No. 315 Dec 2014/Jan 2015

Parents struggle with limits to screen time

A team of researchers from the University of Western Australia's School of Population Health and School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health has found that despite growing concern about the adverse physical and mental health outcomes associated with excessive screen-based media use, parents were finding it difficult to get their children to limit the time they spend with their screen devices.

The research, just published, assessed the amount of time Australian children and adolescents spend on all types of screens and specific screen-based activities. Data was collected from 2,620 eight to 16 year-olds from 25 government and non-government schools around Perth and Western Australia. Children were asked to report how many hours they spent on different screen types and activities - from when they woke up until they went to bed, including before, during and after school.

It was found an average of 63 per cent of respondents exceeded the present recommended guidelines of less than two hours. The most popular type of screen use was TV, with 90 per cent reporting use in the past week, followed by laptop (59 per cent), tablet (58 per cent), and mobile phone (57 per cent).

The amount of screen use varied with age groups, with 45 per cent of eight-year-olds exceeding the guidelines compared to 80 per cent of 14 to 15-year-olds. Boys were more likely to exceed the recommendation when playing computer games, while girls were more likely to do so through social networking, web use and TV, DVD, and movies.

Co-author Associate Professor Michael Rosenberg, of UWA's School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health, said that although the study's results might feel discouraging for parents who were trying to impose screen limits, they should not despair or give up.

This study is part of an accelerated longitudinal study over three years, and children will be assessed twice a year. It is expected that further papers will provide information about mental health aspects and measures of problem screen use.

The study is a very useful addition to the statistics of children's current screen use, and indicates that particularly for younger children, television is still a major component of children's screen time.

For example, at the Grade 3 level, 11.4% of boys and 15.6% of girls spend more than 2 hours per week day on social networking but 38.8% of boys and 38.1% of girls exceed this time with television and DVDs.

At Grade 7 level, 25.3% of boys and 32.3% of girls exceed 2 hours per week day on social networking compared with 37.5% of boys and 51% of girls who view more than 2 hours of television and DVDs.

Houghton, S., et al 2015. Virtually impossible: limiting Australian children and adolescents daily screen based media use. *BMC Public Health* 15, 5.

http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/15/5

See our Editorial P2 for further comment

EDITORIAL

Is cyber bullying the greatest screen risk for children?

The research from the University of Western Australia highlights the struggle parents are having with screen media limits.

It also shows that, especially in the younger years, television use remains higher than social media use. Children are still watching television every day and for several hours, making continual exposure to age-inappropriate content as great a risk (though of a different kind) as infrequent exposure to internet hazards.

It's a real shame then that the Federal Government's intended role for the E-Safety Commissioner is significantly narrower than that outlined in the Liberal Party's pre-election policy. That policy included provision for "advice to parents about the appropriateness of television programmes, films, computer games and websites". The E-Safety Commissioner's role now is focussed almost exclusively on cyberbullying.

Help for parents in **starting early** in managing **all screen use** is needed just as much. We teach road safety and water safety to kids. Screens are as much a part of their natural environment as cars and water and equally, we should be teaching screen safety. Just as the government supports other safety campaigns and affirms parental responsibility, they should also provide similar support to parents, especially from an early age, and in regard to all media, old and new.

E-safety should encompass all screens.

ACCM expanded on these issues in its recent submission to the Senate Inquiry into the enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill. Here's an extract :

Moreover, more and more children are starting to access the internet before they start school. This underlines once again the importance of parents and the home environment in shaping the experience children have online, and keeping them safe. (It also, of course, suggests a need for programs in early childhood settings.)

Barbara Biggins OAM Hon CEO

ACCM also detects something of an 'elephant in the room' in this discussion, namely the number of young children who have unsupervised access to internet-enabled devices. The legislation as currently drawn appears to see this as unproblematic from a policy point of view, or at least something that need not be addressed. We disagree. There is a role for government in setting up at least a conversation about how old a child should be before he or she is provided with a smart phone or similar device.

