mega-energy points for even attempting such an ambitious case. But not for all the fruit in Farmville was I ever tempted to follow her to the dark side.

By McGonigal's own reckoning, by the time the average child reaches age 21, he or she will have spent 10,000 hours in front of a games console, getting incredibly good at — essentially — gaming. If that's what we want to call winning, maybe it's time for a Restart.

Weekend Australian Magazine, 19-20 Feb 2011

Smurfed off at app

AN APP based on the popular children's cartoon *Smurfs* is charging children up to \$119 each time they tap to buy virtual berries.

The *Smurfs Village* app is free on iPhone, iPad or iPod touch to download but parents are being hit with bills worth hundreds of dollars by in-app paid content charged to their credit cards.

The extra costs range from \$4.99 for a bucket of "Smurfberries" up to \$119 for a wagon. In most cases, children do not even realise they are using real money.

In the game, users construct a virtual village using *Smurfs* to plant fruit and vegetables and build houses and bridges over rivers.

Purchasing Smurfberries speeds up the growth of crops and villages and advances the player to higher levels.

Smurfs app creator Capcom Interactive last month posted a warning about fees attached to the game after parents complained on the Apple forum.

It reads: "*Smurf Village* is free to play but charges real money for additional in-app content. You may lock out the ability to purchase in-app content by adjusting your device's settings."

One parent discovered several iTunes receipts totalling \$750 after her son, 6, bought wagons of berries.

"We downloaded the app after it was recommended by a friend



RACHEL HANCOCK

because it teaches children to look after their plants and vegetables, and we thought it might teach him a bit more about responsibility," said the mum, who contacted Apple and has been refunded the money.

"I was horrified when I discovered he had spent that much money — and he didn't even know it. He said he just tapped on it to get through the levels.

"I had not even seen the warning when I downloaded it, but I will know better next time."

Another parent wrote: "Our three-year-old racked up \$200 while supervised... click, click and it's gone."

While the purchase requires a password, once entered the user is not required to enter it again for 15 minutes and can make unlimited purchases in that timeframe.

Apple recommended parents block in-app purchases by following the prompts through settings on the device's home screen.

Choice spokesman Christopher Zinn said most people never read the fine print, particularly with brands they trust such as Apple.

The Advertiser, 5 February 2011

Dependent society

I AM concerned at the "dumping" of Coca-Cola products at questionably low prices. As a father of teens I am well aware my children are the "target" of this sustained practice. The bulk-buy specials in most major supermarkets mean that a can of Coke today is the same price as in 1975 (60¢). Thankfully my daughters are responsible consumers but I fear for those who will develop a "Coke" (sugar/caffeine) dependency that will leave them, and society, with a bigger problem.

David Pyers, Daylesford

The Age, 27 January 2011

Let us stop pussyfooting around our censorship laws

The religious lobby and prudes on the ALP's Right continue to treat Australians like children

ROSS FITZGERALD



FEDERAL Attorney-General Robert McClelland and Justice Minister Brendan O'Connor have announced a shake-up of censorship law in Australia through a review of the 1995 Classification Act.

This act determines where the line is drawn on various categories and forms of media. It legislates different levels of "intensity and explicitness" in images and words, setting out what can be accessed by various age groups in Australia. It designates whether different media can be viewed in private (for example by a couple in their home) or in public, such as at a movie theatre.

The Classification Act is primarily concerned with what we commonly call entertainment, news and information. More than any other federal act, its success relies on accurately gauging public opinion, and it is one of the main pieces of legislation that defines "Australian morality".

Julia Gillard's government is asking the Australian Law Reform Commission to undertake the review, with submissions being sought throughout this year.

It will be unable to report to the government until at least mid-2012 and the government most likely won't be able to act on the recommendations until 2013 — close to another federal election. Hence it could be 2014 before this review bears any fruit.

At the same time, there are four other reviews of the Classification Act, or aspects of it, being undertaken by various agencies.

