



MEET THE TEAM

CMA Honorary CEO – Barbara Biggins OAM CF

Barbara has been an advocate for healthy use of screens for 50 years, motivated by her strong belief (built on her research knowledge and observation) that children's screen experiences influence children's healthy development.

In addition, she is a strong believer in the power of the stories we tell our children. For centuries, parents and grandparents have sat children on their laps and told them stories (often about the world and the way it works), and those parents knew how their children were reacting and could talk to them. Now, stories are told by media outlets who have neither knowledge of, nor responsibility for their child audiences, and the stories are often misleading about the world we live in, and what really matters.

Barbara was a founding member of the SA Council for Children's Film and TV (SACCFT) in 1973, and became an advocate for the Council (both SA and National) about issues related to TV. She conducted surveys of parents' concerns, and researched and wrote submissions to many Inquiries, eg the 1977 Inquiry into Self-regulation of Australian Commercial TV stations, and the subsequent Senate inquiry, from which came the establishment of the Children's TV Standards (CTS). In 1986, Barbara launched *small screen*, a unique monthly review of news, research and developments in children's media environment. She has continued to edit this to the present (36 years).

Her skills developed as Senior Librarian for SA's Child and Family Health Service (1981-2021) have underpinned much of the research for submissions, media debates and for *small screen*.

In 1983, Barbara was invited to serve on the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal's Children's Program Committee which administered the CTS. She also chaired the ABC's SA Advisory Council and later the ABC's National Advisory Council. In 1986, Barbara was awarded an OAM for service to the Arts, "principally through the SACCFT".

Her work with the SACCFT, from 1973, was extended when she became national President of the Australian Council for Children's Films and TV (ACCFT) in 1991. This resulted in a major transformation of the ACCFT (and transfer of the Secretariat to SA after 35 years in Victoria) into a



research-based organisation, delivering trusted information to parents and professionals, and advocating for a healthy screen environment for children, this, at a time when few if any such services existed. ACCFT became a strong coalition of major child-focussed organisations in Australia. Barbara has continued to spearhead the pioneering work of the ACCFT (now CMA) to the present day, becoming Hon CEO after 10 years as President. In 1992, she oversaw the introduction of a unique, child-development-based movie review service, *Know Before You Go*. Now 20 years old, this award-winning service is respected and appreciated by parents Australia-wide.

Successful outcomes from such endeavours have been video-games classified as films; recognition of food ads as an influence on children's eating habits; recognition of sexualisation as an issue 1996; Minister's refusal to allow the screening in cinemas of trailers of movies that were of a higher classification than the feature; successful cooperation with US research company to reveal hidden tracking in children's apps; the development of resources to protect children's online privacy; an agreement in 2023 for Flicks to use CMA's movie reviews' Green Tick age recommendation on Flicks' NZ, Australian and UK websites.

Recognition of the critical importance of strong voices and quality choices in children's media has motivated Barbara to persevere for 30 years in searching and struggling for scarce funding to ensure the CMA's pioneering initiatives continue.

Barbara has given invited addresses at international conferences in Malaysia, The Philippines and New Zealand (twice) and many national conferences in Australia. In 2022, Barbara was appointed as an Associate Investigator with the ARC Digital Child Centre of Excellence and supplies ongoing searches in the field of children and media to its team of researchers. Recognition of her expertise and service expanded from her OAM in 1986, through the award of a Churchill Fellowship in 1989, as Senior Australian of the Year for SA in 2004, and with both a Churchill Trust Impact grant and a Churchill Trust Recognition award in 2022.

In 2023, Barbara has completed 50 years of distinguished, dedicated, dogged and mostly unpaid application of her talents to advocating for the rights of children to quality screen experiences, and for their rights as media consumers. She has no present plans to retire.