

Challenges in children's media: community seminars in May

Teachers, parents and community workers benefitted from seminars held in Adelaide's northern suburbs on May 16 and 17.

ACCM cooperated with Tyndale Christian School in a presentation for 150 local teachers, and in an evening presentation for parents. The Council worked with Salisbury Communities for Children in its seminar for community workers and members, *Technology: the good, the bad and the ugly* on May 17.

Dr Kate Highfield of Macquarie University challenged the teachers to examine technology that they might use in their classrooms to ensure that it was fit for purpose: that it engaged, extended, enriched, and enabled children to do something that they couldn't do usually. She urged them to use pedagogy before "padagogy", and use it to guide their choice of apps, stressing that children learn best when they are actively involved, not distracted, when it is meaningful, and when there is social interaction. Apps that incorporate these elements and encourage children to be involved in creative play, rather than rote learning can provide real benefits.

Dr Highfield and Ben Riley (Senior cognitive behavioural therapist, SA Statewide Gambling Therapy Services) spoke at the Tyndale parents' seminar. Ben discussed the high level of concern that the simulated gambling behaviour in some apps was a risk factor for children taking up gambling in real life. He suggested that a check list for risky apps might include whether the game had chance-based outcomes tied to advancement. Intermittent reinforcement was the most powerful motivator for continuing to play. He mentioned *Crossy Roads*, *Castle Clash* and *Clash of clans* as offering such random reinforcement.

The *Communities for Children* seminar on May 17 featured Dr Highfield, Ben Riley and Dr Lesley Ey and others. Speakers included Senator Nick Xenophon on election issues including predatory gambling. Sports betting came under fire as did the relationship between the AFL and Crown Bet.

[salisbury4c.org.au/
currentconference.php](http://salisbury4c.org.au/currentconference.php)

ACCM reviews app launch

ACCM's app which improves access by parents and carers to ACCM's movie and app reviews, and to web-based information about media and children, was officially launched by Dr Kate Highfield at the seminars hosted by Tyndale Christian School, Salisbury on Monday May 16.

The app and ACCM's reviews were commended by Dr Highfield as very useful tools for those choosing and using movies and apps with children.

Ben Riley, Senior cognitive behavioural therapist, SA's Statewide Gambling Therapy Service, said that the *Children and Gambling Watchlist* (part of the *Know Before You Load* app review service) was particularly helpful for those wanting to help children avoid apps with content that engaged them in simulated gambling behaviour (not always apparent initially).

The development of the app was funded by the SA Attorney General as part of his support of the *Know Before You Go* movie review service.

[childrenandmedia.org.au/
resources/accm-reviews-app](http://childrenandmedia.org.au/resources/accm-reviews-app)

Superhero classification appeals

X-Men:Apocalypse was reclassified from MA15+ (with consumer advice *Strong science fiction themes and violence*) to M (*Frequent moderate violence and coarse language*) by the Classification Review Board (CRB) in a decision announced on May 18. Information about this, with the CRB decision and reasoning can be found at

[childrenandmedia.org.au/
news/latest-news](http://childrenandmedia.org.au/news/latest-news)

As *small screen* goes to press, we are advised that the CRB is shortly to review the M classification given by the Classification Board to *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles – out of the shadows* ("Action violence"). The film is due for release on June 9.

For more discussion of this issue, see the Editorial on P2

Conferences on Aggression Sydney - July 18-23, 2016

For those working in the field, or with an interest or concern about the issue of aggression in our society, Sydney is the place to be between July 18th and 23rd, 2016

Event 1: Monday July 18

Violence in the media: the stories and the science

Parliament of NSW Theatre - a one day conference with a focus on the social impacts of media violence and of media reporting of violence

[childrenandmedia.org.au/
events/accm-conference](http://childrenandmedia.org.au/events/accm-conference)

Event 2: Tuesday July 19

Perspectives on aggression.

