



No. 250 February 2009

Kids free 2B Kids : double achievement

Julie Gale, Kids Free 2B Kids founder and Director has been honoured in the 2009 Centre for Achievement for Women (CLW) Awards for "raising awareness about the issue of the early sexualisation of children in advertising and the media by creating a sustained public debate to shift perceptions that this issue is about the mental health of children and young teens." Julie founded Kids free 2B Kids in early 2007.



Active on many issues related to the early sexualisation of young girls, Julie has, over the past few months, worked to alert politicians and regulators about the content of many R1 classified "teen porn" magazines.

These publications focus on the delights of sex with "young teens" while claiming that the models are all over 18 years (under18s cannot be used in such mags). Having found, in local delies, newsagents and petrol stations, magazines that seemed incorrectly classified, Julie submitted them to the Classification Board. The Director of the Board has responded to her claim that many appeared to be breaking the law. He said that from over 30 issues of magazines labeled R1, the Board has found that 11 issues should be Refused Classification (RC); a further 4 issues contained R2 content and are now classed as unclassified. A further 12 issues were found to be unclassified and were issued with call-in notices. None have complied with the notice.

So adults are having "freedom to see, hear and read" but who's policing the bit about

"offensive or exploitative depictions involving a person who is or who appears to be a child under 18 years", which should rightly be RC?

Julie, as did many other organizations, (such as the Australian Council on Children and the Media) made a major submission to the Senate Inquiry into the inquiry into the sexualisation of children and young people in contemporary media, which reported way back in June 2008. In the normal course of events, Governments are supposed to provide a response to Parliament within 3 months. So why the wait? It could be interpreted that Senator Conroy, Minister for Communications, who has carriage of these matters, believes there's no hurry, because existing electronic communications regulation, and changes to the AANA Code on Advertising to Children, have fixed the problems?

Craig Anderson in Australia



Internationally respected for his work on aggression and violent computer games, Distinguished Research Professor Craig Anderson of Iowa State University will be in Sydney on March 16. He will be interviewed on Nine's Today show around 8am, and on ABC Radio National at 9.15am.

In Adelaide Prof Anderson can be heard on ABC 891 at 9.30am on March 19, and will meet with the Australian Council on Children and the Media to discuss the push for R18+ games.

NAME CHANGE FOR YMA

The Board of the Australian Council on Children and the Media, which has used its registered business name "Young Media Australia" as its public name for many years, has decided that it will now be known as the "Australian Council on Children and the Media (incorporating Young Media Australia).

The role of the organisation will be unchanged, but the Board believes that the change will provide increased understanding of the nature, function and role of the ACCM.

ACMA finds breaches

The Australian Communications and Media Authority has found that TCN Channel Nine Pty Ltd breached the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice 2004 in a segment of National Nine News broadcast on 19 March 2008. The item dealt with changes to the baby bonus scheme proposed for parents with gambling and addiction problems.

ACMA received a complaint that the licensee used racist overtones towards Aboriginal people by using the term 'deadbeat parents' directly followed by footage of Aboriginal communities ACMA found that the segment gave undue emphasis to race in a number of ways, including connecting the opening 'deadbeat parents' with footage of Aboriginal communities, using words conveying that Aboriginal people have drinking and gambling problems and treating Aboriginal people in the footage less sensitively than other parents featured in the item.

http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_311643

ACMA also found that Channel Seven Sydney Pty Ltd breached the same Code of Practice by failing to present factual material accurately in a segment broadcast during Today Tonight on 7 July 2006, and its associated promotions.

http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_311645

KF2BK : DOUBLE ACHIEVEMENT

CRAIG ANDERSON IN AUSTRALIA

GUEST EDITORIAL:

PATRICIA EDGAR ON 'THE ABC'S
CYNICAL PROPOSAL FOR KIDS' TV'

NEW NAME FOR YMA

ACMA FINDS BREACHES



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small screen

Editor: Barbara Biggins OAM

Compiler: Caroline Donald

Editorial Board: Barbara Biggins,
Jane Roberts, Judy Bundy,
Elizabeth Handsley.

