Television and young children

Quality, choice and the role of parents: what the experts and parents say

Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth

The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)

ARACY is a national non-profit organisation of more than 1700 members, working to create a future in which Australia's children and young people thrive and their wellbeing is a national priority.

Despite Australia being a wealthy developed country, many aspects of health and wellbeing of our young people have been declining. We aim to reverse these trends by preventing and addressing complex problems affecting children and young people in this country.

ARACY collaborates with policy makers, practitioners working in the field and researchers from a broad range of disciplines. We share knowledge and foster evidence-based solutions.

Contact us

If you have enquiries about this report, please contact ARACY via enquiries@aracy.org.au

ABN: 68 100 902 92

ISBN: 978-1-921352-92-8

Television and young children

Quality, choice and the role of parents: what the experts and parents say

Prepared by:

the Australian Council on Children and the Media
for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth

November 2011

The 'Young children and the Media' project

Children's exposure to media during their early years can have long-term implications for their cognitive development and future media use. While new forms of media become available at an increasing rate, television remains the most used.

The 'Young children and the Media' project aims to provide parents/carers with information and resources to help them make informed choices to ensure that their young child's media experience is a positive one. This includes information on the effects of media on young children aged between 2 and 8 and what type of content is developmentally appropriate for children.

Further information on the Young Children and the Media project is available on the ARACY website www.aracy.org.au

About this report

This report, produced by the Australian Council on Children and the Media, is in two parts:

1. A literature review examining the views of experts and the industry on quality television for young children
2. Parents' views on television for young children: findings of focus groups and an online survey

About the authors

The Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM) has as its core business, the ongoing collection and review of research on children's use of media.

A national community not-for-profit organisation, it has a respected track record in actively promoting the provision of a healthy viewing environment for children, andsupporting parents and carers with relevant information and strategies.

The team which producedthis report included Barbara Biggins OAM, Margaret Chandler, Lesley Ey, Elizabeth Trickett, Catherine Opitz, with consultant Dr C. Glenn Cupit.

Summary

What is quality children's television?

Quality children's television, as defined on the basis of international analysis:

Quality children's television… is life-enhancing, age-appropriate and engaging.

- is life-enhancing, age appropriate and engaging
- is respectful of the needs of children as developing individuals, rather than targeting them for commercial or other ends
- enhances individual development in cognitive, social, cultural, aesthetic and physical domains, and imparting skills supportive of mental and physical health
- presents material in terms of structure, complexity, pace and content that is comprehensible but challenging for a child audience, and introduces children to a variety of genres, especially narrative forms
- encourages active engagement with the social and physical world as opposed to passive reception of material
- promotes development of skills of problem solving and negotiation in interpersonal relationships
- espouses values that are inclusive, in the sense of allowing both boys and girls to see themselves as active participants in valued pursuits, and showing diverse cultures in a positive light
- depicts authentic accounts of children's own cultural environment
- provides a balance of material that is educational and entertaining
- protects children from harm by excluding images and themes that are violent, provoke fear or anxiety, or are inappropriately sexual
- actively promotes non violence
- embodies the highest aesthetic and technical production standards.

Industry perceptions of quality

Comparative studies show that countries with a commitment in law and practice to public service broadcasting have a disproportionately large share of first-rate children's programming (Palmer 1988). European producers emphasise aesthetic and general cultural commitments. They do not avoid difficult topics, but give a child's perspective. They also emphasise attention to creative integrity and technical detail. In the US, producers vary in their commitment to educational goals and public broadcasting is responsible for most quality programming.

Australia shows a similar concentration of quality production in publicly funded television, but commitment to this aim by the national broadcaster is limited by funding constraints. Commercial providers have often resisted government regulation of children's programming and argued that commercial concerns and the need to sell programs to overseas markets dictate certain content decisions. Pay TV has demonstrated a desire to provide approriate programming, but is limited in local sources.

What parents need to know

Parents need to be informed about the developmental needs of their children and about the way in which TV viewing may affect development in the broadest sense. What constitutes an appropriate program for children depends partly on parents' own values, but also requires an understanding of the psychological impact of the medium. How TV viewing affects children is not always obvious, and research reveals that viewing may have both positive and negative outcomes. Content needs to be screened for developmental appropriateness as well as for its cultural and aesthetic values and for its potential to cause harm by undue focus on themes or images that provoke fear and anxiety, provide inappropriate sexual content or encourage habits that are personally or socially destructive.

However, parents also need to be aware of the richness and variety of content that might potentially be available. Their current concerns about TV viewing, formed on the basis of impoverished programming, do not reflect the potential of TV to promote educational goals and positive social values and to provide cultural richness to young children.

Concerns about TV viewing… do not reflect the potential of TV to promote educational goals and positive social values and to provide cultural richness to young children.

What parents want

Australian parents who participated in a national online survey and/or focus groups (in South Australia and Victoria) about children's television viewing identified indices of quality similar to those defined by international researchers. They want programs that are locally made. They would like to see stories, both traditional and new, that encourage children to develop as individuals and as social beings in our particular culture. They value programs that respect children and support their total development, encourage good social relationships, and promote physical activity, inquiry, problem solving, artistic pursuits, and positive moral qualities. They would like to see programs that value gentleness and caring in interpersonal relationships, place a positive value on education and on knowledge of science and nature, and are simultaneously fun and active, engaging children in dance, music, art and craft. They would like to see less programming that displays excessive violence, views children as consumers, and either wittingly or unwittingly encourages premature sexualisation.

Parents would like dedicated children's viewing uninterrupted by advertisements.

To assist them in providing appropriate viewing for their children, parents would like dedicated children's viewing uninterrupted by advertisements. While pay television channels ('Pay TV') provide dedicated children's programming, this has been available only to a limited audience. The advent of ABC channels dedicated to children's viewing makes the contrast with commercial offerings even more clear than previously. Parents would especially like children's viewing to be guaranteed to be free of violent and distressing themes and images, and to help children discover a supportive cultural framework in which to learn skills like self control, respecting and caring for others, and being independent problem solvers.

Having classification information on screen and available if desired during, rather than only at the beginning of, the program would assist parents in choosing appropriate viewing for their children in a convenient and more reliable manner than is currently available.

Contents

Part 1. Literature review

1 What is quality TV for children?

1.1 Introduction

There is an ongoing debate about the impact of mass media on children's learning and development. This debate covers all areas of media including television, advertising, marketing, cinema, children's magazines, video games and the Internet.

Despite the availability of new forms of media, many young children spend more time with television than with other media. (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2005, Royal Children's Hospital 2009, ACMA 2007). This is why the quality of TV programs young children are viewing is regularly under public scrutiny both in Australia and internationally.

Quality TV programs can stimulate a child's imagination, open up a window to the world and provide positive enjoyment.

TV has the potential to deliver benefits for children. Quality TV programs can stimulate a child's imagination, open up a window to the world and provide positive enjoyment (Edgar & Edgar 2008).

Many commentators are concerned that quality, pro-social content is not being delivered to children, that it is being lost in the ongoing search for commercial profits to be made from marketing to the child audience (Crossfield 2008, Edgar 2006). They question whether such commercially driven content is beneficial to children, and whether as a consequence diversity of program type and 'life-affirming stories that could help them develop into socially integrated human beings' are being lost (Edgar 2006).

This review examines:

- international views about what constitutes quality TV for the young child audience
- the industry's perceptions of quality
- whether there is a useful distinction to be made between programs that educate and those that entertain
- threats to the provision of quality programs for children.

1.2 Characteristics of a quality children's program: subject matter, style and content of quality programs

This section of this review outlines the views of 12 international reviewers and commentators about what constitutes 'quality' programs for young children. These reviews and reports were chosen because they represented a range of opinion over time, demonstrated cultural diversity, had wide experience or significant research credentials, or considered an unusual facet of quality.

1. Edward L Palmer (1988). Dr. Palmer shared in founding the Children's Television Workshop (CTW) and *Sesame Street*, becoming Vice President of Research at CTW for 19 years. While there, he played a role in the creation of *The Electric Company*, a children's TV series on reading; *3-2-1 Contact*, a children's TV series on science; and numerous overseas adaptations of *Sesame Street*.

In his book *Television and America's children*, Palmer's examination of the list of winners of the prestigious Prix Jeunesse International awards for excellence in children's television productions revealed that those countries with a commitment in law and practice to public service broadcasting had a disproportionately large share of first-rate children's programming.

How well can a TV show help a child understand the mysterious world outside– and the equally mysterious world within?

In examining this concept of 'first rate' Palmer proposes that one underlying criterion appears above all others: a quality program is defined in terms of the extent to which it 'meets the diverse real needs of children. A good program must exist *through and for* its audience'. He asks 'How well can a TV show help a child understand the mysterious world outside – and the equally mysterious world within? And, not to be forgotten, How does it help a child to enjoy themselves' (p. 79).

He lists elements common to prize-winning programs, such as:

- children in key initiating roles; facing up to life's torments; taking off on imaginative flights of fancy; discovering compassionate feelings; showing pluck and resilience in face of defeats
- a quest for beauty; the strength to right a wrong; the will to prevail for justice; to see and respect perspectives which differ from one's own; to be self-reliant and resourceful; to know that whatever pain one may experience, others have known it, shared it, and care about it.

Palmer laments that these values are rarely expressed in US children's programs. He argues that "as a healer, television allows children to experience a broad range of responses to all of life's experiences, whether joyous or

troubling". He says "that is itself a vision of quality: the ability of television to do things that parents and educators sometimes cannot. TV can be a marvellous instrument of compassion, able to meet the vital needs of children in a unique way' (p. 81).

2. Amy Beth Jordan (1997). Jordan is Director of the Media and the Developing Child Sector at the Annenberg Public Policy Centre, University of Pennsylvania. Her research is on the role of media in the lives of children and their families.

Jordan identified the following characteristics for quality children's television:

- entertainment value
- high production value
- curriculum based programming – a set of goals for the show that inform the story, ideas and script
- advisory panels and boards (so that collectively people can determine what quality is)
- an extensive generative process that in addition to advisory boards, includes research that brings children into the decision making process; getting a report card for whether you are educating children or not; community outreach that tries to get localised use of your program to give it maximum impact
- programming that enhances children's development outside of the viewing situation, because too much of television is to capture what children do rather than also enhance what they do when they are finished watching the program
- programming that is age appropriate
- programming that includes positive messages and lessons, such as how to get along with others and how to be healthy and safe
- programming that excludes negative messages such as violence, stereotyped views of others and degradation of women.

3. Alison Alexander (1998). Alexander is Professor and Head of the Department of Telecommunications University of Georgia. Her research was assisted by PhD candidates Keisha Hoerrner and Lisa Duke.

These researchers undertook a study to examine what constitutes quality children's programs in the context of the Peabody awards in the US (annually judged productions across a variety of media). Starting with the premise that

quality children's television is commonly defined as 'educational' and 'pro-social' because of the success of programs such as Sesame Street, the authors set out to formulate a definition beyond that. They asked what the characteristics of a quality program are and what claims this group of industry professionals makes about quality in the period 1948 to 1995.

They came up with six measures of quality programs for children:

- Excellence in instruction — such as the program's ability to teach children life lessons, encourage cultural and other diversity, demonstrate social skills, and introduce cognitive components such as math, science, reading, geography, world events, and other classroom skills. This category also included teaching about sensitive issues such as child abuse and AIDS.
- Excellence in general program characteristics — programs that, as a whole, were inspiring, entertaining, made learning fun and were innovative.
- Excellence in production — where the focus was on the technological aspects rather than content, such as technical qualities of music, writing, camera work, visuals, graphics, animation, or acting.
- Age appropriateness — including consideration by producers of the concerns of parents and educators about this aspect of programming, and its relevance to problems and abilities of a specific age group.
- Acclaim or impact — related to those programs that created outcomes, were publicly praised and discussed and even rebroadcast to reach more children.
- Prestigious participants — the involvement of 'big names' that bring skills and talent together to create quality programs.

4 . Maya Gotz (2007). Gotz is the Head of the International Central Institute of Youth and Educational Television, Germany, and Editor of the journal Televizion.

Gotz examined some basic practical rules for producing quality age-appropriate television for preschool children:

- Allow plenty of time for empathising and understanding.
- Make acting characters the focal point on the screen.
- Portray situations and subject matter that preschool children are familiar with from their everyday life.
- Narrate chronologically (ie without flashbacks) and always show the most important aspects of the story on the screen.

- If formal elements of artistic style are employed, do so only in a contextualised manner.
- Explain emotions rather than implicitly assuming them.

5. Patricia Edgar (2007). Edgar was the founding Director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation, and the first Chair of the Children's Program Committee of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal.

Edgar states that the key elements of quality programs for Australian children include stories with three-dimensional characters, showing the diversity of social groups in Australia, imperfect heroes and adults, characters resolving conflict and experiences, and a gender balance in lead characters. She says that quality programs need to demonstrate the complexity of situations and decisions, and address ethical issues like anger and the consequences of violence and challenging gender stereotypes. Her often stated belief is that programs such as these would inspire children to be adventurous and encourage their involvement in life and activities, while helping them to recognise their capacity for making change. She suggests quality children's programs need a curriculum so that they are educational as well as entertaining. (Edgar 2007)

A year earlier, Edgar argued that children's media should focus on storytelling, 'the most powerful means by which a culture understands itself and represents itself to the world outside … an extensive research literature shows the power of storytelling in acquiring basic communication skills, structuring the language, transmitting important cultural values, and learning how to solve problems'. (Edgar 2006)

Media should focus on storytelling.

6. Lothar Mikos (2009). Mikos is the Professor of TV Studies at the Konrad Wolf Academy of Film and TV Germany.

For Mikos, quality in children's programs depends on the program type and the program's 'usefulness to children' through its capacity to foster their learning and development. He argues that aesthetic and dramatic qualities are important for the formation of media literacy. Through this, children develop awareness about narrative structures, typical plot schemata and configurations of characters — all influencing the way in which children's minds interact with programs and films. He also suggests that the programs children watch influence their social skills. For example, a program may provoke conversation among children's peers or inspire children to role-play their favourite characters even if the dramatic constructs and technical components are mediocre. In view of the influence that TV viewing has on children's learning and development, it is essential that producers and broadcasters consider the content and messages children may construct.

Mikos suggests that what counts in relation to quality programs depends on the viewer's perspective and that 'quality' may refer to aspects of the program rather the program as a whole. He argues that because quality can be difficult to define and depends on the perspective of the person making the evaluation, public discussion needs to be fostered and be ongoing to ensure quality children's television is continuously negotiated. However, representing children's perspectives is essential. (See also Cupit 1987; Fürst 2009; Wallmark 2009)

7. Siegmund Grewenig (2009). Grewenig is Head of the TV program group Entertainment family and children, Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Germany.

Grewenig identified 10 criteria for quality children's programs. Quality programs:

- reflect children's own life environment — their own culture and everyday experiences
- make it fun — programs should be entertaining, as television is for adults
- provide good role models.
- show children the world and astonish them — for example, the microscopic world
- give children information — present complex situations in a way that makes it easy to understand, such as in children's news programs
- teach children something — make learning fun
- appeal to children aesthetically — make programs innovative
- create events — foster conversation or create an event in the child's life among their peers
- are accessible — programs that address children at their level are important, as are programs linked to Internet sites and opportunities for them to ask questions and meet presenters or characters
- motivate and mobilise children — make children aware of opportunities to participate in their community such as local sports.

Quality programs…show children the world and astonish them.

8. Televizion, No 22, 2009 Special issue: 'What is quality in children's television?'

Editor Maya Gotz gathered viewpoints from academics and practitioners who examined the question of quality children's television from different angles. The contributions of Mikos and Grewenig are included above at 6 and 7. The perspectives of three other contributors to this special issue are summarised below.

8.1 Norbert Neuss, Professor at the Institute for School Pedagogics at Justus-Liebig University, Germany, believes that quality in content can be achieved by focusing on children's developmental themes and finding appropriate forms of narration for them. He points out that the ages from 2 to 12 years span the most diverse stages of children's cognitive, emotional and social development; and that one must relate children's perceptual abilities and the topics that guide their behaviour to the appropriate genre of television. This would have consequences for technical production, dramatic structure and language, and result in program production appropriate to the age group.

8.2 Peter Lemish, independent researcher, argues that conflict resolution is the basis of quality TV. He says that conflict is one of the most pervasive, pivotal structures in nearly all media products as it is in real life. He shows that conflict should not be synonymous with violence and that, through plot structure and character portrayal, young viewers can be shown non-violent solutions to the sorts of conflict they experience in everyday life, and that they can assume responsibility and advance change for themselves and others.

8.3 Astrid Plenk, Editor and animator with broadcaster RTL2 in Munich, Germany, argues that children are very competent critics of the quality of programs. They begin with subject matter: they demand a comprehensible dramatic structure and authentic characters. Plenk says "children want emotions, which above all, will give them goose pimples or make them laugh"… "Content takes precedence over form"…. "There are also programmes by which boys and girls are so captivated that they find it difficult to express their enthusiasm in words" …Sometimes [having seen a short animation film] they can only say "I've never seen anything like that!!"" (Plenk p25) .

9. International Convention on the Rights of the Child

This Convention requires that signatories (of which Australia is one) undertake to bring their legislation into line with its statements. Article 17 is relevant to a discussion of quality. It states:

> *Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. To this end, States Parties shall:*
>
> *(a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;*
>
> *(b) Encourage international co-operation in the production of, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;*
>
> *(c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;*
>
> *(d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;*
>
> *(e) Ensure the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being.*

10. Australian Communications and Media Authority (2009)

In Australia, the Children's Television Standards (CTS), impose certain programming obligations on commercial broadcasters, including quotas of quality programs. The Standards were first introduced in 1977, and contain criteria for assessing quality children's programs which, though they have had minor revisions on a number of occasions, have basically stood the test of time.

The Explanatory Memoranda to the Standards state that the purpose of the Standards is to:

1. provide for the protection of children from possible harmful effects of television
2. provide for children to be specifically catered for in programming, including Australian programming.

The Standards therefore recognise that children need protection from certain types of programming but also that children must be able to access appropriate quality programming.

Under the Standards, a C (Children's) or P (Preschoolers) program must:

- be made specifically for children or groups of children
- be entertaining
- be well produced using sufficient resources to ensure a high standard of script, cast, direction, editing, shooting, sound and other production elements
- enhance a child's understanding and experience, and
- be appropriate for Australian children.

The CTS not only provide the criteria for quality children's and preschool children's programs, they also state that 'a program must comply with the CTS 2 criteria to be eligible to obtain a P or C classification'. The CTS define children as 'people younger than 14 years of age' (p.5), and preschool children as 'children who have not yet started school' (p 6).

The requirements of the CTS apply only to the quality quotas on commercial TV: 260 hours per year or 5 hours per week for C programs, and 130 hours per year or half an hour per week day for P programs. On Australian commercial TV, therefore, there is a limited number of program hours per week that can be considered to be age- and culture-appropriate, entertaining, life enhancing, and well produced for children.

Other children's programs are offered on the three ABC channels, on Pay TV, and on commercial free-to-air channels, but these are not subject to the ACMA quality assessment process.

1.3 Industry perceptions of quality programs

International research (as noted earlier) has found that those countries with a commitment in law and practice to public service broadcasting had a disproportionately large share of first-rate children's programming (Palmer 1988).

In one study, producers of programs recognised as quality programs for children across Europe and the US were asked their views on how they achieved quality. Jan Willem Bult (KRO The Netherlands) said that to reach [this] level of quality you have to put the child and its competencies in the middle and the focus should be on maintaining contact with the audience (Bult p.10–11). Ragna Wallmark (UR Sweden) said producers should not avoid problematic topics, but try to see them through children's eyes, and to give children a voice (Wallmark p.11). Kalle Furst (NRK Norway) said that children find other children on the screen fascinating; that TV should show real kids in everyday situations — in happiness and in sorrow — and should allow children to be visible in the media (Furst p11–12). Josh Selig (Little Airplane Productions US) says that creative integrity and attention to detail matter, as does attention to the audience for whom the program is being made (Gotz 2009 p.12)

Producers should not avoid problematic topics, but try to see them through children's eyes, and to give children a voice.

The Children's Television Workshop in the US has maintained a high standard of excellence in program research and production, but its programs are mainly shown on the community-funded Public Broadcasting Service. Wainwright (2006), in her report for the PBS Children's Media Center (US), cited Sesame Street as an exemplar of quality effective educational programming.

When examining Australian industry perspectives, there is little literature to be found on what commercial children's TV producers consider to constitute quality.

There has been a long history of antagonism from the commercial TV industry to the imposition of the Children's Television Standards 'C' quality quotas since they were introduced in 1979, with claims of censorship, hindering the creative process, poor ratings and denying shift workers the right to see programs at 4pm. (Edgar 2006, pp. 76-86)

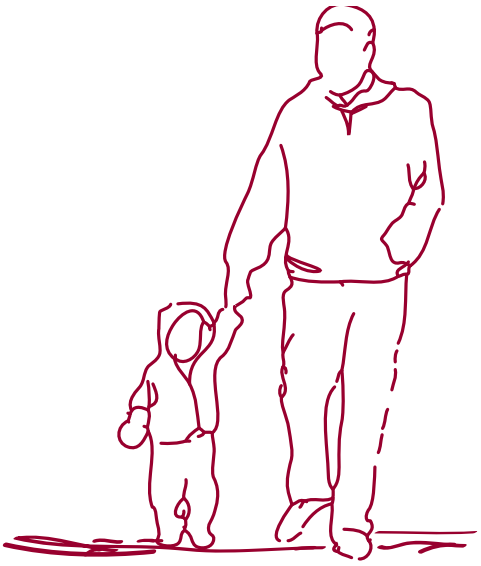
In 1984-5 the industry body, the Federation of Commercial TV Stations (FACTS), and ultimately the Herald Sun TV Pty Ltd (SEVEN), took the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal to the High Court to challenge the validity of the Children's Television Standards. The company network won, and the government of the day was forced to amend the Broadcasting Services Act to ensure that it had the right to impose legally binding standards in the area of children's television (Edgar 2006, p. 162).

Since that time — though the Australian system for promoting quality production has been lauded by others overseas (Palmer 1988, p. 148) — the commercial industry has largely just tolerated the quota system. Edgar memorably described the industry as putting more creativity into fighting the requirements than into their programs for children (Australian Broadcasting Tribunal 1982)

Over time, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal put considerable effort into supporting the industry with information about making age-appropriate quality programming, for example with C. Glenn Cupit's guide The Child Audience (Cupit 1987).