A free one day pre-conference symposium at Macquarie University prior to the 22nd World Meeting of the International Society for Research on Aggression - features six international scholars from diverse fields.

[iec.mq.edu.au/research/cfrc/isra_2016/
isra_preconference_symposium](http://iec.mq.edu.au/research/cfrc/isra_2016/isra_preconference_symposium)

Event 3: Wed 20 - Fri 23 July World Meeting of the International Society for Research on Aggression

At University of NSW. This will be the first time this meeting has been held in the Southern Hemisphere.

This three day event will appeal to any psychologist with an interest in aspects of aggressive and pro-social behaviour, including aggressive personality; domestic violence, child abuse and other forms of interpersonal aggression; societal violence; angry/aggressive behaviours; media violence; criminal violence; managing aggressive and violent behaviour; and factors that promote helping and pro-social behaviour.

iec.mq.edu.au/research/cfrc/isra_2016

Come for the whole week - or to a specific event. Please note that each event requires separate registration.



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www.gocreate.com.au

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EDITORIAL**Classification: cutting it fine?**

It's not uncommon lately for M superhero films to be classified with less than a week to go to release date. But, in many instances, the advertising (on billboards, on TV and in cinemas) has been out for months, as has associated merchandise.

This leaves parents in an information vacuum about the likely impact of the film, while being pestered by their children (under the age of 15 yrs) who've been convinced they need to see it.

This problem was very evident when *Starwars: the force awakens* was released at the end of 2015. The classification was determined 6 days in advance of release. (see small screen # 326 Dec-Jan2016)

The trend is becoming marked, and ACCM is not the only one to have noticed it.

The most recent example is *X-Men: Apocalypse*. This film was classified on 11 May. Not happy with its MA15+ classification, the distributor (Twentieth Century Fox) appealed to the Classification Review Board, resulting in an urgent review on May 16. The classification was lowered and made public on May 18, the day before cinema release on 19th. The cinemas all knew of the reclassification and were showing the M classification early on 17th.

The system worked for the distributor but hardly helped parents. For many under 15 year olds, who've been engaged and enticed by the marketing, seeing it on release date or very soon after, becomes important. Parents were left with just two days to absorb the new information, make a decision about whether their children could go, and either prepare them for the film or work out ways of explaining why they would not be seeing it.

ACCM is concerned about the practice of cutting it fine with classifying M films, while promoting the film heavily in advance as CTC (Check The Classification).

Australian productions successful in Europe

Two Australian children's television programs have found favour in Europe.

Australian Children's Television Foundation's production *Little Lunch* has won a prize at the Prix Jeunesse International Festival for children's film. The comedy program won the Category 7 award for fiction for seven to 10 year olds. The awards in the biennial festival were announced at a ceremony held in Munich, Germany on May 25.

Meanwhile, the award winning Australian live-action children's drama series *Ready for this* has been sold to ZDF Germany and will air later this year on KiKA, the public broadcaster's free to air kids channel.

ACCM checked with the Classification Board about the application process for films. The law provides for two types of classification applications.



Barbara Biggins
OAM
Hon CEO

1) Standard, for which the CB must classify the film within 20 days.

2) Priority (for a higher fee) where the CB must classify within 5 days.

It appears that the majority of applications are for standard rate, and it's the distributor's choice when to apply (usually taking into account release date and marketing plans). A distributor can book for a specific classification date. He takes his chances on getting it done then, but is usually successful if he's booked in advance.

Booking dates may be made before the lodging of a formal classification application (and are sometimes changed) but once that application is lodged the 20 day countdown applies.

So those whose films are being classified 6-8 days in advance, have probably booked the date in advance, have lodged an application for a standard classification, and would be most likely to have then got their required date.

ACCM has reviewed the last 2 years of classification data for M rated superhero and action movies and found that of 25 titles, 12 were classified within 9 days of the movies' release, with 7 of these within 5 days or less. The distributors involved were Twentieth Century Fox, Universal, Walt Disney, and Paramount.