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Young Media Australia

PO Box 447

Glenelg 5045

South Australia

info@youngmedia.org.au

www.youngmedia.org.au

Tel: +61 8 8376 2111

Fax: +61 8 8376 2122

Helpline: 1800 700 357

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EDITORIAL

The ABC's cynical proposal for Kids' TV

Patricia Edgar

The managing director of the ABC Mark Scott now says the ABC's plan for an ad free kids' channel will help the government convince people to make the switch to digital television.

History repeats itself. Children's programming was used as the bait to entice the public to buy a television set in the first place. When the market was saturated with sets, Australian kids' TV disappeared from the screens. Cable television distributors used the same ploy. All-day kids' programming was promoted to help sell parents on cable services.

Just what would the public get from this proposed channel? The ABC argues it would carry 50% Australian content and no commercials (if you disregard the promotions for merchandise and ABC Enterprises). They claim new programming would be produced. But program production is an expensive business and no quality children's drama can now be made without overseas finance which carries editorial controls.

Nigel Pickard a prominent UK children's producer, was recently invited to Australia to speak to Government in support of the ABC Digital Channel. As a business man he supported the project and undoubtedly will be one of the first partners to line up with the ABC to co-produce programs. But he did point to the UK regulator, Ofcom's finding that first-release indigenous programs by British producers amount to 1% of transmission time on digital children's channels. All other programming is repeats and animation, largely from the US.

Australia and the ABC are not equipped to do better than the UK and the BBC. This proposed digital channel is not a solution to contemporary Australian children's media needs.

A complete rethink is needed. Children are leading the digital revolution as they move away from television to spend more and more time with games, the internet, peer to peer communication and self-generated content on sites like YouTube and Facebook.

Government policy and funding initiatives need to capitalize on the remarkable motivation children have to engage with new media.

The ABC as our public broadcaster should be leading innovation in children's programming rather than taking an expedient course that will leave Australia further behind in servicing children's communication needs.

A new children's media service could be established to make a powerful contribution to the education, both formal and informal, of Australian children.

Some of the ingredients of a new service could include:

- a virtual world – developed with sound educational principles;
- an interactive games platform with games;
- a YouTube equivalent where kids post and exchange their own productions;
- a video library for kids to download and watch at their convenience including Australian drama series for all child age groups;
- a major early childhood program to be developed as an integrated resource alongside the new national early childhood curriculum .



The ABC could be given responsibility for this new service as an outcome of the review that is currently underway, with strict conditions for funding that require they meet the educational programming needs of the national curriculum and children's cultural needs through diverse quality programming.

Children spend half their leisure time with media; they are learning values and skills but they are also wasting their brain power on vacuous content which does little to stimulate their development and creativity.

The Minister for Communication Policy Stephen Conroy's broadband plans, his digital revolution, his oversight of ACMA, his review of the ABC are all as central to the education revolution as Julia Gillard's and Kevin Rudd's plans are for reform of the education system for early childhood. Media and education policy must come together under a coordinated government initiative for these issues to be resolved.

Dr Patricia Edgar is the Chair of The World Summit on Media for Children Foundation and co-author of The New Child: In search of smarter grown-ups, Wilkinson Publishing, and Television, Digital media & Children's Learning: <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/earlyyears/index.html>

Australians still spend more time with TV than the Internet

Latest Roy Morgan Research figures show that TV remains the most-used medium, with Australians spending on average 21.5 hours per week in front of their televisions. Radio remains the second most popular medium with people listening for an average of 14.2 hours per week, while the Internet comes third with an average of 10.7 hours per week.

<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/press-releases/2009/853/>

Clips 'n' Cuts

small screen no. 250 February 2009

Filtering filth will not tangle the net



JIM WALLACE

It will be the downfall of the internet, the end of free speech as we know it. It will lull parents into a false sense of security, and it doesn't even work.

But just as students are taught not to believe everything they read on the internet, so should we not believe everything said about it. Some things are too important to leave to drown in a pool of misinformation, and internet filtering is one of them.

The industry tries to tell us we don't want this, but a national Newspann commission by the Australia Institute in 2003 showed that 93 per cent of parents of 12- to 17-year-olds said they did. We can assume they would only want it if it worked, and current trials of automatic filtering of pornography are meant to see if it is technically feasible. The results of the two trials to date show that it is increasingly so.

Our dependence on the internet makes us all very sensitive to anything that might degrade its performance, and opponents of filtering have mounted a shamelessly misleading campaign to exploit this fear.