Cupit provided expert advice related to children's development and making age-appropriate (in terms of perspective and direction) programs:

> *In relation to children's development, it is important to consider how children think and how they comprehend images and story lines when producing quality children's programs. As children develop cognitively, their interests change, their understanding of the world and personal concerns change, their moral judgment and their perception of self-image develop, and their understanding of television conventions and humour change. According to Piaget young children think concretely and although children are active participants in making sense of their environment, they also take many things they see and hear literally. Therefore children's programs that reflect adult ideas and humour may prove to be detrimental to young children's healthy development. Children are influenced by what they see on television: seeing villainy punished and virtue rewarded will reinforce positive moral and social values whilst seeing characters achieve their means through violence will reinforce negative social conventions. Therefore quality children's television producers take into consideration that children are always informally learning.*



Cupit explains that:

> *Children are capable of understanding sensitive issues such as death, divorce, religion, diversity and that not all problems that children are faced with end happily. Therefore these topics should not be avoided, but represented in an age appropriate way. Children do not understand some aspects of humour until middle childhood and cannot evaluate behaviours such as 'sometimes a good person can behave badly' until they are able to think abstractly, which is commonly in late childhood.*

Therefore when producing children's television it is essential to consider the specific audience. Cupit suggests the 'C' category needs to represent three distinct audiences to accommodate for their level of development. These are early childhood: up to seven years of age, middle childhood: seven to ten years, and late childhood: 11 years to adolescence. (Cupit p66-72)

This is also true for television conventions such as camera angles; shifts from long shots to close ups, instantaneous changes of scenes, costumes or motivation may confuse young children but be appropriate for late childhood viewers (Cupit p29-31).

The diversity of output under the quality quotas has been very limited.

Despite having access to such resources – which encouraged producers to take a broad view about topics and genres that could be tackled, while advising on how to ensure age specificity – the diversity of output under the quality quotas has been very limited, and a source of community concern at successive reviews of the standards (Young Media Australia 2007).

Screen Australia is the government-funded body that supports children's drama production in Australia. Its funding program aims to:

> *provide high-end entertaining television production and new cross-platform viewing opportunities to Australian children while affirming their sense of self and community as Australians.*
>
> *Projects must be eligible for a 'C' classification under the Government's 'C' Drama guidelines in order to apply to Screen Australia. A 'C' classification will not be required from applicants whose projects in this category are licensed to the Australian public broadcasters – ABC and SBS.*

Screen Australia seems to define quality (high-end) dramas for children as those that will be entertaining, affirm a sense of self and as Australians, and eligible for C classification.

The ABC claims to offer quality programming for children across its three channels, but makes no mention in its policy documents as to how it define 'quality' (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2009, para 11.13; 2008, para 2.12). In its Code of Practice, the ABC uses the terms 'enjoyable and enriching'.

At the launch of the new digital free-to-air channel ABC 3, ABC Director of TV Kim Dalton said that the programs on ABC3 would be:

> *distinctively Australian and designed for maximum entertainment and fun … It will offer kids a world of their own, accessible through the technology they choose, and one they can interact with on many levels … will feature quality programming both on-air and online across a range of genres: dramas, adventure series, music, wildlife, quiz shows, comedies, Indigenous programs, news and sport … It will tell our Australian stories in a creative, innovative and exciting manner. Our long term aim is for 50% of the content broadcast on ABC3 to be Australian. (ABC 2009)*

In her study of the ABC's long running program *Play School*, Cathie Harrison of the University of Western Sydney says that the notion of excellence is increasingly recognised as both subjective and problematic. However, she finds that the team that makes *Play School* seeks to achieve excellence by providing a program that not only entertains, but also engages and empowers the child as a creative, curious and capable participant (Harrison 2004).

Play School seeks to achieve excellence by providing a program that not only entertains, but also engages and empowers the child as a creative, curious and capable participant.

The publicly funded ABC can be seen, within its own productions, to be working towards excellence in programming for children. The question is whether it can maintain this goal given the many extra hours of programming now to be provided (mainly by overseas purchases) on its extra digital channels.

On Pay TV, Nickelodeon devotes Nick Jr totally to preschoolers, claiming that 'every show on Nick Jr is carefully designed, scheduled and paced just for kids under five years old, so your preschooler can watch TV that is always safe, engaging and entertaining'. (Nickelodeon 2010). According to Nickelodeon, research has consistently told them that 'parents of children under five recognise the value of quality television as a learning tool for their kids, but have been frustrated by the lack of programmes available. The research also showed the busy nature of the average preschoolers' day. Parents also told Nickelodeon that they needed the flexibility to work television into their kids' jam-packed schedules, to avoid having upset toddlers who had missed their favourite show'. (Nickelodeon 2010, FAQs)

1.4 Quality vs market demands

Commercial considerations have a considerable impact on perceptions of quality for both commercial and public networks in Australia.

Potter (2002) reviewed producers' difficulties in financing Australian children's television drama to meet quality criteria here, while trying to get overseas sales. She argues that:

> *This research finds that Australian cultural policy is preventing Australian producers cultivating a competitive advantage in international markets, by making demands regarding content and quality that render their programs less attractive to overseas channels. If the Australian government believes that certain culturally desirable forms of television such as high quality, children's programming should continue to exist, it may in future have to modify its cultural policy in order to attain this objective.*

Potter refers to the need for Australian producers of children's drama to have overseas sales in order to make their quality productions viable. She says that the overseas market is highly competitive and frequently commercially driven, and their requirements are for 'more robust' product than that produced to meet the Australian C requirements (2002, p. 93).

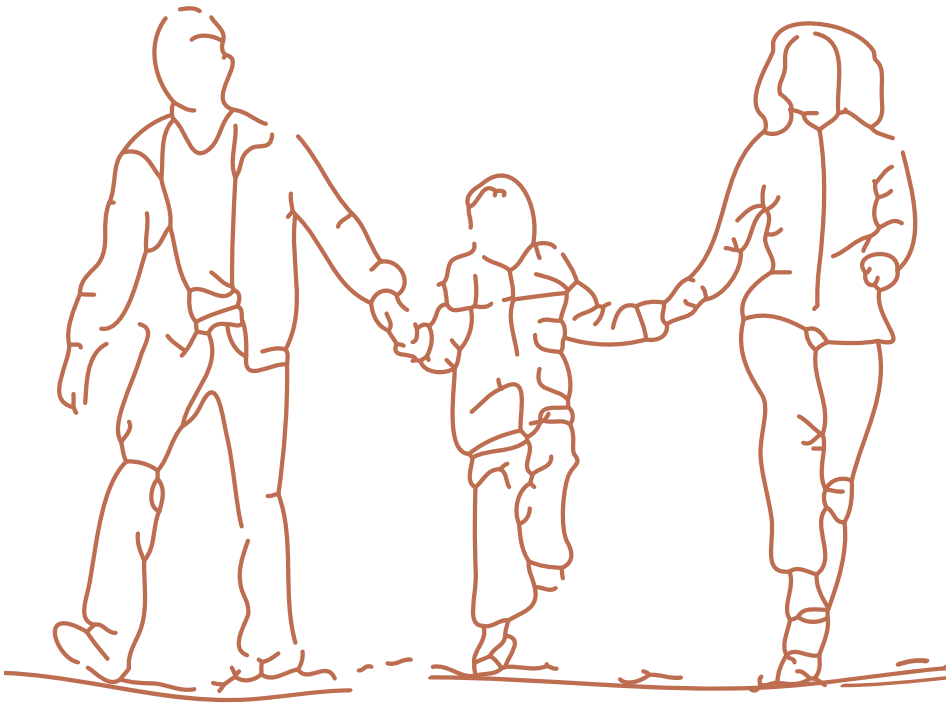
This argument implies that if a production is made to meet the Australian quality criteria, it cannot also be engaging, entertaining and received enthusiastically by overseas children's audiences.

Increasingly, children's programs are linked with merchandise. Some producers claim the production of quality programs is unviable unless there are product spinoffs that can be marketed to children. This may be relevant not only in Australia, but also required by potential overseas purchasers. Steemers (2009) raises the question of the compatability of quality programming with commercial considerations, linked with licensed merchandise, and whether shows that are less well suited to licensed merchandise can actually survive in the present economic climate. Many critics have voiced suspicions that such shows are little more than 'giant toy ads, and result in certain forms of programs such as animation being favoured over real life dramas, and an overall narrowing of the diversity of type of programs, particularly for preschoolers (Steemers 2009, pp. 54–55). Steemers notes that even public broadcasters such as the BBC are increasingly reliant on external producers who regard them as a platform for generating sales of ancillary products, and that the BBC itself exploits the commercial sources of secondary income (2009, p. 56).

There has been a steady decline in the quantity and quality of children's television, in particular narrative storytelling for children under five.

Crossfield (2008) claims that the concept of producing programs purely to support childhood development will always come second to ensuring there is a merchandising angle. He says that there has been a steady decline in the quantity and quality of children's television, in particular narrative storytelling for children under five. He suggests that the reasons for the decline are linked to children's value as consumers; as more restrictions are placed on children's advertising, less advertising revenue is available for the production houses. This makes it harder for producers to justify paying more to produce quality children's programs, and therefore children's programs are commonly imports, repeats, cheaply produced school-based panel games or science and nature magazine shows in a shrinking time slot (Crossfield 2008).

In sum, although some members of the industry are clear about what quality children's programs are, and do produce some high quality children's television, the number of such productions is small. More commonly produced in Australia are programs that minimally meet the CTS and/or, in order to be commercially successful, have merchandise attached to them as a source of revenue, and thus have a format and range of characters that are compatible with spin-offs. Quality programming, in terms of meeting the diverse interests of children and engaging and empowering them, is often lost in the process.



1.5 Education vs entertainment

In the discussions of what constitutes 'quality, some countries and commentators call for children's programs to be educational. Others, such as Australia, require programs to be entertaining while enhancing the understanding and experience of children.

As has been often said, all television is educational; the question is what is being learned. Or as Reich et al. (2009) argue: 'Many things can be learnt through the medium of television and, just as in other areas, in the case of television, the motto "you cannot not learn" certainly also applies'.

There are of course programs with a declared intention to communicate educational content (Reich et al. 2009, p. 40). This category would include the ABC's programs for schools, which are intended to support aspects of the primary school syllabus.

Educational programs do not promote learning unless the children viewing the programs are emotionally engaged.

If these are to succeed as quality educational programs, they will have to engage the audience, appear interesting and, importantly, include humour (Reich et al. 2009, p. 45). Wainwright (2006) suggests that successful educational television programs stimulate active learning, capture children's attention, engage them cognitively and maintain their attention. Calvert and Kotler (2003) argue that educational programs do not promote learning unless the children viewing the programs are emotionally engaged.

Many commentators have reviewed the success of intentionally educational programs such as those emanating from the Children's TV Workshop in the US (e.g. Georgetown University 2010; Wainwright 2006; Huston et al. 2007; Anderson 1998; Children's Television Workshop 1990; Palmer 1988). A Georgetown University study found that, based on 30 years of research, Sesame Street has been successful in enhancing school readiness, academic achievement, pro-social behavior and social skills including contributing to children's understandings of complex issues such as death, love, marriage, pregnancy and race relations. This report suggests this success is attributed to the collaborative effort between production specialists, content advisors and educational researchers who based the series upon formative (informative research upon which production designs are based) and summative (evaluative research indicating the program's effectiveness in particular outcome measures) research.

The producers of Blue's Clues (1996–2006) took the research findings further, basing their highly successful program (introduced to Australia by Nickelodeon)

on a narrative structure with interactivity, rather than the episodic structure of Sesame Street. Young viewers develop active participation skills (Schmidt 2007, p. 76). Elmo's World, specifically developed for 2 to 4 year olds in 1998, also adopted a narrative structure, in response to research showing children wanted to see a story from beginning to end, not as episodes (Thorn 2008, p. 17). This approach is consistent with research by Lynch et al. (2008) which showed that development of narrative comprehension (including understanding of causal connections in story structures) begins in the preschool years and develops relatively independently of early reading skills, although it is related to vocabulary size.

Schmidt and Anderson (2007) found that preschool children exposed to educational programs were more school ready and performed better in school tests in later years, and that exposure to general entertainment content negatively predicted these outcomes: 'When programs are designed merely to entertain through action and violence, children suffer' (p. 79).

The benefits of quality television on children's educational development are generally agreed (Gabrelian, Blumbuer and Hogan 2009). Quality children's television can be beneficial to a child's development and learning. In one study where children had limited access to preschool education, their viewing of a quality pre-school, educational program was found to increase their skills and their school readiness in just three months (Baydar et al. 2008).

Social learning theorists argue that children learn through observation and imitation (Berk 2003). Therefore whatever children see or hear will be a learning experience. It is important that children are exposed to high quality children's programs that are made with a consciousness of children's learning processes and that promote their learning and development in the broadest sense. 'Mediatrician' Michael Rich of the US based Center for Media and Child Health says 'We make a distinction between education and entertainment: we learn important information from [many sources], but television is only entertainment, relaxing down time for our minds. Unfortunately this education–entertainment dichotomy is both artificial and incorrect' (2007, p. 111).

In summary, it is imperative that children's programming should capture and maintain their attention, be appealing, and directly interact with them (Wainwright 2006). Children need to be entertained to engage with the program. Television viewing has an impact on children's learning and development, including cognitive, linguistic, and social and emotional domains. The programming children are exposed to now will shape their viewing habits for their adult lives (Crossfield 2008). It is essential that children are provided with quality children's programs that are both educational (in its broadest sense) and entertaining.

1.6 Quality viewing includes prevention of harm

Quality viewing experiences for children will not include programs that are likely to harm. Internationally, the Convention on the Rights of the Child calls for signatories to 'ensure the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being …' (Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights 1990, Article 17(e)).

In Australia, the Objectives of the Broadcasting Services Act (s.3) require ACMA:

> *(j) to ensure that providers of broadcasting services place a high priority on the protection of children from exposure to program material which may be harmful to them.*

Children's Television Standard 25 (ACMA 2009, p. 11) outlines unsuitable material in programs and advertisements, including material that:

- demeans individuals or people on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual preference, religion or mental or physical disability
- presents images or events in a way which is unduly frightening or unduly distressing to children.
- presents images or events which depict unsafe uses of a product or unsafe situations which may encourage children to engage in activities dangerous to them.
- advertises products or services officially declared unsafe or dangerous by a Commonwealth authority or by an authority having jurisdiction within a licensee's licence area.

1.7 Conclusion

Children's perspectives are the foremost consideration in producing quality TV for children.

Quality children's television is life-enhancing, age appropriate and engaging. It includes positive messages and provides good role models, appeals to children's diverse interests, and is aesthetically and technically of the highest standard. Most importantly, children's perspectives are the foremost consideration in producing quality TV for children (Cupit 1987; Furst 2009; Wallmark 2009).

All the authors whose wide-ranging reports and summaries inform this review agree on one common factor that identifies a high quality children's program: the program's capacity to foster children's learning, understanding and development (Palmer 1988; Jordan 1997; Alexander et al. 1998; Edgar 2007; Gotz 2007; Grewening 2009; Mikos 2009; Neuss 2009; Plenk 2009; Australian Communications and Media Authority 2009). Other characteristics which the authors identified as important include 'age appropriateness', which refers to programs made specifically for children at particular age and developmental levels but also to the care taken to protect all children from material inappropriate to their stage of development; 'entertainment value', having 'good role models'; and attention to 'technical aspects of production' such as graphics, music, writing, and camera work.

Some authors singled out other determinants of quality, concluding that children's programs should be 'appealing and fun'; relate to 'children's diverse interests'; 'motivate and mobilise' children; reflect children's 'life environment and experiences', 'foster creativity', 'cultivate conversation', 'attract positive impact and praise' and/or have 'prestigious participants'.

Internationally, programs with educational content are more highly valued than those that merely entertain.

Children's television workshop pioneer Edward Palmer says quality is:

> *defined in terms of the extent to which it [the program] meets the diverse real needs of children … a good program must exist through and for its audience … quality includes how well a program helps a child understand the mysterious world outside, and the equally mysterious world within … and, not to be forgotten, whether it helps children to enjoy themselves. (Palmer 1988, p. 79)*

A quality viewing experience for children will not include material that may be harmful to them. ACMA's Children's Television Standards require that children be protected from the possible harmful effects of television programs to which they may be exposed (ACMA 2009).

There is little Australian literature discussing commercial broadcasters' views about quality children's programming. What exists is dominated by consideration of whether programs to be made for children will be commercially viable (Potter 2002).

In recent years, few programs have been made for children unless there have been strong marketing connections. The impact on the overall quality of children's TV, including their story world, is of growing concern internationally (Edgar 2006; Crossfield 2008; Steemer 2009).

There appear to be many threats to the production of quality programs (Potter 2002) with both commercial and publicly funded broadcasters finding it difficult to fund production unless programs have commercial spin-offs (Steemers 2009; Crossfield 2008). This demand has the strong potential to limit the diversity of program types made and is a particular threat to the production of drama (Edgar 2007).

2 What parents need to know

2.1 Introduction

There are many influences in a child's life, such as parents, peers, and economic and family circumstances. Television is one of the influences which can have both positive and negative impacts on young children's psychological, social and emotional development (ARACY 2010, Royal Children's Hospital 2009).

Young children are watching television unsupervised more often than in the past (with multiple screens, and TV sets in bedrooms).

Young children are watching television unsupervised more often than in the past (with multiple screens, and TV sets in bedrooms), and what they are watching is not always children's or preschool age programs (Australian Communications and Media Authority 2007, Kaiser Family Foundation 2005). It is estimated that around 30 per cent of Australian homes have the television on all the time where it is often used as a 'babysitter' to keep children occupied (Royal Children's Hospital 2009).

Television viewing can displace childhood activities (Olds et al 2006). Many young children are exposed to programming intended for adults, because the predominant focus for commercial stations is adult audiences. For example, through television, children from a young age have become more exposed to the adult world of violence, sex, and deviant behaviour while left to search for the meaning in adult themes such as murder, rape, and adultery (Williams & Williams 1985). Parents can find it challenging to prevent their children from viewing inappropriate programs (Nadel 2000) while mediating program viewing can be an additional source of conflict in the home, particularly with older children. Restrictive mediation may cause children and adolescents to crave content that is completely restricted and to seek it outside the home (Nathanson 2001). This could be one reason why parents internationally are imposing fewer rules and regulations in relation to their children's television viewing (Kaiser Family Foundation 2005).

By contrast, Warren (2003) suggests that most parents of young children enforce rules around the use of media, but few parents actually discuss content with their children. He suggests that parental commitments outside the home make them less available to their children, forcing them into a balancing act that, at times, means they attend to household chores or school work and place a lower priority on mediating children's TV viewing.

In considering what parents need to know to mediate their children's viewing, we need firstly to explore what they think about the role of TV in their children's lives.

2.2 Parents' views about choosing children's TV programs

A national survey of 751 Australian families conducted in 2007 by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (2007b) asked participants what electronic media and communications devices were in the family home, the time children spent using them, parental attitudes to that use and how families negotiate children's use of media and communications. Results in relation to television found that:

- most families have three or more televisions in their home
- children aged 8–17 years spend an average of just under two hours per day watching television
- more children and young people engage in watching free to air television than any other leisure activity
- children indicate that watching free to air television is their most preferred activity as a solo pursuit
- television is still the most persuasive and influential media in the lives of children and adults
- one in five Australian children have a television in their bedroom
- almost half of the time children and young people spend watching television is spent with adults
- almost all parents reported spending some time discussing adult concepts on television with their children. (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2007b)

Parental perspectives about children's television viewing from the above study include:

- 80 per cent of parents see benefits in their child's television watching
- 30 per cent of parents expressed concern about television viewing and more frequently in relation to younger children than older children. (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2007b)

Some surprising results from this study in relation to parents' comfort with television were that there had been a marked drop in the incidence of rules about television content since 1995: only half of parents said they had rules or understandings about what their children can watch on television, compared with eight in 10 parents in 1995. There also had been a drop in the proportion of households with rules about when television can be watched (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2007b).

The results from this survey suggest that most Australian parents trust that children's programs on Australian free to air television are age appropriate and content appropriate, and are presumably happy with the quality of programs broadcast.

We found no current published Australian research on parental views about the quality of children's television programs, but several on parental satisfaction with TV viewing and advertising practices or violent content (Morley 2007; Young Media Australia 2008, 2007).

Looking at published US research, Jeanne B Funk et al. (2009) reviewed the knowledge of parents of preschoolers about healthy use of TV, knowledge of ratings, their beliefs about impacts of TV viewing, and actual media management practices. They found parents lacked knowledge about many aspects and a need to educate them about screen media exposure and the ratings systems.

The Kaiser Family Foundation report Zero to Six found that 43 per cent of parents thought TV mostly helped their children learn, 27 per cent that it mostly hurt, and 21 per cent didn't think it impacted one way or another. About 58 per cent thought educational TV was important to children's intellectual development. The parents clearly saw TV as having a direct effect on their children's behaviour and mostly saw positive effects rather than negative (Kaiser Family Foundation 2003).

Although the above studies suggest that both Australian and US parents appear to be satisfied with some aspects of children's television programs, no studies actually asked parents what they thought quality children's television was. Therefore, parental satisfaction may be attributed, in part, to their trust in television broadcasters not to screen harmful material, together with a lack of knowledge of what characterises quality children's programs. Further study will need to be undertaken in this area to obtain a true representation of parental views on the quality of children's programs.

2.3 Benefits from children's TV viewing and role of parents

Television viewing can contribute to children's cognitive and language development and their social and emotional wellbeing. In particular, it can impact on their attitudes, behaviours and academic achievement. Therefore it is essential that the programs children view are quality programs. Anderson (1998) asserts that television viewing by children aged 4 to 7 years is not a passive experience and suggests that quality programs can help children to comprehend and interpret narratives in the same way as text.

It is up to parents to be aware of the impacts of television on their children, to monitor their viewing.

Kunkel (1998) points out that, with careful regulation and high standards of production, children can benefit from watching quality TV programs. However, as it is not possible for legislation to regulate children's viewing, it is up to parents to be aware of the impacts of television on their children, to monitor their viewing, put strategies in place to manage it and be highly involved (Myers-Walls 1987; Fender et al. 2010). Depending on their age, educating children to develop a critical perspective on program content, messages and images can mitigate the impacts of media exposure, even exposure to media violence, with some children reducing their viewing of violence-related programs (Rosenkoetter et al. 2009).

2.4 The impact of TV content on children at different ages

Infants: birth to 18 months

The longstanding recommendation from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) that children under 2 years not be exposed to TV was first made in 1999 (American Academy of Pediatrics 1999, 2001). The AAP's rationale for this position was the need for infants to have interactive relationships with their carers for optimal brain and communication skills development.

Opposition to the use of TV with infants has been based on five major concerns: distortion of brain development, displacement of parental interaction, interference with language development, lack of processing ability and false promise of enhancement (Thorn 2008). Thorn found that for children under 2 years communication activities 'require a communication partner. For want of a partner, the opportunity for growth in skill is lost.' (2008, p. 12).

The AAP recommendation has been well supported by research. Tomopolous et al. (2010) found that exposure of babies to media at six months had adverse outcomes at 14 months, and Chonchaiya (2008) showed that children who started watching TV at less than 12 months and watched more than 2 hours per day were more likely to have language delays. There are now seven studies showing language delay for infants who are exposed to TV for significant lengths of time (Strasburger et al. 2010, p. 6).

