“Kids TV content under federal government review”

The Australian newspaper ran a story with this heading on Feb 28. The gist of it is that the Federal Government is said to be planning a wide-ranging review of “outdated” quotas for content produced in Australia to be announced soon. Not surprisingly, given their ongoing opposition to the children’s quality Australian program and drama quotas (going back to their introduction in 1978), the commercial television industry is reported as welcoming the review.

Nine Entertainment chief executive Hugh Marks is quoted as saying:

"It was imperative that quotas for children’s programming were changed ... We spend a lot of money on producing children’s content required by quota, that children aren’t watching, so that needs to be addressed. We absolutely want a reduction or change."

In response, Jenny Buckland, Director of the Australian Children’s Television Foundation wrote in the ACTF news bulletin:

Well, here’s a thought: how about spending money on children’s content that they do watch?

Australian children’s television has an amazing story to tell, thanks to the Australian Children’s Drama Quota, which the commercial broadcasters would so like to see the back of. Much loved children’s dramas that generations of Australians have grown up with like Round the Twist, The Girl from Tomorrow, Lockie Leonard, H20: Just Add Water and Mortified were all screened first on commercial television, thanks to the children’s drama quota.


ACCM’s President Elizabeth Handsley responded with a letter to The Australian (unpublished) saying:

The TV industry argues for deregulation based on the fact that ‘children aren’t watching’ the content they are required to show under the Children’s Television Standards.

"Kids TV content under federal government review"
It’s time Australia changed to age-based classification!

Is your child under or over 15 years? Or under or over 18 years?

These are the ages around which the National Classification Scheme for films and games in Australia, presently revolves.

And it’s time that changed. Parents of children under 15 years need far more useful information-age-based advice that could really support their choices of appropriate media, eg for children aged 4-5, or 9-10.

The present system is based on concepts of community standards and offence, not child development. There is a reliable body of research that identifies the types of content that can disturb, scare, or in other ways cause harm to children, at different stages of their lives. That’s what parents and carers want and need to know.

Other countries have such age-based systems and classification processes based on child development. The Netherlands has had its Kijkwijzer system for many years. It’s scientifically-based, evaluated frequently and well received by parents.

ACCM has for some time been arguing strongly that:
- the present categories should be replaced with G (all), 5+, 9+, 12+, 16+, 18+, where, for example, 5+ means suitable for those 5 and up.
- the categories from 12+ upwards should have legal force

The reasons are that these ages represent, on average, significant changes in children’s development and stages of life. At age 5 they start school; at 9 are exercising critical thinking signalled by the shift from early to middle childhood; at 12 start secondary school and enter puberty, at 16, can leave school, but not yet an adult.

The problem with the M category is that it has no legal force, which means that very young children can and do attend such films, risking potential harm from violent, scary and otherwise disturbing themes and content. Setting legal force at a lower age could help here. And perhaps might discourage marketers from aiming their M classified titles, and linked products like toys and games, at the young.

ACCM recommends that a new 12+ category should have legal force.

So who can change the classification system? The Federal and State Ministers responsible for censorship (the Federal Minister for Communications, and State AGs mostly) together decide on the National Classification Scheme.

Parents need to call for a change, and here’s what you can do:
- Complete our short survey at: www.surveymonkey.com/r/WQP7ZZV
- Contact your local federal member and let them know you’d like a more effective age-based classification system
- Contact your State Minister responsible for censorship (most likely your AG) and let them know too.
- Contact the Federal Minister for Communications, Mitch Fifield
- Copy your letters to ACCM

In the meantime don’t forget that:
- ACCM provides child-development-based reviews which can be found at Know Before You Go. This service is funded by the SA Attorney General.
- The Classification Board provides more information about the present system at the parent information section of their website.

NEW BOOK

Children, Adolescents, and Media: The future of research and action


Routledge 2017


The first steps in addressing that fact are for the industry itself to schedule that content for times when children are available in large numbers to watch, and to promote that content as aggressively as it does other programmes. To date, it has done neither.

