### A Monster Calls: how useful is its PG classification?

The recently released movie *A Monster Calls* is by all accounts a well made and enjoyable film - but for an age-appropriate audience. ACCM’s reviewer told us, “I highly recommend this film. However it is very emotionally intense and upsetting at times”.

The film was given a PG by the Australian Classification Board with the guidelines, “Mild themes and violence. Some scenes may scare children”.

ACCM’s Know Before You Go review gives this advice for parents “Not recommended under 13, parental guidance recommended 13 to 15 due to intense themes and disturbing scenes.”

The supporting reasons for ACCM’s advice include:

- **scenes of school yard bullying**
  
  Conor is pushed and falls, with his face slamming into the ground. He is also kicked, has his hand stamped on and his face slapped. He is constantly taunted. Eventually he retaliates, repeatedly punching his tormentor. Later we hear that Conor’s attack had put the boy in hospital.

- **scary transformations**
  
  A giant yew tree transforms into a monster, its roots breaking out of the ground and transforming into legs. Its eyes are like burning coals with yellow slits for pupils. The arrival of the monster is preceded by strange occurrences including violent windstorms. Some scenes depict the monster inflicting destruction such as ripping a section of a house from its foundations and hurling it through the air, or crushing train lines as it walks. In one scene tree roots grow out of the monster’s head and fingers, and wrap themselves around Conor’s face and body.

- **and the underpinning theme of the death of Conor’s mother from cancer**
  
  A distressing scene shows Conor’s dying mother sitting on a bed, emaciated and bald. Later we see Conor standing crying next to his mother’s bed. Conor climbs into bed with her and she dies while being held by him.

Some might consider that such themes are hardly “mild” and that the film deserved an M classification. The film certainly has very strong content for a PG, and this is concerning when so many take PG as meaning “OK for the kids”.

The film’s classification is a classic example of why Australia needs an age-based classification system. A classification of 12 as given by both the British and the Netherlands systems is a far more satisfactory guide to age-appropriateness.

Fine films like *A Monster Calls* deserve to be seen at the right age.

### Concerns over Netflix suicide series

A study examining US Google search data after the release of the Netflix series 13 Reasons Why has found suicide-related queries increased by nearly 20 per cent.

The Netflix series features a high school student who takes her own life and leaves behind audio tapes which suggest that some of her peers are in some way responsible. According to a report on the ABC website, the series was blamed for an increased number of calls to helplines in Australia following its release earlier this year.

Now a US study published in the American Medical Association’s journal, JAMA Internal Medicine, has found that Google fielded up to 1.5 million more suicide-related searches than would normally be expected in the 19 days after the show’s release.

The team behind the show are reported to have said that they wanted to raise awareness of the issues and provide an authentic picture of the struggles that young people faced at school. However, the study’s lead author Dr John Ayers from the Graduate School of Public Health at San Diego State University said that most of the queries involved suicidal ideation - people searching...continued on P2
**EDITORIAL**

**Why is technology so hard to put down?**

Debate rages as whether there is such a condition as “screen addiction”. Some call it “problematic internet use” or PIU. Whatever the names, there is a problem, and people are calling for help. And especially when it comes to getting their young children off screens.

Well known parenting adviser Justin Coulson has said that for some “the addiction properties of screens are greater than those of heroin”.

**omny.fm/shows/lu-and-matt/dr-justin-kids-addicted-to-screens**

 Screens are having this effect on parents as well as children. Dr Coulson said “The designers of games are always trying to find ways to keep us glued to screens”.

He recommends that parents of young children use the opportunities they have while young, to guide their children’s use of screens carefully. He thinks there is a case for minimising children under 12’s use of screens. “With older children”, he says, “parents need to have conversations about how they can be used .... it’s a constant dance – review, revise, and remind”.

**Huu Kim Le, Adelaide-based child and adolescent psychiatrist and game researcher talks about this aspect of screens too.** At a recent Generation Next conference in Adelaide he said that the first thing we need to remember is that internet games and apps are designed to grab our attention. He is an advocate of parents immersing their children in the real world from an early age, and finding stimulation and satisfaction there.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJ7A74Vx7YE

Alan Alter, author of a recent book on addictive technology, says that it’s the absence of “stopping cues,” that enables endless screening. He writes “With most media today, unlike a newspaper or magazine, there are no stopping cues. The news just rolls on forever.”