Barr (2010) found that there was an association with poorer cognitive outcomes at age 4 when children aged between 1 and 4 years had a high level of exposure to programs designed for adults, or when there were high levels of household TV use of programs not designed for children.

By the time infants are 3 months old they can pay attention to an operating TV set if an adult physically directs them to it. By the age of 6 months, infants can direct their own attention to the set for around 15 minutes (Josephson 1995). By 14 months, infants can imitate some actions on screen (Christakis 2009). Courage (2010) made similar findings.

Joint attention by infant and carer is a crucial mechanism for early learning, and TV cannot act as a substitute for the kind of interaction that occurs in this prelinguistic environment (Moore and Dunham 1995). The adult's attention acts to mediate between the 'blooming, buzzing confusion' of the infant's world and the specific object of attention that is socially or cognitively relevant to the moment. This is particularly important to initial language learning. The first steps in language acquisition involve the discrimination of language specific phonemes (basic sounds of a language) and these are only learned in the

context of interpersonal exchange. Attempts to use TV to teach infants to discriminate phonemes in an unfamiliar language have proved totally ineffective, whereas even minimal exposure to a real language speaker allows the learning to occur quite quickly (Kuhl, Tsao and Liu 2003).

Toddlers: 18 months to 3 years

The AAP recommendations apply until the age of two years. The Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital reports that 'TV is unequivocally a health and well being issue. Children under two should be treated as special group with special vulnerabilities' (Royal Children's Hospital 2009, p. 4).

High daily TV use at 18 months was found by Cheng (2009, 2010) to be associated with attention difficulties and poor social skills and problem behaviours. Christakis (2009b) also found that the age of child when exposed to TV, the type of content and the pacing of programs watched can influence attention difficulties, and that high viewing hours before age three can negatively influence later academic achievement. Pagani (2010) found exposure to TV at 29 months had the most consistent negative prospective associations across markers for mental and physical health.

However, Courage et al. (2009) found that there was insufficient evidence for either deficits or enhancements for children's learning from early TV exposure. Schmidt et al. (2009) found TV viewing by children under 2 not associated with poorer cognition at age 3; but there were significant other benefits for children who did not view TV, such as improved sleep quality. Christakis (2009) suggests that given the mass media's growing presence in lives of very young children, considerable work needs to be done.

In France the sale of baby videos for children under the age of three has been banned.

Before the age of 2 years children suffer from a 'video deficit', in that they learn substantially less than from video than real life experiences (Kirkorian 2008, p. 53). There has been much debate about 'baby videos' and their supposed educational value (Thorn 2008, p. 14). In France the sale of baby videos for children under the age of three has been banned. (http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/26312386/ns/today-entertainment/)

At about 2.5 years, toddlers pay attention for three or four times longer than younger children. They can learn verbal and non-verbal behaviours from television, and can develop meaning from TV content (Josephson 1995). The presence of a competent co-viewer can boost language learning from screen media (Linebarger 2010).

At this age, some exposure to age-appropriate TV can enrich, but exposure to adult TV can negatively affect behaviour (Kaiser Family Foundation 2005). Background TV, particularly adult TV, constantly on, has a very disruptive influence on children's play (Anderson 1998; Thorn 2008; Schmidt 2008).

Children in this age range can also become established TV viewers. (Josephson 1995), and can adopt TV viewing patterns (both amount and type) that persist into and through the later school years (Josephson 1995; Huston 2007).

Preschoolers: Three years to five years

Preschoolers demonstrate a strong tendency to focus on the physically obvious features of their environment. They are highly centred in their attention, focusing on a single feature at a time. They gradually develop the ability to tell that a series of events are all part of a single process rather than just a series of unconnected images. Preschoolers actively search for meaning in content, but are still very attracted to vivid production features such as rapid scene changes and sound effects. They can be predisposed to seek out programs that feature violence, as this is usually accompanied by vivid formal features.

Children at this age don't pick up on motives, or consequences; they don't distinguish between fantasy and reality, and don't really understand what 'real' is (Josephson 1995).

For children up to 5 years, exposure to scary content can traumatise and develop into persisting irrational fears.

Around the age of 4 children begin to appreciate the representational nature of TV, but they can still be frightened by content that they think is not real (Strasburger 2002). For children up to 5 years, exposure to scary content can traumatise and develop into persisting irrational fears (Thorn 2008, p. 18). Studies have found that viewing frightening programs raised children's heart rates and caused symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder and sleep difficulties (Kaiser Family Foundation 2005).

Over many years, Joanne Cantor has researched the outcomes of exposure to scary content in early childhood. Cantor has found that children in this age range struggle with fantasy/reality distinctions (2010, p. 13) and can become afraid to engage in normal activities after exposure to frightening content. She found having a TV in a child's bedroom was strongly associated with fear reactions. Cantor's book Mommy, I'm scared (1998) lists content likely to cause fright among this age group as: scary images, transformations from something benign into something bad, and issues like death of a parent.

Thorn (2008), Murray (2007), Strasburger (2002) and van Evra (1998) reviewed adverse outcomes from exposure to violence and its outcomes, including risk of increased aggression. Manganello (2009) found TV exposure was a risk factor for aggressive behaviour among children aged 3 years.

Early exposure to violent content has also been associated with poor school achievement (Schmidt 2007, p. 69). Schooler and Flora (1996) found playing with violent TV-linked toys prolonged the time children fantasised about characters, and increased the likelihood of aggressive outcomes.

Advertising has a big impact on children in this age range.

Advertising has a big impact on children in this age range. They are unable to distinguish advertisements from program content in a meaningful way and do not understand selling intent, nor the language of TV advertising (van Evra 1998; Jennings & Wartella 2007; Strasburger & Wilson 2002; Kaiser Family Foundation 2005). The Kaiser Family Foundation (2005) found children would rather play with an advertised toy than one that hadn't been advertised, and children who watched more TV made more purchase influencing attempts. Strasburger & Wilson (2002) found this age group pays more attention to advertising than older children.

Advertising uses tactics to draw children into consumerism and can lead to family conflict (Buijzen & Valkenburg 2003). In several studies cited by Valkenburg and Cantor (2001) it was common for parents to experience embarrassment as a result of difficult to manage behaviour in public when their young child demanded products seen on television.

The amount of time spent watching TV increases through this age range. The risk of obesity and overweight increase for each hour spent with the TV set, and children with TV sets in their bedrooms are more likely to be overweight and watch more TV (Kaiser Family Foundation 2005).

Positive benefits can be gained from quality television, with preschool educational viewing such as Sesame Street able to teach conflict resolution skills and impulse control and encourage reading skills (Schmidt 2007, p. 69). Children who viewed educational TV programs as preschoolers had higher grades and read more books in high school (Anderson 1998; Huston 2007).

However, viewing TV that was merely intended to entertain was an easy activity requiring little effort and could reduce children's efforts to acquire reading skills (Williams & Williams 1985; Schmidt 2007).

School age: Six to eight years

Between 6 and 7 years children develop a memory or expectation as to how stories might develop and understand story plots better. They pay more attention to content features rather than formal ones (Josephson 1995).

As they get older, children tend to put less effort into viewing, and watch for relaxation and to pass the time.

As they get older, children tend to put less effort into viewing, and watch for relaxation and to pass the time. Heavy TV viewing by children in first and second grades can reduce reading acquisition skills (Schmidt 2007, p. 72).

The amount of time children spend with TV continues to increase into adolescence.

The impact of viewing frightening material continues as a concern, as for the 3 to 5 year olds. Korthonen (2008) found that children aged 5 to 6 years reported TV-induced fears, mostly related to fantasy characters and interpersonal violence. Children in this age range become less frightened by fantastic content and more by images of reality as presented in TV news programs (Cantor 1996, 1998). The KFF (2005) reports a study of 5 to 9 year old children who experienced more fears when they thought the threat reported on TV was local. Smith (2006) found children aged 5 to 8 years were more upset by visual images of the Iraq war than older children; older children had more personal safety concerns.

Josephson (1995) concluded that the age of 8 years is critical in the relationship between television violence and the development of aggression because of the cognitive and emotional developments that occur at this age.

Schmidt (2007) argues that aggressive portrayals on TV provide models of impulsive restless behaviour, and that through observational learning, children can incorporate this style into their own behaviour (p. 77).

2.5 Knowledge parents need to choose quality

Australian children's interaction with television is considerable, with children aged 0 to 4 years watching an average of 154 minutes free-to-air TV per day and children aged 5 to 12 years watching on average 130 minutes per day (ACMA 2007a). This level of viewing, and the evidence of harm from unmediated viewing, provide good grounds for encouraging parents to take an active role in TV choices for their children.

The findings of the studies reviewed in this section suggest that knowledge of the following would help parents in choosing TV programs for their children:

- The potential impact of TV on children at different ages
- How TV viewing can support or undermine children's developmental tasks
- What is quality, age-appropriate viewing?
- Where to find the quality programs
- Strategies for healthy media use
- How to talk to children about TV viewing
- How to avoid harm
- How to encourage the industry to provide more quality TV for children.

The potential impact of TV on children at different ages is detailed in section 2.5 above. In relation to determining what is quality and age-appropriate viewing, parents would benefit from the knowledge summarised in section 1. The other subjects (above) that parents need to know about to help them choose quality programs are considered in more detail below.

How TV viewing can support or undermine children's development

Parents can assess the suitability of programs for young children by using a framework that can help guide and educate them about children's developmental needs in relation to television viewing. Young Media Australia's booklet Background Facts & Ideas examined the impact of television on children's development and developmental needs. It lists seven developmental needs for children:

- development of a sense of trust and safety
- development of a sense of autonomy with connectedness to family and other people

- development of a sense of empowerment and self-efficacy
- establishing gender identity
- development of an appreciation of diversity among people
- development of a sense of morality and social responsibility
- development of opportunities for meaningful play. (Young Media Australia 1995)

For each of these, Young Media Australia (YMA) has included advice for parents including:

- how parents can support children's developmental needs in relation to viewing television programs
- what type of programs and content are considered inappropriate for children's viewing and
- a guide for choosing more appropriate viewing patterns.

YMA suggests that the type of programs and content considered inappropriate include, for example, glamourisation of violent acts through images of war or drama, presentations of violence as a solution to conflict, gender divisions that represent males as strong and females as weak, racism, the need to win, adult thinking and concepts, and the devaluing of free play and imagination. Instead YMA (1995) suggests more appropriate programs reflect a world where people are respected and valued, depict helpful and autonomous people, show people resolving conflict in non-violent ways, show diversity, challenge bias, and depict creative and varied play.

Where to find the quality programs

The ACMA (2007a) study found that children aged 0 to 4 predominantly viewed programs specifically made for children, and that the top 47 programs identified as children's programs were those broadcast by the ABC.

This highlights the fact that the ABC is the dominant provider of programs for preschoolers and also indicates that the ABC is seen as a reputable source of quality television for preschool and school age children.

The ABC is a strong source of age-appropriate preschool programs.

The ABC is a strong source of age-appropriate preschool programs. But parents need to know that the ABC's programs are not required to be classified according to the Children's Television Standards i.e. gain a C (for children at school) or P (preschool) classification.

The ABC's young children's programs are all classified G, and come from a variety of local and overseas sources. They can be of variable quality. Moreover, the ABC is not immune to pressures to buy and screen programs that have toy or other product tie-ins. In such product-related programming, animation can predominate, with little live action drama, and a narrowing of children's story world (Edgar, 2006).

Commercial networks are obliged to broadcast a quality quota of C classified programs (5 hours per week) and P classified programs (2.5 hours per week). These programs are expected to meet the Children's Television Standards criteria for quality age-specific programs for children.

However, it is important to note that, outside of these limited quotas, children's programs on commercial TV have merely to be classified G, as do children's programs on Pay TV, on the ABC and SBS. Each broadcaster uses their own codes of practice and determinations of quality. On Pay TV channels, such as Nickelodeon, there are fewer commercials than on free-to-air (though many programs are product related), and some commitment to less violence in programming.

Jaffe (2010) provides some questions for parents to evaluate whether a program will be suitable for their child:

1. What is the value of the message and its relevance to the child's interest?
2. Is the message clear and easy for the child to comprehend?
3. How much is the message delivered throughout the program or is the message an integral component of the program itself? For example, is learning being developed through the program's educational theme or as a sidebar through entertainment?
4. How well does the program engage, challenge and involve the child?
5. Is the message relevant to the child's own life and locality?

An independent guide to quality children's programming in Australia would be most helpful to them.

Many parents will not have the time or interest to evaluate programs in this way, and hence an independent guide to quality children's programming in Australia would be most helpful to them. There is no such guide to TV programs in Australia, but parents have appreciated the Australian Council on Children and the Media's 'Know before you go' current movie review service for over nine years. Young Media Australia published its 'fight free' list of non-violent TV programs, movies and games for children under 7 in 2007. A lack of funding has prevented its continuation.

Strategies for healthy TV viewing

Many lists of strategies for parents wanting to manage their children's TV viewing have been written, including those by Young Media Australia (1995), the Australian Psychological Society (2000), Strasburger (2002), Guernsey (2007), Media Awareness (2010) and Jaffe (2010)

A composite list of strategies for parents might include:

- Establish appropriate usage patterns in early life. This is far more effective than TV reduction strategies later (Christakis 2009). Limit consumption of screens such as TV, movies and videogames, especially those that are violent, hyperstimulating, stereotypical or mindlessly repetitive (Strasburger 2002, p335-344).
- No TV viewing for children under 2 years old (American Academy of Pediatrics 1999).
- After age 2, do not forbid TV but provide a lifestyle that engages children in a range of beneficial activities (Strasburger 2002).
- Take responsibility for program choice, plan carefully and discuss choices of programs with your children (Australian Psychological Society (APS) 2000; Strasburger 2002; Young Media Australia (YMA) 1995).
- Do not put a TV in a child's bedroom (Cantor 1998, and many others).
- Watch programs with your child and teach them how to critically evaluate and tell you how they feel about what they have seen (APS 2000; Strasburger 2002; YMA 1995).
- Consider the impacts of programs on your children's development — ask what the screens are teaching (Strasburger 2002).
- Build a functional value system in your child (which offers consistency, security, enforcement, responsiveness) as a defence against TV's ever changing values (Strasburger 2002, p. 339).
- Lead by example — children's television viewing patterns typically reflect those of their parents (APS 2000; YMA,1995).

Techniques for managing children's TV viewing include recording programs, to gain control and flexibility, and keeping the TV in a public space.

It also has been suggested that time spent with children in play activities, reading and teaching can counterbalance the negative effects of children's exposure to media (Mendelsohn et al. 2010).

Parents are advised not to analyse everything their children see on television as this can leave children feeling lectured and takes the fun out of helping them learn to be critics, and to avoid being too negative about programs that children enjoy but rather using another program to make a critique (Media Awareness 2010).

Nathanson (2001) suggests that parents who co-view educational programs with their children can enhance the positive effects but can also endorse the negative unless the parent offers comment. She notes that the parent's active co-viewing communicates approval and endorsement of the program and content.

Parents need to take an active role in children's television viewing to ensure their child is exposed to quality children's programs and avoids those that may be harmful. It is not sufficient for parents to assume programs with particular classifications will provide quality viewing. Parents need to consider the developmental needs of their children, evaluate their reasons for choosing particular programs, and monitor and discuss the programs their children view with them.

How to talk to children about TV viewing

Nathanson (2001) suggests that parental mediation in critically evaluating television viewing is more effective with children aged 5 to 7 years. Older children are likely to find this activity annoying, while a straightforward approach in discussions may be more appropriate for children under five years of ages.

By engaging in critical evaluation of television viewing, parents share their own values and understandings with their children and this is ultimately going to influence their children's views (Nathanson, 2001).

One effective way of helping children to choose programs is for parents to teach them to think critically about what they watch and see on television. Young Media Australia (1995) and Media Awareness (2010) suggest that parents discuss television programs with their children as a strategy to assist children in choosing healthy viewing programs. Media Awareness (2010) suggests topics for parents to talk about with their children.

Parents can discuss with their children whether what they see represents real people and real life and, if it doesn't, what the differences with reality might be. For young children, talking about 'make believe' can be one way parents can help their children learn the differences between real life and television (Media Awareness, 2010).

Helping children to understand that television is only a construction of reality is important. Parents can help children understand that there are people behind the camera who bring specific views and perspectives to programs. This can

help parents broach conversations about dominant perspectives that do not represent diversity such as different class, gender and cultural perspectives or how those are being portrayed. This also relates to stereotyping in programs. Parents can take the opportunity to discuss the stereotyping of children, men and women, western and non-western people, those with disabilities, etc. and suggest children look for it in future programs. This can be of particular importance where negative stereotypes of children or teenagers, for example, may impact on how children watching the program see themselves (Media Awareness 2010).

It is also important for parents to talk with their children about the violence they see on television.

It is also important for parents to talk with their children about the violence they see on television. Naming the forms of violence, such as 'verbal' and 'physical', can help parents teach their children how both are harmful in emotional, psychological and physical ways. It can be useful for parents to place the violence in a context and discuss with their children why they think violence is being portrayed, its purpose in the program and how and why it makes them feel the way they do. This can lead to discussions about the consequences of violence, and violence that may be shown in news programs (Media Awareness 2010).

How to avoid harm

Knowledge of children's likely reactions to certain content at different ages can help parents avoid exposing their children to programs that could harm (Young Media Australia, 1995). Parents are advised to prevent children under the age of 7 from viewing violent content and commercials (see 1.2.5 above).

The Children's Television Standards' 'C' and 'P' classification system provides some guidance.

Programs rated 'G' must to be suitable for viewing by children of all ages, and those rated 'PG' must be appropriate for children under 15 with parental guidance. However, this system does not provide for differences in reactions to content at the several stages of development under the age of 15 years, nor is the system evidence-based in terms of harm at those different ages (Young Media Australia 2001). Many G and PG programs can contain content that will possibly make children under 8 anxious or disturbed, and this makes it important for parents to at least sample new G classified programs for content.

How to encourage the industry to provide more quality TV for children

Palmer (cited in Alexander, Hoerrner & Duke 1998), argues that the public must be committed to quality children's programs to enrich the lives of children. To support quality children's programs Grewenig (2009) suggests that there need to be three areas of commitment: public financing, allocation of time slots to suit children, and recognition of quality programs through awards and prizes.

The underpinning message is the need for policy reform. Calvert and Kotler (2003) argue that quality programs for children need to be regulated by having a set of standards for both programs and networks to avoid commercialisation. A similar argument has been made in Australia.

According to Edgar (2007b), since 1956 Australian governments have been concerned about quality children's television. Members of the Australian public have argued against self-regulation for broadcasters and advocated for government regulation to strengthen quality television for children in this country. Arguments for regulation included the lack of children-specific programs, poor quality of current programs, repetition of programs, advertising concerns and commercialisation of program characters aimed at children.

Parents can contribute to quality children's television by being actively involved in shaping the programs their children will be exposed to. Grewenig (2009) suggests that public opinion plays an important role in making networks accountable for quality children's television. This advocacy role requires parents to register both praise of and concern about programs with broadcasters and media regulators. Young Media Australia (1995) in their 'Background Facts and Ideas' booklet provides guidelines for responding to broadcasting practices, and how to lodge complaints with effect.

2.6 Conclusion

Television viewing generally starts at a young age. Developing healthy habits at an early age is vital for managing television viewing as children grow.

Parents' active involvement in managing children's viewing time, and in promoting exposure to quality children's programs, is essential.

Parents can maximise the benefits from TV watching by finding and choosing quality programs, and by watching with their children and discussing programs. Parents can encourage their children to watch a variety of age-appropriate programs.

There is considerable evidence for the need for caution in exposing infants under the age of 2 years to television. There are also indicators of harm to older children from exposure to content intended for adults, some cartoon material, violent and frightening content, and advertising and marketing techniques.

Children over 2 years can benefit from viewing quality television programs that are age appropriate, educational, creative, fun.

Children over 2 years can benefit from viewing quality television programs that are age appropriate, educational, creative, fun, motivational, informative, diverse and interesting. Quality programs may deepen cultural and social understanding as well as enable cognitive development.

Parents' involvement in their young children's television viewing includes a range of roles and responsibilities such as:

- choosing appropriate programs
- setting viewing limits
- discussing television programs with their children
- being aware of the effects low quality programs can have on their children, and
- being aware of strategies to prevent damaging effects resulting from children viewing unsuitable and harmful programs and images.

It is important for parents to share their position, rules and expectations about their child's exposure to television programs with their children as they grow, and with other parents of their children's friendship groups to ensure consistency for their child.

Although classifications are put in place to assist parents in selecting age-appropriate programs for their children, it is not sufficient for parents to assume that programs with particular classifications guarantee quality viewing for

children. Parents need to consider the developmental needs of their children, evaluate their reasoning for choosing particular programs and take a positive role in guiding and monitoring viewing, and discussing television content with their children.

As role models, educators and advocates for change, parents can maximize the benefits of their children's television viewing experience and prevent negative effects of exposure to media content that may be developmentally inappropriate, aesthetically bankrupt or simply not up to the standard all children deserve.

Part 2: What parents say

A: FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

1 Introduction

The Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM), commissioned by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), conducted seven focus groups and interviews with parents and grandparents of young children in Victoria and South Australia.

The focus groups and the interviews addressed seven key issues:

- what participants thought was good quality children's television
- whether participants thought there were good quality programs currently available for children
- how participants found good quality programs for their children to watch
- whether they thought all age groups under 8 years were equally well catered for in terms of program offerings
- how participants would improve television offerings for children
- how they manage television so that their children see programs appropriate for their stage of development
- what might help them in choosing appropriate programs for their children.

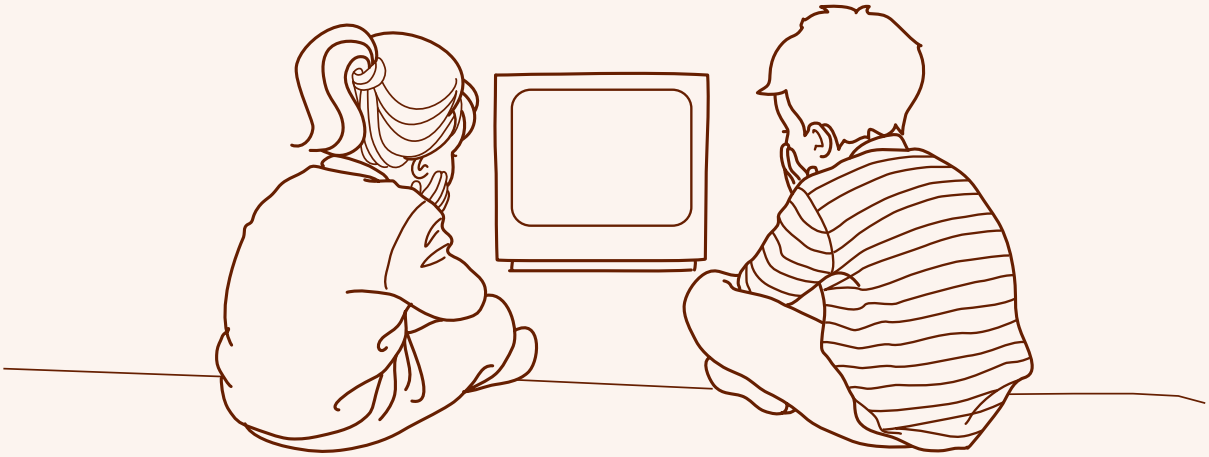
Three focus groups were conducted in Victoria: one at Meadow Heights (MH) near Tullamarine Airport, one at inner metropolitan South Yarra (SY), and one near the regional city of Shepparton (SP). The rest were conducted in South Australia. One was at suburban Belair (BE), and one in the regional city of Mount Gambier (MG). Two South Australian groups (in the outer suburbs of Port Noarlunga (PN) and Ingle Farm (IF) were poorly attended and information provided by participants is included in the form of interviews.

