



Our children need online privacy protections in law

See our resources for parents and carers | P4



Ads will continue to haunt children
Editorial | P2

First published 1986

Issue No 386

JUNE 2021

Game over for loot boxes?



The move to limit children's access to games with loot boxes

Calls are growing for greater protections for children when playing games containing loot boxes.

Independent Tasmanian Senator Andrew Wilkie is promising action in Federal Parliament, while News Corp's newspapers and websites have begun a campaign.

Loot boxes within mobile games have been described as an in-game reward system in which players can repeatedly buy a random selection of virtual items in the hope of advancing themselves.

Loot boxes require no player skill and have a randomly determined outcome or prize, and so they function similarly to scratch tickets or gambling poker machines.

The Senate Environment and Communications References Committee held an inquiry into such practices in 2018 and completed its report Gaming micro-transactions for chance-based items in November 2018.

In [its submission](#) to this inquiry, ACCM argued:

- Loot boxes within online games should be defined as gambling within the Interactive Gambling Act (IGA), and consideration given to whether such providers need to be licensed.
- The Classification Guidelines should be changed to include the element of gambling (and under a revised IGA this definition of gambling would include loot boxes)
- All online games which include the process of gambling should be classified R18+.

News Corp's national technology editor, Jennifer Dudley-Nicholson has written a series of well-researched articles on concerning aspects of children as gamers in recent weeks. These include:

- [Loot box law seeks to ban video game gambling risks from children, add warning labels for parents](#)
- [Absolutely furious': Parents fume as games target kids](#)
- [Violent threats, no school: Grim reality of gaming](#)



Senator Andrew Wilkie

[addiction](#) In her most recent story, Nicholson reports Mr Wilkie will launch the bid to restrict what he called "barely disguised gambling" in games such as Roblox and Clash Royale in a private members' bill in August.

It will also seek to introduce warning labels on any games featuring loot boxes.

The proposal will follow News Corp's [Screen Time campaign](#), that revealed multiple recommendations to investigate and prevent Australian children accessing the gambling-style purchases had been ignored or dismissed over the past three years.

Not surprisingly, the gaming industry is not happy with the campaign.

ScreenHub's Chris Button [reported on June 21](#) "the Interactive Games and Entertainment Association (IGEA), Australia and New Zealand's peak body for the videogame industry, has responded strongly to a series of articles across News Corp Australia's publications about children and videogame addiction.

He continued "similar to the [ABC's Four Corners story last May](#), the recent News Corp articles cover topics including videogame and technology addiction, microtransactions, and loot boxes among popular online games such as Fortnite and Roblox.

"Where the News Corp coverage differs is in its specific focus on children... A number of game publishers whose titles feature a loot box monetisation system are currently IGEA members, including Activision Blizzard, Electronic Arts, and Take Two Interactive. IGEA concluded its statement with an acknowledgement some people do encounter issues with playing videogames, without specifically referring to addiction--which, [as ScreenHub's Jini Maxwell discussed](#), is a highly controversial topic among experts."

While we wait for action on loot boxes, here's [ACCM's 10 top tips for healthy game play](#).



[Read our reviews of the latest streaming and cinema releases](#)

small screen

issue 386 - June 2021

small screen is published at the beginning of each month and reports on the events of the previous month 11 issues per year (Dec/Jan double issue)

Published by
Australian Council on
Children and the Media
(ACCM)

ACCM is a national, non-profit
community organisation.
Its mission is to promote a
quality media environment
for Australian children.

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

Contributions are welcome.

CONTENTS

- 2 - EDITORIAL
- 3 - NEW PUBLICATIONS
- 4 - WORLD NEWS

CONTACT US

Editor: Barbara Biggins OAM
Compiler: Kurtis Eichler
Editorial Board: Barbara
Biggins, Judy Bundy, Elizabeth
Handsley.

Address: PO Box 1240
Glenelg South South Australia 5045
Email: info@childrenandmedia.org.au
Website: www.childrenandmedia.org.au
Telephone: +61 8 8376 2111

ACCM acknowledges
support from



ACCM's website
is designed by



Click to donate

SUPPORT US

editorial

New Code of Practice does not address use of scary images

BARBARA BIGGINS
ACCM CHIEF EXECUTIVE



In February this year, the AANA commenced the operation of its revised Code of Ethics [Code of Ethics – AANA](#).