Closer attention to the role of parents would be consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC - see esp articles 3(2), 5, 18(2) and 29(1)(c)) and with the Coalition's election promises (The Coalition's Policy to Enhance Online Safety for Children, pp 6-7).

http://childrenandmedia.org.au/assets/files/news/submissions/2015/accm_submission_senate-online-safety-jan15.pdf

http://www.liberal.org.au/latest-news/2013/09/05/coalitions-policy-enhance-online-safety-children

US advocate for quality children's TV dies

Peggy Charren died on 22 January 2015, aged 86.

As the mother of two daughters in the 1960s, Charren was not happy with what was on offer on television particularly the commercial content and the lack of educational programming.

With a group of interested friends she formed the organisation *Action for Children's Television* to push for reforms but it was not until 1990 — after years of lobbying — that ACT saw passage of the Children's Television Act, which limits the amount of advertising time in shows aimed at kids and requires stations to prove the educational component of their programming. After the passage of this legislation, Charren disbanded her organisation, noting that many of its goals had been achieved. In 1995 Charren was awarded, the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her work.

FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler called Charren a "national treasure", saying:

"Parents across America owe a debt of gratitude to Peggy, who singlehandedly turned the vast wasteland that was children's television programming in the 1960s and 1970s into the plethora of educational, informational and entertaining programming families enjoy today."

https://variety.com/2015/tv/news/peggy-charren-childrens-television-advocate-dies-at-86-1201412344/

Age the issue as debate urged on smartphones for kids

Back to school for business

BRUCE McDOUGALL

CORPORATE giants from banks to supermarket chains and global technology companies are pumping hundreds of millions of dollars into schools to embed their brands within student education.

As "connected classrooms" become an education buzzword, schools increasingly are entering into arrangements with technology behemoths such as Telstra, Google and Microsoft.

Many other large operations including the National Australia Bank, Coles, Bunnings and even McDonald's have also invested in major school programs linking their name with education.

Woolworths Petrol has sponsored the multi-agency youth road safety program "bstreetsmart" rolled out to schools, while Coles has delivered sports equipment valued at more than $10 million to 7500 schools across the nation.

The investment splurge is a two-way street, with cash-strapped schools benefiting from the deals while the companies link their brand with education and access potential new customers.

A new "super classroom" at Delany College, Sydney, includes a $300,000 investment by Telstra in digital technologies.

The Advertiser, 12 January 2015

EXCLUSIVE

ANNABEL HEPWORTH
NATIONAL BUSINESS
CORRESPONDENT

A CHILDREN'S media lobby group is urging the government to help launch a debate about how old children should be before they can have smartphones and similar gadgets.

The comments come as *The Australian* has confirmed the government is advancing plans to make safety options for smartphones and other devices available for parents.

In a submission on the bill for the government's proposed cyber-bullying crackdown, the Australian Council on Children and the Media says insufficient attention is given to the role of parents and that more children are on the internet before they start school.

"There is a role for govern-

ment in setting up at least a conversation about how old a child should be before he or she is provided with a smartphone or similar device," the submission to a Senate committee inquiry says.

The submission says the group "detects something of an 'elephant in the room' in this discussion, namely the number of young children who have unsupervised access to internet-enabled devices".

The centrepiece of the cyber-bullying crackdown is the appointment of a children's e-safety commissioner, who will have powers to order big social media services to take down harmful material and to tell people who posted the material to remove it, refrain from posting it or apologise for doing so.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications Paul Fletcher said many parents were wrestling with what devices their kids should use and at what age.

"That's certainly the kind of thing that the children's e-safety commissioner would be in a position to provide advice to parents about," he said.

A working group that includes mobile phone companies and internet service providers has met to work on making software available that parents could install on their devices to protect kids from inappropriate material.

The Coalition has ruled out the mandatory filtering once proposed but later abandoned by Labor.

Meanwhile, Telstra is urging politicians to consider compensating telcos for their costs in helping investigations into cyber-bullying on social media under the proposed crackdown.