In an appalling waste of resources, the Senate committee on legal and constitutional affairs has also announced an "inquiry into the Australian film and literature classification scheme".

This owes much of its existence to its deputy chairman, Liberal Party senator Guy Barnett, a man as driven on the censorship of sex-

ual material as was his right-wing Tasmanian predecessor, former independent senator Brian Harradine.

Barnett's comments during Senate estimates hearings last year on young adults appearing in erotic material revealed he seems overly concerned with the fact such material is available in Australia at all. It would not be surprising if this inquiry was dominated by issues of teenage sexuality and may be fundamentally flawed before it even starts.

Barnett claims the National Classification Scheme is not working — a view shared by his detractors. But what does he propose? He wants to extend the act to include art, billboards and music videos. The terms of reference for this committee read like an ambit claim from the Soviet information ministry where it is forbidden to say or print almost anything about sex.

Second, the beleaguered Minister for Communications Stephen Conroy is also calling for a review of one of the classifications within the act, namely the Refused Classification. This is being done to ensure his benchmark classification for the internet filter does not take out too much material that is legal in the real world. This would include references to safe drug use and to euthanasia.

Third, the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy is calling for a review of the effects of so-called convergence in media and entertainment in Australia. This



Guy Barnett

KYM SMITH

is ultimately the reason why the ALRC is being asked to review the act in the first place, so why couldn't they be combined into one inquiry?

Fourth, the Attorney-General has announced an inquiry into billboard advertising.

The internet and the convergence of media have rendered many parts of the Classification Act obsolete. In 1995, when the act was introduced, a magazine in a newsagency, an X-rated film in an adult shop, a TV program shown after 9pm, or an early website on dial-up were relatively separate entities.

Now they are all potentially available on a mobile phone in a matter of seconds. In 15 years the changes have been exponential and if it takes three or four years for these reviews to be completed, the accelerating rate of change will have rendered many recommendations out of date.

Australia's prurient attitudes to sex and adult themes are a mystery to Europeans

If we wait until after the next federal election — which Labor may well lose — any recommendations will be based on outdated technology.

All these inquiries need to align Australian censorship law with genuine public opinion and morality. Yet, remarkably, since 1988 the federal government has not conducted a professional opinion poll concerning the controversial issues involved in the Classification Act.

This has been left to industry clients of the Classification Board, which is upset that the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General has ignored public opinion in censorship decisions.

A 2005 survey by Bond University showed that 88 per cent of Australians supported an R18+ classification for video games. This classification has been debated for more than six years and seems to have been stalled by SCAG, which is caught between public opinion and a bias towards placating religious lobby groups.

Since 1988, the X-rated film industry has commissioned more than a dozen national polls that show a consistent support rate of

72 per cent for legal sales. It's quite legal to buy an X-rated film over the internet. Yet, time and time again, SCAG has refused to address the discrepancy between state and federal laws, which in some states has seen some vendors of X-rated material sent to jail and bankrupted. The federal government accepts this disingenuous situation and continues to claim we have a uniform classification scheme in line with public opinion.

At present, the Classification Act is skewed towards minority religious and right-wing groups. It does not reflect the morality of those attending an Aussie barbecue, a suburban shopping centre, a sporting event or art gallery.

It certainly does not reflect the morality of most Europeans and Americans, or even New Zealanders. Australia's prurient attitudes to sex and adult themes in films and computer games are a mystery to Europeans, who have been painting X-rated masterpieces for centuries and hanging them in the best galleries in the world.

Americans have freedom of sexual and adult ideas enshrined in their Constitution through the First Amendment. Many can't understand why Australian adults don't litigate for the freedom to watch X-rated films and play R-rated games. The fact is we can't, because we don't have a bill of rights. The US First Amendment protects free speech unless it is obscene. This forces American courts to consider the meaning of obscenity. But with our Classification Act, Australian courts have to accept what our politicians have enacted.