It's time that film distributors in Australia played the classification game so that it benefits and protects children, rather than an industry marketing plan.

How about some fair play?

New self-regulatory code for betting advertising

The Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) the peak body for advertising and marketing communication, has recently launched a new self-regulatory code specifically covering advertising for the wagering sector.

The sections of this code that deal with advertising to children are 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 which deal with direction of advertising to minors, the presence of minors in advertising and the depiction of minors in gambling activities.

<http://aana.com.au/self-regulation/codes/>

Clips 'n' Cuts

small screen no. 330 May 2016

ABC local content hits new low

EXCLUSIVE

MICHAEL BODEY
TELEVISION

The proportion of new Australian content premiering on the ABC TV channel is dropping as low as 10 per cent in a striking example of the power of news and current affairs over the TV division.

Analysis of the last four weeks' schedules show the ABC's primary channel has broadcast (7pm-midnight) between 10-25 per cent of first-run Australian content, excluding news and current affairs programming, which accounts for up to 40 per cent of the schedule.

The amount of new Australian programming fell as low as 270 minutes (including 60 minutes of

Rage's music videos) in the week of May 2-8, in the week of the federal budget, when the only new Australian entertainment programming before 9.30pm was *The Weekly With Charlie Pickering*, a Comedy Showroom pilot and drama *Janet King*.

While the quality of new entertainment programming on ABC TV is unquestioned in the week it equalled its record haul of TV Week Logie Awards, the proportion of it is being questioned both within the ABC and externally. The move of funding away from TV to other ABC divisions, including the areas of digital, innovation and corporate, under previous managing director Mark Scott, represents a key challenge for his replacement Michelle Guthrie as the ABC determines its future broadcasting priorities.

Funding for the ABC's news and current affairs division has been a priority above other divisions, both in internal resourcing and in additional funds from the federal triennial funding.

Its last two triennial funding agreements included additional funding for "enhance newsgathering" after the Rudd government's 2009-2010 federal budget allocated new and specific funding for children's TV and local drama, which sparked the creation of a number of dramas that have been renewed this year. But the ABC's minimum 100 minutes per night of news/current affairs programming ensures that genre dominates more than 40 per cent of the ABC prime-time schedule, on top of the ABC News 24 channel.

Last year's ABC annual report showed the number of hours of



Finlayson



Guthrie

"prime-time, first-release Australian content" was 47 per cent in 2014-15, the lowest proportion in the tabled results since 2006-7 and appears reminiscent of the lows, in drama particularly, in 2002-2003.

Particularly striking are Sundays, the highest-rating night of the television week, where the ABC has not shown any new Australian content in the last month, but an average 2½ hours premiere British content, including David Attenborough's *Great Barrier Reef*.

Nevertheless, British content

remains among the highest-rating programming for the ABC; *Doc Martin* is the ABC's most popular show this year. And during each of the four weeks assessed, the ABC's primary channel aired more repeat Australian content than first-run programming.

Director of television Richard Finlayson noted in November the low level of local TV content was an issue and the corporation had launched an "Australian Content Plan" of initiatives aiming to lift local first run content in prime time to 1300 hours annually, or by at least 10 per cent, while still using the "same money". This followed a six-month review by LEK Consulting that found the ABC's proportion of local content in evening television had fallen to 42 per cent and ranked below its overseas peers the BBC (84 per

cent), Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (73 per cent) and even TVNZ (43 per cent).

The cost of making television is rising and the cost of drama, in particular, has become prohibitive and exacerbates the risk investing in new drama. Five of this year's new Australian dramas are returning series, although the ABC has said every week this year will include at least one hour of new Australian drama.

But ABC insiders suggest the scarcity of fresh local entertainment content represents a period in which millions have been pulled from TV's content commissioning budgets, such as drama, factual, children's and indigenous, and moved into areas including news and current affairs and digital.