The AANA had called for submissions back in September 2019, and released the revised version in September 2020. One of the main issues raised by ACCM in [its submission to the AANA](#) during its review of its Code was that of scary ads. Here's what ACCM had to say (in part): *As it stands, the Code of Ethics does not deal explicitly with ad content that is likely to scare or distress children...*

Such exposure is not trivial, and can cause long-lasting unnecessary fears and anxieties, and sleep disturbance. Such anxieties can be triggered by only brief exposures to such images..... The Code of Ethics should therefore provide clearer direction... by including a rule that advertising likely to be seen by children must not display images that are likely to be frightening or distressing to children.

Such a Code provision will necessitate advertisers, and the Community Panel, informing themselves about which types of images fall within the description in the provision. This will require reference to the research literature.

The Code was duly reviewed and despite the [AANA's own research](#) (by Ipsos) showing *"there is a general distaste for violence in the community and this is echoed in the broad overall support (79%) for the changes to the Code of Ethics in regards to Violence/ Horror themes the issue of scariness was not properly addressed.*

The AANA made big claims: *"The Code will: introduce additional restrictions for advertising containing violent or menacing content so that harmful content is not displayed where children form part of the audience."*

But analysis by ACCM's

President and Professor of Law Elizabeth Handsley showed [that the issues were not fixed](#). She said: *"In the substantive provisions of the Code, there is nothing that would indicate a shift in the way that scary images are dealt with. In*

particular, there is no change to the wording of the provision on violence. The Practice Note, by contrast, does contain discussion of the role of 'menace' in interpreting that provision, at least where the audience includes children. It gives examples of images suggesting a character is about to commit violence, or has just done so, and makes it clear that these 'should not be included'.

Therefore it extends the concept of violence further than the words 'present or portray' alone would necessarily indicate. This development is welcome. However, fear is not necessarily rationally connected to threatened or actual violence or harm. The new Practice Note still does not directly confront the issue of scary images per se. Therefore we can be sure that advertisers will continue to use them, finding their way around the current provision on violence." And advertisers have! The list of [Australia's most complained about ads](#) for the first 6 months of this year includes at No.6 a trailer for *The Conjuring - The Devil Made Me Do It*, pictured. shown on TV in the early evening hours. Despite attracting 15 complaints, the ads were Ok'd by AdStandards Community panel.

[A report into the trailer](#) concluded "overall, the Panel considered that the tone of this advertisement was suspenseful and frightening, and contained a suggestion of violence. The Panel considered that the level of menace was not excessive in the context

of an advertisement for a horror movie". And so it goes! The ad was OK'd in the first place, for showing on TV, by [Clearads- FreeTV](#)

[Australia's ad vetting system](#). Somewhere, somehow these processes need to become

evidence-based.



Vera Farmiga in a scene from 'The Conjuring'

ADVERTISING

Lapierre, MA; Choi, E
Parental awareness of new online advertising techniques targeting children: an exploratory study of American parents
 YOUNG CONSUMERS MAY 2021

Emond, JA; Utter, H; Eschholz, A; Chang, V; Gottlieb, MA; Sargent, JD
Promotion of meal premiums in child-directed TV advertising for children's fast-food meals
 PEDIATRICS JUN 2021 VL 147 (6)

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Tsuji, S; Fievet, AC; Cristia, A
Toddler word learning from contingent screens with and without human presence
 INFANT BEHAVIOR & DEVELOPMENT MAY 2021 VL 63

Dynia, JM; Dore, RA; Bates, RA; Justice, LM
Media exposure and language for toddlers from low-income homes
 INFANT BEHAVIOR & DEVELOPMENT MAY 2021 VL 63

Bahadur, EI; Akkus, PZ; Yoldas, TC; Ozmert, EN
How effective is family counselling on screen exposure of pre-school children?
 TURKISH JOURNAL OF PEDIATRICS MAR-APR2021 VL 63 (2) 282-290