The activist group GetUp!, for example, has raised a petition with the alarmist statement that filtering "will slow the internet by up to 87 per cent", but the claim is based solely on the worst results of the products trialled.

It conveniently omits to advise would-be signatories that the trial results released in mid-2008 showed an-

other of the filter products tested slowed internet performance by less than 2 per cent, and three products slowed it by less than 30 per cent. As one commentator has noted, GetUp!'s selective use of figures is like reporting on the first trial of refrigeration and writing off the technology because one freezer failed to cool the meat.

Another legitimate test for any filtering system is that it doesn't block an unacceptable level of legal material.

Internet service providers and the sex industry would want us to believe it would, and have commissioned at least one study full of expressions of woe. But isn't that why we're having a trial?

The latest Australian Communications and Media Authority trial report, published last year, showed the proportion of illegal and inappropriate

From the outset, it has been clear this system is not going to stop any adult from viewing anything that is legal. They can "opt in" to do so. Child pornography would be blocked to all, but the benefit of the initiative is not just in terms of how well it deals with child pornography, but how well it meets the aspirations of the 93 per cent of parents of 12- to 17-year-olds in protecting their children from both legal and illegal pornography.

Contrary to some of the dubious claims, there is a very real problem with children being exposed to inappropriate material on the internet.

In their 2003 report for the Australia Institute, Clive Hamilton and Michael Flood said: "Eighty-four per cent of boys and 60 per cent of girls say they have been exposed accidentally to sex sites on the internet and two in five boys deliberately use the internet to see sexually explicit material, with 4 to 5 per cent doing so frequently ..."

"There are special concerns regarding violent and extreme material on the internet including depictions of non-consenting sexual acts such as rape and bestiality."

Concerned parents do not view filtering as interfering with their parental responsibilities; they welcome the help. There is no substitute for parental supervision, but parents cannot be everywhere. They expect governments to help provide a protective environment.

The internet is a fabulous resource for everyone, including our young people, but it has the potential to cause great harm if reasonable safeguards are not put in place. The real story here is not the dreadful repercussions of having internet filtering, but the dreadful repercussions of not having it.

Jim Wallace is the managing director of the Australian Christian Lobby.

Sydney Morning Herald, 26 January 2009

There are special concerns about extreme material.

content that was successfully blocked averaged above 92 per cent. This was a significant improvement on the 2005 trial, and we would expect more improvements in future.

Just as importantly, the rate of "over-blocking", or preventing access to acceptable material, was in most cases less than 3 per cent, also a dramatic improvement on the 2005 trial. And again, unless you are a technology sceptic, this is inevitably going to improve.

Realising that the trials are likely to prove them wrong, opponents of filtering have thrown in something sure to get everyone animated: "censorship".

Tui staff animated by studio's success

Michael Bodey

WHEN DisneyToon Studios Australia closed its Sydney office in 2005, job losses of 250 were not as common as today.

As the reason for closing a largely unsung creative institution, the Walt Disney Company cited "the changing creative climate and economic environment in which DisneyToon Studios requires more flexibility to choose the most appropriate and efficient animation process".

In short, it no longer wanted to be in the business of the traditional 2D celluloid animation when 3D computer-animated films such as *Finding Nemo* and *Shrek* were the big new things.

This meant little to 250 animators left high and dry in Sydney.

Since then, many have picked up work on animated films being produced here, primarily at Animal Logic, which worked on *Happy Feet*, and where 12 former Disney employees are working on Zack Snyder's *Guardians of Ga'Hoole*, and animation company Dr D, which is working on George Miller's *Happy Feet 2*.

The animation community is a collegiate and as opportunities arise globally, animators tell each other about them and move.

Many can't be so mobile and, as a consequence, some who had highly specific skills at DisneyToon have left the industry.

But others have made a successful break.

Tui Studio's Jonathan Dower and Kelly Baigent were contemplating a move while at Disney-

Toon, but Disney's closure hastened the process, Dower says.

"Disney was awesome, the best place to learn the skills of the trade and it was full of really, really talented people but Kelly and I wanted to explore ideas and concepts that were our own stuff rather than someone else's," he says.

