Conference report - Rights of the Child Consumer

This Sydney conference on 20 November was attended by a varied audience of education, health, law and business professionals with an interest in children’s rights, children as consumers and the process of marketing to children.

The conference was organised by ACCM, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and Flinders University, with sponsorship from Telstra, the Australian Children’s Television Foundation (ACTF) and King and Wood Mallesons.

The MC for the conference was Norman Gillespie, Chief Executive of UNICEF Australia. The principal speakers in the morning were:
- Elizabeth Handsley, Professor of Law, Flinders University and President of ACCM
- Megan Mitchell, National Children’s Commissioner, AHRC
- Sarah Court, Commissioner, ACCC

Elizabeth Handsley spoke on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the role that international standards could play in shaping law and practice in Australia to protect the child consumer.

In her presentation, Megan Mitchell shared insights from her recent project exploring the relationship between children’s rights and business. She looked at tensions arising between the rights of children to participate in, and develop through engagement with, the economic market, and society’s responsibilities to safeguard children’s best interests in commercial contexts.

Sarah Court outlined the issues relating to child consumers that are currently being looked at by the ACCC. She discussed the range of protections currently offered to child consumers by Australian consumer law and provided some recent case studies.

In the afternoon, Jenny Buckland from the ACTF focussed on the work of the ACTF as a model for taking the needs of children seriously. She talked about children’s right to see their own culture reflected in mass media and showed part of the very Australian program Little Lunch as an entertaining example.

Panel sessions during the day focussed on a number of aspects of children as consumers, and included specific examples of projects and services that were working well.

Panel topics included:
- the relationship between children’s rights and business
- the persistent consumer issues for children
- the opportunities and risks for children as consumers in the digital age
- how we can better support children as consumers

A panel of young people talked with Megan Mitchell about their experiences as consumers. Their conversation included experiences of successful and not so successful online shopping, resentment at being asked to give personal details in order to get access to some sites and products, the problems of understanding and wading through “the fine print” in order to understand warranties and refund rights, and the problems that young people have with being ignored or not taken seriously.

In her closing remarks for the day, Megan Mitchell said that she was struck by the range of issues raised and remarked that it was important to continue looking at these issues, testing the legal environment and asserting our collective “pester power” to ensure that governments and businesses do what is good for children.


Free TV Australia’s family-unfriendly Code started 1 Dec.
Free TV Australia (the association of commercial TV stations of Australia) reviewed its Code of Practice in 2015. This revised Code has been registered by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and commences on Dec 1 2015.

The Code can be found at:

What you need to watch out for:
- All G time zones have been replaced by PG time zones
- The M time zone now starts at 7.30pm.
- The MA15+ and AV time zones have been moved forward to 8.30pm
- Alcohol ads can be shown in live sporting programs whenever shown. And also in “sports programs” on weekends and on weekdays from 7.30pm.
- Betting ads can be shown in any PG classified program and that includes sport, and in any program shown after 7pm.
- Program promotions and trailers for higher classified programs and movies than you have chosen to watch will continue.

For a discussion about the changes, see our editorial on page 2. For more information on how to take action about these changes:

Keep this conference date

Monday 18 July 2016

Violence in the media: The stories and the science
Parliament of NSW Theatrette

For more information contact ACCM
Free TV Code of Practice: the process

The revised Commercial TV Industry Code of Practice formally commenced on Dec 1.

The new provisions that make commercial free to air TV a more hazardous viewing venue for families took many by surprise. Few, including quite a few federal politicians, were aware that G time zones were to disappear; that M programs could be shown an hour earlier, MA15+ a half hour earlier, and AV (intense, frequent violence) an hour earlier, and there’s more leeway for alcohol ads in live sport.

ACCM spokespeople have undertaken numerous interviews about the impact of these changes, with interviewers mostly wondering why they are happening.

