



## Apps can track - Who is collecting your child's data?

When children use apps online, all too often their personal data is being gathered by known and unknown collectors.

Collection of children's personal data can facilitate commercial exploitation, enable predators, and build a risky, longstanding digital footprint. This is a big issue for parents who are being expected to protect their children's privacy.

But what tools do parents have to provide this protection? Advice commonly given to parents is to "Read the privacy policies when you download an app".

Privacy policies are often long, too hard to read, and ambiguous. Often they say what companies "may" do with personal data, rather than stating what a company *will* and *will not* do with that data.

### Help is at hand!

The Australian Council on Children and the Media has been working with AppCensus, based in the US, to help parents make more informed decisions about their children's privacy by showing them exactly what data various apps collect, and with whom that data is shared.

The AppCensus testing system runs apps on real mobile phones in its testing laboratory; it installs each app, grants the requested permissions, uses each app for a set period of time and collects as much information as possible about what the app is doing on the phone, what data it is mining and where it is sending that data on.

This system provides reliable information about:

- the data apps have permission to access
- the data apps actually access
- to whom that data is sent; and
- whether this is done securely.

ACCM is making available these privacy checks for 50 of the most popular Android apps played by children in Australia. The information is parent-friendly and will be updated regularly.

ACCM's new resources also include videos for parents to support them with a range of privacy issues, including how to discuss the importance of personal privacy with children at different ages. The resources incorporate research conducted at Macquarie University.

Check out **Apps can track** at <https://childrenandmedia.org.au/app-reviews/apps-can-trap-tracking> from Thursday June 10.

Further inquiries: [info@childrenandmedia.org.au](mailto:info@childrenandmedia.org.au)



Produced in partnership with the Macquarie University Department of Psychology.



ACCM acknowledges the support of the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) which funded the research for this project.