It's significant that the review of the act has been called in the name of both McClelland and O'Connor. Since becoming Attorney-General, McClelland has demonstrated little interest in censorship issues, and his presence now may be a response to the many individuals and industry groups who claim the classification scheme is broken and unworkable. However, a proper repair job needs more than input from Labor's right-wing faction.

The two federal Labor ministers intimately concerned with the review would do well to draw on the philosophies of earlier reformist attorneys-general, including Gareth Evans, and other civil libertarians such as Australian Democrats founder Don Chipp.

Weekend Australian, 12-13 February 2011

A HOG'S Breath Cafe ad aired in May last year on Channel Seven in Sydney breached standards restricting the use of popular personalities and characters in advertising during children's programming periods, the Australian Communications and Media Authority has found. The ad featured the "Hogster" character and V8 Supercars drivers Craig Lowndes and Jamie Whincup.

The Australian, 7 February 2011

Why size matters with 3D movies

REBEKAH DEVLIN

WALLIS Cinemas is encouraging parents of three and four-year-olds to avoid 3D films because they are too young to enjoy the experience.

Program manager Rob Parr said the cinema chain had started putting on more screenings of ordinary versions of films, particularly during school holidays, as younger children had trouble viewing 3D.

Coaxing children to wear a pair of 3D glasses for the length of a film was difficult, and Wallis stocked only adult-sized glasses.

"Kids that young don't appreciate the 3D anyway," Mr Parr said. "For some, price is also an issue."

Mother-of-two Emma Pitkin has given up taking her children to 3D films after her youngest, James, 3, took off his glasses after only 10 minutes and watched the blurry screen without them. His sister, Grace, 6, lasted slightly longer — 30 minutes.

"Getting the kids to sit still for 90 minutes is hard enough, but getting them to wear a pair of glasses the entire time is a nightmare," she said.

"I got the 3D experience, but the kids missed out."

Greater Union has been stocking child-size 3D glasses for several months and SA promotions manager Kirrily Hurst said they helped children sit through 3D films.

They also offered the films in 2D, which was more popular for children aged under three.

The Advertiser, 12 Feb 2011

Great communicator

The Advertiser, 22 January 2011

John Drinkwater Chataway

Media industry leader

Born: October 11, 1953; Adelaide

Died: October 5, 2010; Adelaide

JOHN Chataway was one of the South Australian leaders of a fast-moving media industry. He learned to love modern technology and move with and adapt to it. He was a great communicator, not just face to face, and mobile phone to mobile, but through all the possibilities that the film, television and digital information age had to offer.

The eldest of five Chataway brothers, John grew up in Salisbury and Elizabeth, full of a raw energy and appeal that would see him run home from school, and run around the house and over the furniture while calling out to his mother the day's events. The performance would end with him standing on his head on a sofa chair, in silence, for 15 minutes.

He was adept at many things from tennis to skiing, guitar-playing and mechanics. When the brothers ended up with 11 cars in their backyard and the council came calling, John demonstrated that they were all in running order - including his grandmother's Vanguard, which had not started in six years.

From school John went to Salisbury Teachers College, where Screen Studies was on the curriculum. He graduated in 1978 and worked as a teacher for three years before deciding to try his hand freelancing in the film industry. His eclectic mix of abilities meant the medium was his friend. He became an award-winning cinematographer, as well as a writer and director. If there was no



budget for actors he would lock off the camera and walk through his own shots.

In 1991, he joined forces with Kent Smith to create Kojo Productions, which went on to become one of the major and most influential media communications groups in South Australia.

John was a motivating force in the company. "Just say 'yes' and worry about how you're going to do it later," he would say. As the enterprise grew, he came out from behind the camera and began to play a bigger role in management, particularly as Kojo took

its client Mitsubishi from commercials to car launches, websites and training films. He became CEO and constantly pushed the company into new ventures, including Oasis Post, Oasis DVD, Kojo Interactive, Touche and Kojo Events.