Suggate, SP; Martzog, P
Preschool screen-media usage predicts mental imagery two years
 EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND CARE MAY 2021

Osin, EN; Kosheleva, NV
Digital generation: early choice
 VOПРОСЫ ПСИХОЛОГИИ NOV-DEC 2020 6 141+

Ramirez, NF; Hippe, DS; Shapiro, NT
Exposure to electronic media between 6 and 24 months of age: An exploratory study
 INFANT BEHAVIOR & DEVELOPMENT MAY 2021 VL 63

McArthur, BA; Tough, S; Madigan, S
Screen time and developmental and behavioral outcomes for preschool children
 PEDIATRIC RESEARCH MAY 2021

Corkin, MT; et al
The predictors of screen time at two years in a large nationally diverse cohort
 JOURNAL OF CHILD AND FAMILY STUDIES MAY 2021

Delmestre, J; et al
Young children's exposure to screensL parents' knowledge and social inequalities
 EXERCER-LA REVUE FRANCOPHONE DE MEDECINE GENERALE MAY 21 IS173 203-209

PARENTAL MEDIATION

Nystrom, CD; Abbott, G; Cameron, AJ; Campbell, KJ; Lof, M; Salmon, J; Hesketh, KD
Maternal knowledge explains screen time differences 2 and 3.5 years post-intervention
 INFANT EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF PEDIATRICS JUN 2021

PRIVACY

Jain, AK; Sahoo, SR; Kaubiyal, J
Online social networks security and privacy: comprehensive review and analysis
 COMPLEX & INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS JUN 2021

Desimpelaere, L; et al
Children's perceptions of fairness in a data disclosure context: The effect of a reward on the relationship between privacy literacy and disclosure behavior
 TELEMATICS AND INFORMATICS AUG 2021 VL 61

SCREEN TIME

Kenney, EL; et al
Limiting television to reduce childhood obesity: cost-effectiveness of five population strategies
 CHILDHOOD OBESITY MAY 2021

Ribner, AD; McHarg, G
Screens across the pond: Findings from longitudinal screen time research in the US and UK
 INFANT BEHAVIOR & DEVELOPMENT MAY 2021 VL 63

SENSORI-MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Suggate, Sebastian Paul; Martzog, Philipp
Children's sensorimotor development in relation to screen-media usage: A two-year longitudinal study
 JOURNAL OF APPLIED DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY MAY-JUN 2021 VL 74

SLEEP

Nosetti, L; et al
Impact of pre-sleep habits on adolescent sleep: an Italian population-based study
 SLEEP MEDICINE MAY 2021 VL 81 300-306

Quante, M; Redline, S
Touchscreen devices-impact on 24-hour sleep in "cyber" babies
 SLEEP MAR 2021 VL 44 (3)

Almuaigel, D; et al
Impact of technology use on behavior and sleep scores in preschool children in saudi arabia
 FRONTIERS IN PSYCHIATRY MAY 21 2021 VL 12

SMARTPHONES

Pope-Ford, R
Parent awareness of smartphone use and its health impact
 ADVANCES IN SAFETY MANAGEMENT AND HUMAN FACTORS [10th International Conference on Applied Human Factors and Ergonomics (AHFE) / International Conference on Safety Management and Human Factors JUL 24-28, 2019 Washington, DC 2020 VL 969 215-225

Wacks, Y; Weinstein, AM
Excessive smartphone use is associated with health problems in adolescents and young adults
 FRONTIERS IN PSYCHIATRY MAY 28 2021 VL 12

SOCIAL MEDIA

Kokoc, M
The mediating role of attention control in the link between multitasking with social media and academic performances among adolescents
 SCANDINAVIAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGY MAY 2021

VIDEO AND COMPUTER GAMES

Gnambs, T; et al
Do computer games jeopardize educational outcomes? a prospective study on gaming times and academic achievement
 PSYCHOLOGY OF POPULAR MEDIA JAN 2020 VL 9 (1) 69-82

Goksu, I; Aslan, A; Turgut, YE
Evaluation of mobile games in the context of content: What do children face when playing mobile games?
 E-LEARNING AND DIGITAL MEDIA SEP 2020 VL 17 (5) 388-407

Our children need protections in law for their privacy when online NOW!