The changes are the outcome of the present process for reviewing industry self-regulatory codes. The industry decided (Feb 20) to call for public comment on its proposed changes. The public were not asked to comment on what it thought was working or not working. The time for public comment expired on April 3, and then there was a long silence. Attempts by ACCM and others to find out what other groups had thought of the changes were denied. The ACMA does not comment during the review. There was a long wait until the ACMA announced (Nov 10) that it had registered the new Code. And it was to be implemented just 3 weeks later on Dec 1.

The ACMA must register a Code where it is satisfied that the industry approves it, the public has been given adequate opportunity to comment and appropriate community safeguards have been put in place.

We at ACCM made representations about what we saw as a deficient process in our submission.


We said:

An adequate opportunity to comment would include the following:

1. Seeking feedback on current practice (based on provided documentation and/or the provision of resources for independent monitoring to produce such documentation)
2. Identifying (and justifying) areas and options for change
3. Setting out clearly the precise changes that are proposed

Ideally there would be a delay between 2 and 3, so that the precise proposals are informed by feedback on the first two.

However the crucial point is enabling members of the public easily to see how the proposed Code differs from the current one.

In the last review of the CTICP, FreeTV released a marked-up version of the Code showing the changes. This time, while it has released “Detailed explanatory notes on the Code”, in many areas there are no such provisions for the public to go through clause by clause and determine what changes are proposed unless they are willing to rely on FreeTVs own assessment of what the important things are that we need to know (and for which they are willing to provide a justification). In ACCM’s view this places an undue burden on members of the public, and detracts from the adequacy of the opportunity to comment, especially in the 6-week window provided.

So what’s to be done now it’s seemingly all done and dusted?

- It’s high time that the Minister for Communications revised the Code review provisions in the Broadcasting Services (1992) Act at s.123, to accommodate the points above.
- The industry should fund an independent monitoring program and report publicly on networks’ practices over the next year, and public responses.
- Certainly parents will need to be more vigilant if their children are watching TV in the early evening hours. Before 8.30pm, the content could be classified G, PG or M, (or unclassified news or current affairs); the age-old problem of promos for higher rated programs continues, and there could be alcohol or betting ads.

The fact that children can go off to watch children’s programs on the ABC, is not THE solution. Children enjoy, and benefit from, watching TV with their parents.
Bookies face ban on targeting children

CHIP LE GRAND

Bookmakers would be prohibited from targeting children and young adults under a national code of practice being developed by the advertising industry.

The Australian Association of National Advertisers will release a discussion paper today advocating the removal of gambling ads intended to appeal to children or exploit youth culture.

The proposed code would ban ads that show people younger than 25 placing a bet, promote gambling and drinking or link gambling to sex, and ads claiming punters are guaranteed to win.

Advertisements using themes, images, music, language or celebrities with youth appeal will also run foul of the code, which is being developed as former NSW premier Barry O’Farrell becomes a review of online gambling.

The proposed code would not carry financial penalties for breaches, which would be determined by the Advertising Standards Board. As with other advertising codes, advertisers would bear the cost and ignominy of pulling non-compliant ads.

AANA chief executive Sunita Gloster said the proposed code would protect consumers and provide clear guidelines on the responsible marketing and advertising of betting products.

The discussion paper warns of the potential for “overly burdensome advertising and promotional restrictions” to disadvantage Australian bookmakers competing with offshore bookmakers, operating beyond the reach of Australian laws and regulations.

“Industry has a responsibility to ensure that advertising and marketing activities are delivered in a responsible manner with consideration given to the potential impact on Australians adversely affected by gambling,” it says.

“The Weekend Australian 9/11/2015

Children’s titles hold back the e-book tide

ROSEMARY NEILL

In 2011, the Gillard government’s small business minister, Nick Sherry, predicted that bookshops would soon be virtually extinct.

“I think in five years, other than a few specialty bookshops in capital cities, you will not see a bookstore. They will cease to exist,” then senator said.

In that year, the prognosis for bricks-and-mortar bookshops was grim: local chains Borders and Angus & Robertson had collapsed within days of the American Borders chain (which was under different ownership) folding.

The rise of online booksellers and e-books heightened fears about the impending death of bookstores and print books.

