



ACMA challenges content providers

In a [new position paper](#) released on June 29, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) called on broadcasters and other professional content providers to address the expectations of today's audiences — no matter how they read, watch and listen to content.

ACMA Chair Nerida O'Loughlin (pictured) said the "paper provides our views on what Australian audiences expect when they consume media, whether that be on TV, radio, in print or online. We identify important safeguards on issues such as accuracy and impartiality, transparency of commercial interests, privacy, and dealing with highly distressing content". The executive summary says: "current codes of practice are out of date and do not cover all content available to Australian audiences," referring to the nine industry codes of practice registered by ACMA, covering and developed by associations representing different segments of the broadcasting sector. "The safeguards provided under these codes vary considerably... Many of these codes have not been updated for some years... we consider it timely for all broadcasters to consider the applicability of their current codes in the contemporary environment ... some segments of the industry are no longer fully operational or may not be adequately resourced to undertake code development processes... most current codes of practice do not apply



to online content, even when that content appears on a broadcaster's live-streamed, catch-up, or on-demand platform. Online content provided by streaming platforms such as Netflix, Stan and Disney+ are currently not subject to regulation applied to broadcasters in Australia." Urging all platforms to review/develop appropriate codes, ACMA says it has identified a range

of consistent audience expectations that include:

- Classification and content guidance – audiences expect clear and meaningful information to assist in making informed content choices for themselves and those in their care, including children
- Advertising restrictions – audiences expect content providers to exercise judgement, in line with community standards, about restricting advertisements for certain products and services

ACMA says that its guidance has been deliberately expressed in a platform-neutral manner, on the basis that all providers of professional content targeting Australian audiences should aim to adopt a common set of content safeguards, regardless of the distribution platform.

Following publication of its paper, ACMA will engage with regulated television and radio broadcasters and their representative bodies about their existing broadcasting codes, and will welcome opportunities to engage more broadly with content providers across industry.



Superhero images of masculinity: research

Superheroes are extremely popular among children worldwide, but we know little about their impact on developmental outcomes, particularly over time. [Research by Sarah Coyne et al](#) includes a five-year longitudinal study. Analyses revealed that

early superhero exposure was indirectly associated with weaker egalitarian attitudes toward women, and greater endorsement of the muscular ideal during later childhood through superhero exposure in late childhood.

Implications for individuals, parents, and media producers are discussed. Coyne et al urge parents to be aware of the messages that superhero culture may be sending to their children about hypermasculinisation and the muscular ideal.

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As the fear of COVID and strict government regulations swept across the world, adults and children alike took refuge in the safety of their homes as weeks of stay-at-home rules bled into the best part of two years. Hauled up for months on end, people turned to the marvel of technology to stay connected, employed and occupied. Many parents relaxed restrictions on screens as a stopgap way to keep frustrated, isolated children engaged and entertained. Living rooms became offices, bedrooms became classrooms and seemingly overnight the screen had permeated every aspect of many people's lives, especially our children. Almost without warning, and certainly without scaffolding or support, many children were learning and socialising almost exclusively through a screen. And in many cases, they were, quite literally, left to their own devices as parents struggled to work from home, tied to the screen themselves.

Findings from the 2020 [Royal Children's Hospital National Child Health Poll](#), unsurprisingly, showed 51% of children spent more time on screens for entertainment during the pandemic with many (42%) also spending less time being physically active. In fact, only one in 10 children got enough exercise each day. But it wasn't all bad news: positive habits were also reported, with the vast majority of children (78%) utilising digital media to stay connected with their friends and extended family. Three-quarters of parents (75%) said their child was able to learn well remotely using digital devices.

Concerns were raised about the risk of increased cyberbullying with children spending so much time online, however early research suggests this did not come to pass, and in fact [some studies showed a decrease in online bullying during remote learning](#). Fears of predators targeting children online during COVID prompted the [Australian e-safety commissioner to issue warnings and guides](#) to help parents keep their children safe.

A post pandemic world of 'tele-everything': what does the digital 'new normal' mean for our children?



As a developmental paediatrician I have seen firsthand the negative impact of problematic media use during the pandemic on the health and wellbeing of children. Two years can pass in a difficult blur for adults, but for a child it can represent a whole developmental phase or stage. Some children entered the pandemic as an infant and emerged as a pre-schooler, spending their entire 'toddlerhood' in their living room watching YouTube on an i-pad while their parents struggled to work from home. Others have gone from mid-teens to early adulthood with almost no face-to-face socialisation, turning up on site at uni for the first time, a year and a half into their degree. These experiences are developmentally significant and it is clear to most that we need to find a balance between the convenience and vast opportunities of media and technology, and the essential elements of real life interactions.