The company says industry is already compensated for the costs of helping law enforcement, emergency services and national security and wants this cost recovery extended to the office of the e-safety commissioner.

The Australian, 14 January 2015

Facebook warnings

FACEBOOK is putting warning labels on graphic videos that members upload and share with friends, the leading social network has announced.

The California-based internet giant will also prevent potentially shocking or upsetting video clips from popping into news feeds of members whose profiles say they are younger than 18 years old.

Facebook allows children as young as 13 years to join.

"When people share things on Facebook, we expect they will share responsibly, including who will see that content," a Facebook spokesman said yesterday.

"In instances when people report graphic content to us that should include warnings, or is not appropriate for people under the age of 18, we may add a warning for adults and prevent young people from viewing the content."

The Advertiser, 15 January 2015

Children's hospital Fast food outlets here to stay, says Premier

Andrews attacks McDonald's critics

Julia Medew
Health Editor

Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has dismissed calls for the Royal Children's Hospital to dump its contract with McDonald's as "nanny statism" and says public health experts behind the push should "get over themselves".

Mr Andrews, a former health minister, has also opened the door to the new Monash Children's Hospital including a McDonald's when it opens in 2017.

Last month, public health experts, including former head of VicHealth Rob Moodie, called for Victoria's two main paediatric hospitals to exclude fast-food outlets because it creates a "healthy halo effect" around the food and is inconsistent with the values of a health service treating weight-related problems.

With one in four Australian children now overweight or obese, Professor Moodie AM and others said Australian hospitals should be following a global trend of dumping junk food retailers because they promote a poor diet that is ultimately costing the health system billions of dollars.

But on Wednesday, Mr Andrews declared McDonald's was "here to stay" while visiting the Royal Children's Hospital and said he would not prevent the new Monash Children's Hospital from also including one. "I'm also a parent and frankly the notion that it is somehow a bad thing to give a sick child a treat, to give a sibling of a sick child a visit to McDonald's, that is just nonsense and we'll have none of it, none of it at all," he said.

The premier added that "people who would like to tell parents every single thing they ought do and not do" was "nanny statism" that undermined the power of other advice governments give parents.

"The McDonald's is here to stay in this health service as part of a balanced offering and that's exactly the outcome we'll achieve at Monash Children's as well," he said. "There will be no prohibition as some would like and frankly, they need to get over themselves."

Professor Moodie and Obesity Policy Coalition head Jane Martin, who both spoke out about the issue last month, said Mr Andrews had missed the point.

"It's not really about whether children should be having these treats or not, it's about whether a children's hospital should be seen to be endorsing the kind of food that McDonald's basically sells. They basically sell nuggets and fries," Ms Martin said.

"Hospitals are dealing with a huge burden of diet-related disease ... This is our new smoking."

Previous research published in the medical journal *Pediatrics* has shown that people who eat McDonald's in hospitals believe they are contributing funding towards the hospital and that the food is healthier than it is.

Professor Moodie said this "healthy halo effect" was counterproductive, especially when doctors are treating children for obesity and weight-related diseases on site.

"The huge majority of hospitals don't need to have junk food chains in them and the trend now is for hospitals to take them out, this is happening in the UK, the US and even in Western Australia," said the the professor of public health at Melbourne University.

"This wouldn't matter if we didn't have an obesity epidemic and if we didn't have a whole lot of kids who are going to be fundamentally unhappy and sick because they have major weight problems."

Professor Moodie said he was disappointed with the Premier's comments and said many parents wanted their children to be less exposed to junk food marketing and advertising that creates "pester power".

"It's about creating an environment where parents can help their kids make healthier choices," he said. "I would have expected a government that is going to have to end up paying the bills for overweight and obesity to be really thinking about how we can create healthier environments ... We really need to have a good discussion about this."

Last month, a spokesman for Monash Health said no decisions had yet been made about retailers for its new paediatric hospital.

The Age, 8 January 2015

Learn and sleep best

READING bedtime stories to young children won't just help them nod off – it could also make them brainier.

Research found that babies could only remember new games if they had a good sleep shortly after.