NOTE: A timely opportunity to express your views on the need for quality drama quotas for Australian children exists via this House of Representatives’ Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts Inquiry. The Committee will take submission until March 31 on “factors contributing to the growth and sustainability of the Australian film and television industry”
Ad-blockers pushing websites to the brink

EXCLUSIVE

MICHAELE RINGEMANN

DIGITAL

One in five Australians are using software to dodge online ads, which is depriving websites of revenue, undermining ad-supported business models and pushing sites towards failure.

Two reports to recently come out of the US have cast new light on the increasing trend of users installing ad-blocking software with figures released by US-based PageFair showing worldwide ad-blocking usage surged 30 per cent last year, with about 615 million devices now being used to dodge ads.

The report from PageFair — a start-up that helps companies recoup some of this lost advertising revenue — ranked Australia as the 25th worst offender out of 110 nations when it came to usage of ad-blocking software, with some 20 per cent of internet users actively deploying the software.

Australia’s usage of ad-blocking software outranked the US, China and Britain and was almost double that of the global average that came in at 11 per cent of users.

PageFair’s figures on ad-blocking usage match those that local publishers including News Corp (publisher of The Australian) and Yahoo7 have been tracking over the past year.

The two publishers are trialling new ways to fight back against ad-blocking and the deleterious effect it is having on ad revenue.

“This is a really big issue for all digital publishers. We are seeing publishers try everything from blocking access to their sites right through to politely asking users not to block ads. Other digital publishers are simply paying extortion fees to whitelist their site from ad blockers,” News Corp Australia chief technology officer Alisa Bowen told The Australian.

“We have been proactive about this issue, and we are seeing success in the trials we are doing with double-digit conversion away from ad blocking.”

Yahoo7 chief executive Ed Harrison said that while ad-blocking was presenting serious challenges to ad-supported business models, the usage rate among consumers of the software was not the tsunami of activity that industry pundits were predicting 18 months ago.

“We are seeing ad-blocking being greatly skewed to desktops. And one of the leading reasons we are seeing people use ad-blockers is because they are concerned about malware and viruses. The second issue is about whether ads are irritating and sucking up bandwidth, which is slowing loading times on webpages,” Mr Harrison said.

“The onus is on publishers and the creative industry to make sure they are delivering ads in a responsible way to users that don’t interfere too much with their viewing experience.”

While the PageFair report found Australia was the 25th worst offender overall, when compared to the top 10 ad spending markets in the world, Australia came in third worst being outranked by only Germany (where 29 per cent of the population used ad-blocking software) and Canada (at 25 per cent).

According to the US-based National Bureau of Economic Research, ad-blocking is not only growing but is also severely damaging the financial viability of websites and triggering a downward spiral of degradation for sites relying on the funding model to support their businesses.

Researchers Ben Shiller, Joel Waldfogel and Johnny Ryan published their findings in the paper “Will ad-blocking break the internet?”, and said each additional percentage point of site visitors using ad blockers worsened its traffic rank by about 0.6 per cent over a 35-month period, with stronger effects at worse-ranked sites.

“Revenue reductions undermine investment which, in turn, compromises site quality, making consumers less interested in visiting in the first place,” the researchers said. “If ad blocking undermines ad-supported business models online, market failure is not inevitable.”

However, both News Corp and Yahoo7 said that despite increasing numbers of ad blocking, they were not seeing a material impact on their revenue from online advertising. “People are showing a willingness to pay or be exposed to ads for valuable content,” Ms Bowen said.

Stranger than fiction: ‘Fake news kills people’s minds’

GUOUSZEH SARWAR

TECHNOLOGY

The head of Apple has made a plea for governments and techology companies to intensify the fight against fake news, which he says is “killing people’s minds”.

Tim Cook, chief executive of the world’s biggest company, which has a stockmarket value of $905 billion, called for an information campaign to help educate the public on the dangers associated with fictitious online stories.

“It has to be ingrained in the schools, it has to be ingrained in the public,” Mr Cook said. “There has to be a massive campaign. We have to think through every demographic."

Speaking at the Brit School for Performing Arts and Technology in south London, he said: “We need the modern version of a public service announcement campaign. It can be done quickly if there is a will.”

In the aftermath of a US election which many claim was swung by the spreading of false stories on social media sites, Mr Cook said: “All of us technology companies need to create some tools that help diminish the volume of false news.