There were a total of 33 participants (28 females and five males), all parents or grandparents of children aged 8 years or under. Participants are identified in the text as males or females from particular focus groups. For example MGM1 would be the first male from the Mount Gambier group. Three of

the five focus groups and one individual interview were audio taped in their entirety, with consent. Approximately half of the Belair focus group was audio taped and detailed notes were taken in all focus groups and interviews. Audio tape transcriptions and notes were thematically analysed and the findings are presented in the two sections.

'What parents' think' outlines the findings under six major themes.

The second section, 'What would and would not help parents' presents a summary of the discussions concerning program classification and the best way of alerting parents to program classification and content.



2 What parents think

2.1 Preferred programs

Not all programs were clearly categorised by parents as suitable for the three nominated age groups, namely:

(1) two years of age and under

(2) up to 5 years of age, and

(3) under 8 years of age.

Table 1 lists the programs nominated by participants as enjoyed by their children and at which age groups. Programs deemed by participants to be suitable for more than one age group are shown straddling the boundaries of the classifications.

Table 2.1 Programs nominated by participants as programs enjoyed by their children

Under 2 years of age	Under 5 years of age	Under 8 years of age
Wiggles	*Barbie*	*The Simpsons*
In the Night Garden	*Angelina Ballerina*	
Playschool	*Thomas Tank Engine*	
	Dora and Diego	*SpongeBob SquarePants*
Sesame Street	*Hi-5*	*Mister Maker*	*Scorpion Island*
Bob the Builder	*Ben 10*	*Spiderman*
Maisy Mouse	*Lazy Town*	*Batman*
Chuggington		*Superman*
Iggle Piggle	*Shaun the Sheep*	*Hanna Montana*
Master Davey	*Dinosaur Train*	*The Wizard*	*Wipe Out*	*Glee*
	Trapped	*Scooby Doo*
	Prank Patrol	
Old cartoons	Old cartoons	old cartoons

Some programs were watched by children over a wider than expected age range. For example, one participant from Shepparton said his nephew 'watched Thomas the Tank Engine until he was about 14'.

When asked what was good about these nominated programs, participants' answers reflected many of the characteristics identified in the literature as indicative of quality programs. For example, descriptors included:

> *Educational, no violence, innocent, entertaining, fun, interactive, age appropriate, real people, music, dancing, involve real children, bright, vibrant, happy, positive, bit of a story, children enjoy it, authentic genuine presenters, good stories and narratives.*

I think there is enough out there to choose from.

Participants were asked if they found it difficult to find enough good programs for their children. A Port Noarlunga mother responded by stating: 'Yes and no; I mean I think there is enough out there to choose from'. An Ingle Farm mother did not think good programs were hard to find, in fact she thought that digital television had made it a lot easier. This view was also held by the Mount Gambier group.

The Meadow Heights group answered the question 'Do you think there are enough programs for under two year olds?' as follows:

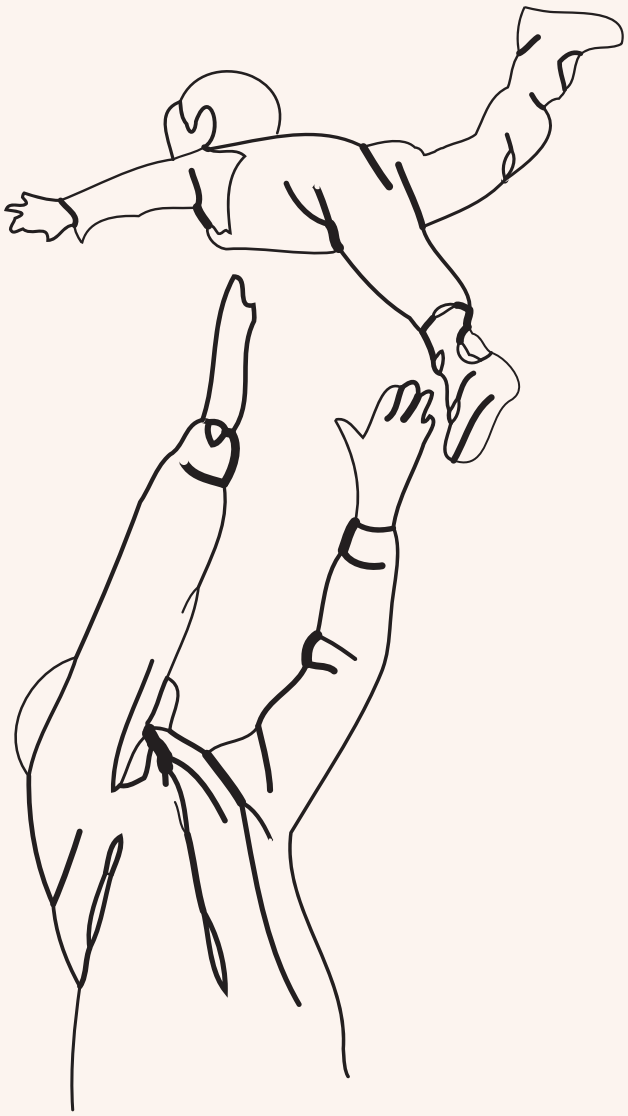
> **MHF1:** *I think so because they shouldn't be watching a lot of TV at that age anyway*
>
> **MHF3:** *My daughter doesn't watch TV any more; she comes home and plays games. My son used to come home from school and watch a lot of TV but my daughter doesn't like it.*
>
> **Researcher:** *Okay so young ones aren't watching a lot of television what about the next group?*
>
> **MHF2:** *That depends on the day and sometimes they don't even put the TV on if it's a nice day. Sometimes they don't even bother with the TV.*
>
> **MHF5:** *[My children in] this age group [are] sister and brother [and] they play.*

The only time that there appeared to be little choice of programming for younger children was between 5.30 pm and 7.30 pm. For instance, the following discussion at Shepparton reflected a general consensus among that group:

> **SPM1:** *We watch a lot of DVDs in our house like Toy Story and that sort of thing and so at different times, teatime we call it the 'happy hour' at our place, to settle them [the children] down we'll whack Toy Story or something on because the ABC at that time doesn't always have a lot on … [so] we might put a movie on.*
>
> **SPF1:** *Yeah they have a bit of a flat spot where it's more like [for] young teenagers.*
>
> **SPF2:** *Yes, the time bracket between 5.30 pm and 6.30 pm is pretty ordinary hence the reason why The Simpsons are on at our house because six o'clock is dinner time and we do have a TV on and they don't sit there and watch the whole thing … There's not really a children's TV program on between those brackets, 5.30 pm is In the Night Garden which a five-year-old is not interested in.*

SPM2: *As much as you've got on digital TV … between that 5.30 pm and probably in our house from 6.00 to 7.30 pm, in that range, there is nothing on [for children].*

Parents were split concerning the quality of certain programs. 'Controversial' programs, in that they attracted both positive and negative evaluations, included *Angelina Ballerina*, *Barbie*, *Ben 10*, *Glee*, *Hi-5*, *Spiderman*, *Batman*, *The Simpsons* and *SpongeBob SquarePants.* Reasons for finding these programs unacceptable included unnecessary emphasis on violence or on issues of gender, sexualisation and body image, or being used as vehicles for advertising and marketing.



2.2 Violent and scary programs

Violent and scary programs attracted the most negative comments. Table 2 lists the children's programs that participants rated as violent or scary. Many parents would not let their children watch these programs and held strong views why they held this stance.

Table 2 Programs nominated by participants as containing violent or scary images

Programs	Reason for not liking
Ben 10	Some violence, not promoting peace or tranquillity
Spiderman and Batman	Some violence, tend to act out what they see
Wipe Out	People hurt themselves; children tend to act out what they see
Funniest Home Videos	Children upset by people being hurt in reality
Later Harry Potter movies	Getting scarier and less age appropriate
News items	Too much blood and bodies, violence
Asian cartoons	Too violent, fighting to the death, people die
Home Alone	Scary parts – young fella was petrified and had nightmares
Jurassic Park 2 and 3	Too much violence
Blue Bar	Freaky, spooky almost scientology based
SpongeBob SquarePants	Shows violence

The discussion at Meadow Heights was typical:

> **MHF1:** *Boys see him as cool and anything Spiderman can do, but some of the things are pretty violent … even if they're in cartoon they're violent and I would much prefer that they don't watch them.*
>
> **MHF3:** *Especially the new Asian ones.*
>
> **MHF1:** *I don't even watch those.*
>
> **MHF3:** *They are so violent, the Asian ones.*
>
> **Researcher:** *And what age group are they targeting?*
>
> **MHF3:** *Oh five to eight …*
>
> **MHF1:** *For boys and for girls.*
>
> **MHF3:** *Sha lai or Shumay or something, a really weird name, a bit like martial arts, Pokemon, Shar lai. My kids, especially my son, on Sundays he will just put it on Channel Ten and one after the other you get all these martial arts and swords coming out.*

MHF1: *Yeah, it's all violent.*

MHF3: *It's all violent.*

MHF4: *And Ninjas and Ninja Turtles or something.*

MHF3: *The Ninja Turtles weren't as bad as the ones that are out now.*

While not intended for children, news broadcasts were also mentioned as containing images of violence and blood that could distress children.

> *… but if you think about the cartoons that are on TV, the news show more violence. … Before in the news they use to hide the bad things with all the shooting, and now they show everything, even to the point where they show the body lying down. (MH)*

Participants' children were also upset by events in children's programs or movies. A father describing how Madagascar 2 upset his daughter said: 'The young lion is chased and is taken away from its dad … the poor little one has lost its parents … It really upsets her'. Another female participant in the same focus group stated that her three-year-old daughter 'relates to that at the same point in that movie'. Another program that may seem harmless and even 'fun' was Wipe Out, yet it had a detrimental effect on one Belair participant's child. She explained:

> *He's on a* Wipe Out *ban until the end of the year because it makes him pull all the cushions out across the lounge room and [he] just go nuts; and it's fine for the first two days but when he starts really doing wipe outs through the house and bundling his sister and literally almost swinging off, oh! That's it, that's it, enough* Wipe Out. *So in terms of role-playing a show, oh yeah.*

Other forms of children's media and entertainment such as PlayStation, DVDs and web-based social networking sites such as Facebook and Club Penguin were also seen as scary. One mother remarked that she was unable to view every PlayStation game that they borrowed and was shocked at the violence, shooting and blood in one game she saw her young son playing.

Participants were probed as to how they address violence and scary images with their children when viewing television. A father in the Shepparton focus group described how the music in a *Harry Potter* film promoted during the *Toy Story* movie they had watched, scared his two-year-old son and he had to keep changing the channel throughout the entire movie to avoid the music. The mother in the Shepparton group whose daughter was upset when the young lion lost its parents in *Madagascar 2*, explained how she responded to her daughter:

You just explain it to them that just sometimes that can happen, that's what I told mine and I was just being honest and that's why you've always got to be close to mum and dad. … Mum and Dad will always go out of their way to make sure you're okay and we're always watching to make sure that you're safe … and that's not really a violent movie that's just kids understanding at a young age they take a lot on, big time.

However, the predominant responses (n=9) were to distance children from the content by emphasising its fictional nature: *'It's just a movie, it's not real'* (SY) *or '[I explain] "It's just make believe, like playing; it's not real and it's just on TV" and he listens to that and then goes on to something else.'* (PN)

Young adult siblings were also implicated in allowing younger siblings to watch 'scary' movies, such as *Home Alone*.

Other participants turned the television off or changed the channel (n=4), sent their children outside or distracted them with something else (n=3) or banned particular programs (n=3). Two participants indicated that their children 'looked away' themselves when they were scared by a particular part of a program or movie. A further two participants blamed the parents' lack of supervision, not the violence, and young adult siblings were also implicated in allowing younger siblings to watch 'scary' movies, such as *Home Alone*, that resulted in the younger ones having nightmares. However, one mother in the Belair focus group used violent programs or inappropriately aged classified material to teach her seven-year-old son who has Asperger's syndrome. The mother explained:

I let him watch shows that I probably shouldn't let him watch … the DVDs … the ones that we've watched all along are all Ms, M15+ all that sort of thing … but I monitor it with him and we talk about it and things don't affect him like they affect other children because he's emotionally detached as well, so he doesn't feel things as much, he doesn't have nightmares you know … Even now I don't think that these movies affect him in a bad way and they teach him. Like Star Wars is very, you know, the morals of the story, so you know I've brought that in … So I've used a lot of programs that are … horrible. I use TV as a medium to teach him. As long as you're there to mediate what they watch and explain it to them.

2.3 Issues of gender, sexualisation and body image

Programs that participants perceived were directed at boys were the more violent ones.

Programs that participants perceived were directed at boys were the more violent ones such as Asian cartoons, *Ben 10*, *Spiderman* and *Batman* while *Angelina Ballerina*, *Dora* and *Barbie* were seen as deliberately targeting girls. When gender was discussed in the Shepparton focus group, one male participant declared: *'Don't change* Thomas the Tank Engine *because the engines are males and the characters are females'*. There were also other comments that indicated gendered behaviour in programs such as The Simpsons where some participants noted the contrast between Bart's bad behaviour and his educated and well-mannered sister Lisa. A member of the Mount Gambier group said that *'*Postman Pat *shows old fashioned, English based, inappropriate stereotypes, particularly of women'*. Similarly, in the South Yarra group one participant suggested many programs stereotyped the roles of males and females, although of *Barbie* she said:

> *I had an issue with* Barbie *but I've learnt to embrace* Barbie *a little bit more because [of] one of the movies,* The Pauper and the Princess *… You expect the pauper meets the prince and they get married and everyone lives happily ever after. But the girl who was the pauper who met the prince chose to have the career at the end. She said 'Thank you very much for a beautiful relationship', so I thought 'Oh yeah Barbie, go for it!'.*

She went on to say *'I know that's a role that we've set up for a hundred years, the damsel in distress and the big man comes and helps the weak feeble female'*. Her comments instigated the following discussion with her fellow participant:

> **SYF2:** *Umm what annoys me with the princesses is that it's all this fairytale and so … this is the starting point and you think this is life, that it's a fairytale and you'll meet the perfect man and you'll live happily ever after … That's not life, that's not how it works and it's not till now when I'm seeing these movies and seeing them for what they are and I'm thinking, 'but that's just planting a seed'.*
>
> **Researcher:** *Setting people up for disappointment?*
>
> **SYF1**: *Yep, I do, I do*
>
> **SYF2:** *Absolutely, I do. Even as adults they think you break up with your first boyfriend and you think 'he was perfect' and 'he was the one I was going to marry' and it's hogwash and it's all a load of rubbish, life's not like that.*

SYF1: *And I totally agree and that could also be adding to the stresses of the youth and mental health issues and depression because they think that it's a fairytale and because theirs isn't the fairytale that they see everywhere then, hmm, that their life is going to fall into a hole.*

SYF2: *Yeah.*

SYF1: *And that they may as well cut themselves or do what they're doing.*

One of the South Yarra mothers said of gendered roles:

> *I can see [it in] some of the cartoon movies like* Pocahontas *– the way she's portrayed, the figure, the magnificent figure, and the big strapping strong man who comes to protect her and just save her … but it's also the way that they're physically dressed too, it's very, very saucy.*

The attire of the *Hi-5* presenters was considered inappropriate by several participants and mentioned at the Belair group as *'premature sexualisation, just want to sell products to children'*. The following are edited comments from a Port Noarlunga mother regarding *Hi-5* and other programs and movies:

> *… with* Hi-5 *I don't like how they dress because it might be appropriate for the age of the singer but it's not for the age of the viewer to mimic it… and that can lead [children]—especially girls—to want to wear the sexier clothing and stuff because my daughter hasn't got into all of the older programs. But I mean if you start watching* Hanna Montana *and* Hitari *… then it does start to have more sexualisation … My daughter watches* Glee *with me at times because they like the singing … it has a sexual undertone in that, but I always watch it with her and if it's too much I change the channel … and she likes* Modern Family *and there's a fair bit in that too that can be, so yeah … and she likes* Grease *as well but that's a bit well, but she also doesn't take everything in and if she asks questions, then I tackle that then … and I sometimes think, 'Oh!'*

The Meadow Heights group did not think that programs were sexualising children or making children look older than they really were.

One female expressed her concerns about Australian soap operas thus:

> *I know the programs that are on, like* Neighbours *and* Home and Away, *is not so much an issue for my four-year-olds, but I know going on for the six or seven-year-olds, hmm, some of the content on those shows is probably not appropriate for that age bracket. There's a lot going on, a lot of kissing and touching and yeah. I guess that's probably where these younger kids are knowing so much at an earlier age, probably from shows like that.* (SP)

Many participants deemed music of importance to their children but found music video clips inappropriate.

Many participants deemed music of importance to their children but found music video clips inappropriate.

Many participants deemed music of importance to their children but found music video clips inappropriate. For example: 'Video Hits … *pelvic thrusting, visuals don't match the words … this is reflected at school discos where children copy the pelvic thrusting'* (BE). One male in the Shepparton group expressed frustration regarding the lack of appropriate music videos or movies for his daughter and his comments drew the following response from a female participant: *'It's a big one—they go from* Wiggles *and* Hi-5 *and in five months they're listening to* Pink *and* Lady Gaga*'* and another male added *'and* Jet*'*.

'Sexy' images were not only shown on television but on computers and iPhones. Parents suggested that their children knew how to download the applications when images pop up on screen.

> **SYF2:** *They don't even have to click on it, there's some woman lying back with a bikini top on.*
>
> **SYF1:** *And again because I'm thinking of a girl [her daughter] the more images that she sees of these bikini clad women the more she feels that she's supposed to look like that to be accepted in society and to be desired. And from that point of view you have a boy and they think 'Well okay that's what women are and that's the typical woman and that's the one I'm aiming to get … and they'll do that for me and they'll present like that for me'.*
>
> **SYF2:** *I don't know, I'm grateful that he's got sisters [her son] so he gets the real side as well that catty possessiveness…*

One of the mothers in the South Yarra group also strongly expressed her disapproval of a particular American children's program. The following are edited extracts from her comments:

> My Little Pony *should be banned! [It] teaches little girls to have horrible little American accents and be precocious and be pretentious little bitches. It is horrible, horrible, horrible, horrible. … And I also find with* My Little Pony *that the girls are getting into the whole image or body image because the girls will be busy painting their hoofs or their nails or whatever and it's all about having their manes curled and it's very focussed on looking [attractive] … and my eight year old even said the other day 'I need to slim down'. And she's tiny, and I don't know where she gets it because I don't watch what I eat, I don't talk about diet and we don't own a set of scales at home. I'm very big about that sort of thing and very anti-body image … and I said 'I don't understand, where did you get that phrase?' and she said 'Oh it's just from me' and I said 'That's weird you wouldn't have heard that in the house. Where did that come from?'. 'It's just me' and I thought 'Great!'* (SY)

2.4 Advertising and marketing

Many of the comments quoted above indicate that advertising and marketing in children's programs were of concern to some participants.

One woman in the Shepparton group could only recall one untoward advertisement and it was for Viagra, but she could not recall whether it had been on during the day, and dismissed its influence on her family: *'I can't recall when it was on and for my children, that would be going right over their heads'.*

Parents are aware of the subtle intrusion of television:

> *I remember recognising that the TV wasn't just an inanimate object in the corner of the room while I was breastfeeding my baby … and it would be the morning breakfast show and that's when I would watch the news and Sharyn Ghidella would come on to announce the news and [my daughter] would go nuts, she loved her face, loved her face because when the news comes on it was a big full face shot and she loved Sharyn Ghidella … and that was when I went 'Hmm, okay it's not just me watching the news, she's four months old and she's already recognising a face' and I can't say I put that knowledge into practice.* (BE)

The consensus of the Meadow Heights group was that the toy advertising in children's programs should be banned and toy advertising was of particular concern for three of the males in the Shepparton group. One suggested that McDonalds marketed its children's meals with toys aligned to movie releases such as *Batman*, when the movie was inappropriate for the age range of the children. Another male in the Shepparton group spoke about his daughter watching the toy advertising and then he said she was 'badgering' him to buy it: *'It's stuff she didn't even know she wanted until she watched the show and saw it and then she thought that she absolutely needed it'.*

Comments of a more general kind were made about Angelina Ballerina:

> Angelina Ballerina *should be banned, I can't stand the precocious little twat, can't stand her, she's hideous. Again she's a bit petulant and she'll go and have a little hissy fit about not going to get a new pair of ballet shoes and gives her father a hard time until she gets the ballet shoes and I think, 'Are you for real?'* (SY)

This suggests that children are not only being marketed to, but that the programs are also educating children about coercive behaviour to get their parents to purchase particular products. In the Belair group one mother spoke about Saturday morning television and how her daughter kept running down the passage saying *'Mum, Mum can I have that Barbie? It's got wings'.* Ten minutes into the program there would be the same commercial, for a toy car or a Barbie, being repeated over and over. The mother said *'I must have seen it 15 or 20 times'.*

Participants in the Belair group wanted sexualised and fast food advertisements in children's programs banned. In answer to the questions 'What sorts of things on TV when your children are around annoy you, or do you resent? Anything you'd like to have stopped?', the Mount Gambier group stated *'Advertising'*.

Timing of advertisements is also an issue:

> *… the ads that come up, I can't stop it even if they're in the general viewing time. Last night I was watching* The 7pm Project *and at 7.35 pm she [her daughter] was sitting there with me, there was an ad for one of those magazines—big busted women, it's a men's magazine—*Zoo Magazine*. And I thought 'At 7.35 pm? Okay, so alright, I'm supposed to have the television turned off in case she walked into the room?'.* (SY)

One mother…suggested her children must *'totally tune out'* during the commercial breaks.