Four years on, Meredith Drake, head of books at Big W and arguably the nation’s most powerful bookseller, has boldly declared that bookstores will rebuff the predicted e-book overthrow.

“I think the (global) industry has seen off the threat, to be honest,” Ms Drake said. “The growth in e-books is stagnating across the world, particularly in America. A couple of years ago, it was the great threat; it hasn’t really worked out that way.”

Ms Drake admitted that “we all suffered to a certain degree when Borders and A&R went under”, as those collapses entrenched the notion that bookstores were doomed.

However, alongside retailers such as Dymocks, Big W— which claims to be the nation’s biggest bookseller— realised kids books were key to holding back the digital tide. This is because most par-
$2bn spent but half of all kids fail IT basics

COMPUTER SCORES

% students proficient in computer literacy

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Natasha Bita National Education Correspondent

Half of the nation's school students still cannot use a computer property despite $2 billion of taxpayer funding being spent buying laptops for classrooms, national testing reveals.

Only 52 per cent of Year 6 students and 52 per cent of Year 10 students met the basic "proficient standard" in last year's Australian National Assessment Program for IT Literacy (NAP-ICT) test.

The results are worse than the 2013 test, when 62 per cent of Year 6 and 65 per cent of Year 10 students were rated as proficient in information and communications technology.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, which will publish the test results today, said students' use of smartphones and tablets could be draining their knowledge of computing.

It warned that schools might be taking students' computer skills "for granted".

"One of the possible interpretations of the decline in ICT literacy is that the increased use of mobile technology devices has resulted in less emphasis on skills associated with information management and processing," ACARA's report states.

"It is also possible that there has been less emphasis placed on schools on the teaching of skills associated with ICT literacy, with the development of young people's ICT literacy competencies increasingly being taken for granted."

Queensland Education Minister Kate Jones, who chairs the Education Council of Federal, state and territory ministers, called for a "removal focus" on teaching digital technologies.

"ICT literacy is vital for students to participate in a world that though the boys were more interested in ICT and more confident about using computers."

"Males tended to be more interested in computer work and more confident than females about doing ICT-related tasks," the report says. However, this difference in interest and confidence between males and females was not matched by a corresponding difference in achievement, female student performance was higher.

In Year 10 students performed worse than a decade ago, when 61 per cent of Year 10 students were found to be proficient in ICT.

In 2008, the Rudd-Gillard Labor government spent $2 billion to provide a million laptops to high school students through its Digital Education Revolution program.

The latest national test highlights a "digital divide" between metropolitan students from wealthy, professional families and those from indigenous, remote or poorer families.

Only 42 per cent of students meeting the basic standard, if their parents were unemployed, workers, office, sales or service workers. But 72 per cent of students passed the test if their parents were senior managers or professionals. Four out of five indigenous students failed to meet the basic standard.

The ACARA report shows Year 6 students are twice as likely to use their home computer to play games than to search for information for assignments and homework. Year 10 students are equally likely to use a home computer for games or study.

The Australian 17/11/2015

Teaching in good hands

As someone who spends a fair bit of time in primary school classrooms, I take issue with Douglas Taylor over his articulation of the widely believed claim that teachers squander their time teaching the 'fair' and 'right' thing while ignoring the essentials of education (Letters, 12/11).

It is certainly true that for a generation or so, children were allowed to pass through school without much traditional learning, but the heavy social cost of this mistake has been recognised. And while the curriculum is still overcrowded, many orthodox ideas are being restored. For example, children are now introduced to maths tables, spelling and phonics. Further reform and improvement is happening, whether it will take the time for these things to bear educational fruit.

Society has changed dramatically in the past 30 years, and the children who start school now are also very different. Typically, they are not compliant boys from a secure background, raised on folk stories, nursery rhymes and counting songs. They are self-aware and demanding individuals steeped in digital technology, TV violence and sensation. Teaching them is a hard task that tests the ingenuity of the best and brightest.

Most teachers are the same as they always were: intelligent, hard-working, and dedicated. But they are not super heroes. The difficulties of teaching in this century cut far deeper than people imagine.