“We must try to squeeze this without stepping on freedom of speech and of the press, but we must also help the reader. Too many of us are just in the complaint category right now and haven’t figured out what to do,” he told British newspaper The Daily Telegraph.

Research by Stanford University, published last month, suggested that fabricated news stories favouring Donald Trump were shared 30 million times leading up to the election, nearly quadruple the number of pro-Hillary Clinton stories shared.

However, the most widely circulated hoaxes were only seen by a small fraction of Americans and only about half of those who saw a fake news story believed it.

At the centre of the backlash against the dissemination of fake news was Facebook. The publishing and technology company, which was criticised for allowing its automated systems to send fake stories to 1.8 billion users, has updated its algorithms to downgrade fake news and clicked on users’ news feeds.

However, Mr Cook said more was required. “We are going through this period of time right here where unfortunately some of the people that are winning are the people that spend their time trying to get the most clicks, not tell the most truth. It’s killing people’s minds in a way.”

The outcome of a concerted effort to crack down on peddlers of fake news “is that truthful, reliable, non-sensational, deep news outlets will win”.

He stressed that by directing educational efforts towards children, a generation of young people would be in a position to change attitudes towards consuming news. “In some ways kids will be the easiest to educate. At least before a certain age, they are very much in listen and understand (mode), and they then push their parents to act.”

The Australian 13-2-2017
Don’t let social media rule your life

Mindlessly checking Facebook makes you very much like a lab rat.

You probably remember the rat that habitually presses a lever hoping for a pellet. It’s never sure when a reward will come, so it’s compelled to just keep pressing. When you check your phone, your brain gets its own little zing. Someone might be talking about you on Facebook! No? Reload.

Are Facebook or Twitter “addictions”? The evidence that we aren’t coping well is on display at dinner tables where everyone is starring at screens — and even on pedestrian crossings, where distracted pedestrians walk into traffic. Don’t just blame the millennials. A new Nielsen study found Americans aged 35 to 49 spend nearly seven hours a week on social media, more than younger generations.

I became mindful of my bad habits in the early morning. Pre-coffee, half awake, I’d be lying there for an hour with my phone, getting sucked into the Donald Trump vortex on Facebook. So I called up psychologists, brain scientists and app designers studying our behaviours for advice on what would help me pull back from the brink.

Surprisingly, they didn’t recommend a cold-turkey digital detox. What you need are skills to manage social media as a part of your life.

Limit the triggers

Our brains are wired to “voraciously feed on information”, says University of California, San Francisco neuroscientist Adam Gazzaley, co-author of The Distracted Mind. So why let social media companies decide when they should tempt you? Turn off app notifications, particularly for live video broadcasts. Make your main work devices off-limits to social media so distractions aren’t possible. Don’t log into Facebook or even install the app. Hide your phone when you’re working, driving or doing important socialising.

Avoid distraction quicksands

When you’re on Twitter or Facebook, it’s easy to read one article, then another, then another. Nir Eyal, author of Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products and a consultant to app makers, says he refuses to read anything right away. Instead, he saves articles to a service called Pocket, which reads them aloud while he’s at the gym. We do ourselves a disservice when we use social media as a break from serious work, Gazzaley says. Our brains need a chance to be empty. The best way to help your brain focus is exercise, even for a short period. Just staring into space would be better than refreshing Facebook.

Set boundaries

Establish times when social media is off limits. Setting rules is also important for parents, says Wendy Wood, a professor of psychology and business at the University of Southern California. “You want your kids to learn the same skills that you want to learn yourself, which is to use (social media) in a way that is healthy and beneficial,” she says. Tech can help if you find it too easy to ignore those rules. Website and app blockers such as Freedom, SelfControl or Unplugged on phones might do the trick. If you’re able to set aside just a single block of time each day, or each week, to catch up on social media, let your friends know you’re making a change. Then they won’t take offence when you don’t respond right away.

Make new norms

Not that long ago, it would be a sackable offence to visibly ignore a meeting or class; now, many openly scroll away on phones or laptops. Bosses could set a better work culture by providing charging stations at meetings where everyone could leave their phones, then focus on the discussion at hand. Eyal suggests you could also try shaming friends who have bad habits — provided you do it politely. If someone is ignoring you at dinner, say, “Is everything OK?” The answer might start an important conversation.