In other words, sleeping like a baby seems to be crucial to memory and learning and could help youngsters retain the educational benefits from books.

The University of Sheffield researchers studied 216 babies aged between six months and a year.

Researcher Dr Jane Herbert said the results demonstrated "just how valuable activities like reading books with young children just before they go down to sleep can be".

"Until now, people have presumed that the best time for infants to learn is when they are wide-awake," she said.

The Advertiser, 15 January 2015

Phone lock kids won't be 'appy

SAMANTHA LANDY

NAUGHTY kids beware – an app that allows parents to lock their children's phones if they are ignoring their calls is gaining momentum.

The controversial Ignore No More, which promises to "helps parents get control back over their child's phone", will be fully available on iPhones from March after launching for Android phones last year.

Parents simply install the app on their phone and their child's phone and enter a four-digit code to lock their device.

When the phone is locked, kids can't "text, surf the internet, play games or look at Facebook", the app's creator, mum Sharon Standifird, said.

"What they can do is call the parent back to get the password to unlock their phone," she said.

Ms Standifird, 47, of Texas, dreamt up the sneaky app after getting no response from her two kids to several calls and texts asking them to let the dog out of the house one day.

"I was so frustrated with this recurring event," she said.

Ms Standifird had "zero experience" in the field – she had served in the army for more than 10 years, including in the Gulf War, and worked as a teacher before becoming a technology trailblazer out of the blue.

Her product has some calling her a genius, and others (such as British media outlet *The Independent)* a "frustrated mother turned evil genius".

Her son Bradley, 17, has described it as "a good idea, but for other people, not me".

"It's is not about punishing the child – it's a tool to try and correct a behaviour," Ms Standifird said.

She said parents usually bought and paid the bills for their children's phones, so they had a right to control them.

"It's no different than when ... children are given a time out, limited TV or lose their car keys when they choose to break these rules," she said.

Parents have added to the app's uses by locking their child's phones after bedtime, while they do homework, during school and when driving.

The Sunday Mail, 18 Jaanuary 2015

Apps a gamble

Your editorial and article ("Poker machines foɪ children a reckless gamble", *The Advertiser* 20/1/15) put the spotlight on the promotion of gambling to children via toy pokies.

Many apps for children also promote gambling behaviour, and deserve similar condemnation.

While some of these are clearly identifiable, many are not.

The Children and Gambling Watch list at http://childrenandmedia.org.au/app-reviews/ can help parents in this regard.

The List is part of the Know Before You Load app review service established in April last year by the Australian Council on Children and the Media and funded by the SA Attorney General's Department.

BARBARA BIGGINS, CEO,
Australian Council on
Children and the Media.
Glenelg.
The Advertiser, 22 Jan 2015

Poker machines for children a reckless gamble

The Advertiser, 20 January 2015

LAUREN NOVAK
POLITICAL REPORTER

TOY poker machines that encourage children to play for lollies or to win back their savings from money boxes have prompted calls for laws banning the sale of products that promote gambling to young people.

Anti-pokies advocates have raised concerns about the Candy Jackpot Slot Machine and Pokie Saver Money Bank toys, found at two Adelaide stores. It is not illegal to sell such products but authorities have recommended the store owners offering the miniature poker machines take them off the shelves.

The State Government is preparing legislation which would prevent their sale to children.

The tougher laws would aim to protect children from exposure to gambling products or advertisements for them, Consumer and Business Services Minister Gail Gago said.

Independent Senator and anti-pokies campaigner Nick Xenophon said toy poker machines led to "dangerous conditioning of kids" to gamble and has written to gaming Commissioner Dini Soulio,

urging him to investigate.

"There is something pretty sick about a so-called toy that promotes poker machines as a way to save money when so many people have lost their life savings because of the pokies," he said. "This sends completely the wrong message to kids."

Pokies Anonymous and Communities Against Pokies member Shonica Guy discovered the Candy Jackpot Slot Machine at a Semaphore Rd store and was alerted to the Pokie Saver Money Box, sold in an Elizabeth Shopping Centre store, by a fellow member.