However, there were opposing comments about commercial content in children's programming. For instance, one mother in the Shepparton group suggested her children must *'totally tune out'* during the commercial breaks because the only response she would get from them is *'When are* The Simpsons *coming back on?'*. Another woman in the same group said that when the commercials come on *'That's when they [her children] … get bored and they say stuff to start a fight'*. These comments are consistent with a Belair parent's concern that *'Children lose the threads to their story due to advertisements in the programs'*. A father in the Shepparton group had successfully taught his children to avoid the commercials interrupting their programs. He explained to the group:

> **SPM1:** *Yeah, we tape a lot of movies on the hard drive as well as we tape some shows, so we fast-forward it for them when they're really watching it. So now when they see an ad on the TV they go…*
>
> **SPM2:** *'Why are the ads coming on the TV?' … 'Well, we're watching TV live today'*
>
> **SPM1:** *Yeah they go 'Fast-forward the ads dad'. They can't associate, they can't separate well, the young ones can't anyway.*

A mother in the Shepparton group mentioned that there should be more advertising campaigns similar to *'Life be in it'* and one in particular that she and her husband had really enjoyed was *Go For Your Life* that had been aired *'in the last couple of years'*. The last comment on this theme goes to one South Yarra mother who, while completing the questionnaire for this study, and asked to express agreement or disagreement with the statement *'It's not the fault of the advertisers that children see things that are inappropriate?'*, said aloud *'[That's] a red rag to a bull. Can I write "Oh, f*** off?"'*.

2.5 In control, not in control

With advertising and marketing, parents were not in control of some of the images that their children were exposed to. In this section and the following, we report participants' examples of times when they felt they were in control of what their children saw, and other times not in control. In keeping with the 'advertising and marketing' theme, one South Yarra mother said that even if she did not let her daughter watch television, she was:

> *…being exposed to billboards — 'Want longer lasting sex?' — and all those things, constantly bombarded with images down the supermarket and they see covers of magazines with 'I lost 48 kilos' and the list of people and beauty and money and all of this stuff that they are constantly exposed to is … giving them a false sense of values I think.*

The same mother said that she thought that she had more control over the television because if her daughter turned the television on, she could monitor the viewing and interrupt it by saying *'Inappropriate thank you, off, go out and play'*. The same mother also said that computer technology really frightens her and that *'My husband is a computer person and keeps trying to assure me "It's okay we've got things in place, Yes it's all right". It's not okay; he's at work'*. The South Yarra mothers went on to discuss web-based technology:

> **SYFI:** Club Penguin, *it's that sort of thing, it's prepping them or priming them for a whole twitting and tweeting and* Facebook *and they scare the life out of me because kids in the safety of their own home write something, and because they're not there they can't hear the voice intonation and they can't look them in the eye and they can't read the body language. And so much of what is in print is misinterpreted and that child can sit there brooding on something that they have received. And kids kill themselves over this sort of thing, over this miscommunication or something that has been misread and that frightens the life out of me, it really does.*
>
> **SYF2:** *But don't you think as a parent that you're a little bit trapped because it's so prevalent at school and everything, and so, you don't want to let your child not do it because then they're the only one that's not doing it?*
>
> **SYF1:** *Yep, yep I am trapped, you're right.*
>
> **SYF2:** *So what do you do? You let them, because either way they lose.*

SYF1: *Well that's what's happening and my husband put that argument across and said 'its better to let her do it and modify and to be able to help her go through it than to ban it and then have her do it behind your back. I totally agree with that but still, I don't feel that I have any control over it and any say in it, and where it spirals to the next level, it's frightening.*

Turning the television off was mentioned 24 times by participants as a tactic employed when they did not want their children viewing something on television. For instance one Shepparton mother said:

> *… there will be something that I glance at and I'll flick it off with the remote and they'll go 'What happened Mum?' and I'll go 'Oh, I'm not sure, the man at the TV station must have done something'.*

Participants…suggested that they prefer to watch 'new' programs with their children.

Likewise a father in the Shepparton group suggested that he monitored his child's viewing, especially if it was a new program. He said, *'I'll sit down and watch it too and if it's crap I turn it off and watch something else or we go outside'*. Another two participants in the same group also suggested that they prefer to watch 'new' programs with their children. For instance, one mother said *'If it's a new show you'll sit down and decide if it's something that they should or shouldn't be watching'*. Responding to the question 'So what happens when you don't have control and your kids are over someone else's place?' one mother in the Shepparton group said:

> *They know they're not allowed to watch it and if we're flicking through the tele and it comes on and [my son] turns around and says 'We're not allowed to watch that' and I say 'No. You're not allowed to watch it' and he knows. Whether he watches it at somebody else's place, well I don't have any control over that — but he knows, and he probably does watch it, because he thinks it's a thrill because it's banned, but yeah, they know.*

Additionally, one of the South Yarra mothers suggested that their children want to watch programs such as My Little Pony and Barbie and indicated that her daughters' friends were influencing those choices. The mother stated:

> *… particularly the elder girl, she's got a little friend who's got an older sister and her parents are quite liberal I think, and they let them do things that we would be horrified at. She has a big influence. So her friend's influences are affecting us as well.*

Shepparton group participants agreed that program choice was generally made after they watched the programs for the first time with their children or based on previous knowledge of the program. Yet one mother said *'The kids want to watch*

them', and there was general consensus within the group that what the children wanted to watch was an influencing factor. Similarly, the Port Noarlunga mother responding to the question 'Who chooses the programs?' stated: *'When they were younger I chose for them but they are probably more in control of what they watch now; but we will say if we don't think it's appropriate'*. She usually watched new programs with her children but did not pre-screen programs. When asked how the children chose those programs, her response was:

> *They flick through the channels until they find something that they're interested in. Sometimes it's based on interests, other times its because they've heard about it from peer groups and friends and stuff but that's more so for my older one. But even with the younger ones …* Ben 10 *and things like that. … they want to play it at kindergarten and stuff and he [her son] hardly watches it. But he wants* Ben 10 *clothes, he wants* Spiderman *clothes and stuff but he doesn't watch* Spiderman. *It's the same sort of [peer pressure] – they talk about it and they act it out and of course they want to see it.* (PN)

The mother's four-year-old boy was with her during the interview and said that he did watch *Spiderman* but agreed with his mother that he did not watch it very often. Regarding peer pressure, one father in the Shepparton group spoke about his daughter who had started school and he said *'She wanted to watch … not the dragon ball but one of those [programs] where they turn into something, that all the boys were playing'*. Another participant suggested it was *Bakugan*, where children throw little balls that turn into dragons and they have cards. The father then said *'She came and watched it once with me and she wasn't interested at all, she was only interested in what all the kids were playing'*.

The Belair group suggested that parents were too busy to choose programs and allowed their children to watch what they liked. This was especially an issue if parents separated and there were mixed messages as to what children could, or could not watch. This group also mentioned that older children dictate what will be watched and the younger ones necessarily watch the same programs. While these discussions indicate that parents were not in total control of their children's viewing, the Ingle Farm mother suggested that *'parents have the responsibility, they need to control'*.

2.6 Who can you trust?

While parents wanted to have control of what their children were watching they also indicated a greater level of trust in some broadcasters as opposed to others. For instance, one South Yarra mother said: *'I am okay with the ABC because there are no ads and generally I feel that you can trust the program'*. Probed as to why she trusted the ABC, she responded, *'The content is not quite so offensive and the lack of ad; the advertising [on commercial stations] [is] just not great'*. There was also a general consensus in the Meadow Heights group that participants trusted the ABC, with one mother stating *'We know that it is suitable for their age and as soon as you start going on to the commercial TV you don't know what they're watching'*. Another mother similarly responded: *'It's more for their ages. It's more from small to [age] 12'*.

Other groups had similar views that ABC was *'safe'* and that children's program on the ABC were expected to *'be okay'* (IF), but some parents *'still check on programs initially'* (MG). Most of the programs nominated by the participants in the Shepparton group as programs that their children watched were on the ABC. One father in that group said *'the ABC mostly and the digi [digital] channels, I don't have a problem with the digi channels and if you get Nickelodeon'*. Another father agreed: *'I think you can trust in those channels'*. The Belair group similarly suggested that the group trusted the ABC programs but one mother mentioned that she *'didn't trust ABC 3'* and thought the presenters were *'weird – teenagers who ranted as though they were stoned'*.

There appeared to be little mention of Pay TV from participants. When the Meadow Heights group were asked about Pay TV one mother said, *'I suppose some of us haven't got it'* and other parents also said, *'Haven't got it, don't want it'* and *'Yeah, I totally agree, I haven't got it, don't want it'*. Similar responses were forthcoming from Shepparton and South Yarra parents. The Port Noarlunga mother indicated that she did have Pay TV but was not sure she trusted the content for her needs.

> *No I don't trust it at all, no, because there's lots of kids shows and like Disney Channel is for older children and Nickelodeon is for older, but then they have* Nick Jr *and* Our House *[so] the channels are divided up a bit to try and guide you. But then there's also other channels that have a mixture for what's suitable for young and what's suitable for older and you need to be a bit more aware of those things.*

Trusting and/or not trusting are also feelings explored in the next section.

3 What would and would not help parents

3.1 Displaying classifications

There was much discussion regarding classification of programs but only one Shepparton mother and one Belair mother were able to define the 'P' classification for programs as suitable for pre-schoolers. The Shepparton mother was unsure how she knew but thought it must have been from watching the ABC program *In The Night Garden*. There was also some confusion regarding the 'C' classification, meaning 'suitable for children'. Some participants thought that it meant 'Classified'. It appeared that participants were aware of other classifications such as 'G' for General viewing, 'PG' for Parental Guidance and 'M' for Mature Audiences.

There was a general lack of awareness about the rating of programs.

There was a general lack of awareness about the rating of programs. A number suggested that parents needed to be educated about the P and C classifications and these and all other program classifications should be displayed within the programs, not just at the beginning. Suggestions for how classification information should be conveyed included *'just a little watermark down the bottom for me'* (SP) and information throughout the program because:

> *you could turn [the TV] on somewhere [during] a show and you don't necessarily see the beginning to see what the content might be about … At least then it would give you some guideline to make a reasonable decision.* (PN)

Discussion also addressed the trustworthiness of classifications, i.e. whether the classification system could be relied on as a good guide to programming for particular age groups. *'If it comes up on TV, I trust that is the [right] classification'* (SP) and *'I think when we were younger every program had a classification in the bottom of the screen, whereas now they don't'*. (SP) That comment drew agreement from other participant. According to one father in the Shepparton group:

> **SPM:** *It doesn't matter if there is a classification on the screen; I'm still going to watch the show with my child; put it on there or not put it on there, I'm still not going to take any notice.*
>
> **Researcher:** *Quite rightly, but will it help you in your decision to watch it?*
>
> **SPM:** *No, not necessarily.*

Researcher: *So you would be guided more by your own views?*

SPM: *I'll be guided by my own views and the content rather that what it's classified.*

Some parents agreed that there should be an age indication instead of a classification. Participants in the South Yarra and Meadow Heights groups as well as the Shepparton group saw some problems with age classification in that peer pressure might be exerted to discourage children from viewing material classified as suitable for younger age groups:

SPM1: *Well kids might say that 'Well why are you watching that?'. It's a pointer to kids wanting to rib each other about it.*

SPF1: *Yes that's exactly right.*

SPM1: *Yeah, instead they might want to watch that show.*

SPF2: *Some big bully might say 'Well what are you doing watching* The Wiggles*?'. They might have a younger brother or sister at home.*

SPM2: *Putting an age on it gives the kids something to say 'Well why are you watching a 10-year-old program when you're 14?'. I just know my nephew for instance watched* Thomas the Tank Engine *until he was about 14 and it was getting weird at the end because he was still wearing his* [Thomas] *t-shirt … but it was up to him. But then his friends would say, 'Well why are you watching a five-year-old's show?'*

Researcher: *So you think there might be some peer pressure?*

By just giving it a label it might discourage them to watch it.

SPF1: *Yeah, I think.*

SPM3: *By just giving it a label it might discourage them to watch it.*

3.2 A visual device

All participants were shown two colourful charts designed to present both age suitability and quality of individual TV programs and movies. Age suitability was indicated via a scale showing red for not suitable, yellow for caution, and green for OK for this age group. Quality was indicated by gold stars. This system is in use on the US Commonsensemedia website (see Appendix A). One chart presented information for the TV program *Scooby Doo*, and the other for the movie *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

The parents were then asked to explain what the charts conveyed to them.

> *That is showing that* Scooby Doo *is appropriate for kids five and upwards and it's showing that it's not appropriate for kids between two and four and the other one [shows that]* Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows *is appropriate for a child 12 and upward and is not appropriate for anyone under that age. … easy to read, easy to see and the colour shows that red is not good for them and the green is [a] go zone.* (MHF)

The Meadow Heights, Belair and Mount Gambier groups all approved the scale. No further comment was made except for one mother in the Meadow Heights group who said 'the star system [for quality] is a good idea too'. The Belair group suggested the system should be mandated.

However, others did criticise the device. A South Yarra mother commented:

> *… that's good as a visual thing but I also need to hear it because I'm in the kitchen, I'm not constantly watching it … so if I hear it I'm tuned into what's being said. If I hear 'The rating of the following program …' that's enough to make me look up if I'm tuned in. It's a prompt; I need to be able to hear something.*

Some discussion centered on the star rating:

> **PNF:** *Yeah, it's quite good having some sort of age scale, but I think [the star rating] is too subjective. [Asking] 'Is it any good?' [is] too subjective. I might think it's a five and other people might think it's a one.*
>
> **Researcher:** *Like movies?*
>
> **PNF:** *Yeah, and I think that's too subjective [but] if this sort of stuff is based on research then yes … I think that it needs some sort of backing behind it. So no, I don't think that the star system is needed and I think 'Is it age appropriate?' is confusing. But a scale with the key would be useful.*

Similarly, the Ingle Farm mother thought *'the age appropriate aspect was good (red, green, yellow etc), but not the "Is it any good" aspect'*.

Participants were also asked where and when they would like to see the device in programming. One suggestion was to maintain it throughout the program: *'you may even like to have this scale in the bottom of the corner [of the broadcast] constantly rather than the P or C … or intermittently'* (SY). The mothers at Meadow Heights agreed that it should be shown at the beginning of the program and intermittently. As one mother said *'flash it underneath when [the program is] playing … because some people change channel [mid-program] and don't know'*. Similarly, the Port Noarlunga mother proposed:

> *If it's on commercial TV, I would want it on after every commercial. I don't think that I would want it on throughout the whole program, it would be annoying, and it would have to be intermittently. It couldn't be just at the beginning because you don't always watch everything from the beginning.*

The researcher asked whether having classifications displayed within a program might be a barrier to children watching programs.

> **PNF:** *Yeah, for the older children it could be.*
>
> **Researcher:** *Limiting?*
>
> **PNF:** *Yeah, yeah.*
>
> **Researcher:** *When they could still get enjoyment and could still get something out of the program?*
>
> **PNF:** *But here it's still showing that it's still age appropriate and even if it starts at five it's still saying it's age appropriate up to seven … as long as the scale goes long enough I think they'll see that it's still age appropriate … but if it just said 'age appropriate at five plus' or something … I think it does have to show 'Oh it's still says it's okay at my age' [but] they might not go and tell their friends.*
>
> **Researcher:** *So you would be happy with something like that after a commercial break or when a program resumes after a commercial break?*
>
> **PNF:** *Not on all the time, if it was there the whole time they'd [children] probably pay more attention.*

Parents expressed similar concerns about the scale as about program classifications, i.e. whether older children would be put off by an indicator showing the program was suitable for children younger than them. Consideration needs to be given to whether the benefits of these devices (information to help determine age-appropriate viewing) outweighs any possible negative peer pressure on children about watching programs denoted as for younger children.

3.3 Program guide information

Participants were asked in what other ways the information regarding programs could best be delivered to them. There was general consensus in the Shepparton group that participants did not use a program guide although three Shepparton mothers said they accessed the program description on screen. The Port Noarlunga mother commented that 'the ABC's divided up now so it's ABC 3 for older children and ABC 1 for younger and so that's a bit of a guide' and that an online guide was now more important for digital TV programs.

The mothers…suggested that they would find it helpful if more information regarding the classifications was in the program guide.

There was 'not much support' from the Belair group for a program guide and the Mount Gambier group indicated that they use a program guide 'sometimes' or 'don't get papers' but indicated support for an electronic program guide. The mothers in the Meadow Heights group suggested that they would find it helpful if more information regarding the classifications was in the program guide.

However, while newspaper program guides are not the preferred source of information, they and online program guides should not be discounted as suitable sources of information for parents and grandparents if carefully designed.

3.4 Locks, emails and other helpful things

Most parents at Meadow Heights were opposed to the use of parent locks to prevent viewing of undesirable material. For some of them the locking mechanism was just too difficult to operate:

> **MHF1:** *No we don't want to lock things up because sometimes we can't work the TV out; it's hard enough already with all the channels and some of us don't have the intellect to work that out, and so it's best not to lock anything.*

> **MHF5:** *Exactly, I'm trying to work out the child lock so I can actually turn off the TV in the morning and I still can't get it, so they still watch TV in the morning.*

The Belair group thought that blocking programs was helpful and some participants locked channels to block out programs that they did not like. The Ingle Farm mother said, *'it's up to parents to use or not [use locks]'*. She was able to lock programs but did not do so.

Some participants were asked whether it would be helpful to receive emails containing program information. This had a mixed response: *'No I don't check emails that often, my husband does it and I don't think that he would pay much attention either'*. (PN) On the other hand, the Belair group thought that a daily or weekly email with information regarding program age classifications would be helpful. A member of the Mount Gambier group said:

> *Whatever it is, it needs to be accessible in as many ways as possible; needs to be easy to understand, [and] needs an independent organisation to do the classifying, not the TV stations.*

4 Conclusions and recommendations

The findings indicate that the participants had firm opinions about what they deemed to be good quality children's television. They were very supportive of the ABC as a mostly trusted source (noting that it has no advertisements).

Generally the participants thought that there was often enough choice of good programs for those in early childhood, yet acknowledged that within some free-to-air broadcasters' time slots (notably late afternoon) there was less choice for younger children.

Participants also felt strongly that television could and did have harmful or detrimental effects and singled out programs with violent, scary, gendered and sexualised content (including music video clips), and advertising and marketing in general, for adverse comment. They found some of this content difficult to avoid.

The participants acknowledged that children's choices of viewing held sway much of the time, with peer pressure an influence. Parents' strategies for having some control over viewing choices included taping programs, talking with children about programs, viewing the programs with their children, monitoring their reactions, encouraging other alternatives and turning the television off. These are all recognised in the literature as strategies for promoting healthy viewing.

Help in finding age-appropriate programs for… children would be useful.

Participants acknowledged that help in finding age-appropriate programs for their children would be useful. They offered their insights into what would and would not help them make decisions about their choice of programs for their children. Present program guides were not considered very useful, and they were ambivalent about present classifications. Some form of on-screen indicator of age suitability (shown at intervals throughout the program) was strongly preferred.

Other feedback suggested that indicators would need to be audible as well as visual (on screen), to assist parents who were visually or hearing impaired, or those who were listening to the TV sound while engaged elsewhere in the home.

Parents were mindful of how some of those aids and devices could be interpreted by their children and their children's peers. Some thought that indicators of age-appropriateness might make older children think some programs were only for children younger than them (and shun them). The authors consider that with careful design this problem could be avoided, and that easy access to a simple on-screen indicator of age suitability would be much appreciated by parents.

B: SURVEY FINDINGS

1 Survey methodology

The ACCM conducted an online survey of parents to gather information about their history of TV viewing, availability of digital resources and their supervision of their children's viewing.

The survey questions are included at Appendix C. These were developed having regard to the issues identified by ARACY, and informed by the outcomes of a small focus group of people familiar with issues to do with children's television viewing. The final version of the survey was trialled with several parents of young children.

The survey was promoted to participants in focus groups and additional parents who were invited in as members of organisations such as child care centres. Where there was no access to computers, paper copies were provided and the responses were later added to the online survey.

Characteristics of respondents

A total of 588 people completed the survey. Respondents included the focus group participants, but most were parents who had not participated in those groups. Most indicated that they were made aware of the survey by some kind of Internet communication (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Source of contact for survey respondents

Source of contact	Percentage of respondents
Childcare/kindergarten/school	15%
Parents Jury	14%
ARACY	11%
Email–no source indicated	25%
Other (4% or fewer per group)–includes Facebook, workplaces, newsletters, local government, small organisations, colleagues and friends	35%

Reflecting the traditional gender division of responsibility for early childhood care, most respondents were female (Table 3.2, below).

Table 3.2 Gender of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	70	11.9
Female	494	84
Missing	24	4.1
Total	**588**	**100.0**

Most respondents (70 per cent) were aged 26–35 year. Only 2 per cent were under 25 years and 28 per cent were over 35.

Collecting survey responses on the Internet resulted in a wider geographic spread of respondents than was obtained for the focus groups (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 State of residence of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
SA	135	23.0
NSW	131	22.3
VIC	128	21.8
WA	107	18.2
QLD	62	10.5
TAS	11	1.9
NT	6	1.0
Not specified	8	1.4
Total	**588**	**100.0**

About two-thirds of respondents had two or more children, thus having recent experience with children of different ages (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Number of children in respondent's family

	Number of respondents	Percentage
2	278	47.3
1	136	23.1
3	119	20.2
4	34	5.8
5 or more	14	2.5
Not specified	7	1.2
Total	**588**	**100.0**

While the original focus group members were selected with the aim of having individuals from a variety of backgrounds and locations, survey respondents beyond these groups were self-selected. They had a higher level of education (Table 3.5) than would be expected in a representative sample of the population.

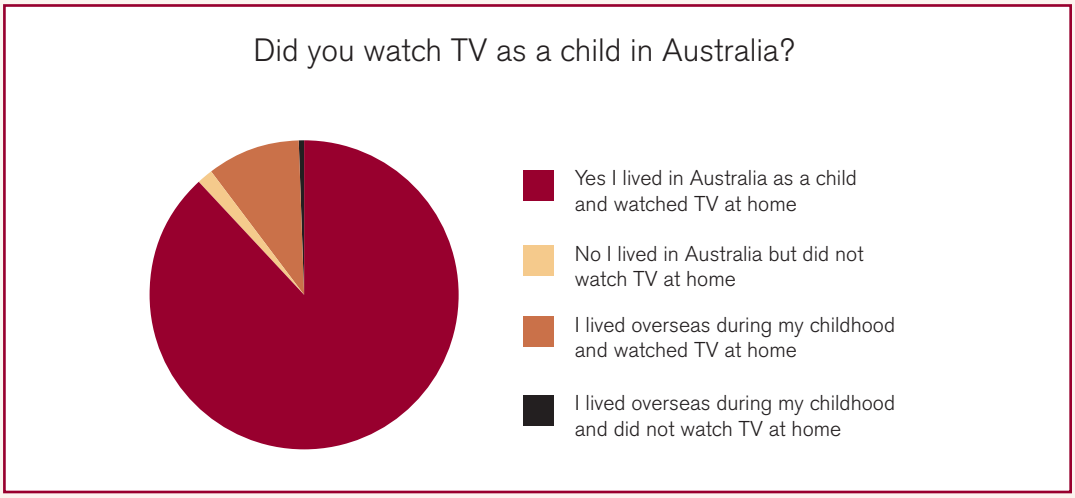
Table 3.5 Level of education of respondents

	Number of respondents	Percentage
University	454	77.2
TAFE	82	13.9
High School	40	6.9
Not specified	12	2.0
Total	**588**	**100.0**

2 Parents' history of TV viewing

The survey participants were asked about their own history of television viewing as children. Most (88 per cent) had spent their childhood in Australia and been exposed to television at that time. Only 2 per cent had not watched television as children (Fig 3.1).