While the ABC does not want to apportion blame to suc-

cessive federal budget cuts, privately TV executives noted the effects of cuts wouldn't be seen on screen until mid-2016, at the same time as the effect of the recent raiding of funds from genres such as factual and drama finally hits.

The ABC said it currently broadcast "between 55-57 per cent premiere Australian content on a weekly basis, including news and current affairs programming, which is integral to the ABC and a central viewing priority for our audiences."

It reiterated that no other network offers "the same level of public affairs broadcasting, or the level of program quality that makes the ABC Australia's most trusted source of news" and it broadcasts "significant" Australian entertainment and specialist programming

Continued on Page 28

It's a different story in the West, where so much work is carried out in a "half-baked way". "People keep telling me all the productivity statistics must be wrong because technology is supposed to make us more productive," he says. "I ask myself, 'What percentage of time does the average office worker spend on Facebook, on social networks?' I have a strong suspicion that the internet and its associated technologies have created opportunities to waste time undreamt of by previous generations."

The impact on society is profound: "If you are on Facebook, Twitter and WeChat and WhatsApp, constantly communicating with your contemporaries, which seems to be the norm, you're not reading *War and Peace*. You really can't read anything long."

"I think there has been a collapse of serious reading among a generation of my students who are cut off from the great works of world literature. How can we possibly preserve our civilisation if the next generation has read 1 per cent of what we read? How can that work? They are in danger of being cut off from the great truths of the human condition by their own incessant chatter with one another."

To those unperturbed by the loss of privacy on the net, Ferguson says: "You wait, when the tools of Facebook and its ilk fall into the wrong hands — and history tells us that it is hard to keep governments and information technology separate from one another — then we will all look back and say, 'We gave up our privacy for a mess of pottage.'"

ABC local content hits new low

Continued from Page 26

across arts, science and religion. "We are confident we are meeting not just the requirements of the ABC charter but also the expectations of our audiences for high quality programming that is informative, entertaining and educational," an ABC spokesman said.

All three commercial networks are currently screening

at least a third more premiere Australian content each week (excluding live sport) than the ABC, although diversity at each could be questioned because reality franchises (*The Voice*, *House Rules*, *MasterChef Australia*) bulk up the hours. Surprisingly, Network Ten has the highest number of different Australian programs in its prime-time schedule, even excluding *Neighbours* on Eleven and *Family Feud*.

The Australian. May 16 2016

The Weekend Australian. May 21-22, 2016 quote from Niall Ferguson included in "our turbulent times" P22

STRANGE BUSINESS HAS COME TO AN END



ERROL SIMPER

It's difficult to face or write this, but the day is fast approaching when this page will be permanently scribeless. So far as columns are concerned, your ancient correspondent is uncomfortably close to meeting his maker. He's pretty well ceased to be. His metabolic processes are close to history. He's not far from joining the choir invisible. He's rather adjacent to becoming a dead parrot, a Norwegian Blue pining for the fjords.

A regular column is a tyrannical thing that consumes many more of your waking hours than it takes to write. It can become an all-consuming cannibal of a thing that all but forbids you to "waste" time thinking about anything else.

What should that bloody column be about? Will it be out of date by Monday? Will someone else have written something similar (and better) in the meantime? Do you know enough about whatever it is to dare to pontificate? Do you feel strongly enough about it to sustain an argument for close to 1000 words? The one thing that simply never occurs to a regular columnist is not to do a column.

The scribe has written this column down the years through all manner of ailments, not because he's brave or noble or ultra-conscientious but because that's what

you do. Mark Day is much the same. There's a space to be filled and despite broken bones, surgery, toothaches, fevers, myriad infections and all the rest, the space is still there and so long as you're conscious it remains a challenge. It's a challenge you condition yourself to win.

Besides, having combed your tiny brain for at least a week to select a topic you can be childishly loath to abandon your "good" idea. A regular column can be a brutal taskmaster. It becomes an urgent, self-imposed obligation. It's something that *must* be done. It is, as we said, tyrannical.

