

Annual Report 2017 – 2018

Australian Council on Children and the Media

Incorporating
Young Media Australia



Australian Council on Children and the Media
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Mission Statement

The Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM) (incorporating Young Media Australia) supports families, industry and decision makers in building and maintaining a media environment that fosters the health, safety and well-being of Australian children.

What we do

The ACCM:

- collects and reviews research and information related to children and the media.
- provides information and advice on the impact of print, electronic and screen based media on children and young people.
- advocates for the needs and interests of children in relation to the media.
- conducts and acts as a catalyst for relevant research.

How we do it

Both directly and via its information and parenting arm, the ACCM:

- provides information including movie reviews to parents and caregivers via the Children and Media website www.childrenandmedia.org.au. Fact Sheets relating to children and media use are also available via the website.
- conducts community seminars and national conferences on current issues.
- represents community concerns about the impact of print, electronic and screen based media on children and young people to legislators, regulators and the media.
- promotes discussion and debate via facebook and media interviews.

Who we are

ACCM:

- is a national not-for-profit community organisation, structured as a company limited by guarantee, and incorporated in Victoria (1957).
- is registered for GST, has tax deductible status and is a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR).
- has a national Board representative of all Australian States and Territories and its corporate membership.
- has a comprehensive organisational membership that includes ECA (Early Childhood Australia), ACSSO (Australian Council of State Schools Organisations), APPA (Australian Primary Principals Association), AHISA (Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia), AEU (Australian Education Union), Parenting Research Centre, Council of Mothers' Union in Australia Inc., SAPPA (South Australian Primary Principals Association), NSW Parents' Council.
- Board members are volunteers and receive no remuneration for their contribution to the organisation.

Organisational Structure

Patrons



Baroness Susan Greenfield



Steve Biddulph

Board of Directors 2017-2018

President	Professor Elizabeth Handsley	
Vice President	Amelia Joyce (resigned 11/17)	Early Childhood Australia
Directors (State)	Stephen Grieve	New South Wales
	Dr Harriet Hiscock	Victoria
	Prof Elizabeth Handsley	South Australia
	Leon Straker	Western Australia
	Michael Nuttall	Australian Capital Territory
	Assoc Prof Michael Nagel	Queensland
	Dr Donna Odegaard	Northern Territory
	Phillip Spratt	Tasmania
Directors (Corporate Membership)	Leah Mertens	Australian Education Union
	Beth Blackwood	AHISA

Appointments

Honorary CEO	Barbara Biggins OAM
Company Secretary	Anne Anastasiou
Treasurer	Helen Shaw (resigned 31/05/2018)
Auditor	Ascensio Accounting

President's Message

In the past year, advocacy has been a main activity for ACCM, with classification a major focus.

ACCM officers have been consulted by Classification policy officers on several occasions including a roundtable in Sydney.

ACCM has successfully lobbied for retention of the existing trailer rules in cinemas- based on principle that if parents choose a film they think will be suitable for their children they will not be ambushed by a trailer for a higher classified future attraction. The cinema industry wanted to relax these rules.

ACCM was supported in this advocacy by responses received from the level of concern expressed by parents who took part in its online survey about trailers in both cinemas and on TV.

The responses to the survey included some expressing considerable concern about trailers in early evening family programs for movies that parents considered to be quite frightening for their children, for example the MA15+ horror movie *It*. ACCM took these concerns to the Australian Communications and Media Authority, to Free TV Australia and its Commercials Acceptance Division, and to the Motion Pictures Distributors Association, suggesting that their classifiers needed to improve their knowledge of child development, and particularly of children's responses to images.

ACCM has continued to push for an overhaul of Australia's National Classification Scheme so that it provides better protections for children. It needs to be age- and research-based and to include legal restriction at a lower age than the present 15.

Other major areas of advocacy included the need to reduce children's exposure to ads for sports betting within live TV sports broadcasts, and also tackling the intrusion of gambling influences in children's games and apps (simulated gambling behaviours, and loot boxes).

Children's and Australian TV content standards have been reviewed during the year with a strong push by the free-to-air TV industry to drop quality quotas for children, without any proposals as to how or whether they might continue to support the production of such culturally important programs for children. ACCM has been actively involved in arguing for the rights of children in these debates.