There’s much we don’t know about the impact of internet apps and games on the young. But there’s a lot to be said for making time that’s without technology, and making sure we and our children have that.

How do we keep screens in their place?

One suggestion I read was to “choose something you have to do every day, like eating dinner. If you commit to keeping this time screen-free, it’s hard at first and there’s a withdrawal period. But those who try it eventually say their dinnertime conversations are richer and they feel better for the absence of screens, and it can spread to other parts of their lives”.

Alan Alter’s advice is “find more time to be in natural environments, to sit face to face with someone in a long conversation without any technology in the room. There should be times of the day where it looks like the 1950s or where you are sitting in a room and you can’t tell what era you are in. You shouldn't always be looking at screens.”

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continued from P1

for ways to kill themselves - rather than ways to prevent it. It appeared that in some cases the series had been presenting this content to people who already have suicidal thoughts.

The authors suggested that World Health Organisation media guidelines for preventing suicide should be followed, including removing scenes showing suicide and providing suicide hotline numbers in each episode.

Speaking to the ABC, Dr Fincina Hopgood, a lecturer in screen studies at the University of New England in NSW and an expert on the representation of mental illness in film said that she felt that the makers of the program were “very cavalier in their approach to adapting the novel to the screen”. She feels that “screen media has the potential to open up really healthy and important discussions about mental health.” However, the new media environment did not enable controls over binge watching of such content or necessarily provide messages of where to go for help.

She said that it was time to think about bringing together mental health policy and broadcasting regulations to help protect vulnerable viewers – in this case those who are “particularly susceptible to feeling overwhelmed by these sorts of images”.

Parents call for informed guidance

Australia's vague film classification system fails to protect children.

BARBARA BIGGINS

It's in the school holidays, when families are most likely to head to the cinema, that frustration about how movies are rated and promoted most often boils over.

"I had to leave PG-rated films with my two kids in the past, because the film was completely unsuitable for my young kids," one annoyed mother said.

"It cost me $40 for 10 minutes. It was my own stupid fault for not researching the film beforehand. But still, it should be clearer as to appropriate ages."

A survey by my organisation, the Australian Councill on Children and the Media, found an astonishing 80% of 10 parents thinks the classification system needs to change.

The categories (G, PG, M and MA15+) are too broad and people provide little information about what's suitable.

"The M classification is an even greater issue than PG. It's meant to indicate that a film is not recommended for children under 15. We asked parents whether they thought it did much good. Again, nearly 80% said that it didn't," the survey found.

Some disturbing stories emerged. "My ex took my child to an M film. My child is five years old. He said he was scared and didn't like it, but my husband didn't have enough awareness/empathy to not take him or leave if it didn't suit," says a mother.

Parents also want tougher restrictions on how M-rated films are promoted. Distributors often make merchandise available at fast-food restaurants, making it hard for parents to resist demands to let their children see the film.

One parent expressed frustration that the makers of films that are inappropriate for children are allowed to market toys and lunch boxes to young kids, for example Marvel and X-Men movies. "It's really hard for parents to explain why the kids can't see the movie."

The Netherlands does it better.

Very young children are limited in their ability to distinguish fantasy from reality.'

Eight in 10 parents say the classification system needs an overhaul.

One parent expressed frustration that the makers of films that are inappropriate for children are allowed to market toys and lunch boxes to young kids, for example Marvel and X-Men movies. "It's really hard for parents to explain why the kids can't see the movie."

The Netherlands does it better.

"Very young children are limited in their ability to distinguish fantasy from reality."

Its Kijkwijzer (Watch Wiser) system classifies films and TV programs by age, using research on what affects children at different stages of development.

There's plenty of evidence about the harm violent and disturbing films can do.

The effects can last into adulthood and can lead to unnecessary fears and anxieties.

"Joanne Cantor, emeritus professor of communication science at University of Wisconsin-Madison, stresses that children don't need to understand the stories they are watching to be terrified. Very young children are also limited in their ability to distinguish fantasy from reality, and resistant to attempts to convince them that what they watched wasn't real. Seeing or hearing about a "happy ending" doesn't help much either."

Prevention is worth more than cure.

The Australian Council on Children and the Media has tried to help by producing an age-based, colour-coded "know before you go" review service. Initially started with the help of federal government funding, we have kept it going from our own resources and help from the South Australian government. But much more needs to be done.

We urge state and territory ministers and the federal Communications Minister, who are jointly responsible for classification, to review the national classification scheme.