Yet, it's a tyrant whose absence can leave an awful, empty void in your life. But we shouldn't give way to melancholia. And we should stress that none of the above is by way of complaint. A column is also a privilege. It affords you a vehicle through which to say what you believe needs to be said. Such as, for example, that public broadcasting is (at its best) a virtuous thing, an aid to media diversity, a reinforcement of democratic values and, overall, a public good that needs constant and vigilant protection against ignorant politicians and the predatory corporate dollar.

A regular column allows you to build a relationship with regular readers, relationships that can be immensely rewarding. They can also be instructive. You discover, over the years, that many readers are so much more knowledgeable than you are about so many, many things. They are frequently generous with that knowledge and mercifully gentle with their corrections. Readers, in the main, are wonderful, good-natured people. The scribe has much readers'

correspondence he'll endeavour to keep by him until he goes to that great newsroom in the sky.

It's a strange thing to finally retire from journalism. It's a strange feeling to thumb through mountains of decaying, yellowing newspaper clippings of stories you did way, way back. You wonder at the energy you must have had, back then. Where has it all gone? Strange, too, to think back to how a handful of seemingly casual, innocuous remarks can totally reshape your career.

The scribe was coming to the end of a longish stint as national chief-of-staff sometime back in the late 1990s and was much look-

months later, and with Kelly away, former editor-in-chief Chris Mitchell was editing *The Weekend Australian*.

He sent a late Friday afternoon message, via Graham Erbacher (then night news editor), to the effect that he (Mitchell) could do with a media-oriented feature that would blend with the tone of the then "Broadcasting" page of the old Focus (now Inquirer) section, which traditionally carried the weekend television schedules.

Your correspondent gave him an interview with the then manager of the ABC's Radio National, the late Roger Grant. Roger later told the scribe the then managing-director of the ABC, David Hill, had told Roger off in no uncertain terms for speaking to the scribe without his (Hill's) permission. Well, David ticked lots of people off back in those days, including the scribe.

Sometimes he was justified, sometimes not. But we digress.

The thing is that a week on and Erbacher returned with a similarly late and inconvenient Mitchell request: a media story for the Broadcasting page.

The scribe said he didn't have another Grant-like story in his drawer so it'd have to be a quick opinion piece and would that do? Erbacher said don't talk about it, just do it, Chris needs to get the page away. Thus did a weekly habit take root. Kelly allowed the scribe's nonsense to continue. Subsequent editors and editors-in-chief must simply have turned a benevolent blind eye to his arcane, digressive ramblings. A strange business, is journalism.

Chris Mitchell's column will appear next week.

A regular column can be a brutal taskmaster. It becomes an urgent, self-imposed obligation ... something that must be done

ing forward to getting back on the road. He had no thoughts of becoming a columnist. It had never crossed his mind.

One day the then editor, the well-respected Frank Devine, told your correspondent he'd be well suited to write about the television industry. Frank told the faintly dubious scribe: "Television writing has become a seriously good beat in the US." A while later an incoming editor-in-chief, Paul Kelly, muttered to someone that the scribe's television meanderings should be broadened to include print media and radio. A few

Superhero takings top \$110 million

No wonder Hollywood keeps making comic book superhero movies. Quashing any suggestion the genre has been running out of steam, Australian cinema goers have spent more than \$110 million on tickets to the genre in the past 15 weeks. More than 7.5 million tickets have been sold — 500,000-plus cinema visits a week — to watch superheroes in action. For 11 out of those 15 weeks, a comic book instalment has been the biggest movie in Australian cinemas. It started with *Deadpool* (pictured) then continued with *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*, *Captain America: Civil War* and, last weekend, *X-Men: Apocalypse*.



Garry Maddox
More at theage.com.au/movies

The Australian. May 16 2016

The Age. May 26 2016

Tuning in to the right time for

TIFFANY DUNK

WHEN should you let your child watch PG-rated content?

