



INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE SAFETY

On December 2, the Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced that a House Joint Select Committee had been appointed to conduct an inquiry into Social Media and Online Safety. The Committee would be required to present its final report on or before 15 February 2022. After tabling the final report the committee would cease to exist. 61 submissions addressing the terms of reference were received by the due date 12 January 2022. Seven public hearings were conducted between Dec 21 and Jan 28. Transcripts of these can be found [here](#).



While some submissions considered harms to adults, a significant number of submissions saw the need to put the focus of the Inquiry on to harms to children. ACCM said: *The chief aim of the ACCM submission to this inquiry is to provide input relevant to children’s uses of social media and online technologies. While social media have profound implications for people of all ages, and indeed for society as a whole, ACCM believes that this inquiry should ensure that its processes and methodology create space for a specific focus on children’s needs and interests throughout. This would be consistent with the Commonwealth’s obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as recently elaborated in General Comment 25 on Children’s Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment (2021).*

Many were concerned about the well recognised harms to children from cyberbullying and from sexual predators. Others including [ACCM \(submission 56\)](#), [Reset Australia \(submission 12\)](#) and the [Alannah and Madeline Foundation \(submission 2\)](#) presented evidence of the harms from the invasion of children’s privacy and from unwelcome targeted marketing by Big Tech. One of the harms to children from online interactions comes from apps that engage children in simulated gambling behaviour. A recent [ABC TV news](#) story raised valid concerns in this regard (22/1/22). So many potential harms and so little time to fully explore. See Editorial p2.



THE PERILS OF POPULAR REPORTING OF RESEARCH STUDIES

CTV News Canada [ran a story](#) in January headed “European study finds action video games can help a child’s reading ability”. Now a lot of claims have been made for the benefits of action/violent video games, as well as for their lack of harm, often on the basis of one or two studies, and sometimes from only one or two authors. That’s always a risky strategy when dealing with social science: what really counts is research over time from many authors who publish converging findings (eg in the field of the impact of violent media). It’s also useful to find the original study and see what it actually says. This study was published in [Nature Jan 2022](#).

In this case, what ACCM’s reviewer found was that: *the game used was not a commercial or typical action game, it was purpose built to scaffold higher cognitive functions throughout and contained no violence. In other words, it was designed to foster cognitive skills that underpin reading and it is no surprise that it did so. What is amazing is that such a small study (N=150), and one that is not representative of action games more widely, got published in Nature. No doubt some will spruik the headline that action video games can help a child’s reading ability even though it is totally misleading. There is NO evidence presented that commercially available action games (most of which are repetitive, use a limited range of cognitive skills, are often violent, and are well demonstrated to be linked with cognitive deficits in many key areas) can help reading. Most likely they hinder it.*

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Editorial: Why the Rush?



BARBARA BIGGINS OAM
Honorary CEO
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The inquiry being conducted by the [House Joint Select Committee into Social media and online safety](#) is a really important inquiry and the issues are worthy of detailed and full examination.

The Federal Government has made this difficult by setting a short deadline and conducting the inquiry at a time of year when Australia goes on holidays. On Dec 1, Parliament appointed a House Joint Select Committee to conduct the Inquiry. The inquiry was announced by the Prime Minister on Dec 2, and Chair, Mrs Lucy Wicks, appointed on 9 December. Documentation took a while to appear online, submissions to the Inquiry closed on Jan 12, and the Committee must report by February 15. This seems like an almost impossible timeframe in which to do this complex topic justice.

As the UK 5Rights group said to the UK government in [June 2021](#):

The problems children face from the digital world are systemic. They are not restricted to technical bugs or bad actors but are also present in the features and architecture of the products and services on which children rely for access to education, health, entertainment, civic engagement and to manage their relationships with family and friends. In a commercially driven environment, children are routinely presented with information, behaviours and pressures inappropriate to their evolving developmental capacity. They are introduced to unknown adults, nudged to make in-game purchases, targeted by sexualised content, bombarded with targeted advertising and misinformation, and subjected to invasive, extractive data gathering.

The normalising of services designed by and for adults creates an environment that is beyond children's development capacities, which is difficult to navigate and exposes children to a wide range of systemic risks.

Because the risks to children in the online environment are complex, it's useful to have a systematic way of examining them and associated responsibilities. A taxonomy of online risks has been devised by Sonia Livingstone and Mariya Stoilova (2021). This 4 Cs classification recognises that online risks arise when a child:

- engages with and/or is exposed to potentially harmful CONTENT
- experiences and/or is targeted by potentially harmful CONTACT
- witnesses, participates in and/or is a victim of potentially harmful CONDUCT
- is party to and/or exploited by a potentially harmful CONTRACT

ACCM is reminded of the undue haste with which this government in 2020 conducted a review of Australia's National Classification Scheme. The timing was also similar. Despite assuring ACCM a few weeks earlier that it would not call that inquiry over the Christmas/New Year period when so many involved in children's care and welfare and families would be on holidays or preoccupied with children's needs, the government opened submissions on Jan 8 and closed them on Feb 19.