The scheme's framework is outdated. The categories of G, PG, M, MA15+ and R18+ do not achieve what should be their principal purpose: to protect children from content that might harm.

Certainly, parents have judged the unrestricted G, PG and M as pretty useless. A scheme based on what is known to cause children distress or harm, and at which ages, would be welcome. This is an evidence-based change whose time has come.

Barbara Biggins is honorary chief executive of the Australian Council on Children and the Media.
‘Get rid of kids’ TV content quotas’

EXCLUSIVE

STEPHEN BROOK
PUBLIC Broadcasting

Children’s television content quotas should be scrapped and the ABC should junk one of its two children’s channels because the system for guaranteeing content in children’s television no longer works, the architect of the original children’s C classification says.

Instead, a new independent online service, funded by an annual levy that should replace the current system, says Patricia Edgar, the founding director of the Australian Children’s Television Foundation.

“Get rid of all the children’s quotas. The networks have never played the game fair and never really worked to ensure that the programs that they are doing are the programs that were really intended by the standards,” says Edgar, who as chair of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board’s advisory committee on program standards was the architect of the C classification.

Edgar’s comments carry significant weight. She was also chair of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal’s children’s programs committee, where she oversaw the implementation of the Children’s Television Standards.

“Forget the commercials. Systematically they have under mined the children’s programming. But levy them so that each pays $10 million so that each goes to a fund that supports a new multiplicity of online service for ages nine to 14.”

Such a platform would operate like the ABC’s iView player, allowing children to select content they wanted to watch, much as they do on YouTube, but without the need to produce volumes of episodes to sustain television time slots or channels.

“I am making an argument about quality and an argument about the audience (that is) diminishing worldwide if you look at the research,” Edgar said.

“What it shows quite clearly is the kids in the age group (9 to 13) are moving away from television because they are on their tablets and mobile phones and social media.

“Edgar’s views, made in a submission to the government’s Australian and Children’s Screen Content Review that is examining the future of children’s TV quotas, will cause angst in the independent production sector, which has attacked ABC managing director Michelle Guthrie’s insistence that the ABC should not be subject to such quotas, and fear the government will scrap such quotas, which the commercial free-to-air networks say they can no longer afford.

Commercial-free-to-air broadcasters must screen at least 96 hours of first-release Australian C drama over a three-year period and a combined total of at least 260 hours of C programs and at least 130 hours of P programs (for preschool children) per year from any source.

But Edgar thinks traditional television dramas are not the “be all and end all of what kids need”.

“So much of the thinking behind this review is about an assumption that we should sustain this industry. It’s not about the industry, it’s about the kids,” she said.

“Kids, they come and they go, very quickly. You are not going to get them in by offering them more of the same. They want something new and innovative. They are 10-year-olds pick up tablets and playing games and learning words and numbers.”

Edgar has called for the ABC to close its ABCME digital channel aimed at children aged nine to 15 years and focus on programs for children in their early years aged two to nine.

“Edgar says the ABC should scrap one of its digital channels and focus on two to nine-year-olds. “It’s ridiculous they have the two channels, if you look at the hours they have got to fill.”

Former ABC director of television Kim Dalton recently attacked the ABC for empire building at the expense of content funding. He is claiming that ABC was a haven for children’s programs,” Edgar said. “I am saying that they were putting in low-cost studio-based cheap programs with multiple repeats to fill the time slots. You are looking at massive number of hours that are required,” Edgar said.

Both the ABC and Kim Dalton declined to comment.

Modern media hasn’t dulled the appeal of broadcast television

STEPHEN BROOK
AUDIENCES

Despite unprecedented choice, the humble television retains its hold over our viewing habits, with 19.9 million of us — 85.7 per cent of the TV population — watching broadcast television on home TV sets each week.

On average we watch two hours and 30 minutes of live and playback TV on television sets each day — 33 minutes fewer than six years ago, according to the Australian Video Viewing Report from OzTam, Regional Tam and Nielsen.

“The vast survey of our viewing habits in the first quarter of the year found that even among 18 to 24-year-olds, a generation who supposedly shun TV, nearly two-thirds (66.9 per cent) watch some broadcast TV each week.

Numerous viewing options at home encourage “spreading” viewing behaviour across multiple screens, says the report for January to March, which replaces the previous Australian Multi-Screen Report.

“That in turn contributes to the steady and gradual decline in the amount of time Australians spend watching live and time-shifted TV — particularly in the evenings,” the report said. Each household has on average 6.2 screens, including televisions, desktop computers, laptops, mobile phones and tablets.