The two Sydney-based New Zealanders worked on animation and story-boarding for New Zealand comedy hit *Bro'Town*, a job that had Tui contracting 40 staff, essentially from its inception.

Dower says since then, Tui has changed "quite a bit" and crewed down.

It is doing pre-production work on Playstation video games with local designer Team Bondi and recently won "some pretty

big jobs which we can't talk about yet".

Tui's present focus, and possibly its biggest test, is the release of an iPhone application *Little Bella's: I Close My Eyes* aimed at children aged three to nine.

It is an original animated, interactive book developed exclusively for the Apple platform and with ancillary projects that include books and shorts.

The story has pages like a children's book, with text, audio and animated adventures activated by touching the iPhone or iPod screen.

Dower says iPhone apps are a pretty big thing at the moment.

Tui has previously produced short films and searched for new opportunities but applications for the iPod are particularly entic-

ing because children become engrossed in touch-screen technology, if parents let them near it.

"I had these short concepts I wanted to get out there and we recognised the iPhone was a really good format because it's international and we wanted to see if we had a place in the market," Dower says.

He agrees that a small company without a marketing budget can become lost in the flurry of applications for the hot product, particularly a company targeting a niche market: parents who have iPhones.

And he believes with some confidence Tui's background as Disney animators gives it a boost in being able to entertain and educate children.

The Australian, 2 March 2009

ABC looks to kids

ONLINE ABC TV service iView has launched FAVES, a channel dedicated to Australian dramas for school-aged children. Series will include *Noah & Saskia*, *Worst Best Friends* and *Crash Zone*. To watch FAVES go to abc.net.au/iView
The Australian, February 2009

TV baby show gets a health warning

Amanda Meade

AN ABC TV documentary series featuring a harsh nanny who advocates newborns be left outside in the cold "to air" will now be broadcast with a health warning, saying methods used in the show could increase the risk of a child dying from cot death.

Tonight on ABC1, the second episode of the British series *Bringing Up Baby* will be preceded by a disclaimer that methods demonstrated in the series might increase the risk of SIDS and "fatal sleeping accidents".

Last week, some viewers were horrified and distressed by advice given in the first episode by one of the so-called experts on the parenting series, Claire Verity.

Verity, who advocates a strict 1950s regime of four-hour feeds, says in the program: "The biggest mistake parents can make is to allow a baby to dictate to them. A baby should fit into your way of life, not you into its."

When the Channel 4 series aired in Britain in 2007, *The Times* revealed Verity's claimed qualifications as a maternity nurse did not exist. The paper said Verity had been earning more than \$2000 a day working for clients such as Mick Jagger, Sting and Claudia Schiffer.

In the series, Verity is one of three mentors working with new parents in road-testing three famous childcare manuals: from the 1950s by Truby King, from the 1960s by Benjamin Spock, and from the 1970s by Jean Liedloff.

Verity, not a parent herself, told parents to avoid eye contact — and cuddling — when feeding.

"I can't understand why anybody wants to cuddle a baby or pick a baby up," she said. "A baby doesn't want to be touched all the time. All they want is to be left alone to grow."

Her recommendation to leave babies alone in a cot in their own room from day one caused the most anger as it contradicted the advice of health authorities in Britain and Australia. The local



Verity

screening last week was greeted with an outcry from parenting groups and SIDS authorities, who forced the ABC to investigate the subject matter and background of the program.

One woman, Danni, said: "I too watched last night's program in absolute horror. I don't know what is worse, the reality that there is a market out there for 'parents' who would even consider treating tiny babies like this and pay for the privilege or the fact that the ABC has allowed it to go to air without making it very clear that her methods are downright dangerous."

The ABC stopped short of banning the program and has scrambled for a response, with its first statement immediately over-ridden by a second.

The first said a warning would be broadcast about the qualifications of "maternity nurse" Verity. "The ABC advises that the term 'maternity nurse' used in this program does not signify a professionally qualified nurse but rather someone with experience in caring for babies and children," it said.

The Australian understands a second statement was issued yesterday after pressure from SIDS authorities. It says the ABC will warn parents about the dangers of the sleeping methods as well.

"After further investigation, ABC TV has decided to continue broadcasting *Bringing Up Baby* ... with relevant advisory notes preceding each episode," the ABC's head of television, Kim Dalton, said. "Some of the parenting practices advocated by the mentors in this series are not consistent with current, scientifically based, safe sleeping messages and can increase the risks of sudden and unexpected death in infancy, including SIDS and fatal sleeping accidents."