ACCM hopes that when the recommendations from the present Select Committee Inquiry are provided to the government on Feb 15, they meet a better fate than those of that Classification Review. Two years on there's been no public report and no appearance of any action to improve the Classification Scheme. ■

WE KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILD'S APP DID LAST SUMMER!

Too many popular children's apps are gathering and onselling your child's personal data. It's hard to know which apps these are, and this puts your child at risk. Help is at hand. ACCM has partnered with the US research agency AppCensus and Macquarie University to provide a range of new privacy resources and checks.

The resources include a regularly updated list of top 50 Android apps played by children in Australia that have had AppCensus privacy checks to identify app data collection activity.

Here's where to go: <https://childrenandmedia.org.au/appreviews/apps-can-trap-tracking>



ADVERTISING

Abbasi, A.Z; Rehman, U; Ting, D.H; Quraishi, M.A.

Do pop-up ads in online videogames influence children's inspired-to behaviour?

Young Consumers, Dec 2021

Shen, S; Mackay, S; Lee, A; Mhurchu, C.N; Sherif, A; Eyles, H.

Impact of a voluntary industry code for advertising food to children and young people: an analysis of New Zealand television data.

Public Health Nutrition, Dec 2021

Srivastava, R; Gupta, P.

Research on unhealthy food and beverages advertising targeting children: Systematic literature review and directions for future research.

Australian Journal of Management, Nov 2021

Bragg, M; Lutfeali, S; Greene, T; Osterman, J; Dalton, M.

How food marketing on Instagram shapes adolescents' food preferences: online randomized trial.

Journal Of Medical Internet Research, Oct 22 2021, Vol. 23 (10)

Zheng, X; Lin, H.C.

How does online e-cigarette advertisement promote youth's e-cigarettes use? The mediating roles of social norm and risk perceptions.

Health Communication, Dec 2021.

Escalon, H; Courbet, D; Julia, C; Srour, B; Hercberg, S; Serry, A.J.

Exposure of French children and adolescents to advertising for foods high in fat, sugar or salt.

Nutrients, Nov 2021, Vol. 13 (11)

Archbold, L; Clifford, D; Paterson, M; Richardson, M; Witzleb, N.

AdTech and children's data rights.

University Of New South Wales Law Journal, Sep 2021, Vol. 44 (3) 857-877

BODY IMAGE

Nesi, J; Choukas-Bradley, S; Maheux, A.J; Roberts, S.R; Sanzari, C.M; Widman, L; Prinstein, M.J.

Selfie appearance investment

and peer feedback concern: multimethod investigation of adolescent selfie practices and adjustment.

Psychology Of Popular Media, Oct 2021 VI 10 (4) 488-499

CYBERBULLYING

Spears, B.A; Taddeo, C; Ey, L.A.

Using participatory design to inform cyber/bullying prevention and intervention practices: Evidence-Informed insights and strategies.

Journal Of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools, Dec 2021, Vol. 31 (2) 159-171

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Shoshani, A; Nelke, S; Girtler, I.

Tablet applications as socializing platforms: The effects of prosocial touch screen applications on young children's prosocial behavior.

Computers In Human Behavior, Feb 2022, Vol. 127

PROBLEMATIC GAMING AND INTERNET USE

Jeong, H; Yim, H.W; Lee, SY; Lee, H.K; Potenza, M.N; Shin, Y.

Preschool exposure to online games and internet gaming disorder in adolescents: a cohort study.

Frontiers In Pediatrics, Nov 23 2021, Vol. 9

Kamasak, T; Topbas, M; Ozen, N; Esenulku, G; Yildiz, N; Sahin, S; Arslan, E.A; Cil, E; Kart, P.O; Cansu, A.

An investigation of changing attitudes and behaviors and problematic internet use in children aged 8 to 17 years during the covid-19 pandemic.

Clinical Pediatrics, Dec 2021

Rashi, A; Rita, K; Poonam, P.

Adverse effect of social media addiction on life effectiveness of adolescents: an approach towards mental health and mood modifications.

Journal of Pharmaceutical Research International, 2021, Vol. 33 (52a) 206-220

SCREEN USE

Ramirez, S; Gana, S; Garces, S; Zuniga, T; Araya, R; Gaete, J.

Use of technology and its association with academic performance and life satisfaction among children and adolescents.

Frontiers In Psychiatry, Nov 11 2021, Vol. 12

Glover, J; Ariefdjohan, M; Fritsch, S.L.

#KidsAnxiety and the digital world.

Child And Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America, Jan 2022, Vol. 31 (1) 71-90

Ehrenreich, S.E; George, M.J; Burnell, K; Underwood, M.K.

Importance of digital communication in adolescents' development: theoretical and empirical advancements in the last decade.

Journal Of Research on Adolescence, Dec 2021, Vol. 31 (4) 928-943

SLEEP

Werneck, A.O; Hoare, E; Silva, D.R.

Do TV viewing and frequency of ultra-processed food consumption share mediators in relation to adolescent anxiety-induced sleep disturbance?