“While the total number of screens in homes has risen over the past two years, growth rates are slowing,” the report said.

“Penetration levels for various technologies are also plateauing and this reflects consumer tendencies to retain an older model device for secondary use when upgrading to a new one.”

And while the TV set remains central to our choices, as TVs grow “smarter” with additional entertainment functions, more of us are not watching just television programs on our sets.

In prime time, Australians spent 25 per cent of their time using the TV set for other activities. This includes playing computer games, watching DVDs, browsing the internet, listening to music, streaming video, watching YouTube or Facebook videos, or watching streaming channels.

Tablets are the most popular method for watching broadcast TV on a connected device, known as a video player measurement. On weekdays the majority of VPM viewing occurs on tablets (39 per cent of total minutes played), followed by desktop or laptop computers (26 per cent), then connected TV’s and smartphones (18 per cent each).

But 24-36 watch the most video content on smartphones (nine hours per month), while 25-34 watch the most on tablets (four hours 23 minutes).

“As we move through 2017 we’ve continued to see growth of Australians aged 18-24 engaging with video content online,” said Craig Johnston, regional managing director, Media, Nielsen. This group was the biggest consumer of mobile video content, he said.

“Content providers and advertisers need to be flexible with their approaches in order to reach consumers where they are, and on any screen size they choose.”

The report found:
• Australians watched an average of 29 hours and 30 minutes of broadcast programs on home TV sets per person each month.
• 89.9 per cent was watched live.
• 8.9 per cent was played back within seven days.
• 1.9 per cent was time-shifted up to 26 days later.

Prime time is still the most popular to watch video on all devices, but catch-up viewing on tablets increases from mid-afternoon, coinciding with the end of school, while on weekdays there is a morning peak on smartphones and tablets. “As people embrace device and platform choice, for some these new options actually create more time to stay up to date with their favourite TV programs or watch other video — for example, while commuting or taking a few minutes out during their lunch break,” said OzTam CEO Doug Feifer.
Work a distraction for young blokes hooked on gaming

ADAM CREIGHTON
ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

The rapid spread of XBox, Wii and PlayStation consoles in Australian households could be distracting young men from looking for work, according to new research that finds unemployed young American men spent more time — 10 hours a week — on gaming than socialising, chores, sport or other hobbies.

Economists at Princeton and Chicago universities found that a 2½-hour fall in average hours worked by men aged 25 to 30, over the eight years to 2015, had been offset by an almost identical rise in leisure time, almost all of which was chewed up by video gaming. The dramatic improvement in the range and quality of gaming in the past decade — the World of Warcraft game has more than 12 million subscribers worldwide — has had "no effect on the labour supply of older men and only a small effect on that of younger women", they found.

"This 1.9 hours a week increase in recreational computer use (for young men)... is a very large change," they added, noting that over-40s years women had reduced time spent on domestic duties by only 10 hours a week.

"When you consider we're reaching saturation point among the young people who are playing games, it's not surprising that some would in fact be gaming rather than going to work," said Ron Curry, chief executive of the Interactive Games and Entertainment Association. "But if you thought it was cumulative, you'd expect the effect to be higher."

He suggested the gym or gambling could have similar effects. In Australia, the average age of gamers has increased from 24 in 2005 to 33, as the share of female players has risen from 37 per cent to 47 per cent. Two-thirds of households have three or more gaming devices.

Australian play video games just under 90 minutes a day on average but males aged 15 to 24 play almost 150 minutes, according to RGIA's 2015 survey. Sales of games and consoles have increased 8 per cent a year since 2000 to almost $3 billion in 2015.

"We find younger men reported increased happiness during the 2000s despite stagnant wages, declining employment and increased propensity to live with parents (contrasting sharply with) older men whose satisfaction clearly fell," the authors said.

More than two-thirds of unemployed young men lived with a parent or close relative in 2005, up from 46 per cent in 2000. "Gaming and recreational computer use is distinctively a leisure luxury for younger men, but not for other demographic groups," the US authors concluded, estimating that the 10 per cent increase in available leisure time led to a 20 per cent rise in time spent gaming.

Mr Curry said the government, which assists film and television, should help develop the gaming industry in Australia. "In Canada, the provinces are competing against each other to have game development studios," he said.