John Frowes, Laidley, Qld

Greens launch toys inquiry

Judith Ireland

The Greens have initiated a Senate inquiry into the role children's toys and entertainment play in creating gender stereotypes and contributing towards domestic violence.

Greens spokeswoman for women Larissa Waters said the inquiry would not seek to ban toys but examine how they are marketed to boys and girls.

Senator Waters said there was now widespread awareness that gender inequality drives domestic violence.

"Gender inequality shapes and reinforces stereotypes about what men and women can and can't do in the workplace, at home and in the community," it creates disrespect and relationship conditions in which violence festered."

Senator Waters said while some Australian retailers such as Toys "R" Us had modified their marketing, others still labelled toys as "for boys" and "for girls" in catalogues and in stores. The investigation is due to get under way when Parliament resumes in 2016, with a reporting date of August.

Full story – theage.com.au

The Age 26/11/2015
Star Wars: the ‘merch’ awakens

The Australian 13/11/2015

“...this is going to be a very significant business in the first half of next year as kids watch the movie multiple times when it is distributed digitally,” says Richard Barry, chief merchandising officer of Toys ‘R’ Us Inc, which has built permanent Star Wars aisles in all of its stores. Star Wars’ massive appeal means the toys must please a varied audience, ranging from serious adult collectors to casual nostalgic fans to children who are new to the franchise. To maximize appeal, Hasbro segmented its toy line by price and design sophistication. Its most basic 3.75-inch Star Wars action figures, for example, start at about $10 and are intended to encourage consumers to buy more than one, the company says. “Once you have two characters in your hand and you’re a 6, 7 or 8-year-old, you can start playing and building out a whole world,” says Steve Evans, Hasbro’s design director for Star Wars. “As people get older, they move away from the play state, and go more to the display state.”

Chris Firlito, a Seattle-based online producer whose daughter’s name is Jeda, participated in Disney’s 16-hour online Force Friday toy launch, unboxing the new Millennium Falcon in a live video. So far Firlito has purchased eight different figures of BB-8, a small spherical robot (“this is the character — that’s part of the playing.”

Dunay has been mum on how the new characters are selling. It says that because of accounting rules it cannot report revenue information about The Force Awakens merchandise until the movie is released. Hasbro has reported sales of its Star Wars toys have been well above expectations. This weekend, Walmart is planning a Star Wars-themed “Epic Weekend” in 3000 US stores, offering shoppers the opportunity to play the Star Wars: Battlefront video game, made by Electronic Arts, four days before it is available for purchase. Target has more than 600 Star Wars items in stores and more than 1000 online, including action figures, pizza cutters and lipstick. Among its biggest sellers is BB-8, about which only hints have been revealed through movie trailers. Sphero, the maker of a $130 BB-8 droid controlled with a smartphone app, has been racing to meet demand after nearly selling out in September, the drone remains in short supply.

Now half of Sphero’s engineering team in China is working to speed up production. “Demand has far exceeded anything we predicted,” says Ian Bernstein, company co-founder and chief technical officer. Bernstein says he hasn’t seen the new film and had to rely on character descriptions of BB-8 from Disney, which is an investor in Sphero. “I know BB-8 is going to be amazing, but I’m still nervous,” he says.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Should TV viewing rules be relaxed?

MICHAEL McGUIRE

It’s good to have some time set aside, so you know kids can watch the TV in relative safety. But TV is not the main game any more. Kids are bombarded with all sorts of options through the internet, iPads, video games and any number of other options. The TV is about the least of a parent’s worries these days.

NATHAN DAVIES

Mandatory G-rated periods probably made sense before there were at least two free-to-air stations devoted entirely to children’s television, but I’m not so sure it’s still necessary these days. To be honest, my kids are far more likely to be watching a Pixar cartoon they’ve downloaded on Apple TV than worrying about what time Day of our Lives can be screened.

PENELOPE DEBELLE

Not sure what the issue is. Are children clamouring for more of The Bachelor? Have they signed petitions to take off the Veil channel where women announce the sport while stripping naked? I’m a fan of parental guidance anyway, not inflexible rules.

