

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND THE MEDIA 30 APRIL 2017

NATIONAL SURVEY: AUSTRALIA'S CLASSIFICATION SCHEME NEEDS LESS PG and MORE GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS.

Australia's National Classification Scheme (NCS) does not give them enough information say 82% of Australian parents and carers".

And 89% think that an age-based system would suit their needs better.

These are the findings of an online survey conducted between March and April this year, by the Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM)..

ACCM President, Prof Elizabeth Handsley said today "Close to 1000 parents and carers have responded and most emphatically told us that the NCS does not give them sufficient information to judge whether cinema films and computer games are suitable especially for their young children. They complained about being ambushed by movies classified PG that were too frightening or violent for their young children. They resented having to take children out of such movies and wasting money". She said "The system only provides information as to whether movies are suitable for children under 15 years.

She continued, "A further problem arises with the M classification. Many M movies (especially superhero ones) are promoted to young audiences via linked toys and other goods. 86% of respondents thought that too many young children are exposed to M films and 79% that legal force at age 12 could help the situation.

ACCM has been pushing for some years, for the introduction of an evidence and age based classification scheme using categories such as G, 5+ 9+, 12+, 16+ and 18+, and where all categories from 12+ up have legal force.

ACCM has considerable expertise in this field, having for 15 years been supporting parents with its *Know Before You Go* free online movie review service, and a more recent *Know Before You Load* app review service, where movies and apps are assessed by reviewers with child development qualifications. These services support parents in choosing movies and apps that their children will enjoy

ACCM is presenting the *Tots and Tech: challenges for early childhood in a digital age* conference in Melbourne on May 5.

For interview: please contact Elizabeth Handsley 0448 898 185, or to arrange an interview Barbara Biggins 0403 005 736

Backgrounder

The Australian Council on Children and the Media a peak national community organisation which reviews research on the impact of screen use on children, advocates for more effective protections for children, and promotes healthy media choices. ACCM's movie and app review services are free, and supported by the SA Attorney General.

www.childrenandmedia.org.au

The survey was listed online by a number of child- and parent- focussed websites during March and April 2017. Respondents were from all states of Australia and totalled 940.

The main findings are reflected in a report on the ACCM website.

www.childrenandmedia.org.au/news/latest-news

Comments

Respondents were keen to comment. Here's a selection:

I was recently trying to decide if I can take my 8 year old daughter to the new Beauty and the Beast and am finding conflicting information. Current PG rating states "some material may be inappropriate for children"... how do I know before I see it whether it is appropriate?!!

I've had to leave PG-rated films with my 2 kids in the past, because the film was completely unsuitable for my young kids. It cost me \$40 for 10 mins. My own stupid fault for not researching the film beforehand, but still should be clearer as to appropriate ages.

Often surprised by content of PG rated shows that I would not have thought suitable for younger viewers but have had very little or no warning to the point that many of them we don't see as it is too difficult to judge if they are suitable for our family.

PG classification is very unreliable for making a suitable movie selection for children 12 and under. For example. Grown Ups is rated PG mild sexual references and coarse language. It also reveals that the tooth fairy isn't real. How can this movie be the same rating as Cars 2 or Brave?

PG is a useless rating. How can you provide parental guidance on a film you have not yet seen?

Age based classifications would provide very valuable information regarding content suitability. Then parents could assess the appropriateness of a film/game. For example I might decide to take my four and five year old to a 5+ film if I deemed it suitable.

About M films and young children

I hate my kids coming home and telling me about horrible things their friends saw in M rated films. We don't take our kids to anything other than PG films and then only after research about why they are PG so I really hate the fact they are exposed to M rated stuff through their friends whose parents take children as young as 5 to see M rated films.

Something must be done to decrease access to M films and games with strong violence and adult themes. Not all parents are responsible when it comes to what their kids see and play.

My ex took my child to an M film. My child is 5 years. He said he was scared and didn't like it but my husband doesn't have enough awareness/empathy to a) not take him, b) leave if it doesn't suit... I would rather age classifications to protect kids who have non protective guardians... from a young age.