He was a State winner in the Ernst and Young Australian Entrepreneur of the Year awards. His personal philosophy and corporate philosophy were the same: always be open, trusting, generous, caring, loving, optimistic and spirited.

He married Ann and had two children, Mark and Simon. Their large home in the Adelaide Hills became a home away from home for many of the boys' teenage friends. Ann and John separated but remained on friendly terms. After two years he fell in love and married Maryanne. With her daughter Isabella they formed a blended family of five. In their nine years together the two shared similar interests, travelled and enjoyed life to the maximum.

John's ever-burgeoning interests stretched to membership of government, corporate and community boards. At his funeral, Premier Mike Rann said he had known the Chataway family for decades and had worked with John in arts and film. He had served on the boards of the Adelaide Fringe Festival, the SA Film Corporation and Australian Dance Theatre.

"I found John to be a person of extraordinary vision and decency," said Mr Rann. "He was a positive and generous spirit in our community."

John was an enthusiast for the new SA Film Corporation studios at Glenside Hospital campus and the Premier said a facility would be named in his honour.

Local lads take world by storm

KATIE SPAIN
ADELAIDE* MAGAZINE

AN animated pig with flatulence problems has taken the ABC and its audience by storm.

If you have children, chances are you've already encountered Horace, the porky star of *Horace In Slow Motion*. But did you know that the mini-series delighting kids worldwide was made right here in Adelaide?

The three blokes behind the delightful 10-part series run Boombada, an ani-



mation company based on Halifax St.

Such was the success of the first series of *Horace in Slow Motion*, it was nominated for the Best Family Animation gong at the prestigious Kidscreen Awards in Canada.

A second series has also been announced by BBC3.

Boombada's Luke Jurevicius, Arthur Moody and Andrew Kunzel come from a variety of backgrounds: illustration, TV and feature films. The trio first pooled



SUCCESS: Award-winning series Figaro Pho, and, left, Horace the pig. **Picture:** VISHUS PRODUCTIONS

their collective skills in 2009.

Previously, they worked together on the acclaimed interactive children's learning program Reading Eggs, and *Figaro Pho*, the AFI award-winning series about a quirky-looking boy with an A-Z of phobias.

Figaro Pho's success also continues with the new ABC series *The*

Adventures of Figaro which will be produced by Chocolate Liberation Front.

In the March edition of the Adelaide* magazine, free in *The Advertiser* on Thursday, the lid is lifted on Boombada's animation masterminds.

Watch *Horace In Slow Motion*: adelaidenow.com.au/adelaidemagazine.

Children grab hold of home purse strings

KAREN COLLIER

PESTER power is booming as parents face a barrage of nagging, headstrong and brand-conscious children.

New research shows many children are having an enormous say on how families dip into their wallets.

More than half of all children aged six to 13 years describe themselves as the main decision makers for buying games and toys.

More than a third also choose clothes, shoes, breakfast cereals, chips, CDs, magazines and DVD rentals.

One quarter even claim credit for deciding holiday destinations, national Roy Morgan Research polling reveals.

The market research company's agencies director, Michael Duncan, said children's power over the average home's purse strings was significant.

"This generation is well informed and clearly understands brands and specifically what they think is cool

right now," Mr Duncan said. "They often know what they want and expect to be able to convince their parents to buy it for them."

A survey of almost 3000 of the nation's smallest consumers found they were least likely to influence what kind of family car was bought or the type of dinner eaten each night.

Parenting guru Michael Grose said pester power was linked to shrinking family sizes.

"About half of all Australian families have two kids or less. The smaller the number, the louder they are heard," he said.

Mr Grose said it was healthy for children's growth and independence to have a say in some decisions.

"Kids need to learn to make decisions by themselves," he said.

"But parents should avoid always giving in to instant gratification. That way, children learn to link success with working hard or saving."