It's a question family expert Dr Karen Phillip is continually asked by parents.

According to the Australian Government's classification guidelines, PG content is "mild in impact" but may contain content kids could find confusing or upsetting.

They recommend people under 15 watch these shows or

movies with the guidance of their parent or guardian. There is no minimum age specified.

Dr Phillip said that where this can be confusing for parents is because there are several reasons why films or TV series can be given a PG label.

"We've got so many children's movies that are rated PG simply because there is romance in the background," she said. "But then you have a movie like *Jungle Book* which is rated PG but there is consider-

able violence in it. I've seen it with my stepdaughter and I was quite surprised that they were gearing it towards children."

The problem in this, said Dr Phillip, is that not only are young children highly impressionable but the human brain – even in adulthood – finds it difficult to differentiate between real and imagined.

"It's why we still cry when Leonardo DiCaprio goes down in *Titanic*," she said. "It's where

our logic needs to kick in to tell us it's not real. A child doesn't have that capacity. They don't have that capacity until they are in their double figures."

For that reason, Dr Phillip recommends that parents continue to watch PG-rated material with their kids until at least the age of 12 to 13.

"Participate with your child when you're watching it together," she said.

"You can either stop the show or discuss what's happen-

parental guidance on television

You have a movie like *Jungle Book* which is rated PG but there is considerable violence in it

DR KAREN PHILLIP

ing in the show with your child. You can reframe the program, 'Even though that did happen, did you know that it isn't real?'"

And while she had warnings for shows that may expose our children to excessive violence, including in cartoon form, she also warns seemingly innocuous reality series like *The Bachelor* can be just as dangerous.

"They believe that is how males and females communicate, how they experience finding love and seeking love," Dr

Phillip said. "The only way you can nullify that is if the parents have a balanced and close relationship and they can watch the program with the child and they can laugh and explain that it's a bit like *Home and Away*, it's not real."

When in doubt of the suitability of a PG-rated show or movie, read the reviews. Not only is it faster (and far more painless) than trying to watch it yourself, but it will generally give you a good guide as to ex-

actly why the show achieved that rating in the first place.

But until your child reaches that age of 15, caution is always advised, said Dr Phillip.

"Around the 15-year mark, children of that age have probably already experienced a little bit of emotional love or attachment with somebody, they're starting to differentiate a little more between imaginary and real and they've got much more life experience," she said.

The Scribe signs off

The Scribe hangs up his boots after 38 years. After a long, glorious career at *The Australian*, **Errol Simper** is putting his pencil away and retiring his A Certain Scribe media column for walks on Sydney's Manly beach. Having joined *The Australian* in 1978, Simper is the newspaper's longest serving contributor. He has been chief-of-staff three times and has worked for *The Canberra Times*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *Northern Territory News* and *Queensland Country Life*. He was a London correspondent during the 1980s, and by our reckoning might be Australia's first full-time media specialist. A Certain Scribe is also Australia's longest-running column by a single author. Simper is a passionate Liverpool fan and, happily, his beloved club has reached the 2016 UEFA Europa League final on Wednesday. *The Australian's* former editor-in-chief **Chris Mitchell** has joined Media as a columnist. We thank Simper for his service, and wish him good health and happiness. His encyclopedic insights and good humour will be missed by his loyal readers and all at Holt Street.

The Australian, May 16 2016

The Advertiser, May 21 2016



LITTLE KIDDLES

How cool is this! A search engine developed by Google called Kiddle not only filters out adult content, it also provides search results written in a style that kids find easy to understand. The layout is fun, vibrant and suggestions have extra large thumbnails for kids to click on. Take a look with your small folk, kiddle.co

Adelaide's Child, May 2016

Doom developer learns from past hell

DAVID SWAN
GAMING

After years of development, blockbuster action shoot-em-up Doom is finally out in the open but it almost didn't make it out of development hell, according to its director Marty Stratton.