Public Health Nutrition, Nov 2021 Vol. 24 (16) 5491-5497

VIDEO GAMES

Vilasis-Pamos, J; Pires, F.

How do teens define what it means to be a gamer? Mapping teens' video game practices and cultural imaginaries from a gender and sociocultural perspective.

Information Communication & Society, Feb 2021

Bushman, BJ; Anderson, C.A.

Solving the puzzle of null violent media effects.

Psychology of Popular Media, Sep 2021

WORLD DATA PRIVACY DAY JAN 28

[Data Privacy Day](#) reminds us to treat personal information like money. It has value and we need to protect it as if our lives depended on it because sometimes they do.

Canada marks the occasion with a [free, online webcast](#) on from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 (a.m. EDT), hosted by Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner, Patricia Kosseim, entitled *Children and Youth in a Digital World: Empowering a New Generation of Digital Citizens*.

US | BANNING SURVEILLANCE ADVERTISING ACT, AIMS TO PROTECT CHILDREN'S PRIVACY

New Bill could put tighter restrictions on how advertisers use our online information to create targeted advertising. Read more [here](#).

Courtesy: Media Post

US | BIG TECH BEING ATTACKED BY THEIR OWN.

Regulators around the world are trying to rein in Big Tech, but the companies in the spotlight are [increasingly eager](#) to point out their competitors' sins.

Courtesy: Axios.com

US | VR HEADSETS THREATEN CHILDREN'S PRIVACY

Meta's (formerly facebook) Oculus virtual reality (VR) headset like Quest 2 was a popular gift for Christmas and its companion app was the most-downloaded app in the U.S. It's reported that the app's popularity has not decreased and it has been downloaded over 2 million times since. Some cybersecurity experts are voicing [potential privacy concerns](#).

Courtesy: Media Post

UK | AGE ASSURANCE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

How do they know it is a child? The 5Rights Foundation has continued its publication of very useful papers on privacy issues. Read this report [here](#).

Courtesy: 5Rights Foundation, UK

NZ | HARMFUL BRANDING

Kiwi children are being exposed to a brand almost every minute, research has found – a “concerning” amount of which is harmful advertising. Read more [here](#).

Courtesy: Stuff.co.nz

MEXICO | GETTING SERIOUS ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Mexico is getting serious about childhood obesity. [Officials seized 380,000 boxes of Kellogg's cereals](#) last week because they have cartoons or mascots on them in violation of recent laws preventing the marketing of allegedly unhealthy products to children.

Courtesy: Food Processing, Industry magazine

SWITZERLAND | NESTLE POLICY ON ADS TO KIDS

Nestle commits to no advertising to children under 6 and advertising to 6-13 years may not include “sweet and savory biscuits; sugar confectionery; chocolate confectionery; water-based beverage products with added sugars; ice-cream products.” Read more [here](#).

Courtesy: Market Screener

UK | NHS APP TO HELP PARENTS MAKE HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES

A [new feature](#) on the NHS Food Scanner App has been launched to show families how to make healthier food and drink swaps in a bid to tackle childhood obesity.

Courtesy: Nurseryworld.co.uk

UK | UNBOXING BY INFLUENCERS

Whereas previously toy marketers would vie for an advertising spot on Saturday morning cartoons, data analytics show that they are [re-allocating their marketing funds](#) to social media. In 2021, securing a coveted spot on the 'Best-selling' toy list depended largely on whether the right influencer is promoting it.

Courtesy: LSE Parenting for a Digital Future

NETHERLANDS | THE ASSOCIATIONS OF ACTIVE AND PASSIVE SOCIAL MEDIA USE WITH WELL-BEING

[This review](#) investigates the validity

of the recurring claim in the literature that active social media use (ASMU) leads to increases in well-being, whereas passive social media use (PSMU) leads to decreases in well-being.

Courtesy: Sage Journals

US | CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT THE CONTENT AND CONSEQUENCES OF MEDIA VIOLENCE

The findings of [this qualitative study](#) of early adolescents' critical thinking about the content and consequences of media violence suggest that although most members of the sample readily noticed violent depictions in media texts and could critique the manner in which violence is depicted, relatively few expressed either surprise or concern about those depictions.

Courtesy: Journal of Media Literacy Education.

CANADA | A STUDY OF CHILDREN'S SCREEN USE DURING COVID

[This longitudinal study](#) of 4 cohorts and 2026 children found that children with higher levels of screen use had significantly higher levels of mental health symptoms during the COVID-19 pandemic compared with children with lower levels of screen use.

Courtesy: Jama Network

AUSTRALIA | SECOND REVIEW OF MEDIA CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

The [2021 survey](#) shows that online subscription services are on par with commercial free-to-air television as the most popular way for Australian adults to watch screen content.

Courtesy: Australian Government

AUSTRALIA | SAFETY SPACETALK WATCH FOR KIDS GOES TO US

[This Australian product](#) combines a cellular 4G phone with a GPS device into a rugged smartwatch for kids. Safety features include SOS alerts, Safe Zones, Safe Contact lists, GPS location finding, and no-open access to the internet or social media.

Courtesy: Markets Insider