To have your say, go to theaustralian.com.au

The Australian, 26 February 2009

THE OVERFLOW ROSEMARY SORENSEN

THE grandly titled Australian Children's Literature Alliance has been set up by the Australia Council with assistance from the Copyright Agency. Its first goals are to create a national children's laureate and set up a website. The board is chaired by **Bronwen Bennett** from the Children's Book Council, and includes author **Libby Gleeson** and illustrator **Ann James**. It also looks set to continue Melbourne's not-so-subtle push to build the power base of its new Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas, as initial funding from the Australia Council will assist the appointment of an ACLA project officer, based at the State Library of Victoria. The centre had a setback last week when **Caro Llewellyn**, who was to have been the inaugural director, withdrew because of personal circumstances.

Weekend Australian, 14-15 February 2009

Strange but true

The **Tetris computer game** may help people deal with trauma. Playing it soon after experiencing trauma may help prevent flashbacks suffered by people with post traumatic stress disorder, research in the online journal *PloS ONE* suggests. It involved 40 people, who watched a film showing scenes of death and injury. Half then played Tetris for 10 minutes, while the others sat quietly. During the following week, those who played Tetris had significantly fewer intrusive flashbacks of the film's scenes.

PloS ONE

2009;doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0004153 (Holmes E, et al)

Want to know more?

Items are referenced where possible. A reference such as "2007;35:18-25" means the source article was published on pages 18-25 in volume number 35 of the publication, in 2007. A doi number or website address is used for research published on a journal's website.

Weekend Australian, 31 Jan-1 Feb 2009

Sex loses lustre in the art of selling

Meg Macfarlan

SEX doesn't sell, Nokia tunes make people feel physically sick and Apple is a mini-religion.

So says global marketing guru Martin Lindstrom, who has used the latest medical technology to scan people's brains and gauge their reaction to advertisements, jingles and product smells.

"What we learned was amazing. The most important senses when building brands were the sense of sound followed by smell then followed by sight. It's ironic that 83 per cent of all brand communication only appeals to the sense of sight," said Mr Lindstrom, the author of the best-selling book *Buyology — Truth and Lies About Why We Buy*.

"We learned that the Nokia tune turns people off. It is so disliked in our brains that we almost feel physically sick when hearing it. The reason for this is that it reminds people about work, missed deadlines and their boss calling them."

Danish-born Mr Lindstrom, who advises companies including McDonald's, Microsoft and Walt Disney, said his book was based on the world's largest neuro-marketing study that

scanned the brains of 2000 consumers across five countries.

The researchers used functional magnetic resonance imaging to scan consumers' brains as they were exposed to Johnson & Johnson baby powder, the smell of Play-Doh, the smell of Coca-Cola, the sound of a Nokia phone ringing and the sound of a Microsoft tune.

They found an enormous correlation between a powerful religion and a powerful brand.

"In a world where religion in many societies has begun fading away, brands have begun to take over the role of belief. We as human beings need something to believe in and brands have become almost mini-religions," Mr Lindstrom said.

"Think Apple, they have their own 'temple': their flagship store; their own religious leader: Steve Jobs; their own cross: the Apple logo; their own rituals (hundreds — just ask an Apple fan); their own enemy (Microsoft) ... you name it."

Mr Lindstrom said sex no longer sold like it used to.

"These days sex isn't as mysterious any more as it is everywhere, so that's the reason why sex doesn't sell."

The Australian, 17 February 2009



IT IS A sad reality in the modern television landscape that networks endorse their own shows, but when it creeps into what barely passes for journalism, is it really a surprise viewers defect to other media?

Last week's *A Current Affair* carried an "exclusive preview" of *Underbelly* that turned out to be the network's extended promo for the series. The same promo, incidentally, that it might normally screen in a commercial break. With its news service under fire and beset by production glitches, one wonders why Nine would risk flushing its journalistic credentials down the loo in such an astonishing fashion.

Nine is not the only offender. Seven's *Today Tonight* screens what amounts to commercials in what is publicly licensed air time. Air time that benefits from an exemption to the pre-7pm "G" classification because it is supposed to be used for news and current affairs.