"I was horrified. Its encour-

aging people to gamble," she said. "It does say it's recommended for people over 18 (years) but it doesn't say 'not for' people under 18 and I think that's a loophole there."

Pokies Anonymous leader Julia Karpathakis called for a ban on the sale and marketing of "anything that looks like a pokie machine" to children.

"I think parents should be really diligent as to what they're children are actually playing," she said.

Opposition gaming spokesman Rob Lucas said his party did not believe "these sorts of products should be available to

children if they're promoting gambling".

For help contact Pokies Anonymous on 0458676823 or Gambler's Help Youthline on 1800262376.

Pull plug on guide for kids viewing

JENNIFER DUDLEY-NICHOLSON

THE rise of smartphones, tablets and social media has made it "virtually impossible" for parents to limit their children's exposure to screens, an Australian study has found.

Limiting a child's screen time to meet official national guidelines of two hours a day is "virtually impossible", as more than 60 per cent of Australian children are already exceeding the recommendations, the West Australian study reveals.

The study, which investigated children's use of social networking, gaming, web surfing, and television, found almost half were already exceeding screen-time guidelines by the age of eight, and girls were more likely to spend "excessive" time looking at screens.

But rather than advocating stricter parental control, the University of Western Australia study recommended guidelines be revised to accommodate the reality of today's technological environment.

The study, titled *"Virtually Impossible: limiting Australian children and adolescents daily screen-based media use,"* surveyed 2620 Australian children between the ages of eight and 16 at 25 schools.

Australian Health Department guidelines recommend that children over two years spend fewer than two hours looking at screens daily, but the study found 45 per cent of eight-year-olds were already exceeding the limit, and the proportion climbed to 80 per cent for children aged 15-16.

Lead researcher Professor Stephen Houghton said previous studies in the field typically only looked at traditional screens such as televisions and computers, but did not consider the growing popularity of smartphones and tablets, or social networking.

"The introduction of mobile devices suggests the less-than-two-hours-per-day recommendation may no longer be tenable given the surge in social media engagement and school-derived screen use," Mr Houghton said.

The two-hour guideline was initially set by the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2001, but the study points out that in 2015, "both parents and schools are enthusiastically embracing the digital age".

The study also found, however, that the most popular screen for children remained the television (90 per cent) followed by the laptop computer (59 per cent), tablet computer (58 per cent), and mobile phone (57 per cent). But while TV watching was the most popular activity, screens were also often used for school and homework (63 per cent), and searching the web (86 per cent).

Boys were 1.75 times more likely to exceed the recommended screen time playing games, with game use peaking among eight-year-olds, while girls were bigger users of social networks, the web, and TV. Mr Houghton said girls' use of social media increased with age, and far exceeded that of boys.

"By 15 years of age, girls were over 15 times more likely to exceed the less-than-two-hours recommendation compared to their eight-year-old peers," he said.

The study concluded that more research was needed into the "mental, social and physical health impact" of spending more time looking at screens.

The Advertiser, 22 January 2015

Tech firms told to steer clear of our kids

BRUCE McDOUGALL

PARENTS are demanding "iron-clad guarantees" from major technology companies involved in schools that students' personal details, emails and schoolwork are not used for commercial purposes.

The Australian Council of State School Organisations will launch a campaign targeting global tech companies, including Google, to ensure student privacy is protected.

The nation's peak parent body said it would press Australia's political leaders to consider laws preventing students' information from being "data mined" for advertising or on-selling to third parties.

Parents are seeking similar protections to those announced by US President Barack Obama stopping tech companies from misusing the student data they manage and analyse in schools.

ACSSO president Margaret Leary said: "Mr Obama's announcement sends a clear message that mining students' data by tech companies for marketing and profiling purposes is simply unacceptable.

"School students' data and privacy should never be compromised. It is now time that all tech companies ... make a firm pledge not to sell student information, target them with ads, or use their data for any unauthorised purpose.