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Home 3D printing invades toy market

JOHN ROSS
SCIENCE WRITER

Do-it-yourself manufacturing is invading the lucrative toy and game market, with companies warned to embrace the trend or risk going under.

A US analysis has found that desktop 3D printers, notoriously dismissed as a "gimmick" by the chief executive of iPhone manufacturer Foxconn, are capturing a significant slice of a market projected to exceed $US15 billion ($70bn) globally by 2020.

The study, published in the journal Technologies, found that 3D printing had become entrenched in the "mass consumer market" thanks to the advent of online repositories of free 3D printable designs. The team found that just one of these databases, London-based MyMiniFactory, generated toys and games worth around $60m a year.

Co-author Joshua Pearce said 3D printing supplies were also becoming cheaper, transforming customers into "prosumers".

(They) make a growing number of their own products in their homes from inexpensive materials and even recycled waste," said Professor Pearce, a materials scientist at Michigan Technological University. "It is clear that distributed home manufacturing can no longer be ignored."

The study analysed the commercial value of the products created from MyMiniFactory's 100 most popular designs, some 85 per cent of which are toys and game accessories. They range from Pokémon Go aimers and Batman cowls to model guns, helmets and Harry Potter wands. These designs collectively spawned products worth over $6m a month, with consumers typically saving 78 per cent of the cost of commercial alternatives — 90 per cent if they used plastic garbage converted into printer filament using home "recyclebots".

Professor Pearce said there were dozens of other free design repositories. It was not clear whether people were supplanting purchases with home-printed alternatives, or generating customised accessories.

He said companies selling simpler plastic toys at high prices were particularly threatened by 3D printing. For example, Lego blocks, which cost about 6c each to buy, could be printed for 3c using generic filaments and half a cent using recycled plastic. But he said all manufacturers were vulnerable and should treat it as an opportunity rather than a threat.

"The trend this technology is creating is clearly accelerating," he said. "Companies should not attempt to criminalise their own customers and fans by using anti-competitive ideas about intellectual property."

He said firms should re-create themselves as "platforms" by open sourcing as many of their products as possible. This would encourage consumers around the world to add value to the brands by designing, customising and sharing 3D printable add-ons.

The analysis found that in the case of Lego, the real strength of 3D printing lay in "Lego compatible" alternatives. "Companies encourage consumers to help their customers get what they want," Professor Pearce said.

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The Weekend Australian 8-9 July 2017

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Tech giants lurk in your living room

The speaker-like Google Home personal assistant has gone on sale this week for $199

CHRIS GRIFFITH

Google Home, Apple HomePod and Amazon Echo are shaping to make Australian homes a marketing banana.

The first of the three speaker-like personal assistants, Google Home, went on sale on Thursday for $199.

Apple HomePod follows in December, while Amazon Echo will sell when Amazon arrives.

Google Home is a speaker device with an in-built microphone. It works similarly to Apple's Siri and the Google Assistant, except it's a fixture in your home with its own speaker and lets you control lights and appliances by voice. It plays music on demand and can even trigger Netflix, Stan and YouTube movies to play on your TV. You ask for what you want.

It also briefs you about your day. The briefing can be the weather, followed by personalised news, time for your commute to work and traffic flow. You can configure what type of information you want using the Google Home app for Apple or Android phones.

There are also features we expect with phone personal assistants. Google Home can read out your calendar entries and emails, it can set reminders and maintains a shopping list. Home can distinguish the voice of six householders, so it hopefully reads your morning briefing, calendar and email details, not your partner's or your children's.

The security around Home is not great yet. I made a recording of myself saying Google commands and it executed them. A thief could record me and access my personal details. That needs to be fixed before it is suitable for online shopping and payments by voice.

So why are big tech companies rushing into your home? The most obvious motive is e-commerce. Amazon already lets you buy some goods by asking Echo for them. You pay with a credit card that's on file.

It seems the tech giants are placing themselves at the centre of transactions in the home. That's a handy place to be in terms of commissions. And handy for snaring ad revenue too.

There are clever ideas as to how they could achieve this. In May, Amazon released details of a feature called Echo Look. It involves equipping the Echo speaker with a camera that takes photos of what you wear each day, and advises you about your "look".

Over time it can suggest fashion choices, which of course you'll be able to buy through Amazon, probably through Echo. The morning period of calm when you dress in front of a mirror is now a sales opportunity.

Take Google Home's ability to help you cook in the kitchen, operating in the US. You select your creation from more than 5 million food recipes by using Google Search on your phone (iPhone or Android), and then press the "send to Google Home" button.