Fig 3.1 Television viewing in parents' childhood



In response to the question 'Can you remember any TV programs which you particularly enjoyed as a young child?' respondents mentioned a wide variety of programs. Table 3.6 lists those that were mentioned most often.

Play School stood out from the rest, being mentioned about twice as often as the next most memorable program. Programs likely to have been watched later in childhood were more varied and there was no equivalent to *Play School* in terms of an outstanding program directed at children from 5 to 8 years.

Table 3.6 Television programs remembered as enjoyable by parents (N= 548)

Program	Number of mentions	Program	Number of mentions
Play School	219	*Brady Bunch*	35
Sesame Street	125	*Astro Boy*	33
Mr Squiggle	71	*Goodies*	32
Humphrey Bear	57	*Bewitched*	31
Romper Room	46	*Gilligan's Island*	27
Skippy	45	*Young Talent Time*	25
Magic Roundabout	36	*Dr Who*	23

While only 61 males answered this question, their responses are of interest as they reflect a slightly different set of interests. The top 10 programs recalled by males are shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Top 10 programs recalled by males (N=61)

Program	Number of mentions
Play School	11
Sesame Street	10
Astro Boy	6
Goodies	6
Skippy	6
Gilligan's Island	5
Mr Squiggle	4
Flintstones	4
Thunderbirds	4
Curiosity Show	3

3 Availability of digital resources

Broadcast television is currently in a state of transition. Many families now have access to digital television and to alternatives such as iView available via the Internet. (Table 3.8)

Table 3.8 Availability of media sources in respondents' household

	Yes	No	Response count
We have an old analogue TV with the basic channels	150	284	434
We have a TV with a set top box that lets us see digital channels	251	213	464
We have a digital TV and can see the digital channels	347	147	494
We have a recorder and copy programs for our children from local TV stations	224	222	446
We have access to Pay TV with children's programming	98	327	425
We use our computer to get access to children's TV from local channels which are available online (e.g. iView on ABC)	136	295	431
We use our computer to play children's TV available from Youtube and similar sources	139	278	417
We play favourite DVDs often	467	61	528

Access to digital television allows considerably wider program choice than is available on the analogue channels. Wider choice is also possible via access to pay TV and by recording and time-shifting broadcast programs or using the online access to programs provided by TV stations. ABC children's programs became available online during the course of this study. Parents also provide access to recorded material entirely outside of broadcast programs by purchasing favourite DVDs.

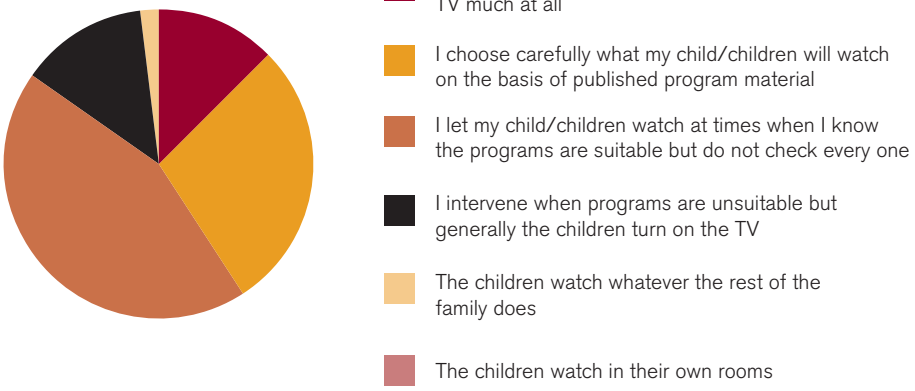
Only slightly over 20 per cent of households did not have access to digital channels (Table 3.8). Over 30 per cent actively seek out online resources such as iView and YouTube, but a higher proportion (over 30 per cent) record local programs, and by far the majority have access to broadcast digital programming. The very high proportion of parents who play favourite DVDs for their children indicates that most households, at least on some occasions, will make choices outside broadcast programs.

4 Supervision of children's viewing

While it is now possible for parents to make choices within a range of media, supervision of children's viewing of free-to-air programming is still a significant issue to be addressed (Fig 3.2).

Fig 3.2 Parental supervision of children's viewing

How closely do you keep an eye on what TV programs your child watches? Choose the response which best matchesyour view. (choose only one option)

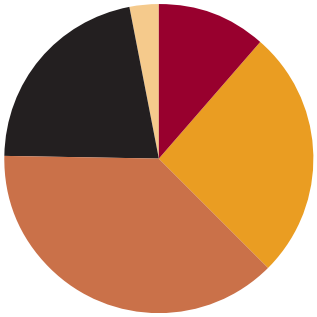


Parents most commonly allow children to watch at times when they are relatively sure the programs are appropriate for their age group (Fig 3.2).

Fathers tend to be slightly more permissive, being more likely to allow children to turn on the TV and then intervening if the program is unsuitable, as opposed to making choices in advance on the basis of known programming (Fig 3.3).

Fig 3.3 Fathers' supervision of children's viewing

How closely do you keep an eye on what TV programs your child watches? Choose the response which best matchesyour view. (choose only one option)



- I don't allow my child/children to watch TV much at all
- I choose carefully what my child/children will watch on the basis of published program material
- I let my child/children watch at times when I know the programs are suitable but do not check every one
- I intervene when programs are unsuitable but generally the children turn on the TV
- The children watch whatever the rest of the family does
- The children watch in their own rooms

Parents use a wide variety of means to control viewing. Virtually all will intervene to turn off programs that are scary or violent (Table 3.9).

Most parents trust ABC programs, but the overwhelming majority limit viewing of commercial TV and avoid programs with advertising.

About half the respondents always limit viewing to set periods in the day, and most of the rest adopt this practice sometimes. Use of a child lock to restrict viewing is quite rare, and most parents do not record and view programs in advance of allowing children to watch them. Most parents did not have access to Pay TV, so the availability of free-to-air programming was of major importance in determining what children were likely to watch.

Table 3.9 Most and least used ways of controlling children's viewing

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Doesn't apply	Response count
Turn off scary or violent	481	71	4	19	575
Allow ABC TV for children	348	205	6	15	574
Choose programs which are classified as suitable for my child's age group	332	214	14	12	572
I limit my child's viewing to set times each day	287	222	38	20	567
Play good programs more than once	252	271	25	23	571
I stop my child watching news programs	236	210	101	20	567
I avoid TV where there is advertising	230	248	77	13	568
I deliberately choose programs that show caring relationships	178	325	45	25	573
I allow my child to watch commercial TV	66	373	112	21	572
I allow my child to watch pay TV for children	49	71	185	260	565
I use a child lock to limit my child's viewing choices	21	16	376	156	569
I record programs and view them before my child watches them	20	182	304	64	570

Overall (Table 3.9), parents rely either on trusted sources for programs, or assume that child viewing times and programs classified for children will generally be safe. About half the parents avoid commercial TV in general and the other half do so some of the time. A similar proportion of the parents aim to prevent children viewing news programs.

5 Finding good programs

When asked how easy it is to find good programs, parents are mostly in agreement that they can find good programs but indicate that it is easier at some times of the day than others (Table 3.10). The overwhelming majority indicate that they certainly do think about this issue.

Table 3.10 Responses to: Would you say it is easy or hard to find good TV programs for your children to watch?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Response count
It's generally easy	80	282	159	31	552
It's easy at some times of day but not others	149	321	79	9	558
I find it hard but I record good programs or use DVDs instead	82	206	191	55	534
It's not something that I really think about	15	76	205	224	520

Most parents appear to have a general idea what programs are available and when. They do check the classification of programs but do not typically use newspaper program guides for information (Table 3.11). Given the scarcity of detail in these guides, they are increasingly not used for this purpose. Friends and other parents are more likely to be a source of information about what to watch. Once again, trust in the ABC children's channels appears widespread. Most parents are not permissive about children choosing programs, though about 20 per cent said they let children decide what program to watch.

Table 3. 11 How do you find out what are good programs for children to watch?

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never	Response count
I choose Australian programs where possible	52	199	265	39	555
I let the children decide for themselves	6	114	279	154	553
I watch programs myself before I let my child watch them	46	106	283	128	563
I read the TV guide in the newspaper	17	94	177	266	554
I get information from friends and other parents	21	125	328	86	560
I have a general idea what programs are on when	68	344	131	17	560
I trust the ABC children's channel	212	260	77	20	569
I assume that good programs will be on early in the morning and in the afternoon	48	174	199	134	555
I check the classification on programs	203	170	128	63	564

6 Choosing programs that are appropriate for age and stage of development

Knowledge of child development and hence of how television viewing is likely to affect children at different ages comes from personal experience as a family member and parent as well as from more formal sources. Table 3.12 indicates the importance respondents attributed to various sources of information in determining what kind of TV experiences would be appropriate for their children. Respondents were asked to complete the sentence 'My knowledge of how children of different ages are affected by watching TV and other media comes from…'

Table 3.12 Sources of knowledge about what is appropriate viewing

	Very important	Important	Not important	Does not apply to me	Response count
Being a parent	325	235	14	1	575
Being one of a large family	42	132	206	186	566
Picking things up as I go from friends, magazines etc	41	348	151	32	572
Reading widely by myself	209	302	47	12	570
Information from various professionals like child health workers	142	272	118	41	573
Formal study in the area of media	74	155	135	204	568
Formal study of child development	185	188	68	128	569

Most parents are aware that programs need to be appropriate to the age and stage of development of the child in order to be of benefit (Table 3.13). They agree that programming which is made for older children may actually be harmful if viewed by younger children.

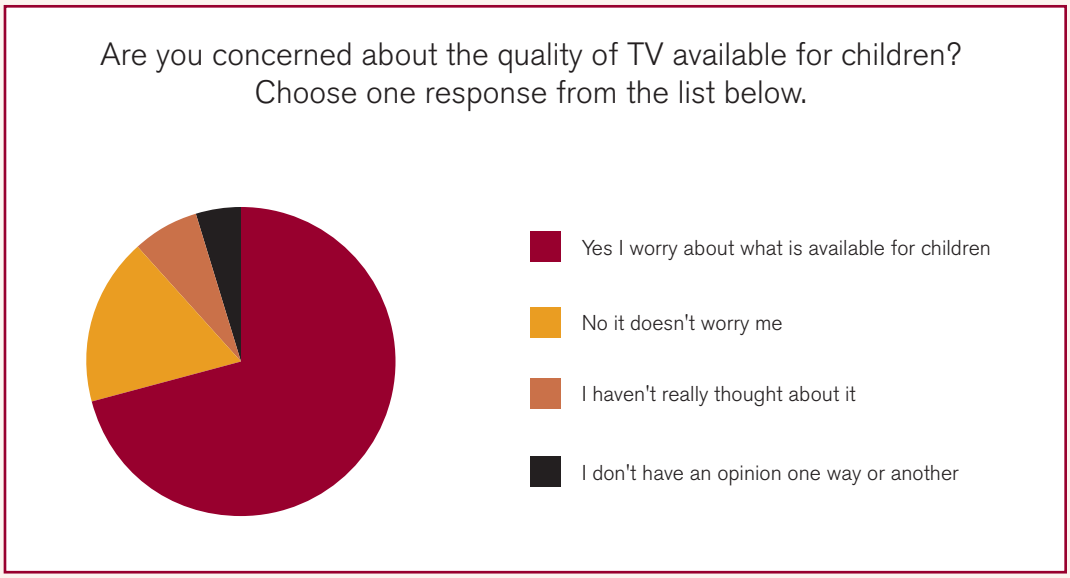
Table 3.13 Effect of age-inappropriate viewing

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response count
Programs intended for younger ages will bore older children	77	277	201	21	576
Programs intended for older children go right over the heads of the younger ones	38	146	313	78	575
Programs which are good for 10 year-olds might be harmful for younger children	217	289	66	4	576
Programs need to be carefully tailored to the age and stage of development of children	259	273	41	3	576

The overwhelming majority of parents (over 70 per cent) expressed concern about the quality of programs available for children (Fig 3.4).

Only 17% per cent said they were not concerned, and the remainder either had not thought about it or didn't have an opinion.

Fig 3.4 Concern about what is available for children



To determine whether respondents to the survey could actually identify which programs were appropriate for particular age groups, they were asked to say which of a list of programs currently being shown they had themselves viewed, and to classify them according to the age group for which they were appropriate (Table 3.14).

Table 3.14 Current programs as viewed by respondents

	Yes	No	Response count
Play School	555	8	563
Sesame Street	532	19	551
Thomas and Friends	530	32	562
Angelina Ballerina	451	86	537
Hi-5	443	106	549
In the Night Garden	441	108	549
Teletubbies	432	106	538
Bindi: The Jungle Girl	371	164	535
Yo Gabba Gabba	361	162	523
Ben 10	259	267	526
The Book Place	173	332	505
Boo Bah	135	353	488
H20: Just add water	110	398	508
Puzzle play	104	383	487
Marine Boy	97	395	492
Toybox	59	418	477

Table 3.14 shows the list of programs in order of most viewed by parents to least viewed. Respondents were then asked to classify the programs according to the age group for which they were most appropriate.

Table 3.15 shows responses to the statement 'These TV programs are currently available for children. If you are familiar with them, please rate them as appropriate for particular age groups'. Programs are listed in the same order in Table 3.15 as in Table 3.14.

Table 3.15 Classification of current TV programs by age group

	Program	18 months and up	3 years and up	5 years and up	Over 8 years	Response count
1	*Play School*	424	131	7	2	564
2	*Sesame Street*	335	195	14	1	545
3	*Thomas and Friends*	349	195	12	0	556
4	*Angelina Ballerina*	72	319	83	8	482
5	*Hi-5*	180	249	48	22	499
6	*In the Night Garden*	436	41	7	1	485
7	*Teletubbies*	424	53	9	1	487
8	*Bindi: The Jungle Girl*	23	233	174	32	462
9	*Yo Gabba Gabba*	182	176	40	9	407
10	*Ben 10*	5	31	186	179	401
11	*The Book Place*	79	133	44	7	263
12	*Boo Bah*	163	63	9	1	236
13	*H20: Just add water*	5	25	82	122	234
14	*Puzzle play*	38	104	54	8	204
15	*Marine Boy*	7	42	122	48	219
16	*Toybox*	51	96	16	1	164

It is clear from the pattern of responses that most parents have a reasonable grasp of which programs are appropriate for each age group based on their children's response and their own viewing of the programs (Tables 3.14 and 3.15). Age group suitability as allocated by respondents generally accords with classifications that would have been expected given the target audience of the programs. Responses tend to cluster around two age groups with only a few outliers in less appropriate age classifications. Where respondents were not familiar with particular programs they chose not to classify them.

These results suggest at least 80 per cent of respondents are probably quite sensitive to the needs of their children in terms of choosing age-appropriate programs. While the programs were chosen to include both commercial offerings and programs available on the ABC, those most likely to have been viewed by parents were ABC programs.

7 What children enjoy and parents value

The survey also asked parents to list their children's favourite programs. These are listed in Table 3.16 below.

The pre-eminence of *Play School* indicates the enduring quality of this program, which takes special care with choice of presenters and carefully tailors its content, pace and overall style to the needs of preschoolers.

Very few programs that are among the most frequently mentioned are on channels other than the ABC. If parent reports of the way they oversee their children's viewing are accurate, children probably have little opportunity to view programs on commercial stations, and their choices may reflect this factor as well as the children's choices among the ABC offerings.

Table 3.16 Child's favourite program

Program	Channel	Number of mentions
Play School	ABC	214
Thomas the Tank Engine/Thomas and Friends	ABC	85
Mister Maker	ABC	74
In the Night Garden	ABC	58
Sesame Street	ABC	50
Bob the Builder	ABC	45
Angelina Ballerina	ABC	44
Bindi the Jungle Girl	ABC	48
Dora the Explorer	NIne	47
Wiggles	ABC Christmas special/ DVD/Nickelodeon	42
SpongeBob SquarePants	Ten	35
Prank Patrol	ABC	31
Simpsons	Ten	27
Scooby Doo	Nine	21
Shaun the Sheep	ABC	20

Although they do not appear in the most frequently mentioned programs, there were also a smattering of programs mentioned as children's favourites that would not fit into the category of traditional viewing for young children. These included *Mythbusters*, *Bear Grylls (Man vs Wild)* and *Blast Lab* as well as documentary programs and quizzes.

There is a considerable overlap between the programs cited as children's favourites and those listed as the best available for their child's age group by parents (Table 3.17).

Table 3.17 Programs parents regard as good for their children

Program	Channel	Number of mentions
Play School	ABC	240
Sesame Street	ABC	74
Mister Maker	ABC	49
Thomas the Tank Engine/Thomas and Friends	ABC	38
The ABC	ABC	38
Wiggles	DVD/Nickelodeon	25
Dora the Explorer	Nine	18
Ben 10	Nine	18
Yo Gabba Gabba	ABC	17
Documentaries	n/a	14
In the Night Garden	ABC	13
Blast Lab	ABC	10

In answering this question parents included a wide range of personal comments. *Play School* got special mention: *'The hands down winner every time'*; 'Play School *still a favourite'*.

The ABC has also been included in this list as it was frequently mentioned without reference to any particular program. For example:

'Anything on ABC2'

'We love ABC for lack of ads'

'Pretty much anything on ABC 2'

'ABC 2 I think is the best option for kids during the day'

'Most ABC3 and ABCKids (on ABC2)'

'Most of the ones on ABC1 and 2. She loves to (be) interactive so actions dance and then animals are always a favourite, even an animal documentary is good, some real life'

'ABC nature documentaries'

Documentaries are also mentioned in general, although none would gain sufficient nominations to be mentioned as an individual program.

Mister Maker has a very consistent following. It is obviously valued for its emphasis on encouraging children to be active, a feature it shares with *Play School*. For example, one parent who didn't really think TV was of great relevance to her children at the moment said: *'Nothing really as my kids (aged 4 and 5) are in between; programs are too old or too young. I like what the ABC has but they get bored with most of it. I prefer shows like* Mister Maker *which are creative'*.

This question about current offerings was followed by one that asked parents what kinds of program they would like to see more of (Table 3.18). It would misrepresent these answers just to categorise the topics of programs. Parents also commented that programs should embody an element of fun and creativity, be interactive, encourage activity and should exemplify good ethical values. Programs should encourage positive, non-aggressive social interactions and indeed be gentle in their approach. For example: *'More gentle stories for boys aged 5 and up'*.

Educational programs were mentioned the most, but the manner of introducing educational content was stressed:

> *'Educational programs that teach not only academics but social relationships as well. Programs that promote problem-solving skills and inspire them to use all their potentials'*
>
> *'Educational but fun things like* Playschool*'*
>
> *'Educational but funny programs—keeps kids interested. Less 'relationship based' programs'*
>
> *'Educational but fun programs [about] science, maths, etc. that portray authentic uses of these theories'*
>
> *'Educational type programs for my 8 year old. I feel the programs aiming at this stage are the* I Carly, Hannah Montana *type stuff which is often a bit age inappropriate. I find it difficult to find something I really like for her.'*
>
> *'Educational but fun and visually beautiful programs that can be for all ages'*
>
> *'Shows that captivate a young boy but also teach something worthwhile (without violence)'.*

Parents' selections of best programs were even more likely than their children's favourite programs to be on ABC television.

Table 3. 18 Programs parents would like to see more of

Program type	Number of mentions
Educational	100
Music/Singing	50
Science	49
Comedy/Fun	47
Australian	38
Art	34
Nature	31
Dance	28
Cartoon	25
Documentaries	22

Music and singing were the second most mentioned category. Once again it was not just content that was wanted but content directed at active engagement on the child's part. Parents wanted:

> *'APPROPRIATE MUSIC PROGRAMS FOR PRIMARY AGE CHILDREN'* (capitals from original)
>
> *'Gentle, positive, interesting, informative, intelligently funny with high quality music, no screaming and with British or Australian accents'*
>
> *'Music-based, calming'*
>
> *'Music and movement'*
>
> *'Active ones, ones that encourage movement and dance, involve music'*
>
> *'Music and art based with a diverse selection cultures and countries included'*
>
> *'Reading and singing nursery rhymes'*
>
> *'Singing and dancing shows that aren't coupled with commercialism* (Wiggles, Hi-5 *etc)'*
>
> *'Singing and dancing for children'*
>
> *'I do like educational, singing and movement shows'*

Science was a recurring theme but parents wanted it presented in a way appropriate for a child audience and encouraging active engagement:

> *'Science fun and girls creating things or having adventure'*
>
> *'Science based*—Mythbusters *for kids'*

'Interesting and at least somewhat educational history, science, geography, current affairs shows'

'Our boys would love science/mechanical shows rather than just fictional stories all the time'

'Children's educational interest—eg backyard science, Mister Maker*… which inspire children to explore and experiment outside the TV experience'*

'More of the fun science shows like Compass *or* Geeks*'*

'Adventures involving kids, science'

'Interesting science shows for kids.'

Parents wanted Australian programs of all kinds. Some indicated Canadian or British programs were acceptable, but there was a preference for our accent. The comments included:

'Australian—children's gardening, children's cooking, Reading, Animals, Basic Science, Mathematics, Music'

'Australian content, science and nature, conservation and environment'

'An Australian version of Dirty Jobs *would be interesting, especially for young boys. They are light but factual and informative info-tainment, documentary genre'*

'More Australian drama. I love My Place*, and* Lockie Leonard*'*

*'Australian programs for younger children [5 years old]…*Blue Water High *type thing but for younger kids)'*

'Australian Comedy/drama relevant to Australian children'

'Australian fictional series for 4–8 year olds similar to BBC style series'

'Australian based kids programs, more Camp Orange *type programs that display challenges for kids, problem solving and working together as a team'*

'Australian ones, particularly animation. It's hard to find TV that has an Australian accent; we end up watching British or USA stuff'

'Australian comedy/drama like Mortified *and* H2O Just Add Water*'*

'More Australian made programs with children of various ages as the main characters'

'Educational early childhood cartoon programs or lovable Australian characters, similar to Teletubbies*. Teen docos about life changes with positive role models. Music, dance and art shows made in Australia'*

'Less American cartoon nonsense and more home-grown Australian dramas, information and fun age-appropriate programs'

'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs'

'An Australian version of Sesame Street*'*

'Australian, British and Canadian programs that provide positive role models without stereotyping'

'Australian content reflecting our unique language, culture'.