"Australian parents now expect our political leaders to show similar leadership and introduce legislation to protect student data from commercial gain once and for all."

A suite of Google products including apps and email accounts has been made available to hundreds of thousands of students around Australia while Microsoft has invested $100 million in school technology programs.

As the involvement of tech giants ramps up, parents are concerned that they are able to track students' online activities for profiling and marketing purposes, even if advertising features are turned off.

Director of Google for education Bram Bout said advertisements in apps for education services had been turned off and ads also had been removed from Google Search for signed-in kindergarten to Year 12 users.

The Advertiser, 19 Jan 2015

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Australian Early Development Census

National Conference

Bridging the Divide: Linking data to action in schools, communities, and governments across Australia

18-20 February 2015
Glenelg, South Australia

http://www.aomevents.com/AEDC2015

WORLD NEWS

Report - *Children, teens, media, and body image*

This is a new review by US organization Common Sense Media of research on the links between body image and media. It examines the role of both traditional media (movies, TV, magazines, ads) as well as newer forms of interactive, online, digital and social media.

Research shows that body image begins to develop at a very young age and that multiple factors -- especially parents, some media, and peers -- are influential. Body-image issues are widely prevalent, and societal norms around appearance and weight depicted in children's media are gendered, stereotypical, and unrealistic. Children's consumption of mainstream media puts them at risk of developing unhealthy approaches to their bodies.

Research on social media and body image is in its infancy but suggests these new media can present both positive and negative environments for self- and body esteem. The report uncovers large gaps in research on body image and media. Some groups are not well-studied, longitudinal and ethnographic methods are rare, and research on online, digital media has yet to keep pace with the explosion in their use by children and teens.

https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/children-teens-media-and-body-image

Changing UK media environment

The 2015 CHILDWISE Monitor Report which surveyed more than 2,000 kids in the UK aged five to 16 reflects a changing landscape in digital media consumption by this age group.

More children now own a tablet than a laptop and tablet ownership among younger children doubled this year. One-third of five to seven year olds now own their own tablet.

The researchers suggested that parents like tablets because they are more controllable and can be taken away more easily than a TV or computer. Also with the growing use of tablets in primary schools, parents see educational advantages in children being familiar with tablets.

Among older children the tablet has been slower to displace laptops or smartphones, especially among teens. In the older age group, mobile phones are increasingly being used to access the internet and as the primary way to listen to music.

According to the annual report, Minecraft topped the list as the number one game for boys and girls of all ages, and YouTube ranked as the favourite website. In the 11 to 16 group, the video-sharing site has displaced previous leader Facebook among all but older girls. Social sites like Instagram and Snapchat are also gaining in popularity as the place to keep in touch and share with friends.

More information and the full report are available at

www.childwise.co.uk

Children and mobile gaming

In its new *Mobile Gaming 2014* report, US market researcher NPD Group shows how popular mobile gaming has become in the US.

The report found that on average, time spent playing games on a device (smartphone, tablet, iPod Touch) has increased 57% since 2012. On average, gamers are spending more than two hours a day playing, a significant increase on one hour and 20 minutes in 2012.

Children are playing a large role in driving up these numbers. The study found the average number of minutes per session was greatest in the tween years, decreasing through the teen and early adult years.

Children aged two to 12 are spending the greatest proportion of their device time on gaming as opposed to other activities. This age group is also playing more games (an average of five), as well as more games that were paid for (an average of three).

The report also pointed to the growth of the tablet market, as well as continued improvement of tablet technology, which has seen these devices increasingly used for mobile gaming.

https://www.npd.com/wps/portal/npd/us/news/press-releases/2015/average-time-spent-playing-games-on-mobile-devices-has-increased-57-percent-since-2012/

Safer Internet Day 2015

Safer Internet Day 2015 will be celebrated on Tuesday 10 February, with the theme, once again, of "Let's create a better internet together" Safer Internet Day (SID) is organised by Insafe in February of each year to promote safer and more responsible use of online technology and mobile phones, especially among children and young people across the world

http://www.saferinternetday.org/web/guest/home