ACCM continues to receive significant financial support from the South Australian government for our movie and app review services. However, finding funding to support our activities in advocacy, in bringing the latest research about children and screens to public notice and in supporting parents with strategies for healthy media use has become more difficult in the past year. ACCM is reliant on, and grateful for, the support it receives from its members, its small staff, its Board and its Executive Committee. We value the positive feedback we receive from the community about specific advocacy activities, and about our review services. If this level of appreciation could be translated into tangible financial support, we could operate far more effectively.

In spite of these challenges, my involvement with the organisation has continued to be stimulating and rewarding. The work we do is soundly based in research, and driven by a passion for improving children's media environment. As always a huge thank you is due to our indefatigable Hon CEO, Barbara Biggins, who not only makes an enormous direct contribution to our activities, but inspires the rest of us to strive harder towards the organisation's goals. To the office staff and the members of the Executive and Committee, too, thanks for all that you do.

REPORT

Information collection, review, and distribution

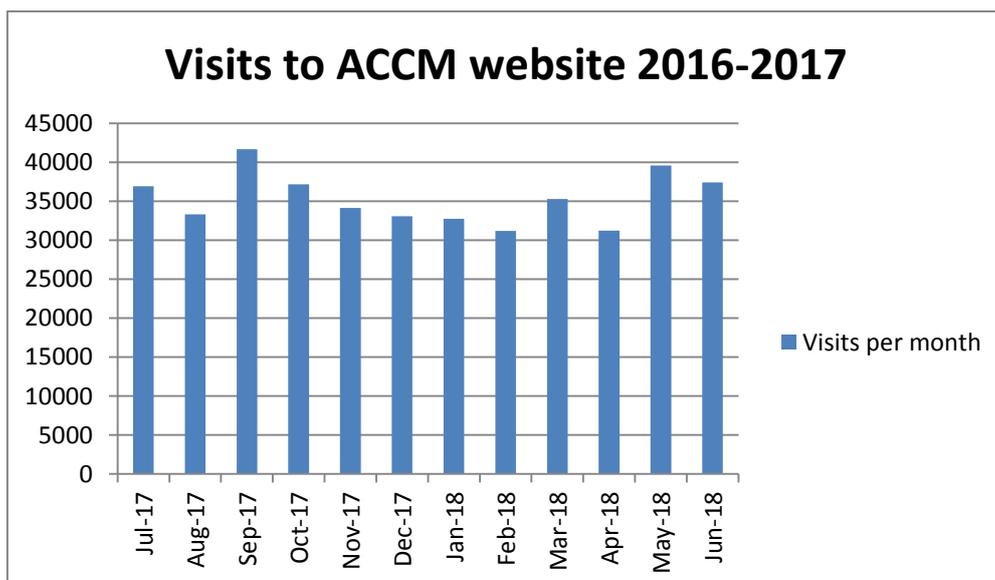
Research collection and review

This continues to be a core activity of ACCM with current research findings providing the evidence base for ACCM projects and articles, parent strategies, and advocacy. The latest research is reported in *small screen*, via ACCM's regular *E-Bulletin* and on ACCM's Web site. Research studies continue to support ACCM's platform that media use, particularly in early childhood, needs to be managed with considerable care, to promote healthy development and prevent the risk of harm to children's cognitive, social and emotional, and physical development.

Children and Media Website

The ACCM website has continued to provide child-centred movie and app reviews, the Children and Gambling Watchlist, the latest news about children and media from around the world, lists of current research, information for parents about managing media, and details of ACCM's latest campaigns and how to take action. Nick Fedorowytch from [go create](#) provides hosting and support.

The movie review section of the website continued to be the most frequently visited during the year, with the highest use pages being those for the tween and early teenage groups. However, there has been increasing interest in the app reviews, particularly in our review of the game *Fortnite*. The average number of monthly website visits this year was just over 35,300 with increases generally around school holiday times.



Social media

Increasingly Facebook and Twitter have been used as a method to connect and interact with a wider audience. We have used them to promote our website, latest news, seminars and conferences, and to engage with parents and carers. Our Facebook page has grown to 2119 likes.

small screen

Published monthly, this is a unique review of developments in children's media in Australia and overseas, plus the latest research citations. *Small screen* is distributed, mostly by email, to members, subscribers, politicians and media representatives. It is also sent to researchers and libraries overseas. A limited number of print copies are produced.

ACCM E-Bulletin

This free email-based publication is sent fortnightly to over 780 subscribers who have nominated to receive the listing of the latest news articles, research, reviews, events, due dates for submissions and more. ACCM uses the web-based *Mail Chimp* to produce and send out the *E-Bulletin* and other campaign emails. This enables us to produce consistently attractive emails, receive reports on recipient take-up and manage subscriber lists. It also allows recipients to subscribe or unsubscribe themselves easily. The *E-Bulletin* is also available from the *Latest news* section of the website.