The preference for shows that inspire activity was also evident in the plea for more shows about art and craft:

'Art shows and cooking shows—things that inspire kids to DO something'

'Arts and Crafts and Yoga or similar for kids—a program that you can watch with your child and either do the activities as you watch or put into action later in the day (something that extends beyond the activity of just watching TV)'

'I would like to see more shows like Play School*. It has been invaluable for my daughter in terms of language development and creative play. Just like the presenters she can find hours of fun in scraps of material, empty cotton spools and cardboard boxes. She will also discuss what she sees through the window (one of the devices in the program to introduce new topics) at later times showing the value of getting experience of activities and cultures not a part of her normal day.'*

Many parents wanted nature shows aimed at particular age groups:

'Nature shows aimed at children [aged] 5–8'

'Nature documentary, educational aimed at children aged 5 years'

'Nature and environmental type programs (an older version of Bindi*)'*

'More nature based shows for young kids'

'Australian content, science and nature, conservation and environment, interactive rather than passive (e.g. make and do)'.

Another aspect of the activity focus identified by parents was a desire for programs encouraging dance and movement. Respondents mentioned: Programs incorporating movement/dance/music

> *'Song and dance to keep kids active'*
>
> 'Mister Maker, *making things, craft based programs, dance programs (like* Bindi Kid-fitness *and* Justine Clarke*)…'*
>
> *'Programs where children are not just sitting on the lounge not moving. With these programs my children are either trying to do what they see at the time (dancing/moving) or are thinking about the craft so they can make it afterwards'*
>
> *'Shows that encourage story telling, music and dance in children; not just being entertained by others doing these things, but that promote this creativity'.*

Less often mentioned were cartoons. However there was a distinction drawn between good, non-violent cartoons, and the undesirable cartoons which showed excessive violence, and often had values which respondents identified as belonging to other cultures and saw as inappropriate for Australian children. Parents wanted:

> *'Old style cartoons'*
>
> *'Funny cartoons'*
>
> *'More stories—cartoons that are not violent, Manga or drawn very badly i.e. that silly American cartoon Sliced together…also rubbish*
>
> *'English or Australian cartoons, only if they were as good as the American ones…hate the American accent'*
>
> *'Less American cartoon nonsense and more home-grown Australian dramas, information and fun age-appropriate programs'.*

One program was identified more often than any other (apart from Play School) as being the sort of Australian program there should be more of, namely Round the Twist. When parents were trying to describe the sort of Australian children's drama they would like to see more of, this was the one they nominated. They wanted 'More things like Round the Twist'; 'Round the Twist, Lift Off – good stories, classics'; 'The Curiosity Show, Round the Twist, Play School'; 'More wholesome kid dramas that are not too heavy, like Round the Twist'.

8 Programs parents regard as bad for children

Programs that parents thought were actually bad for children were in most ways the inverse of those they would like to see more of. Programs that featured violence, showed guns being used or concentrated on crime were regarded as the most unsuitable for children.

Violence was mentioned more often than any other program features that parents think are bad for children (Table 3.18), especially violence perpetrated by the characters in the program with whom children tended to identify.

In response to the question 'Are there any kinds of program you think are actually bad for children?' one parent wrote:

> 'Yes. All the programs that promote violence and destruction. We should teach children that evil and bad behaviour have consequences. As they grow up they will adjust better in society since we have laws to follow and consequences for breaking them.'

Other programs or features nominated by parents as bad for children were:

> *'Bad cartoons depicting violence'*
>
> *'Cartoons where there is a lot of fighting and violence. I have seen this carry through into the school yard with many issues'*
>
> 'Ninja Turtles, *my son's behaviour changes when watching this.*'
>
> *'Films showing violence, family conflict, "dark" topics'*
>
> *'Excessive violence, especially graphic depiction. Inappropriate teaching of values—this is rife in today's programs'*
>
> *'Yes, anything that is violent or scary. Currently unsuitable shows for up to 6 year olds on ABC before 7.30 am'*
>
> *'Programs with mindless violence, bullying behaviour, scary themes'.*

There were many comments of this kind, indicating an awareness that watching violent behaviour could result in children reproducing elements of what they had seen, and generally coming to regard as acceptable behaviour which was quite outside the norms of our society and their family in particular. One parent particularly mentioned *'fighting as a means of problem solving'* as unacceptable.

Cartoons were listed as bad for children, but they were mainly so listed because of the content of some violent cartoons as opposed to the cartoon format (eg sword fighting in Japanese cartoons and animals being blown up or injured in

more traditional cartoons). As one parent put it: *'All in moderation but I balk at some of the more violent Japanese anime'*. However, some respondents also found the artistic quality of cartoons lacking, saying they were *'badly drawn'*.

There is a…tendency among programmers for anything in cartoon format to be regarded as suitable for children and therefore be broadcast at times when children are watching.

There is an apparent tendency among programmers for anything in cartoon format to be regarded as suitable for children and therefore be broadcast at times when children are watching. Many cartoons, as parents attest, are actually made for teenage or adult audiences and are quite unsuitable for preschool or young audiences. One parent wrote of 'scary cartoons that appear benign but give kids bad dreams'. Another made the point that 'Young children are not able to distinguish between real and fantasy and some shocking images from TV remain with them for life'.

Table 3.18 Programs (or features of programs) that parents think are bad for children

Program	Number of mentions
Violence / Crime	279
Cartoons	103
Ben 10	69
Music videos	48
Sex	36
News	28
American	16
Guns / weapons	13
Reality shows	10
Neighbours	9
Monsters	9

News programs are a source of real world images that may be violent or frightening when seen by young children. Many respondents thought the *'real suffering'* that could be accidentally encountered during some lapse in parental supervision could be quite harmful, and several pointed out that news items could be shown during children's viewing hours when parents were not expecting it. Images of war and reports of murders and sex crimes were mentioned as the kinds of content that were particularly likely to cause harm.

As one parent put it, one theme that is too frequently encountered is the *'endless violence and revenge that habituate children to violence'*.

Apart from violence, sex and adult themes were identified as particularly harmful. One parent mentioned in this latter category *'so called "family" soaps like* Home & Away, Neighbours *and anything with dysfunctional "real life" social dynamics with adult issues and relationships including the early sexualisation of children/youth'*. Several respondents noted that these programs are now shown in very early evening at times that would once have been reserved for children's programs.

Other aspects of sexual content that disturbed parents included *'cartoons that have violence and that encourage our children to be sexually aware before their time, with regard to theme, plot and dress of characters'*; also *'those which over-emphasise specific gender roles and "sexualise" young children'*. One parent made the point that some programs showed young children and 'tweens' looking for romantic relationships with each other.

One program source in which violent and adult themes were often encountered was in music videos. While these are targeted at a young adult audience, the fact that they appear in early morning timeslots at weekends means that children who are out of bed before their parents may see images that are intended for a much older audience. Music videos often include overtly sexual imagery. One parent identified as harmful *'anything like* Rage *which is so sexually explicit…it should so not be on first thing Saturday morning…'*.

Another, perhaps unexpected, source of inappropriate content is so-called 'reality' TV. Parents wrote of these: 'Funniest Home Videos *de-sensitises to human injuries/laughing at misfortune'; 'Harmful? Reality TV—All of it'; 'Reality TV shows aimed at "family" audiences … are not really suitable for children'*. As with the soap opera style programs, these programs are often broadcast in relatively early timeslots, but may unexpectedly address adult themes not suitable for a very young audience.

The question of the effect of watching violent TV content was directly addressed by a series of questions (see Table 3.19 below) designed to find out what parents knew about how this sort of content could affect their children.

About 25 per cent of respondents agreed with the proposition that the more violence children watched, the less effect it had on them. These parents may not have understood that what actually happens when children cease to be concerned about seeing violent acts is that they are becoming desensitised to violence (Cline, Croft & Courrier 1973). Children may then be quite unaware of the reality of the harm that violent acts cause, and therefore be more likely to commit violent acts or fail to recognise them as such when committed by others. This is in fact a very real effect, and certainly not one to be ignored by parents.

Most parents, however, were aware that children could be strongly affected by TV violence (Table 3.19). Children do not necessarily distinguish between TV

violence and real world violence, so they can be quite upset by it. Parents did not think TV violence was cathartic; in fact they agreed with the reverse, namely that children would be more likely to act out violent behaviour performed by powerful characters and that children who did this were more likely to be violent to others.

Most parents agreed that violent acts were more common in TV programs than in real life and they disagreed in general with the view that children who see violence on TV are less likely to worry about it in real life.

There is not such a consistent view about whether children can distinguish between cartoon and more realistic violence. This depends to some extent on the age of the child, so perhaps this question could have been more precisely worded and then would have been answered more precisely.

Parents' views on this topic are summarised in Table 3.19 below.

Table 3.19 Please tell us your views about the effect of watching violence on TV

	I agree	I disagree	I don't know	Response count
The more violence children see on TV the less effect it has on them	146	369	56	571
Children know TV violence is not real so it doesn't affect them	15	525	34	574
Children who act out violent scenes they see on TV are more likely to be violent to others	412	51	110	573
Watching violence on TV actually helps children get rid of their anger	4	540	32	576
Children under 18 months don't really pay attention to violent actions on TV	26	484	63	573
Violence in cartoons or fantasy stories is not seen in the same way as violence in more realistic programs	161	351	60	572
Children are less likely to copy violent acts if they are performed by the good or powerful characters in a story	26	470	80	576
Happy endings to stories are important as they help children overcome any bad feelings they may have from seeing violence in TV programs	144	308	123	575
Children who see violence on TV are less likely to worry about it in real life	40	475	59	574
Violent actions are much more common in TV programs than in real life	331	142	102	575

Parents were also asked to give their views on the effect of 'scary' images on children (Table 3.20). Most were concerned that disturbing images could stay with children for a long time. However, again there was a significant group of parents who thought that children could get used to them over time. This is hard to reconcile with the fact that almost all parents agreed with another statement in the survey, that *'It's especially important to avoid exposing very young children to scary images'*. Most parents thought scary images could cause unnecessary distress, and would not expose their young children to them.

Most respondents disagreed with the statement that scary images have been with us forever and that what children see today is no different. The ubiquity of visual images does appear to be a concern for parents now. There was virtually universal agreement that disturbing images can stay with children and cause distress.

Table 3.20 Responses to: Some images may be scary or uncomfortable to look at. What do you think about how these might affect children? Please choose a response to each statement.

	I agree	I disagree	I don't know	Response count
Scary images have been part of childhood forever. It's no different now and no worse.	58	453	63	574
A particular image might be startling to begin with, but children get used to them if they see them often and are no longer concerned.	108	404	61	573
Vivid images can stay in children's minds and cause unnecessary distress.	541	20	15	576
It's especially important to avoid exposing very young children to scary images as they can't understand their significance.	516	30	30	576

9 Advertising and children

Parents are concerned by the way advertisers target young children.

The overwhelming majority of parents are concerned by the way advertisers target young children and advertisements can make children unnecessarily sensitive to how they appear at a very young age. Parents also strongly believe that inappropriate sexual messages are used by advertisers in material likely to be viewed by young children. They place responsibility for this issue with the advertisers rather than with parents who need to oversee children's viewing (Table 3.21).

Table 3.21 Many parents are concerned that advertisers are directing material to children which treats them in a manner inappropriate for their age and emotional or sexual development. Does this concern you?

Answer options	I agree	I disagree	I don't know	Response count
Advertisements often make children worry about how they look as opposed to who they are	507	26	42	575
Obvious sexual messages in TV advertising directed to adults are seen by children when they are too young to understand them	471	64	40	575
It's not the fault of advertisers that parents let their children see images that are inappropriate	51	498	26	575

One of the perennial points of conflict between parents and advertisers is the broadcast of food advertisements during children's viewing times, especially advertisements for fast foods, and for breakfast cereals and other foods with high levels of sugar, salt and fat. Almost all respondents agreed that children are influenced to request food that is linked by marketing with special toys (Table 3.22). Most disapprove of this practice.

Parents do not think that children who see advertising early in life become inured to it, nor do they agree that children are capable of seeing through the wiles of advertisers.

Respondents were concerned that food habits learned early in life are hard to break, but less sure about the ability of high profile individuals who appear in advertisements to influence children's food choices. They did not think that food advertised on television reflected the content of a normal balanced diet.

Survey results suggest most parents do not think there are rules to prevent children from being exposed to advertising. They are apparently unfamiliar with the classification standards that state: 'The Children's Television Standards do not allow advertising during the times when P programs are broadcast and limit advertisements during the times when C programs are broadcast to no more than 5 minutes of advertisements in each 30 minute period, except in the case of Australian C drama.' (Australian Communications and Media Authority 2009, p16)

Several respondents reported having seen advertisements targeting children during programming directed at children but not specifically in the period the channel has identified as 'C' for the purpose of satisfying government classification standards. Programs classified as 'G' may include advertising directed at children. Overclassification of programs, in the sense of showing material clearly directed at young children but classified for an older age group, may occur. Since many parents are not aware of the nuances of the classification system (see 3.10), their reports are unlikely to be totally reliable on this matter.

Table 3.22 Please tell us what you think about TV advertising for food which is on at times when children are likely to be watching.

	I agree	I disagree	I don't know	Response Count
Children are very likely to be influenced to request foods linked with special toys	552	13	9	574
I approve of the selling of fast foods by linking them with special toys only available if you buy the food	36	519	20	575
Children who are exposed to advertising from an early age are less affected by it over time	32	470	72	574
Children are not stupid; they can tell when advertisers are not telling the truth	48	493	33	574
Food habits formed early in life are the hardest to break	533	21	20	574
Children are less likely to follow the food choices of high profile individuals such as TV presenters than their parents' choices	185	258	130	573
Manufacturers have a right to make money; it is not their fault if parents do not provide a balanced diet	129	416	29	574
Foods advertised on TV are a balanced sample of the normal diet	16	536	17	569
There are rules to prevent the exploitation of children in advertising and they are strictly followed	48	390	134	572

10 Classification of television programs

To determine whether parents were able to use the current system of program classification effectively, respondents were asked to explain the meaning of the classifications used on commercial television stations.

ABC channels…are not required to use the P and C classifications.

Given the generally high level of awareness about children's television displayed in the survey, the low numbers of correct responses given for the P and C ratings is surprising. However, these classifications are often not shown on current programs, and by their own admission, most parents limit their children's viewing to what is on ABC channels which are not required to use the P and C classifications. The programmers frequently use the G classification on all programs, and published programs in newspapers do not show the P and C ratings. It is also the case that the very short duration of the required P and C classification programs on commercial channels would make it hard for any but the most assiduous watcher to locate the times when the required children's programming is being shown. ACMA (2009) requires '130 hours of material classified as preschool (P) and 260 hours of material classified as children's (C) each year'. This is only half an hour per weekday for the P classification and one hour per weekday for C classification. Programs directed at children outside these times may be given different classifications and not be required to follow advertising and other guidelines.

Parents are clearly not using these classifications as a guide for choosing programs except at the most general level, ie to exclude programs that are only suitable for adults. The most freely available online guides do not mention any classification for programs (for example, http://www.ourguide.com.au/WebPages/SA_Adelaide.html).

Parents' knowledge of the meaning of the most important classifications relevant to young children is very limited (Table 3.23). It's clear from the responses that the P classification is very little known or understood, and only about half the parents surveyed could correctly define what was meant by the C classification.

Table 3.23 Knowledge of program classification

Classification	Proportion of correct responses
P rated material is intended for preschoolers	76/568
C rated material is intended for children	298/568
PG rated material recommends parental guidance for young viewers	566/568
G rated material is deemed suitable for general exhibition	558/568

Parents were asked what they would do to improve the choices available in children's programming. The options (Table 3.24) ranged from constraints on what could be broadcast and when to leaving it up to parents to be the supervisors of their children's viewing.

Options are listed in the table from most to least popular. The option of having a readily available and reliable channel showing only children's programs without advertisements was clearly the most popular. The least popular choice, leaving supervision up to parents, not only had the lowest number of first preferences, it was the last preference of most respondents. In other words, parents see themselves as the last line of defence in program choice. Certainly they would like more help in making sure there is a reliable place to go for good programs.

Parents cannot always prevent their children from viewing what they regard as inappropriate content. Children will visit other households and be supervised by people other than their parents from time to time. While parents may be careful with what happens in their own household, they must rely on external authorities to exercise appropriate choices if some more damaging effects of TV viewing are to be avoided. They are also not in a position to ensure that good Australian programming is available in sufficient quantity to be a genuine cultural force in their children's lives. Although this was the fourth choice in their list of preferences, perhaps there is a certain cynicism about the likelihood of achieving this aim.

Table 3.24 Preferences for ways of improving choices in children's programs

Answer options	
Provide special children's channels free to air	1
Limit types of TV programs and advertising during daytime hours	2
Educate parents on effects of TV viewing	3
Provide federal funding for more quality local TV for children	4
Provide onscreen information about the content and age suitability of all programs	5
Pass laws to make all TV channels show more quality children's programs	6
Allow adults to block unsuitable programs using electronic means	7
Leave it up to parents to do what's best for children	8

Of all the ways in which programs might be screened or blocked, the most preferred was an onscreen information system showing the classification of programs. Given that parents are unlikely, as earlier reported, to use parent locks to prevent access to unsuitable programs, and the fact that many do not use published timetables, it seems a way in which a parent can see classification information at the time of turning on the TV set would be most valued.

11 What parents would do to improve children's TV

At the end of the survey parents were asked 'If you were able to do something to change the way TV is provided for children, in terms of programs, advertising, etc., what would it be? Feel free to mention things you would like to see stopped, or things you think could be improved'.

Table 3.25 shows the most mentioned types of changes parents would like made. Top by far was advertising, but food, violence and sexual content were often mentioned as occurring in advertising during children's programming, so these topics might also be seen as part of what is being objected to when parents mention advertising as something they want less of. Parents said they would stop advertising altogether during children's programs and would ban junk food advertisements. Respondents also found promotions for adult programs scheduled for later in the evening were quite unacceptable during children's viewing times. For example:

> *'No advertising during children's programs, No advertising within children's programs, No violence in children's programs, No news bulletins or advertising of adult programs during children's programs.'*
>
> *'Ban ALL food advertising in child viewing hours—the toys we can cope with; the relentless junk food and sugar-cereal is too much.'*
>
> *'No advertising directed at children (e.g. [for] toys, junk food) during their TV shows.'*
>
> *'I cannot believe that television stations advertise after hour programs during daytime viewing. I think it is disgusting that I can be watching TV during the day and an ad for* Criminal Minds *or* CSI *or any other M rated show can be on. Some of those ads scare me, so I could just imagine what it could do to a poor child. I wish they would get rid of all these SICK programmes altogether.'*
>
> *'I have all but given up on it. There is too much rubbish on, and the special interest groups have total control. They are indoctrinating our kids, so we play board games, chess, etc. or go to the beach instead. TV has essentially lost us, particularly they way the networks delay shows, advertise during the actual program, and advertise anything, from gambling, late night porn, etc.'*
>
> *'I was shaken to see how literally my 4yo responded to an ad that said 'ask your parents' and he did, immediately. Advertising aimed at children should be eliminated. They, themselves (children) are not making the purchasing decision and advertising makes parental control harder.'*

Some parents wanted advertising limited in some way, for example: *'Group advertisements before start/after finish of program on commercial TV'*; *'Advertising Free Time Slots'*; *'No advertising at certain times'*; *'Ban all advertising from children's TV (Pass laws)'*; *'Less or no advertising in children's viewing times, restrictions on TV promo advertising in daytime viewing'.*

Food advertising in particular was a pet hate of parents who responded to the survey, for example:

> *'Ban food advertising at children's time (children don't do the grocery shopping)'*
>
> *'Less emphasis on body images, "must have" fads, advertising "junk food". See more encouragement in getting children outdoors, making and creating …. and promoting a healthy lifestyle and body image'*
>
> *'Stop unhealthy fast food advertising'; 'Strict control of ads for content, bans on inappropriate foods'; 'No bad food advertising during kids shows'; 'Food should NOT be advertised during shows, unless it is healthy foods i.e. fruit and vegies'; 'Keep kids' programming off commercial television. Prohibit advertising targeting children for foods, toys, etc. Replace them with public health messaging that kids understand about exercise, hygiene, nutrition, etc. in between set programs'.*

Violence, especially when there was no warning it was likely to be part of the content, was particularly mentioned as something parents would like to eliminate. Comments included:

> *'Don't show violence at all on TV, even on the news. News is often watched by parents at times when children are still around and watching too, even if it is not meant to be seen by children.*
>
> *'Less violence and aggression, less sexually explicit imagery, less guns, more shows depicting good values and conflict resolution skills among characters, less dark or frightening imagery in commercial programs or movies directed at young children (eg Disney and Pixar features films)'*
>
> *'Family viewing should be up to 7.30 pm. However during this time slot there is advertising for programs later in the evening which is inappropriate re violence or crime etc.'*
>
> *'Ban violent shows altogether'*
>
> *'I can't understand why we play violent or nasty programs during the day. I would like to see a complete ban on violent programs during children's viewing hours. Why teach our children to harm one another or speak badly? Surely we should spend this time offering programs that enrich their lives rather*

"Surely we should spend this time offering programs that enrich their lives."

than teach them bad habits. I am also concerned about the way in which young girls are influenced. Why make them feel the need to grow up before their time?'

'If only more parents controlled the type of programs they allow their children to watch. The effects are not limited to their own children'.

Many parents would like to see information provided about the appropriateness of programs so they could prevent their children seeing age-inappropriate, violent or scary images. For example, one respondent suggested a warning similar to that provided for Indigenous people: '*This program is likely to scare your children*'. Other comments included:

'I would like appropriate ages for the program flashed up during the show'

'More defined age groups of children's TV, i.e. not recommended for children under 3, 5, 8 etc.'

'More regulation, compulsory warnings on DVDs just like cigarette advertising outlining the rating, age appropriateness and listing specific aspects of content that may have negative consequences for young children if viewed'

"I would like to understand the criteria for ratings a little better."

'I would like to understand the criteria for ratings a little better. What constitutes a G rating these days is confusing, especially when movies are concerned. There is a big difference between a G rating for a Thomas movie and a G rating for a Toy Story movie. I still do not understand the need for violent programs, such as Ben 10 [and] Ninja Turtles, and what they are doing being shown to young children.

'Have something that says "Kids this is scary. You might not want to watch it"'

'I think commercial channels have an obligation to limit adverts in the morning and afternoon, especially advertising containing sexual and junk food content.'

