



10th February 2011

Media Release

Children's media usage: is it affecting their sleep?

As school returns in 2011, experts in the field of children and media are cautioning parents to review their children's media usage.

Dr Sarah Blunden, Paediatric Sleep Research Fellow at the Centre for Sleep Research, University of South Australia, and an expert on children and sleep, says 'When children watch television at night, especially in their bedroom, or when TV is used as an aid to falling asleep, it can displace important sleep time, and may seriously effect the quality of sleep a child gets each night'.

She says 'It is well known that poor sleep, (that is, not enough sleep and not good quality sleep) can have serious detrimental effect on the physical and emotional development, behaviour, performance and cognitive function of children and young people. It is also well known that media usage, that is the amount media children engage in and the content of that media exposure can also affect children's social, emotional and cognitive development'.

These concerns are supported by the Australian Council on Children and the Media spokesman Dr Wayne Warburton, who notes that recent research shows that 'some children are replacing important sleep time with watching TV, surfing the Internet or playing computer games. This in turn can lead to serious problems in relation to physical and emotional development, as well as behaviour and performance at school'.

Dr Blunden and Dr Warburton will be speaking on these issues at the 'Scared, sleepless and hostile: children, violent/frightening media and public policy' conference on March 1 in Sydney. The conference will focus on violent and frightening media, impacts on children's sleep and anxiety levels, and policy responses including evidence-based classification systems.

Other speakers include Dr Douglas Gentile, Dr John Murray and Prof Ed Donnerstein from the US, and Australians Prof. Wayne Warburton, Mr Richard Eckersley, and Prof. Elizabeth Handsley. The conference is jointly organised by The Australian Council on Children and the Media and the Children and Families Research Centre at Macquarie University.

For interviews please contact Dr Sarah Blunden on sarah.blunden@unisa.edu.au 0414 700 953 and/or Dr Wayne Warburton on 02 9850 8643 or 02 9850 7257

For more information about the conference please visit www.childrenandmedia.org.au or contact the Australian Council on Children and the Media on 08 8376 2111,