Cricket fans must also endure plugs for programs the commentators have, for the most part, clearly never seen. Listening to Richie Benaud read from a script reduces a legendary figure to the likes of radio rent-a-voices.

It is hard enough to explain the benefits of watching television with ads compared with ad-free illegal downloads, but when networks treat audiences with such disrespect it's hardly surprising they go elsewhere.

The relationship between viewers and television networks is a delicate one. They are already finding other avenues for television viewing, most notably, the internet and DVD because of haphazard and unreliable scheduling. They surely don't need even more reason to change channels, or worse, switch off.

Sydney Morning Herald Guide, 2-8 February 2009

Download love not war

Far from the internet superhighway Kevin Rudd promised, he and Stephen Conroy are preparing to turn what we have into an unpaved information goat path, complete with government snooping checkpoints to block Helen Razer and millions of others in their legitimate taste for porn ("Hey, senator – leave us discerning viewers of pornography alone", January 24-25). Will he also remove sexually suggestive advertising from billboards and TV?

It seems odd to worry about children and adults watching the mating behaviour of adult human animals on a two-dimensional screen when Nicole Kidman was nominated for Australian of the year after making *Eyes Wide Shut*.

Yet we see nothing wrong in letting children see graphic portrayals of murder dozens of times a day on TV. Indeed, we happily buy video games so that they can participate in it.

Art Raiche Killara

Either Helen Razer has her tongue planted in her (or somebody else's) cheek, or she knows nothing about the internet, or both. Even a Google search for mild schoolyard terms will garner results that would make most parents hit the moral panic button.

If this is the voice of our rights being defended, then our rights are in trouble. Any sensible person can understand that the rights of an adult must be balanced against the rights of children. Yes, children must be protected, but that doesn't mean they should be (or can be) quarantined.

There are paths in between complete censorship and a free-for-all and these are the options that should be discussed. Quips about pizza delivery boys only degrade and dilute the debate.

Russell Edwards Ultimo

Sydney Morning Herald, 26 January 2009

In-house promotions crossing the line

How many cross-promotions do we endure before it becomes one cross-promotion too many? It is a sad reality in the modern television landscape that networks endorse their own programs but when it creeps into journalism – or, frankly, what barely passes for journalism – is it really a surprise that viewers are defecting to other media?

Last week's *A Current Affair* carried an "exclusive preview" of *Underbelly* that turned out to be nothing of the sort. In a stunning display of journalistic laziness, the program simply screened the network's extended promo for the series. The same promo, incidentally, that it might normally screen in a commercial break. With its news service already under fire and beset by embarrassing production glitches, you could be forgiven for wondering why Nine would risk flushing its journalistic credentials down the loo in such an astonishing fashion.

It is hardly Nine's first offence, nor are they the only offender. Seven's *Today Tonight* wastes the audience's time with equal disrespect, screening what amounts to commercials in what is actually publicly licensed airtime. Airtime, we might add, that benefits enormously from an exemption to the pre-7pm "G" classification because it is supposed to be used for news and current affairs.

It is also not confined to news and current affairs. Cricket fans must endure excruciating plugs for television programs the commentators have, for the most part, clearly never seen.

Listening to Richie Benaud read from a script doesn't drive audiences; it merely reduces a legendary figure to the likes of radio rent-a-voices such as Alan Jones and John Laws.

It is a problem that risks alienating an already disengaged audience. It is hard enough to explain the benefits of watching television with ads compared to ad-free illegal downloads but when networks treat audiences with such disrespect it's hardly surprising they go elsewhere.

The relationship between viewers and television networks is a delicate one. They are already finding other avenues for television viewing – most notably, the internet and DVD – because of haphazard and unreliable scheduling. They surely don't need even more reason to change channels, or worse, switch off.

midato@smh.com.au

Sydney Morning Herald Guide, 2-8 February 2009

Children's literature seeks its laureate

Justine Ferrari
Education writer

A CHILDREN'S laureate to champion reading among kids will be appointed from next year under a program established by an alliance of authors, teachers, librarians, publishers, booksellers and arts administrators.

The newly formed Australian Children's Literature Alliance hopes the initiative will promote Australian children's and youth literature, as well as convince schoolkids of the importance and pleasure of reading.