ACCM's Knowledge Base

ACCM's evidence base underpins a number of activities and endeavours including the following:

***Know Before You Go* movie review service (KBYG)**

This award-winning service is now in its 13th year of funding from the South Australian Attorney General. ACCM is very grateful for this ongoing funding, which now also includes the app review service and provides continuity for a service much valued by parents and carers.

The ACCM website now has over 1000 movie reviews. We continue to review all G and PG rated films and M-rated films which are likely to appeal, or be promoted, to children.

We have five regular movie reviewers, all with early childhood qualifications. A total of 72 movies were reviewed in the past financial year - 13 G-rated, 33 PG-rated, 26 M-rated. As in previous years, many M-rated films have been released and classified just in time for school holidays with widespread advertising and associated merchandise. One particular example this year was the latest M-rated Jurassic Park movie which was promoted by a cinema chain with a plastic dinosaur give-away for every child ticket sold. Another M-rated film that concerned ACCM was the film of the Tim Winton book, *Breath*. As it featured stunning surf photography and two young teenagers, we believed that it was likely to appeal to young boys in particular. Our reviewer was concerned to find scenes of an adult seducing a minor and involving him in erotic asphyxiation. We expressed our concern to the Classification Board.

As well as appearing on the ACCM website, abbreviated versions of *KBYG* reviews have been printed weekly in the local South Australian Messenger Newspapers, and in OSHC (Out of School Hours Care) newsletters.

The importance of the *KBYG* service has been reflected in unsolicited emails of appreciation. Testimonials received this year include:

- *I think this is a fantastic service, and I'm grateful for the information. I think the reviews provided give a much more accurate indication of age-appropriateness than the government classifications.*
- *Excellent resource. I am shocked at the content that parents/movie producers deem suitable for children. Finally, I have a reliable resource (other than word of mouth which is subjective) for helping determine what might be appropriate.*
- *Excellent. More parents need to use it & would like it to be widely known & advertised. Particularly to teachers, student teachers & all primary schools. It should be mandatory for all primary schools to refer to this excellent guide. Well done. Please promote more widely in playgroups, kinders & primary schools.*

***Know Before You Load* app review service (KBYL)**

The *Know Before You Load* service is now 4 years old, and supported by funding from the Attorney General of South Australia. 129 new apps have been added to the site bringing the total number of apps reviewed to 687. We again focussed on apps from the most popular children's lists. In addition we reviewed sporting apps that are popular with tweens and may contain gambling elements, especially those using cartoon characters (that might appeal to children); games with 'loot boxes', apps that are linked to the latest movies; and educational apps that we can guide parents toward that will positively influence their child's development. There are now 94 apps listed on the *Children and Gambling Watchlist*.

In the past 12 months ACCM app reviewers have noticed a growing trend for developers to use a range of tools that engage children with gambling-like behaviour. These can be divided into four categories including: simulated gambling games that use characters or images that appeal to children (ie. a rubber duck or cartoon pig/cat character; sporting apps that appeal to tweens (*Cricket Australia Live* or *AFL Live*); games based on classic family board games eg *Monopoly*; and games that are free to download but encourage the player to purchase coins or jewels (with real money) to make progress in the game (ie *Disney Emoji Blitz*).

The latter category mentioned here has recently received media attention in Australia with gambling experts raising concern about the potential for mobile app games (that appeal to children) to set up normalised gambling behaviours, because children get used to using real money to get ahead in their favourite game.

'Loot boxes' are the most recent concern in this area. Players pay real money for a loot box for a chance that the content might increase their odds of winning, or provide real advantages within the game (that would usually take hours of game play). In addition, some 'loot boxes' include a feature that randomly allows the player to 'get lucky' and be offered more advantages, thus increasing the incentive to buy. While this trend appears to have started on Xbox or PC computer games (most recently *Star Wars Battlefront 2*), gambling experts are warning that 'it's in mobile games where gambling mechanisms like loot boxes are nearly ubiquitous, often overlooked, and potentially most problematic'

Below are two examples of feedback ACCM has received about the service:

- *"The app review service was particularly helpful when my boys were asking if they could play Fortnite, which until I read your review, I had no idea about – thanks for continuing to educate parents in this area"*
- *"Fantastic, I like both the app reviews for entertainment style games and for the educational apps, it makes choices about what our kids will do in their allocated screen time easier to navigate"*
- *"Thank you. I'm a teacher and the app reviews are a great resource for me and for any parents who are concerned about their child's media use"*

Partnership with Messenger Press

Messenger Press weekly local newspapers in South Australia have carried abbreviated *Know Before You Go* movie reviews in the “what’s on” section of their publication, with links to the full reviews on the ACCM website.