Doom, which Stratton says boasts "badass demons, big effing guns, and moving really fast", is a reboot of the iconic shooting series from 1993 and, while Doom 3, released in 2004, was a survival horror genre hit, it was too far removed from the core DNA of what made Doom great.

Rebooting the brand turned out to be a torturous process that eventually led to a whole new team brought in for the job in 2011. As Doom developer id Software's Tim Willits said during Quakecon 2013: "Every game has a soul. Every game has a spirit. And (Doom 4) did not have the spirit, it did not have the soul, it didn't have a personality."

According to Stratton, the template in place was broken but there were a few bits and pieces that were put to good use.

"I'm a firm believer you're always a product of every lesson you've learned, and there's a lot we took away from that work," he says. "When we started at the beginning of 2013 we said what do we want the new Doom game to be, and when we boiled it all down it was much more inspired by the classic Doom, and Doom 2."

Stratton, who has worked for id Software for about 20 years, says his development team members were inspired by their own fandom for those classic

games and says after hundreds of hours playing and working on the game he still loves to play it.

The games industry has obviously come a long way in 20 years, and Stratton has had a front-row seat to the action. He says when crafting the game his team paid close attention to the streaming industry, to make sure they were making a game that people would not just want to play but also watch.

"Doom, when you play, it's fast, fluid, very improvisational and you take on combat in all different sorts of ways. People still stream the original Doom stuff, so when you take those ingredients and mix them together, but add a more modern Doom-type combat, add weapon mods, fast weapon switching, it boosts all those things up even more and makes it really watchable. We think people will play with a style and flair that's all their own and people will want to watch that."

Another aspect of the gaming industry to shift — and many say for the worse — is the idea that a game when released is not actually "finished", and is instead tweaked for months if not years with users asked to pay for extra maps and upgrades.

Stratton is a staunch defender of DLC, or downloadable content, declaring "we're a business".

"It's far more for us about keeping people playing," he says.

"We want to give people more ways to do that, whether it be new game modes, or new maps, or if you enjoy the vanity items like the armour, the skins and colours and all that stuff."

Doom is out now for Windows, Xbox One and PS4.

The Australian. May 17, 2016

Ahead of the game on risks to kids

LAUREN NOVAK
POLITICAL REPORTER

ELECTRONIC games with names such as Bingo Blitz or Big Fish Casino feature on a new government watch list designed to help parents prevent their children from learning to gamble.

Following inquiries by *The Advertiser*, the government has revealed the watch list, which ranks games under red or yellow classifications depending on how much they may encourage young players to gamble.

At least 64 games have been added to the list so far, many of which can be downloaded free to play on mobile phones or tablet devices.

The most concerning games, in the red category, use elements of "simulated casino-style gambling" such as noises, flashing lights or encouraging players to risk something of value in the hope of gaining a reward. Games in this category include Bingo Blitz, Big Fish Casino, Dice Poker 3D, Jackpot Slots, 8-Ball Pool and Slots Romance.

The yellow-rated games may allow players to win bonuses through chance or to build or visit virtual casinos.

They may also normalise attending casinos and race tracks or playing poker card games, or promote other casino-style games.

Games in this category include Bingo Bash, the Solitaire card game, a Coin Dozer arcade game and Megapolis, a city-building game. Parents

can search the list by their child's age range or search for the name of a specific game.

The State Government promised to develop the watch list ahead of the 2014 state election. Attorney-General John Rau said it "allows parents to make educated choices about the appropriateness of certain games by providing an easy and clear rating system".

Pokies Anonymous leader Julia Karpathakis said many parents would have "no idea" of the potential risk some games posed.

"What they're doing is normalising it (gambling) and instilling a seed in children for the future," she said.

Mr Rau said he was also working with federal Justice Minister Michael Keenan on new classifications for such games.