The Advertiser, 19 February 2011

The Advertiser, 19 February 2011

Outrage at suicide school exercise

STUART RINTOUL

A HIGH-PROFILE psychologist has attacked several books on the national English curriculum after a Year 8 student was asked to write a suicide note as an exercise based on the book *Smitherens*.

Psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg said the first story in the book was about "a bloke who murders his brother-in-law because he is abusing his sister", the second was about the "legal killing of homeless children", and another was about a man who kept a human hand in a box to remember a lost love.

Edited by Richard Baines, published by Oxford University Press and described as a collection of chilling short stories for secondary students in years 8-10, students are encouraged in follow-up activities to explore the issue by writing poems in a suicide note.

Parent Tracy Young told Melbourne radio station 3AW's Neil Mitchell she had banned her 13-year-old from reading the book after she had been asked to write a suicide note, and regarded the book as "quite disturbing". "I just think these kids aren't ready to deal with all of these issues," she said. "They are quite deep and challenging."

Dr Carr-Gregg challenged Victorian Education Minister Martin Dixon to move against books he had criticised while in opposition, including *Smitherens* and the multi-award-winning Phillip Gwynne novel *Deadly Unna*, which he said was degrading to girls.

If a student "so much as scratched themselves" after being asked to write a suicide note, schools could be found to have breached their legal duty of care, he said. "I think it is insanity."

Mr Dixon said late yesterday: "I personally don't like the book and I think there are more suitable texts for Year 8s to study."

"However, it is a school's decision about which books are studied, and I encourage parents to take an active interest in their children's education" and take their views to school councils.

In 2008, Mr Dixon said the language in *Deadly Unna*, with lines such as "dirty rotten whore", "Sharon B gives head" and "she was begging for it", was inappropriate and unwelcome in homes and schools.

Dr Carr-Gregg was supported by Australian Childhood Foundation chief executive Joe Tucci.

"That age group is very susceptible to what they see and read," Dr Tucci said. "They are trying to understand their place in the world." There were better ways to explore adolescence than giving children a "rehearsal" for harmful behaviour.

Oxford University Press declined to comment.

The Australian, 17 February 2011

Oh, You Beautiful Doll

"I'm a mom. I have a daughter, and girls are put on a flume ride, channeled through Disney Princesses, then Bratz, Kim Kardashian and 'America's Next Top Model.' It's not the greatest thing for the way that they define themselves."

Peggy Orenstein, author, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*

YOU'LL PROBABLY THINK TWICE before buying your young daughter a Barbie or Bratz – or any doll dressed in a micro-skirt, midriff top and high heels – after reading *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, just released in the US. Its author, Peggy Orenstein, a social commentator and journalist, has caused quite a stir with her comments on what she calls "princess mania", the rise of pink-tastic toy aisles crammed with princesses and fairies and the proliferation of pouting, provocatively dressed dolls that are far too "adult" (meaning slutty) for 12-year-old girls, let alone five-year-olds. These dolls foster impossible-to-attain body images, giddy consumerism and female passivity, Orenstein complains in her book, which is yet to be published in Australia. "Girls are doing really well in school ... but the pressure to define themselves by appearance, by hotness and sexiness, has increased," she declared in a recent interview.

Orenstein's critique of the multi-billion-dollar doll industry has many supporters in Australia, including Cordelia Fine, author of *Delusions of Gender* and an honorary fellow at the University of Melbourne. "Childhood culture is now relentlessly gender-segregated, with profoundly stereotypical 'boy' and 'girl' versions of just about every product available," says Fine. "The Bratz dolls are 'the girls with a passion for fashion'. A new 'pink' version of Monopoly for girls involves them buying malls, hair salons and fashion boutiques. This is all happening at the time when we are congratulating ourselves on an enlightened society in which children are free to develop outside the confines of rigid gender stereotypes."

Next month, Barbie turns 52

clothes as an indication of moral behaviour, as adults, sadly, are still prone to do." Garland says that moral panic about young girls has been bubbling away since Victorian times. "The term 'teenager' didn't exist until the 1940s, when 17 magazine was launched, and marketing executives invented a girl called 'Tina,'" notes Garland. "Now we're worried about another marketing construct, the 'twens'."