BOTTOM LINE

PASS THE REMOTE

The Advertiser 14/11/2015

VTech data breach hits child profiles

VTech Holdings, the Hong Kong maker of digital learning toys and cordless phones, says information about at least 6.4 million children has been exposed in a recent data breach.

That is in addition to records for 4.9 million adult customers VTech had previously said were affected. In a statement on its website, the company said child profile information only included name, gender and date of birth.

Parent account information includes name, email address, password details, mailing address and internet protocol address. Monday, VTech said an “unauthorised party” had hacked into its systems on November 14, and the breach was discovered on November 24. The company said it had reached out to every account holder in its database.

The data accessed on VTech’s Learning Lodge app store, which allows users to download learning games and other educational content, VTech’s website yesterday continued to say it had “temporarily suspended” the Learning Lodge site.

The incident points to increased concern about children’s privacy as they, like their parents, put more personal information online to use modern toys or social networks.

DANNY YADRON
Save your kids from trap of popular culture

**Dr. Justin says**

Consumer culture is making our children unhappy. The drive to have the latest stuff and to look “hot” is associated with a downward spiral of poorer peer relationships and lower self-esteem. And it is starting from the age of eight, if not sooner.

In a recent study of 8000 children aged eight to 14, researchers found kids wanting to be popular felt they needed to own the right clothes, toys, and gadgets to fit in, but that the desire to have those things led to worse, rather than better relationships with friends, and poorer psychological well-being.

Psychologically, it is often children who are already struggling who turn to these extrinsic sources in the hope they’ll find new friends if they look cool enough. The approach appears to be unhelpful.

Keeping up with the Joneses Slick, appealing multi-million dollar sales campaigns from refined marketing departments of multi-billion dollar companies are better than ever at making us, and our children, believe owning a certain product or possessing a particular look is the answer to feeling good and being popular. While adults are not immune, our children are particularly susceptible. They want to fit in. They want to be cool, and they want to look like (and feel like) those they admire. Social media amplifies the desire.

Materialism is not the answer

When our children pesters for a new product we should remember that “stuff” usually will not solve the problem. One morning my daughter refused to go to school unless we purchased her a new school bag. After careful listening (and a LOT of patience) she helped us to understand that a new school bag was essential because she had no friends. When pressed as to how a school bag would help her with her friendship challenges, she replied: “If I have a new bag with the cool brand on it, then the other kids will notice it, and they’ll talk to me.”

Accomplishing to materialistic demands is like trying to destroy a tree by knocking at the leaves. While we ignore the root, the tree will keep growing, and the challenges in our children’s lives will continue to appear.

Tips for parents

Here are my top tips for parents who want to help their children understand that having the right gear or the right look won’t make the difference they wish it would:

- Be an example
  - Our children follow our lead. If we always have to have the latest, coolest gear then chances are that our children will want it too. We set the example, and if we buy the lie that having nice things is the highway to happiness, our children will fall into step behind us. Get clear on your values, because the kids will catch them.

- Listen and understand
  - Your child’s well-being is worth a few minutes of listening. It can be tempting to issue a flat-out “no” and it can be just as tempting to say “sure, why not?” But remember that the desire for stuff is often a plea for recognition and popularity, and buying into consumer culture offers a short-term fix at best.

- Be flexible but not indulgent
  - Take each case on its merits. Sometimes you’ll give in and other times you won’t. It may be that a request is unrelated to popularity and consumerism, and your child simply has a need or desire fora really great product. If so, it’s worth considering, if the item is all about looks and being cool, then a discussion followed by a gentle “no” or “not now” or “what other options are there” would be appropriate.

Avoid handouts where possible

Help your child appreciate the cost of things by inviting their contribution to the purchase or having them wait for a significant event (like a birthday). While this is not likely to reduce materialistic tendencies, at least they’re recognising that nice stuff costs money and takes effort to earn.

What if my child doesn’t understand “no”?