It is often said that 'change doesn't happen overnight'. But perhaps in some cases it does. As we emerge from the pandemic we are undoubtedly changed. As a society, the amplification and acceleration of our digital transformation is perhaps the greatest aspect of that, with many positives to be gleaned as digital literacy levels have skyrocketed from our youngest children through to the elderly. But as with any societal change, inequities have been highlighted, [with issues of inclusion and the digital divide](#) magnified by the pandemic. So what does this digital 'new normal' mean for our society, and especially for our children, will it be a life of 'tele-everything' and more importantly, how do we harness the good and temper the risks? I suppose we could save ourselves some effort and just 'ask google'. That's probably what my kids would do.

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UK: Canadian Professor's concerns about industry and Children's Age-appropriate Design Code

Dr Valerie Steeves of the University of Ottawa in Ottawa, Canada, who researches human rights and technology issues, [has expressed](#) her hesitation about the global push to adopt the [UK's Age Appropriate Design Code](#) and the dangers of giving children and parents limited data protection rights to manage the impact of the surveillance economy.

Dr Steeves (pictured) sees the [UK Children's Code](#) as a hopeful step in the right direction. but fears the industry will interpret some of the language of the Code in ways that weaken its



impact. (She suggests the example of [Meta's latest design initiative](#) designed to apply the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) Her research, she says, has consistently shown that it's the commercial agenda behind these apps that [creates problems for young people](#). In other words, it's the profit-driven imperatives and the need to create "sticky" apps that can collect huge amounts of data to feed into the surveillance economy that set young people up for online conflict and shut down opportunities for creative and democratic interactions.

CANADA: Introduces privacy legislation

On June 16, Canada's Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, and Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, [introduced](#) the [Digital Charter Implementation Act, 2022](#), which will significantly strengthen Canada's private sector privacy law, create new rules for the responsible development and use of artificial intelligence (AI), and continue advancing the implementation of Canada's [Digital Charter](#). The Digital Charter Implementation Act, 2022 include three proposed acts: Consumer Privacy Protection Act, Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act, and Artificial Intelligence and Data Act. It includes stronger protections for minors, by limiting organizations' right to collect or use information on minors and holding organizations to a higher standard when handling minors' information. [Read more](#)

AUS: *Bluey* wins at Prix Jeunesse and Logies

Bluey won the Category Up to 6 Fiction at this year's Prix Jeunesse, which promotes and celebrates excellence in television for young people. Children's TV programs from Germany were among the most successful (5 prizes with 2 in the main TV categories). Norwegian's children's TV won two prizes for the teen drama *Truth or Dare*. In a first, a program from Bhutan won an award, for *Dancing with Cranes*

(Gender Equity Prize). ABC Head of Children's Libbie Doherty said: "Every *Bluey* episode is created and crafted as a perfectly formed film. Each one bringing incredible moments and connections for children and audiences of all ages." *Bluey* also won a Logie for [Most Outstanding Children's Program](#), beating *Hardball* and *Dive Club*.

US: New privacy bill introduced

On June 3, House Energy and Commerce Chair Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) and Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Ranking Member Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS) released a new comprehensive federal privacy bill, the [American Data Privacy and Protection Act](#) (ADPPA).

While this Bill has some similarities to the Consumer Online Privacy Rights Act introduced in 2019 by Senators Cantwell (WA), Senators Brian Schatz (HI), Klobuchar (MN) and Markey (MA), [there are some notable differences](#). Predictably, the [industry is opposing the Bill](#), saying: "it's going to have huge negative implications on the whole internet economic model -- which will be bad for consumers and bad for businesses". Venable attorney Stuart Ingis, advisor to the industry coalition Privacy for America, told MediaPost: "what's more, the bill would allow consumers to opt out of receiving targeted ads - even if those same consumers previously opted in to tracking."

US: FTC head to tackle children's privacy

The head of [the Federal Trade Commission](#) Lina Khan says the agency is pushing a robust agenda of actions and policies [to help safeguard](#) children's privacy online. The work will include toughened enforcement of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act [COPPA], long-standing law governing kids' online privacy, and eyeing the algorithms used by social media platforms targeting young people. "Children's privacy is enormously important and we want to make sure we're doing everything we can ... to vigorously protect children's privacy and protect them from data abuses," said Lina Khan, who has led the consumer-protection agency for a year.

US: Senators applaud passage of research bill

Senators Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) and Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) and Reps Jamie Raskin (MD-08) and Anthony Gonzalez (OH-16), co-leads of the Children and Media Research Advancement Act, released the [following statement](#) on June 22, after the Bill's passage in the House of Representatives. "CAMRA would direct the National Institutes of Health to develop a comprehensive research program that explores how technology and media use affects children's development, health and wellness."