Alliance chairwoman Bronwen Bennett, the immediate past president of the Children's Book Council of Australia, said one of the main aims was to educate the community about the quality of

Australian children's literature.

"There's a perception in the broader community that children's literature, for authors, is an apprenticeship for writing 'real books' and it's not always given the credence it deserves," she said.

"Australia has a rich tradition in producing the very best children's writing, from literary greats such as Colin Thiele and Patricia Wrightson through to the irreverent humour of Andy Griffiths.

"And if we don't have reading children, we won't have reading adults."

Ms Bennett said the laureate would be the public face of the children's and young adult book industry, and act as its advocate on issues.

The idea is based on the

successful Children's Laureate program run in Britain for the past 10 years, which was the brainchild of poet Ted Hughes and children's writer Michael Morpurgo. Britain appointed its first Laureate in 1999, the children's book illustrator Quentin Blake, whose work appears in many Roald Dahl books. The US launched a similar program, the Ambassador for Young People's Literature, last year.

The ACLA comprises a 12-member board of industry groups along with the Australia Council, which is providing the start-up funding for the initiative, and the State Library of Victoria, which is providing administrative support.

Australia Council director of literature Susan Hayes said the

project would focus on Australian books, but the intention was to convince children to read books of any type, whether Harry Potter or *The Day My Bum Went Psycho*.

"The aim is to encourage young people to ... value literature," she said.

While the selection procedure for the laureate is still being finalised, it is envisaged the public will have a role in nominating suitable people.

Ms Bennett and Ms Hayes said popular writers such as Griffiths, Paul Jennings and John Marsden would be ideal.

The children's laureate will get a stipend for a two-year appointment, during which he or she will travel to every state and territory at least once, visiting schools,

libraries and events such as the Royal Easter Show or Teddy Bear's Picnic.

"The idea is to maximise exposure to the widest possible audience, not just people who visit bookshops and libraries," Ms Bennett said.

Eventually, she hopes the alliance can be a source of information for parents, booksellers and librarians in circulating information about appropriate books for different types of children.

The alliance is a collaboration by the AC, Australian Publishers Association, Australian Society of Authors, SLV, CBCA, Little Big Book Club, Australian Booksellers Association, eLit – the association of primary English teachers, Fremantle Children's Literature Centre and an independent bookseller.

The Australian, 16 February 2009

Salt in fast food 'a danger to health'

Adam Cresswell
Health editor

MANY popular brands of fast food contain so much salt that just one product would provide half the recommended daily intake of sodium in one hit, while some have much more — raising the risk of chronic health problems such as high blood pressure.

A survey of salt levels in leading fast food brands, to be released today by Sydney-based health experts, found three-quarters of the burger and sandwich-style products sold by six companies provided more than 50 per cent of the suggested daily target.

One product — KFC's Zinger Double BBQ Bacon & Cheese Burger — provided the highest amount of salt, with 2410mg of sodium per burger.

That is equivalent to 150 per cent of the suggested dietary target of 1600mg recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council, and 104 per cent of the 2300mg daily upper limit.

The survey, conducted by the Australian Division of the World Action on Salt and Health organisation (AWASH), surveyed products sold by KFC, Hungry Jack's, Oporto, Red Rooster, Subway and McDonald's.

It found one Red Rooster chicken and chips meal con-

tained a "shocking" 2800mg of sodium.

AWASH chairman Bruce Neal, professor of medicine at the University of Sydney, said that despite entreaties to cut salt levels, the fast-food industry was still "fiddling around the edges". This was despite high blood pressure being a leading cause of death in Australia, alongside smoking.

AWASH, which is a project of The George Institute for International Health in Sydney, has already held talks with food manufacturers to persuade them to lower salt levels by an average of 25 per cent over the next five years.

Professor Neal said the fast-food industry was the next target, as 80 per cent of the salt eaten by the average Australian was added to processed or catered foods.

Just 10 per cent is added to home-cooked food, while the remaining 10 per cent occurs in food naturally.

McDonald's Hamburger provided the lowest level of salt, equivalent to just 27 per cent of the suggested daily target. Both McDonald's and Subway told the survey authors they had plans to reduce salt levels in their foods.