Raising Children Network



ACCM has continued to supply movie reviews to the Raising Children Network (RCN). In the 2017 – 2018 financial year, ACCM supplied a total of 67 *Know Before You Go* movie reviews for inclusion on RCN’s website.

Brochures

ACCM’s brochures continue to be in demand from parents and educators, and have been distributed at ACCM parent seminars and national conferences in Sydney and Melbourne, and at seminars run by other organisations (such as Generation Next).

ACCM Reviews free app

ACCM has widely promoted the availability of this free app to access to its reviews, since its development early in 2016. Apple and Android versions are available.

ACCM in the Community

National survey of parents’ and carers’ views of the National Classification Scheme

In September, ACCM promoted participation in a survey regarding parent’s views about trailers in cinema and on TV. Questions included whether trailers shown in cinema were appropriate for the feature being shown, whether trailers shown on TV were suitable for the time slot/program being viewed. Whether they supported changes being made to the rules for trailers at the cinema, so that films with a higher classification than the feature being shown could be promoted, so long as the content of the trailers matched the feature. The results of this survey can be found at

<https://childrenandmedia.org.au/assets/files/news/latest-news/trailers-survey17graphs.pdf>

and were influential in the success of ACCM’s campaign to stop ambushing parents with unsuitable trailers in cinemas.

The survey outcome was used to engage with staff of FreeTV Australia and its Commercials Acceptance Division, and also of the Motion Pictures Distributors Association on the topic of children’s reactions to the content of trailers (mostly for cinema films) shown on TV.

***Little Big Shots* film festival for children in Adelaide**

October saw ACCM present the *Little Big Shots* film festival for children in Adelaide for the second time. The event ran for two days at Event Cinema in Adelaide city. Many young children were delighted with a range of the best overseas and local short films made especially for them, as well as exciting performances in the foyer between sessions, by the talented Cirkidz troupe.

Planning is underway for a third festival to be presented in a variety of different OSHC locations across Adelaide.

ACCM Seminars and Conferences

Sydney October 5 2017 Raising Boys with Steve Biddulph at Marrickville Town Hall.

Over 500 parents attended the seminar presented by renowned author Steve Biddulph.

Thank you: ACCM would like to take this opportunity to again thank the Steve and volunteers involved in this seminar.

Working with other community agencies:

President Elizabeth Handsley and Hon CEO Barbara Biggins have participated in working parties set up by other NGOs, including Early Childhood Australia's Digital Policy group.

ACCM has also liaised closely with the Australian Children's Television Foundation and Screen Producers Australia in relation to the Government's review of Australian and Children's Content Standards.

Hon CEO Barbara Biggins attended the Deakin Food Policy Dialogue, convened by the Global Obesity centre and Deakin University in Melbourne, in November 2017.

Attendance at international conferences:

Prof Elizabeth Handsley attended the Global Summit on Children and Media, Manchester, in late December 2017.

Advocacy

Submissions to inquiries

ACCM has researched, prepared and lodged the following submissions during the 2017-2018 period:

- Submission to the Department of Communications Australian and Children's content review, September 21, 2017
- Submission to the NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee no. 1 – Premier and Finance in relation to the Alcoholic Beverages Advertising Prohibition Bill 2015, November 16, 2017
- Submission to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee regarding the Communications Legislation Amendment (Online Content Services and Other Measures) Bill 2017, January 15, 2018
- Submission to Australia Human Rights Commission of Australia's Progress on the Rights of the Child since 2012, June 18, 2018

ACCM also participated in the debates about the need for regulatory action on ads for gambling within live sports programs on Free to air T V, and online, and highlighted related issues in its monthly news review *small screen*.

Letters to Ministers

- March: Minister for Communications re need to remove ads for sports betting from sports programs
- June: Minister for Communications and all State and territory Ministers responsible for classification re need for age-based classifications

Consultations

Professor Elizabeth Handsley and Barbara Biggins were consulted on a number of occasions by Federal government policy staff on issues related to classification, and the advertising of unclassified films in cinemas and the "commensurate audience".