Tech should help

The social-media industry has a responsibility here, too. Since companies usually know exactly how much time users spend on their apps, Eyal suggests they reach out to offer help to people who demonstrate problem behaviour.

And for the rest of us, let’s encourage app makers that support a philosophy called Time Well Spent, created in part by former Google designer Tristan Harris. It says app makers should make interfaces more helpful, not more demanding of our time.

The Australian 3-2-2017
Secret's out on tween danger

EXCLUSIVE
LANAI SCARR

CHILDREN as young as eight are sharing their home address, phone number and surname on open social media platforms as experts call for mandatory education in schools to warn of the dangers of over-sharing online.

Data from the Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner shows kids are exposing themselves to huge digital risk. The Young and Social Online research shows 39 per cent of children as young as eight, who use social media, have shared their real surname on their accounts, 24 per cent have posted a photo of their school or school uniform and 8 per cent have shared their phone number and/or street address.

Teens are also turning to more “dark social” platforms such as Snapchat which are providing a false sense of security that their information will be safe because it vanishes within a certain time frame.

The research on 2278 teens and pre-teens also showed Facebook is the platform of choice for young people, with 90 per cent of 14 to 17-year-olds using it on a regular basis.

About 56 per cent of kids aged eight to 13 say they are circumventing rules in place preventing children under 13 from opening accounts.

On average, children aged eight to 13 say they have two active social media accounts, while teens aged 14-17 have three. Nine per cent of social media users as young as eight say their main profile is public.

Children’s E-Safety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant said young children revealing private information on social media were exposed to risks “they may not have the maturity, judgment or resilience to handle on their own”.

“In the rare or worst case scenario, school details can also be used by online predators to find a child’s location, to befriend a child or trick them into believing they know them,” she said. Parents need to use every opportunity to talk to their kids about internet usage. She also encouraged parents to ask their children for permission to share images of them online, to set the right example.

Professor Matt Warren, of Deakin University’s Centre for Cyber Security Research, said there was a need for privacy and digital literacy programs in schools.

“The earlier age, the better,” Professor Warren said.

SWITCHED ON
Social media used by children: Kids (8-13 years)

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<thead>
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<th>Platform</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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Source: Office of Children’s eSafety Commissioner

Pokemon GO a $1.2b hit

Gaming
Rae Johnston

Thanks to its ability to attract non-gamers, nostalgic characters, simple mechanics, the novelty of augmented reality and its social nature, Pokemon GO reached a level of success in 2016 that eludes even some of the most successful traditional video games.

Record downloads, engagement and of course - revenue.

The exact figures are revealed in the App Annie 2016 Retrospective:

“Contrary to publishers’ concerns, we have noted that it did not appear to eat into other games’ revenue or usage. Since the game attracted more than just traditional mobile gamers and was often played during users’ traditionally ‘non-mobile’ time, the game did not seem to prosper at the expense of other games”, the report says. “The game rose in a breathtaking fashion, reaching $US800 million ($1.05 billion) in consumer spend in 110 days. By the end of 2016, the game reached over $395 million ($1.2 billion) in consumer spend. This was far faster than some of the most successful mobile games of all time.”

To put Pokemon GO’s success in a broader perspective, its global consumer spend in 2016 exceeded the total worldwide box office gross of Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice.

Pokemon GO’s monetisation in 2016 demonstrates the viability of novel gameplay ideas in mobile gaming, the report says.

Pokemon GO wasn’t just impressive for its revenue, though - its user engagement was extraordinary. The time spent in Pokemon GO was nearly as high as that of the next 19 biggest games combined.
Too many junk food ads on kids’ menu: experts

Esther Han

Children continue to be swamped by junk food ads, pointing to a failure in the food sector’s self-regulation, health experts say.

A study by Cancer Council NSW and Sydney University researchers found children are being exposed to an average of three unhealthy food advertisements every hour they watch TV during peak periods – same as five years ago.

Nearly half of all food ads during children’s peak viewing hours were for unhealthy foods, with fast food ads being most frequent, followed by chocolate and confectionary, and sugary drinks.