A spokeswoman for Yum! Restaurants International, owner of the KFC brand, said the company would need to examine the findings before responding.

The Australian, 5 February 2009

Children with mobiles, after research showing that, as for drivers, the gadgets distract them and put them in danger of getting run over while crossing the street. The study put 77 children aged 10-11 years into a computerised virtual reality environment. There, they had to cross a virtual road 12 times; six times while distracted by a phone conversation and six times while undistracted. The phones severely compromised the kid's safety, the study published online in *Pediatrics* found. Children distracted on the phone were less attentive to traffic; left less safe time between their crossing and the next arriving vehicle; had more virtual collisions and close calls with oncoming traffic, and waited longer before beginning to cross the street.

Pediatrics

2009;doi:10.1542/peds.2008-1382

(Stavrinos D, et al)

Weekend Australian, 31 Jan-1 Feb 2009

Top 10 games, 2008

1. Wii Fit — Wii
2. Wii Play — Wii
3. Mario Kart — Wii
4. Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games — Wii
5. Grand Theft Auto IV — PlayStation 3
6. Grand Theft Auto IV — Xbox 360
7. Dr Kawashima's Brain Training — Nintendo DS
8. Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games — Nintendo DS
9. Super Smash Bros. Brawl — Wii
10. Big Beach Sports — Wii

Source: GfK

Age Green Guide, 29 January 2009

Barbie blasted

ON Friday an influential media lobby group in the US, the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood, awarded the title of worst toy of the year to the Barbie Dallas Cowboy Cheerleader Doll.

"For 50 years since her launch, Barbie has promoted the worst gender stereotypes to young children, but the Barbie Dallas Cowboy Cheerleader Doll sunk to new depths," CCFC said.

"Rated appropriate for age six and up, the doll comes with the shortest of short shorts, stiletto boots and a revealing halter top. The preposterously skimpy outfit allows children to get a better view of Barbie's dangerously thin body supported by impossibly long legs.

"The co-branded doll sends a clear message that they belong on the sideline, not in the game." So there is something worse than a Bratz doll.

The Australian, 16 February 2009

In her fab 50s, Barbie still struts her stuff



Birth of a legend: The original 1959 version, right, of Barbie

NEW YORK: New York's Fashion Week celebrated Barbie's 50th birthday yesterday with a catwalk debut for the famous doll.

Organised under tents in Bryant Park, close to Times Square, the event drew throngs of fans of the fantastic plastic model, many of them young girls brandishing their pink invitations in a bid to cut through the crowd.

About 500 of the 29cm dolls were lined up in the entry hall inside huge letters spelling out Barbie's name.

Shrouded in pink extravaganza, the podium gave way to human models, with hair styled "à la Barbie" in a high pony tail or draping their shoulders, showing off specially designed outfits by top designers.

Models displayed twinkling outfits, tiaras and the black and white bathing suit the first Barbie wore in 1959. A young woman wearing a T-shirt with the slogan "everyone needs a Ken" strutted her stuff while holding the hand of a man bearing a striking resemblance to Barbie's plastic fiancé.

The world's most-sold toy has often inspired designers, and Assouline Publishing distributed a specially created book showing the blonde doll dressed in Prada, Karl Lagerfeld and Alexander McQueen.

Toy maker Mattel, Barbie's



Stepping out: From the Tiffany Amber African collection

"father", has just signed a contract with the Council of Fashion Designers of America.

The group's president, Diane von Furstenberg, said she saw in Barbie an independent and confident woman who has an amazing capacity to have fun while remaining elegant.

Barbie sales have slowed in the past seven years, however, since the emergence of the competitor Bratz doll, and fell another 21 per cent last year, according to Mattel's latest figures.

AFF

The Australian, 16 February 2009

The Fairies are concerned

LATE last year *Media* ran a story about the growing empire of *The Fairies*, created by South Australian Jen Watts. A third series of the show was about to go into production for Seven when three of the stars — there are two fairies, a bee, an elf and a wizard — demanded more money. We don't know who. Watts is now in dispute with the performers' union, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance.

"*The Fairies* is deeply concerned that the MEAA's continued publication of material that is patently incorrect will damage the reputation of a business that wishes to do nothing more than make quality Australian children's television, including making use of primarily South Australian cast and crew," Watts said.

The Australian, 23 February 2009

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