Media Interviews

ACCM President Professor Elizabeth Handsley, Executive Member Dr C. Glenn Cupit, and other spokespeople for ACCM, took part in a range of media interviews on diverse topics throughout the year.

Administration

Board of Directors

The Australian Council on Children and the Media's ten member Board meets by teleconference.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the Board of the Australian Council on Children and the Media meets monthly in Adelaide. This committee includes three representatives of the Board, representatives of the organisational members and other individuals selected for their expertise. It is supported by the ACCM's Treasurer (Helen Shaw), Board Secretary Anne Anastasiou, and Hon CEO Barbara Biggins.



Professor Elizabeth Handsley - President

In addition to representing ACCM in the media, Elizabeth chairs the monthly meetings of the Executive Committee of the Board of the Australian Council on Children and the Media.



Amelia Joyce - Vice-President (resigned November 2017)

Amelia represents Early Childhood Australia. She has a particular interest in children's use of digital media. ACCM greatly appreciates the contribution made by Amelia in the areas of ACCM's corporate communications strategy, and through her review of the app review service protocols.

Board member- Michael Nuttall, Executive Officer, APPA

Other members co-opted this year were Dr C Glenn Cupit (formerly UniSA); Karl Brettig (Communities for Children); Judy Bundy (SAASSPC); Jacqueline Stratfold; Kate Martin (SAPPA); Dr Lesley-Anne Ey (UniSA); Leon Straker (Curtin Uni); Beth Blackwood (AHISA)

ACCM Staff



Barbara Biggins OAM - Honorary Chief Executive Officer

Barbara has been a volunteer with the organisation since 1973. After periods as President of both the South Australian and Australian Council for Children's Films and Television, she now co-ordinates the day-to-day activities and projects of ACCM, utilising her extensive knowledge and background in Australian broadcasting and regulation. Her dedication to the organisation and leadership of the staff team is invaluable to the running and success of ACCM.



Anne Anastasiou - Finance Officer and Company Secretary

Anne managed ACCM's resources with great skill and good humour, and has the ability to utilise the sometimes small funds very effectively. As Company Secretary to the Board of ACCM she assists in ensuring all corporate reporting and ASIC and ACNC requirements are met. Anne retired as Finance Officer in October 2017. We thank her most sincerely for her many years of dedicated service.



Caroline Donald - Webmaster and Researcher

Caroline skilfully delivers one of ACCM's core functions of collecting and disseminating information for both the website, *small screen* and other publications. As well as updating the website, she coordinates the movie review team to ensure all G and PG, as well as some M movies, are appropriately reviewed in a timely manner. Her extensive child development expertise is a valuable resource across the organisation and her commitment to the organisation and good humour are much appreciated.



Clare Phillips – Development and Events Officer

Clare utilises her skills, passion and knowledge in public health policy plus marketing as Events Co-ordinator. She also coordinated the app review service. Clare is also engaged in the presentation of the third *Little Big Shots* film festival for children in SA, which is being presented in Out of School Hours Cares Centres in 2018.



Rebecca Kevern – Admin Officer

Rebecca began working for ACCM in September 2017, undertaking a range of administration tasks.



Marilyn Coleman

Marilyn worked for short periods in a range of capacities this year, including as app review coordinator, and as a movie reviewer and coordinator. Her enthusiasm and knowledge are much appreciated by ACCM.

Office Volunteers



Helen Shaw

Helen volunteered her time and skills in finance on a regular basis since Anne's retirement as Finance Officer in October 2017.

Acknowledgements

Accommodation

Our office is located on the first floor on the corner of Partridge and Bath St Glenelg. We thank the Romeo family for their continued support.

Support

ACCM thanks the many persons, institutions, and government departments which have provided support over the last year. We could not survive as an organisation without this.

- The Attorney-General of South Australia continues to support ACCM's *Know Before You Go* movie review service, and the *Know Before You Load* app reviews. This ensures the continuation of these services and is highly appreciated by all at ACCM.
- Lachlan Coles (film editor) created the highly professional and punchy DVD's used to open ACCM seminars.
- Tim Nicholls provided essential IT support.
- Nick Fedorowysch of *go create* supports the development and maintenance of our website.
- Designworks Advertising has designed and printed posters, brochures and banners.
- Ramesh Manocha of Health Ed provided display space for ACCM at his conferences.
- We are grateful to the many individuals who have provided tax-deductible donations to support our work.
- Many more individuals give their expertise, advice and time to assist our organisation to promote healthy choices and stronger voices in children's media.