When your child is absolutely convinced that a new gadget (or for older kids, a new surgical procedure) will be the answer to their happiness and popularity issues: Listen.

The Age 26/11/2015

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Coke’s top boffin bottles it over research claims

**Amahad O’Connor**

Coca-Cola’s top scientist is stepping down following revelations that the beverage giant initiated a strategy of funding scientific research that played down the role of Coke products in the spread of obesity.

Rhona S. Applebaum, Coke’s chief science and health officer, helped orchestrate the establishment of a non-profit group known as the Global Energy Balance Network. The group’s members were university scientists who encouraged the public to focus on exercise and worry less about how calories from food and beverages contribute to obesity.

Coca-Cola spent $US1.5 million ($2.1 million) last year to support the group, including a $US1 million grant to the University of Colorado medical school, where the nonprofit group’s president, James Hill, a prominent obesity researcher, is a professor.

Coke’s financial ties to the group were first reported in an article in the *New York Times* in August, which prompted criticism that the soft drink giant was trying to influence scientific research on sugary drinks.

The university returned the money to Coke this month after public health experts raised concerns.

Dr. Applebaum, a food scientist with a PhD in microbiology, had been Coke’s chief scientific and regulatory officer since 2004, helping lead the company’s efforts to work with scientists as a way to counter criticism about sugary drinks.

At one food industry conference in 2012, Applebaum gave a talk outlining Coca-Cola’s strategy of “cultivating relationships” with top scientists as a way to “balance the debate” about soft drinks.

Coca-Cola has said that while it offered financial support for the Global Energy Balance Network, it had no influence on the group or the scientific research it produced.

But new reports show that Dr. Applebaum and other executives at Coke helped pick the group’s leaders, create its mission statement and design its website, findings first reported this week by The Associated Press.

The Age 26/11/2015
NEW PUBLICATIONS

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Children’s implicit recall of junk food, alcohol and gambling sponsorship in Australian sport.  
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Portraying physical activity in food advertising targeting children.  
Health Education 115, 534–553.

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Children’s food and beverage promotion on television to parents.  

Harris, J.L. et al 2015  
Sweet promises: Candy advertising to children and implications for industry self-regulation.  
Appetite 95, 585–592.

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Public Health Nutrition 18, 2722–2728.

EDUCATION
Early literacy promotion in the digital age. Pediatric Clinics of North America, Pediatric Prevention 62, 1273–1295

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Dutra, G.F. et al 2015  
Television viewing habits and their influence on physical activity and childhood overweight.  
Jornal de Pediatria 91, 346–351.

Forde, C., Hussey, J., 2015  
How children use active videogames and the association between screen time and physical activity.  
Games for Health Journal 4, 312–317.

The impact of Sleep Time-Related Information and Communication Technology (STRICT) on sleep patterns and daytime functioning in American adolescents.  
Journal of Adolescence 44, 232–244.

The relationship between parental behaviors and children’s sugary drink consumption is moderated by a television in the child’s bedroom.  
Childhood Obesity 11, 560–568.

INTERNET
Bannon, S., et al 2015  
The positive role of Internet use for young people with additional support needs: Identity and connectedness.  

Adolescents’ comments in social media: Why do adolescents receive negative feedback and who is most at risk?  

Factors reducing the risk of internet addiction in young people in their home environment.  
Children and Youth Services Review 57, 68–74.

Early adolescent Internet game addiction in context: How parents, school, and peers impact youth.  
Computers in Human Behavior 50, 159–168.

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Elevated background TV exposure over time increases behavioural scores of 18-month-old toddlers.  

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How and why parents guide the media use of young children.  
J Child Fam Stud 24, 3423–3435.

Young children talk about their popular cartoon and TV heroes’ speech styles: media reception and language attitudes.  
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Dimensions of video game behavior and their relationships with personality.  
Computers in Human Behavior 50, 132–140.

Impact of violent video game realism on the self-concept of aggressiveness assessed with explicit and implicit measures.  