The federal Attorney general's office has been conducting [a review of Australia's Privacy Act 1988](#). Having received close to 170 submissions on its preliminary Issues Paper, the government is expected to release its next stage Discussion Paper soon. This will seek more specific feedback on preliminary outcomes, including any possible options for reform. Over the past 6 months, ACCM has extensively researched privacy issues as they relate to children and their parents, and has found considerable deficiencies. In response, ACCM has developed a new range of resources for parents to support them in understanding the

importance of protecting children's online privacy, and in working for change. These include innovative checks for whether app titles are gathering children's data and passing it to others. Check out the [resources](#), and get ready to add your voice to the case for law reform:

- [Our Taking Action page](#)
- [Our Privacy Law and You page](#)
- [Our Apps Can Track: Privacy Tips and Checks page](#)
- [Our submission on the Issues paper](#)
- [The Terms of Reference for the government's review](#)



UK: Addiction to gaming and technology goes up threefold

THE number of young people in UK receiving treatment for addiction to gaming has risen significantly in the past year. [The Nightingale Hospital received 17 referrals in its first year](#) of operation after WHO recognised "gaming disorder" as a condition in 2018. A year later referrals reached 56.

UK: Public backs total gambling advertising ban

Polling conducted by YouGov found that three quarters (77%) of adults and two thirds (66%) of 11 to 17 year olds would support a ban on gambling adverts being shown on TV and on radio before 9pm.

[The research showed](#) overwhelming support for tighter curbs on gambling advertising, with almost two thirds (63%) of the adult respondents and over half (53%) of the young people surveyed in favour of a total ban on ads for gambling products

US: Rudd Center for food policy and obesity finds self regulation by industry doesn't work

Children's health advocates are calling on fast-food restaurants to [further restrict marketing of unhealthy food to children](#) on television, across social media and in their establishments after finding the industry's annual ad spend increased 9% between 2012 and 2019. [Read the research](#).

EU: Our choices are individual but can be influenced – high-profile celebrities have the power to encourage healthy behaviours

When an influencer or public figure is seen consuming or endorsing unhealthy products, such as foods and beverages high in salt, fats and sugars, this often has an immediate effect on their followers. It may influence their consumption, attitudes and preferences. Even a simple action by a high-profile celebrity can have [a significant impact](#) and cannot be underestimated.

US: Fairplay is new name for Campaign for a Commercial-free Childhood

Chair of Board of Fairplay, Emeritus Prof Angela Campbell says "While our advocacy has evolved to match the digital techniques used by corporate marketers, our name hasn't. As Fairplay, we will demand a new set of rules to protect children from the unfair and harmful manipulations of Big Tech," [Campbell added](#).

Fairplay is preparing to launch a "major campaign" for new regulations to protect children online, including pushing for an age-appropriate U.S. design code similar to a code of practice in the U.K., according to the announcement.

SWZ: Smart Toy Awards 2021

The World Economic Forum announced the eight winners of the inaugural Smart Toy Awards. The winners are Intelino,

Twin Science, LEGO, Leka, PlayShifu, ROYBI, CoderMindz and LuxAI. The Awards Show was held with special guest and judges will.i.am, Klaus Schwab and Henrietta Fore. Watch the highlights of the Awards Show [here](#).

US: Google's Privacy Backpedal shows why it's so hard not to be evil

Technology companies' blithe [disregard for consumer desires is an outgrowth of decades](#) of permissive or nonexistent government oversight. Regulators ought to consider how Big Tech's monopoly power further empowers the companies to ignore their own customers.

US: Quarantine Side Effect: Nearsightedness in Kids

Recently, [researchers have found](#) a substantial uptick in the prevalence of myopia in children, a several-fold increase. Not enough outside play has affected children's sight during the pandemic.

UK: Overnight children's lives became digital by default

Over a year on, few thought children's lives would still be upended one year later. [It's time to ask important questions about children and young people's experiences](#), the difficulties they've encountered, maybe some good things to come out of it all ... Will we – should we – go back to how things were before? Or is this the perfect moment to research, reflect, and demand change?