That sends the recipe to Google Home which will read step-by-step instructions for you to follow in the kitchen. Many recipe sites create a shopping list of ingredients. Google too has a shopping list facility in Home, You ask Google Home to add items to it.

There's a potential for Google to offer a service where you select a recipe, and create a shopping list which Home seeks to fulfil directly with its supermarket sources. It's one of many things a device like Home could offer. But an idea for now.

When you listen to a news bulletin on Home, you hear the occasional ad. But the ad isn't courtesy of the news organisation that created the segment. It's a Google ad.

Google is offering services through Home that it could monetise down the track. For example, ask it the cost of air tickets to Los Angeles, and it will volunteer the lowest price and offer to send you emails when the price changes. That's just a step from offering to sell a ticket.

Perhaps the most powerful use will come from third party apps that interface with Home. You'll soon be able to ask Home to connect to other hot-style services. You'll be able to speak through Home to order food, book a cab, a hotel room and a tour using an easy question and answer dialogue.

Voice recognition firm Nuance Communications says it is working with local businesses wanting to provide services through Home, Echo and HomePod.

"Its use will proliferate pretty much as soon as they make these systems available in Australia," said Robert Schwarz, the managing director of Nuance in Australia and New Zealand.

There are other reasons for the big tech firms to build personal assistants. Research firm Telsa says firms like Sony and Microsoft want to add the voice assistant to their home appliances, such as fridges or microwaves.

"If you give the internet access to your fridge, you have access to your entire kitchen," Fadaghi says.

"It's the first time a particular service on these platforms," Fadaghi says.

The Weekend Australian 22-23 July 2017
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Politics, power and agency in early childhood education
16–17 February 2018
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Parents disagree on “sharenting”

According to the annual Communications Market Report by the UK’s communications watchdog, Ofcom, British parents are divided about whether it is right to post photos of one’s children to social media.

Ofcom reported that 56% of parents it surveyed said they avoided what is known as “sharenting”. Of these parents most had concerns about the privacy of under 18 year olds, 70% do not think it is OK to share images of others without permission, 36% strongly believe that personal photos should be restricted to friends and followers and 50% think it is difficult to erase images from the net after posting.

According to BBC News, an Ofcom spokesperson said that there was good news, in that over 80% of those who do share photos of their children feel confident about restricting who can see those photos, often friends and family. Just over half of the sharers said their children were happy for photos and videos of themselves to be online. However, only 15% had concerns about what their children might think about this when they grew up.

US study finds 50% of apps for children fail to protect their data

According to the Washington Post, researchers from the US based Usable Security & Privacy group at the International Computer Science Institute tested more than 5,000 of the most popular apps aimed at children under 13 and found that half of them were failing to protect data.

They reported that the apps they examined appeared to regularly send potentially sensitive information—including device serial numbers, which are often paired with location data, email addresses, and other personally identifiable information—to third-party advertisers.

This was occurring despite the fact that the US Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) prohibits website operators and app developers from tracking or collecting personal data from children under the age of 13.

The group have developed a website, AppCensus, that shows the privacy behaviors of the apps that they have tested. They hope that this website will highlight these practices so that other developers take action and ask key stakeholders in government and industry to work together to ensure that the law is properly enforced.

US standards body plans to crack down on sexist advertisements

New rules around gender stereotyping are set to be introduced after a report by the British Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), Depictions, perceptions and harm, found that advertising affects people’s expectations of how others should look or behave according to their gender.

The review examined gender stereotyping across areas including body image, objectification, sexualisation, gender characteristics and roles, and mocking people for not conforming to gender stereotypes.

The ASA will toughen rules on ads that present activities as only appropriate for one gender or another, or that mock people who do not conform to stereotypical gender roles.

It will also strengthen rules on ads that “body shame” young women after an outcry over a recent ad for a weight-loss product.

Toy promotions have a powerful influence on children

New research from Cancer Council Victoria suggests that free giveaways, like movie character toys, have a powerful influence over what kids want to eat and can even make them more likely to choose healthier options, research.

The study involved almost 1,000 Australian children between the ages of five and nine, who were offered a number of healthy and unhealthy meal choices after watching a movie trailer followed by a fast food advertisement or leisure activity. Some of the meals came with a movie character toy and some did not.

Overall the study found that children were more likely to choose fast food. But the interest in healthy meals significantly increased when a toy was offered.