Wendy Watson, the council’s nutrition programs manager, said the lack of reduction in unhealthy foods ads seen by children meant the industry’s self-regulation initiatives – introduced in 2009 – were not working.

“For almost eight years now junk food companies have been able to take advantage of these weak, self-defined codes because there has been nothing to stop them from doing so,” she said.

“We’re calling on government to take long-awaited action to regulate to protect children from the impact and influence of junk food advertising, so that they can take a healthier path into adult life.”

The study, published in Journal of Public Health, analysed ads aired during children’s peak viewing times: 6am to 9am and 4pm to 9pm on weekdays, and 6am to midnight and 4pm to 9am on weekends.

The researchers viewed free-to-air channels 7, 9 and 10, in Sydney for four days.

McDonald’s dominated the fast food category, accounting for 47 per cent of fast food ads, followed by KFC and Hungry Jack’s.

The Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) launched two voluntary codes – Responsible Children’s Marketing Initiative and Quick Service Restaurants Initiative for Responsible Advertising and Marketing to Children (QSR1) – in 2009 to reduce ads targeting children for unhealthy products and promote healthy eating.

McDonald’s, KFC and Hungry Jack’s are all signatories to the QSR1 code of conduct.

Gary Dawson, chief executive of AFGC, said he rejected the report’s findings as it “deliberately” ignored the concept of advertising that targets children and food advertising generally.

He said the Cancer Council’s report measured all food advertising, which is almost entirely directed at adults.

“The advertising to children codes are what the name suggests. They’re about advertising directed at children because adults are well able to make their own choices and take responsibility for themselves, just as parents are best placed to make decisions for their children,” he said.

“The codes deliberately target programs when children are likely to be viewing TV on their own, without parental supervision, which is the rationale for removing promotion of non-core foods during these programs.”

In regards to calls for government intervention, he said overseas experience showed it didn’t reduce childhood obesity rates.

At least one-quarter of Australian children are overweight or obese, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and this figure is increasing.

Ms Watson held her ground, saying the codes had “toothache”, including the requirement that a third of the audience had to be children for an ad to be considered targeting children.

“We observed that in Sydney alone there were 40,000 children watching the rugby league and 30,000 watching MasterChef, but they only made up about 10 per cent of the audience, so a junk food ad in those shows would still technically comply,” she said.
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#### VIOLENCE


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**Australian content conversation**

Australian Communications and Media Authority 16-17 May 2017 International Convention Centre, Sydney

www.acma.gov.au

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**Parent Engagement Conference**

6-8 June 2017 Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

pecaustralia.com/
paedophiles are actively posting deviant messages over photos of their innocent children. Users of paedophile websites from Germany, Switzerland, Finland and France were posting deviant messages over photos of young Australian girls.

Queensland police and cyber-security experts have foiled a plan by paedophiles to track down two 12-year-old girls whose innocent pictures they harvested online. Users of paedophile websites from Australia, New Zealand, the US, Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Finland and France were posting deviant messages over photos of young Australian girls.

The images and videos showed background detail, including street signs, vehicle registrations and landmarks and within a few hours, the paedophiles had identified the girls’ home town.

Task force chief, Detective Inspector John Rowse, urged parents to be safe with photos of their children online. He said that parents need to know that the images they are putting up online are also publicly accessible to people all over the world. DI Rowse also said that children didn’t have a right to privacy when it came to online devices and what they were sharing, and that parents should be monitoring everything their children are doing.


New Carly’s Law to protect young Australians online

The Minister for Justice, The Hon Michael Keenan MP, has announced that young Australians will have greater protection from being groomed by online predators under tough new laws to be introduced by the Australian Government.

An evolved version of Carly’s Law will make it a crime for an adult to use a carriage service to commit an act in preparation for, or planning to, cause harm to or engage in or procure sexual activity with a minor.

The law will enable law enforcement agencies to take action against predators sooner and with greater consequence. Police will have the power to intervene before predators have a chance to act.

The minister said that the new law will also serve as a strong deterrent, with a tough new sentence of 10 years prison for convicted offenders.

www.ministerjustice.gov.au/Mediareleases/Pages/2017/FirstQuarter/New-Carly%27s-Law-to-protect-young-Australians-online.aspx