VIOLENCE
Coyne, S.M., 2015.  
Effects of viewing relational aggression on television on aggressive behavior in adolescents: a three-year longitudinal study.  
Developmental Psychology, Nov 23 , No Pagination Specified.  
http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dev0000068

EDENTS
Screen Futures Summit and Youth Media Festival  
1-3 July 2016  
Melbourne  
screenfutures.com

22nd World Meeting of the International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA)  
19-23 July 2016  
University of NSW, Sydney  
iece.mq.edu.au/research/cfrc/isra_2016

PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL  
2016  
What it means to be me: Identity in children’s TV  
20 – 25 May 2016  
Munich, Germany  
prixjeunesse.de

4th National No 2 Bullying Conference  
18 – 19 April 2016  
Mantra on View Hotel  
Gold Coast, Queensland  
no2bullying.org.au
What not to buy for Christmas 2015

US organisation, Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood, has announced this year’s contenders for the TOADY (Toys Oppressive And Destructive to Young Children) Award for the Worst Toy of the Year, saying:

From thousands of toys that promote precocious sexuality to children and push branded and screen-based entertainment at the expense of children’s play, we have selected six exceptional finalists.

They are:

- A real flying drone with inbuilt camera which would enable children to spy on their neighbours
- A Bratz doll that comes with a child-sized selfie stick that has a lip-shaped phone holder.
- A toy gun for girls complete with a bracelet, charms and lipstick shaped and styled bullets
- A book called Brands We Knowe with bright pictures of many leading brands
- A set of miniatures of “Tube heroes” – people who upload videos of themselves playing video games to YouTube
- The Hello Barbie doll which has the ability to record children’s private conversations and transmit them to cloud servers.

STOP PRESS: HELLO BARBIE WON WITH 57% OF THE VOTE

For more information, and to read CCFC’s very amusing comments about the finalists go to:

http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org/action/2015-toady-awards

Meanwhile, as parents shop for presents this year, they should think twice about buying toys that connect to the internet. Public interest lawyer, Angela Campbell, writing for the Guardian, warns that there are real privacy risks with some “interconnected” toys (such as the Hello Barbie described above) and that it is not easy to understand privacy policies.

Security experts have been warning about the potential vulnerabilities of many technological toys that include features like Wi-Fi, data collection and voice recognition. Adults may find that information they used to register these kinds of interconnected toys, such as their email address or answer to a secret question, is used by hackers to access their bank accounts or perpetrate fraud.

There is potential for marketers to use information disclosed by children, location data made available by a device and tracking cookies to target individualised advertising to children who are too young to even understand what advertising is.

Recently a Hong Kong-based company that sells tablets, educational toys and apps designed for children, experienced one of the largest ever hacks targeting children, with almost 5 million parent accounts and 6.4 million children’s profiles believed to have been compromised.

Angela Campbell suggests that until the issues raised by this are satisfactorily addressed, the best option for parents is to refuse to buy toys that may risk their child’s privacy.

New report from Ofcom UK

The United Kingdom’s Office of Communications (Ofcom) has published a report this week based on interviews with thousands of children and parents in the UK. It suggests children are increasingly playing games on mobile devices, and their parents are concerned about how those games pressure children to make in-game purchases.

Ofcom’s Children and parents: Media and attitudes report reveals that children aged 8-15 are spending more than twice as much time online as they did a decade ago, reaching over 15 hours each week in 2015.

On a positive note, it appears that the vast majority of children do hear the advice given about staying safe online. Some 97% of children aged 8-15 recall advice they’ve been given, particularly from parents.

http://media.ofcom.org.uk/news/

Awards for ABC children’s programs

The Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) has announced its winners for 2015. The ABC has again shown that it is Australia’s primary source of quality children’s television, taking its fifth consecutive win for the AACTA Award for Best Children’s Television Series.

The Award went to a debut production Ready for this (awarded to Darren Dale, Miranda Dear and Joanna Werner), which beat two past winners, The new adventures of Figaro Pho and Nowhere Boys Series 2, along with another newcomer Little lunch (all these programs showed on ABC3).

http://www.aacta.org