A trial of a new system — which assigns ratings based on answers to an online questionnaire given to game developers about the content of their products — will finish on June 30. A report will be provided to governments.

An Adelaide University study, released in late 2013, found teenagers who use gambling-style games on phones and other devices were up to three times more likely to engage in real gambling.

The games watch list is administered by the Australian Council on Children and the Media.

SEE THE LIST AT WWW.CHILDREN-ANDMEDIA.ORG.AU/APP-REVIEWS/WATCHLIST

NEW PUBLICATIONS

ADVERTISING

Collins, R.L., et al 2016.

Alcohol advertising exposure among middle school-age youth: an assessment across all media and venues.

Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs 77, 384–392.

Kasser, T., Linn, S., 2016.

Growing up under corporate capitalism: the problem of marketing to children, with suggestions for policy solutions

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EVENTS

The Mental Health and Wellbeing of Young People

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WORLD NEWS

Have LEGO products become more violent?

Although television, computer games and the Internet play an increasingly important role in the lives of children, they still play with physical toys, such as dolls, cars and LEGO bricks. The LEGO company has become the world's largest toy manufacturer.

A New Zealand study from the University of Canterbury investigated if the LEGO company's products have become more violent over time.

First, researchers analyzed the frequency of weapon bricks in LEGO sets. They found that the use of weapons has significantly increased and nearly 30% of today's LEGO sets include at least one weapon brick

Second, the study investigated perceived violence in the LEGO product catalogues from the years 1978–2014. The results show that the violence of the depicted products has increased significantly over time. The chances of observing violence in a LEGO catalogue pages has increased steadily by 19% per year. Currently, around 40% of all pages contain some type of violence. In particular, scenarios involving shooting and threatening behaviour have increased over the years.

As the researchers themselves say, "The LEGO Company's products are not as innocent as they used to be."

<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0155401>

Teens and multitasking

Although media multitasking is especially common among adolescents, its influence on their school performance has not been well researched.

Now US researchers have found that using multiple forms of media simultaneously is associated with poor cognition in adolescents.

In their study, the researchers administered a questionnaire to 73 grade 8 students asking them how many hours per week they spent on a number of activities, as well as how often they combined these activities. The activities included watching television or videos, listening to music, playing video games, reading print or electronic media, talking on the phone, texting, creating crafts, and writing.

The students' cognitive capabilities (working memory, manual dexterity, and vocabulary) and personality traits (grit, conscientiousness, and impulsiveness) were also tested. To measure the students' academic abilities, the researchers collected their scores on state maths and English exams.

Based on all of the data collected, the researchers discovered that students who spent more time media multitasking were the most likely to underperform in school. Not only did these students score more poorly in exams, but they also did less well on cognitive exercises for working memory and were more likely to be impulsive.

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.3758/s13423-016-1036-3>

How pediatricians have changed the study of children and media

Although the study of media and children has long been interdisciplinary, child health researchers and pediatric journals have more recently joined their social science counterparts to investigate media effects.

Research on how media use influences child health and development has increased exponentially in pediatric journals since the early 1990s. Communication and psychology scholars have begun to publish their media effects work in medical journals. Health researchers, who previously used existing science on media effects in policy statements and recommendations, now conduct original research.

Researchers from the US Center on Media and Child Health have recently reviewed this transformation by documenting publication patterns in journals from different disciplines and discussing possible explanations for the shift. In a recently published article, they consider the benefits and challenges presented by this evolution in the study of media and children, and discuss how it has shaped the future direction of research and policy.

The researchers suggest that the study of media and children should not be defined by any specific discipline, theory, or research methodology, but by the people doing the work. They suggest that researchers from different disciplines have much to learn from each other as they face the challenges of investigating how media use in ever-changing forms influences developing children.

Bickham, D; Kavanaugh; J; Rich, M (2016) **Media effects as health research: how pediatricians have changed the study of media and child development**

Journal of Children and Media, 10:2, 191-199

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2015.1127842>