Construct it may be, but as any mother strolling around a toy store with her young daughter will attest, a beckoning Bratz or Barbie doll can be hard to resist.

Greg Callaghan

Weekend Australian Magazine, 12-13 February 2011

on the web and the appearance in 2008 of a then 15-year-old Miley Cyrus in *Vanity Fair* magazine, clutching a sheet to her bare breasts. In this context, dolls with flawless bodies and skimpy clothes are priming girls for premature sexualisation, Orenstein insists.

But not everyone is buying the connection. "It's a bit of a long bow, arguing that playing with a doll in high heels and fishnets leads to precocious sexuality," says Carina Garland, a PhD student at the University of Sydney, who is writing her thesis on the history of girlhood. "A little girl doesn't see

Weekend Australian Magazine, 12-13 February 2011

Weekend Australian Magazine, 12-13 February 2011

No need to add regulation

ADVERTISING: Australia is in no need of further advertising regulation because current community complaint rates are so low, the Australian Association of National Advertisers argues in a submission to a parliamentary inquiry into outdoor advertising.

In the outdoor industry last year, only 38 out of 30,000 outdoor ads attracted a complaint under the current advertiser-funded self-regulation system, according to the AANA.

Nine of those were found to be in breach of the AANA code of ethics, which is currently under review. "(That) represents 0.003 per cent of all outdoor advertisements and only 0.00002 per cent of all advertisements run nationally," the association said.

"The comparatively insignificant levels of complaints

and breaches under the AANA codes indicate that the AANA self-regulatory system is working and greater regulation of outdoor advertising is not justified."

Among the most complained-about ads of last year were billboards for Advanced Medical Institute, which is known for its "Want More Sex?" billboards.

"Of the top 10 complained-about advertisements in 2010, four were situated on billboards," committee chairman Graham Perrett said last month.

"Unlike television and print advertising, there is no way of switching off from a billboard. We need to consider what content is appropriate for viewing by an unrestricted audience, and also what type of advertising we as a nation wish to have occupying our public spaces."

LARA SINCLAIR

The Australian, 21 February 2011

Play it again, Samantha

I enjoyed reading Emily Maguire's article "Girls on film" (January 22) and agree with its central argument. I remember that as a child in the '60s there were no girls in *Flipper*, *Gentle Ben* or *Lassie* and the girls in *Skippy* and *Lost in Space* were pathetic. I loved *Thunderbirds* because of the Angel Interceptors who were glamorous girls who flew fighter jets.

Emily did not mention the impact of *Xena*, *Warrior Princess* but during its heyday I overheard a group of eight-year-olds playing and one boy plaintively saying, "But I want to be Xena!"

Kit Devine Bronte
Sydney Morning Herald, 31 January 2011

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Australian & New Zealand Journal of Public Health, Vol. 34, No. 6, Pp635-636

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Tobacco Control, Vol. 19, No. 5, Pp361-366

Fenstermacher, SK; Barr, R; et al (2010)

Infant-directed media: An analysis of product information and claims.

Infant and Child Development, Vol. 19, No. 6, Sp.Iss. Pp557-576

Scottish Parliament, Equal Opportunities Committee Report (2010)

External research on sexualised goods aimed at children.

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Cyberbullying and self-esteem.

Journal of School Health, Vol. 80, No. 12, Pp614-621

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Body Image, Vol. 7, No. 4, Pp296-300

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Salmon, Jo (2010)

Novel strategies to promote children's physical activities and reduce sedentary behavior.

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Moseley, KL; et al (2011)

Which sources of child health advice do parents follow?

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ter Bogt, TFM; Engels, RCME; et al (2010)

"Shake it baby, shake it": Media preferences, sexual attitudes and gender stereotypes among adolescents.

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CONFERENCES

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