Table 3.25 What parents would do to improve children's TV—most common topics of responses

Topic	Number of mentions
Regulate content/amount advertising	242
Limit food ads	147
Reduce violence	85
Raise quality of cartoons	20
More Australian/Local content	43
Choose ABC	44
Limit sex/adult oriented content	67

Sexually explicit advertising, adult themes in children's programs and advertising for adult programs to be shown later in the day are all a concern for parents. Respondents wrote, for example:

> *'Stop putting so many aggressive and violent, sexually orientated shows on first things in the mornings as a majority of kids 5 and under are awake earlier than a 8–10 year old. Saturday programs are pathetic'*

> *'Limit or remove all sexualisation of children (intentional or not)'.*

Parents objected to:

> *'Sexualisation of young children in the media'*

> *'Sexualised advertising and movies that are rated inappropriately for young children e.g.* Harry Potter, Batman*'; 'sexual ads'*

> *'sex/drug use/cigarettes/adult themes (inferred actual, simulated or advertised)'*

> *'I would say that before 7:30 pm, no ads should feature sex scenes (like an ad for a TV show showing two people in bed or kissing like ads for* Home and Away*) or products for adults'.*

Cartoons came in for special mention as a genre, mainly because of violent content (as previously mentioned) but also for what one parent called their 'mind-numbing' quality. Respondents noted the prevalence of violent or adult themes in cartoons:

> *'Ensure that all parents know that just because it's a cartoon, does NOT make it suitable for children'*

> *'Remove all scary images, including from cartoons'*

'There are so many cartoons or programs with aliens, devil/demon characters, and witch/wizard characters!! It would be great to see them cut right down and to have more educational and "in the real world" type programs'

'There should be a tighter monitor on types of cartoons before 7 pm, like The Simpsons *or* Stoked*'.*

Cartoons of the 'mind numbing' variety which parents would like to see fewer of were described in various ways:

'Programs where the characters cannot speak, but merely use baby-talk (unless they are of course, a baby)'

'Aliens and lalaland stuff, and things/characters that don't speak English (or any other language for that matter) are really annoying'.

"Just because it is a cartoon doesn't make it suitable for children."

As one parent wrote *'Get rid of all the crappy cartoons. Just because it is a cartoon doesn't make it suitable for children'.*

Some parents put in a plea for more positive values:

'Many children's TV shows convey a number of positive political values such as tolerance, listening and communicating. However, they can also represent a conservative political ideology that punishes individual initiative, opposes critique and change, and relegates females to supportive roles. I would like to see the latter removed from all children's programs'

'See to it that respect, kindness, etc. are promoted, and not give repeated examples of the opposite, e.g. Funniest Home Videos, The Simpsons'

'More focus on family shows between 6 and 9 pm which are fun and stimulating for everyone; violence and poor taste are bad for grownups too. TV only for specific age groups is very divisive. We should all be on the couch together.'

12 Summary of survey findings

The survey elicited a wide range of views on many aspects of this vexed topic. However, there was considerable agreement on many of the major issues. Most parents expressed concern at the effect television viewing was having on their children. Most wanted to protect their children, especially from exposure to violent, scary or adult themes or images.

As a group, parents are… open to education about the effects of television on their children.

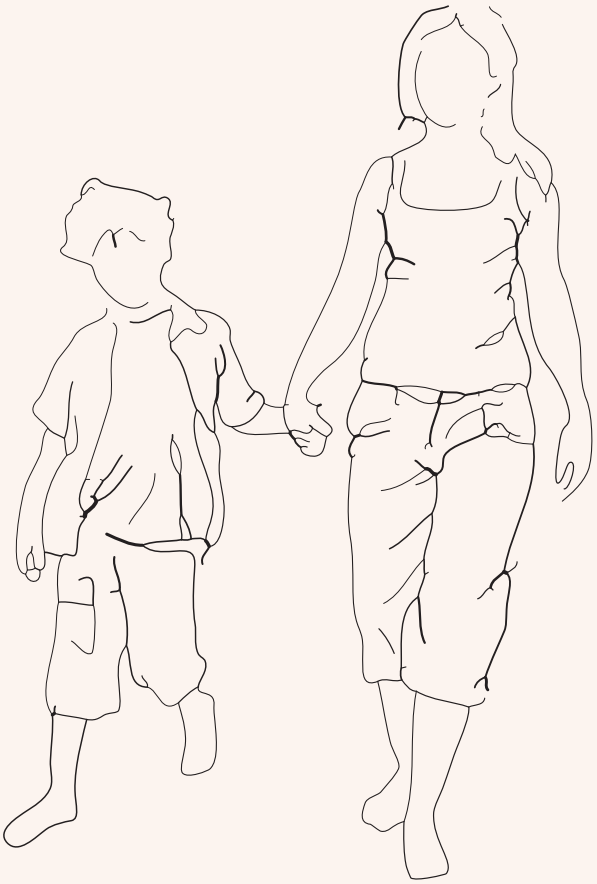
While parents used a variety of means to ensure children's television viewing was appropriate and even beneficial, they would like some help with this by way of regulation, availability of reliable sources of good programming, and clear labelling of programs concerning their content and suitability for particular age groups. As a group, parents are generally open to education about the effects of television on their children, though many are already well-informed and obviously careful consumers of the media. However, the ubiquity of various media sources itself constitutes a threat to any parent's own attempt to make their child's viewing a positive and enriching experience. Children's experience is not limited to what is available in their own homes.

To be guaranteed that television will generally be beneficial as an influence, there does need to be some limit on those uses of it that can be damaging to early development. It will be much easier for adults to provide appropriate viewing if children's programs are shown without interruption by extraneous material, particularly material like advertisements or promotion of adult content, which requires continual editing or censoring by a responsible adult. Parents object to what they consider to be exploitation of children by linking their favourite viewing to commercial ends and encouraging them to nag parents to buy food or toys.

Dedicated channels like ABC3, which have little or no advertising, are clearly easier for all adults to monitor. In addition, parents need to be able to choose appropriate programming for children at various stages of development. A fairly widespread lack of knowledge among parents about current classification needs to be addressed, and this needs to be matched by clear labelling of programs in ways that are easily accessed by viewers.

Parents would like to see an emphasis on programs that appeal to all children, boys and girls, and that acknowledge and value a range of cultures.

Parents want quality programs that are Australian made, encourage good social relationships and encourage activity, inquiry, problem solving, artistic pursuits, and good moral qualities. The programs parents remember from their youth are those that valued gentleness and caring in interpersonal relationships, placed a positive value on education and on knowledge of science and nature, and were also fun and active, engaging children in dance, music, art and craft. Not surprisingly, these are the values they would also like to see reflected in their children's viewing. In addition, they would like to see an emphasis on programs that appeal to all children, boys and girls, and that acknowledge and value a range of cultures.



Summary and conclusions

Quality children's television is inspiring, educative and culturally enriching.

Quality children's television is inspiring, educative and culturally enriching. It can contribute to many facets of a child's development and provide a bridge between home and the wider society that is beneficial to both. Poor quality TV, on the other hand, may exploit, humiliate and disturb children and prematurely expose them to an adult world which they may be ill equipped to cope with. While TV is only one element of the range of media to which children are exposed, it is still among the most powerful, especially as it has a society-wide reach and is viewed on a daily basis in most homes.

Quality programs enable the retelling of the enduring stories of our culture and the expression of the creative spirit of our society. The opportunity to use this medium positively to support children's development should not be missed. As the parents consulted in this study attest, good programs are long remembered and regarded with affection. They educate, inform and impart understanding and attitudes that affect not only the individuals concerned but the families they eventually create and care for.

It is therefore somewhat surprising that the most consistent comments to come from the focus groups and the survey relate to parents' concerns about the fact that their children are being inculcated via television with views they see as foreign to their way of life and endorsing many values they do not welcome. The prevalence of violence and the lack of gentleness and kindness as positive virtues were among the most mentioned features of young children's television programs. Parents also objected to commercial exploitation of children, especially the linking of children's TV characters to fast foods. Many respondents objected to the way in which material directed at children exploited sexual imagery more appropriate to an older audience.

Play School was the most remembered program of the parents' youth and the most highly regarded for their own children. The careful construction of this program — including the choice of presenters, the pace of the program, the focus on particular themes, dealing only with a few things at a time, always encouraging active participation, and demonstrating how to make or do things in a manner that young children could readily follow — are the factors that made the program memorable in the past and highly valued now. The fact that the program is Australian was also seen as important. *Sesame Street* had a strong following but lacked the overwhelming endorsement of the home-grown product. No similar program had equivalent status for children in older age groups.

Most parents who participated in the survey had a reasonable grasp of child development and were aware of the features that made programs suitable for particular ages. Nevertheless, they did not always find themselves in a position to monitor children's viewing and ensure that what their children watched was appropriate. Many felt that there should be firmer control of the kind of programs that were broadcast at times when children were likely to be watching television. They particularly objected to overtly sexual music videos being shown in early morning timeslots, and to grisly images in news programs broadcast during the day and in the early evening.

Preventing children from being exposed to programs that were unsuitable for them was a problem for most parents, and many resorted to banning commercial TV altogether. This had two advantages: restricting both program content and eliminating advertising as a source of children's pestering behaviour.

The availability of dedicated children's channels on free-to-air ABC channels has changed the viewing environment. Many parents trust the ABC to provide appropriate offerings in a way they do not trust commercial sources.

Most families encompass children from a range of ages. Choosing 'family' viewing is therefore a challenge. Determining whether a program designed for older children might contain material that parents would prefer younger children not to see is a common problem.

Parents use a range of techniques to censor or ban inappropriate content. Turning off the television in response to unwanted content is often too late to prevent the damage that was feared. Where children choose their own programs, adult monitoring needs to be constant to be effective, and is unlikely to be available at all times. Parents who wish to guarantee only appropriate viewing by their children need to know in advance what the program content is. Finding classification information is difficult. Published guides often show only G and PG ratings, and tuning in after the beginning of the program means that the station's own advance information is missed.

Very few parents who responded to this study were aware of the P rating for preschoolers. So even if the information is available, some of the most precise classification information bypasses the people for whom it is intended. More were aware of the C classification, but the roughly 50 per cent of parents who did not know what it means are missing out on relevant information to make an informed choice.

Poor quality television may… prematurely expose children to an adult world they are ill equipped to cope with.

Parents were easily able to understand the rating instrument devised by Commonsense Media (see Appendix B) but its use would require some on-screen information to be available or searchable during the entire showing of a program in order for it to be effective. Parents who said they would use a rating scheme indicated that an on-screen digital display would be the most effective and useful device for parents. It would need to be available where and when the program was about to be viewed, as opposed to being only at the beginning of the program or in a separate publication.

Parents are seriously concerned about the quality of programming available for young children.

This study has shown that parents are seriously concerned about the quality of programming available for young children. Many, if not most, actively monitor their children's viewing and have strong views on what should be available. They would choose quality local, age-appropriate programs over imported offerings where available, and understand from their own experience the value of good programs. Their very strong opinions about TV violence, fast food advertising and adult materials intruding on children's viewing need to be taken seriously. Their desire to protect their children from these adverse influences should be supported by the availability of a well understood classification system with information available at the time and place they are making decisions on their children's behalf.

References

Alexander, A., Hoerrner, K. & Duke, L. (1998). What Is Quality Children's Television? *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 557: 70–82.

American Academy of Pediatrics (2010). Policy statement on media education. *Pediatrics*, 126(5).

American Academy of Pediatrics (2010). Health effects of media on children and adolescents. *Pediatrics*, 125(4).

American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Public Education (2001). Children, Adolescents and Television. *Pediatrics*, 107(2): 423–426.

American Academy of Pediatrics. Committee on Public Education (1999). Media education. *Pediatrics*, 104 (2, pt1): 341–343.

Anderson, D.R. (1998). Educational Television Is Not an Oxymoron. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 557: 24–38.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (2009). Countdown to ABC 3, media release. Viewed 22 December 2010, http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/media/s2602161.htm

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (2009). Editorial policies. Viewed 22 December 2010, http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/documents/EdPols07_updateFeb09_FIN%20tools.pdf

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (2008). Code of Practice revised. Viewed 22 December 2010, http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/documents/200806_codeofpractice-revised_2008.pdf

Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (1982) Third progress report of Children's Program Committee. Sydney.

Australian Communications and Media Authority (2007a). Children's Viewing Patterns on Commercial, Free-to-Air and Subscription Television, Report analysing audience and ratings data for 2001, 2005 and 2006. Sydney.

Australian Communications and Media Authority (2007b). Media and communications in Australian families 2007: Report to the media and society research project. Sydney.

Australian Communications and Media Authority (2009). *Children's Television Standards*, Subsection 122 (1) of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*. Sydney: ACMA.

Australian Communications and Media Authority (2009). *Guide to the Children's Television Standards 2009*. Sydney: ACMA.

Australian Communications and Media Authority (2010). *History of Children's Television Standards (CTS)*. Commonwealth of Australia. Viewed 18 November 2010, http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_91816

Australian Communications and Media Authority (2010). *Make a Report or Complaint*. Commonwealth of Australia. Viewed 2 December 2010, http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=CONTACT_COMPLAINTS_OVIEW

Australian Council on Children and the Media (2010). *Know before you go.* Viewed 22 December 2010, www.childrenandmedia.org.au

Australian Institute of Family Studies (2005). *Growing up in Australia: a longitudinal study of Australian children.* Melbourne: AIFS

**Australian Psychological Society (2000). *Media Representations and Responsibilities: Psychological Perspectives: Position Paper.* Viewed 22 December 2010. http://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/media_position_paper.pdf

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2009). *ARACY ARC/NHMRC Research Network Annual Report 2009: New knowledge for better outcomes for children and young people.* Perth: ARACY.

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2010). *Young children and the media: a discussion paper.* Perth: ARACY.

Barr, R. & Linebarger, D.L. (2010). Special Issue on the Content and Context of Early Media Exposure, *Infant and Child Development*, 19: 553–556.

Barr, R., Lauricella, A., Zack, E. (2010). Infant and early childhood exposure to adult-directed and child-directed television programming relations with cognitive skills at age four. *Merrill Palmer Quarterly* 56(1): 21–48.

Baydar, N., Kagitcibasi, C., Küntay, A.C. & Göksen, F. (2008). Effects of an educational television program on preschoolers: variability in benefits. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 29: 349–360.

Berk, L. (2003). *Child Development*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Browne, K.D. & Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. (2005). The influence of violent media on children and adolescents: a public-health approach. *Lancet*, 365: 702–710.

**Buckingham, D., Davies, H., Jones, K. & Kelley, P. (1999). Public service goes to market: British children's television in transition. *Media Information Australia* 93: 65–76

Buijzen, M. & Mens, C. (2007). Adult mediation of television advertising effects: A comparison of factual, evaluative, and combined strategies. *Journal of Children and Media*, 1: 177–191.

Buizjen, M. & Valkenburg, P.(2005). Parental mediation of undesired advertising effects. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 49(2): 153–166.

Calvert, S.L. & Kotler, J.A. (2003). Lessons from children's television: The impact of the Children's Television Act on children's learning. *Applied Developmental Psychology*, 24: 275–335.

Cantor, J., Byrne, S., Moyer-Guse, E., Riddle, K. (2010). Descriptions of media-induced fright reactions in a sample of US elementary school children. *Journal of Children and Media*, 4(1): 1–17.

Cantor, J. (1998). "Mommy I'm scared": how TV and movies frighten children and what we can do to protect them. San Diego CA: Harvest.

Cantor, J. & Nathanson, A. (1996). Children's fright reactions to television news. *Journal of Communication* 46(4): 139–152.

Chakroff, J. (2007). Parental mediation of advertising and consumer communication: The effectiveness of parental intervention on young children's materialistic attitudes. Dissertation presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University. Viewed 12 November 2008 http://etd.ohiolink.edu/view.cgi?acc_num=osu1190001119

Chaplin, L.N. & John, D.R. (2007). Growing up in a material world: Age differences in materialism in children and adolescents. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(4): 480–493

Cheng, S., Maede, T., Yoichi, S. & Yamagata, Z. (2010). Early television exposure and children's behavioural outcomes at age 30 months. *Journal of Epidemiology*, 20 (Suppl 2): S482–9.

Children's Television Workshop (1990). *What research indicates about the educational effects of Sesame St.* New York: CTW. [Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED340498.pdf]

Chonchaiya, W. & Pruksananonda, C. (2008). Television viewing associates with delayed language development. *Acta Paediatrica*, 97: 977–982.

Christakis, D. & Zimmerman, F.J. (2009). Young children and media: limitations of current knowledge and future directions for research. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 52(8): 1177–1185.

Christakis, D. (2009b). The effects of infant media usage: what do we know and what should we learn? *Acta Paediatrica*, 98(1): 8–16.

Cline, V. B., Croft, R. G. & Courrier, S. (1973). Desensitization of children to television violence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 27(3): 360–365.

Connor, S. (2006). Food-related advertising on pre-school television: building brand recognition in young viewers. *Pediatrics*, 118(4): 1478–1485.

Courage, M. & Howe, M. (2010). To watch or not to watch: infants and toddlers in a brave new electronic world. *Developmental Review*, 3092: 101–115.

Courage, M. & Setliff, A. (2009). Debating the impact of television and video material on very young children: attention, learning and the developing brain. *Child Development Perspectives*, 3(1): 72–78.

Crossfield, J. (2008). *A lament for kids' TV*. Viewed 25 October 2010 http://www.jonathancrossfield.com/blog/2008/06/a-lament-for-childrens-tv.html

Cupit, C.G. (1987). *The Child Audience: A guide to the developing child for television writers and producers.* Canberra: Australian Broadcasting Tribunal. Children's Program Committee.

Derksen, D. & Strasburger, V.C. (1996). Media and television violence: Effects on violence, aggression, and antisocial behaviors in children. In Allan F Hoffman (ed), *Schools, violence, and society.* Westport CT, US: Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group. (pp. 61–77)

Edgar, P. & Edgar D. (2008). *Television, digital media and children's learning.* Melbourne: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/earlyyears/Edgar_Paper_20081223.pdf

Edgar, P. (2007). *Children's Television: Regulation, Production and Funding.* Conference Address, La Asociacion Nacional de Anunciantes de Colombia, 30 August to 2 September, 2007. Viewed 19 November 2010, http://114.76.87.232:8080/PatriciaEdgarAndDonEdgar/selectedspeeches/ss_childrenstelevisionRPF.aspx

Edgar, P (2007b) A Challenge to the status quo in children's media in Australia. Viewed 11/10 2010 http://www.youngmedia.org.au/pdf/Challenge_status_quo.pdf

Edgar, P. (2006). *Bloodbath: a memoir of Australian television.* Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Fender, J.G., Richert, R.A., Robb, M. B. & Wartella, E. (2010). Parent Teaching Focus and Toddlers' Learning from an Infant DVD. *Infant and Child Development,* 19: 613–627.

Forrester, C. (2008). France bans kiddie channels. Rapid TV News, 21 August 2008.

Free TV (2010). *Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice.* [Retrieved 9 December 2010 from http://www.freetv.com.au/media/Code_of_Practice/2010_Commercial_Television_Industry_Code_of_Practice.pdf]

Funk, J.B., Baldacci, H., Pasold, T. & Baumgardner, J. (2004). Violence exposure in real-life, video games, television, movies, and the internet: Is there desensitization? *Journal of Adolescence*, 27(1): 23–39.

Funk, J.B., Brouwer, J., Curtiss, K. & McBroom, E. (2009). Parents of preschoolers: expert media recommendations and ratings knowledge, media-effects beliefs, and monitoring practices. *Pediatrics* 123(3): 981–988.

Furst, K. (2009). Children's TV with real children in leading roles. *Televizion*, 22: 11–12.

Gabrelian, N., Blumberg, F.C. & Hogan, T.M. (2009). The effects of appeal on children's comprehension and recall of content in educational television programs. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 30: 161–168.

Gadbury, S. (1980). IQ effects of restricting first graders' TV-viewing on leisure time use, change and cognitive style. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 1: 45–57.

Georgetown University (2010). *Educational TV: 30 years of* Sesame Street *research*. Viewed 21 December 2010, http://www.elp.georgetown.edu/linktext.cfm?lid=8

Gotz, M. (2009). Eureka! That's quality! *Televizion,* 22: 10–12.

Gotz, M. (2007). Television viewing from before birth up to the age of 5: a review of the research literature. *Televizion*, 20: 12–17.

Gotz, M. (2007). What constitutes a good preschool program?: some ideas for TV producers drawn from research. *Televizion,* 20: 18.

Grewenig, S. (2009). 10-Point Plan for Quality: Statement from a programme maker for public TV. *Televizion*, 22: 7–9.

Guernsey, L. (2007). Into the minds of babes: how screen time affects children from birth to age 5. Philadelphia, PA, US: Basic Books.

Harrison, C. (2004). Excellence in television for young children — entertainment, engagement and empowerment. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 29 (2): 50–57

Hart, B. and Risley, T. (1995). Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children. Baltimore, US: Brookes.

Huston, A., Bickham, D.S., Lee, J. H. & Wright, J.C. (2007). From attention to comprehension: how children watch and learn from television. In Pecora, N. Murray, J.P. & Wartella, E.A. (eds). *Children and television: 50 years of research.* Manwah NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Huston, A.C., Wright, J.C., Alvarez, M., Ruglio, R., Itch, M. & Piemyat, S. (1995). Perceived Television Reality and Children's Emotional and Cognitive Responses to its Social Content. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 16: 231–251.

Jaffe, K. (2010). *Tips for Picking Good TV Shows*. FamilyEducation website. Viewed 29 November 2010, http://fun.familyeducation.com/television/parenting/35759.html

Jennings, N. and Wartella, E. (2007). Advertising and consumer development. In Pecora, N. Murray, J.P. & Wartella, E.A. (eds). *Children and television: 50 years of research*. Manwah NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Jordan, A.B. (1997). Children and Television: A Conference Summary. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 550 (supplement): 153–167.

Josephson, W.L. (1995). *Television violence: a review of the effects on children of different ages.* National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. Ontario, Canada: Health Canada.

Kaiser Family Foundation (2005). The effects of electronic media on children ages zero to six: a history of research. California.

Kaiser Family Foundation (2003). Zero to six: electronic media in the lives of infants, toddlers and preschoolers. California.

Kirkorian, H.L, Wartella, E.A, Anderson, D.R. (2008). Media and young children's learning. *Future of Children* 18(1): 39–61.

Korthonen, P. & Lahikainen, A.R. (2008). Recent trends in young children's television-induced fears in Finland. *Journal of Children and Media*, 2(2): 147–162.

Kuhl, P. K., Tsao, F.M, Liu, H.M (2003). Foreign language experience in infancy: effects of short term exposure and social interaction on phonetic learning. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA*, 100: 9096–9101.

Kunkel, D. (1998). Policy Battles over Defining Children's Educational Television. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 557: 39–53.

Linebarger, D. L. & Vaala, S. E. (2010). Screen media and language development in infants and toddlers: an ecological perspective. *Developmental Review*, 30(2): 176–202.

Lynch, J. S., van den Broek, P., Kremer, K. E., Kendeou, P., White, M. & Lorch, E. P. (2008). The development of narrative comprehension and its relation to other early reading skills. *Reading Psychology*, 29(4): 327–365.

Manganello, J.A., Taylor, C.A., (2009). Television exposure as a risk factor for aggressive behavior among 3-year-old children. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 163(11): 1037–1045.

Media Awareness (2010). *Talking to Your Kids about Television*. Viewed 1 December 2010, http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/parents/television/talking_to_kids_tv.cfm

Mendelsohn, A.L., Brockmeyer, C.A., Dreyer, B.P., Fierman, A.H. Berkule-Silberman, S.B. & Tomopoulos, S. (2010). Do verbal interactions with infants during electronic media exposure mitigate adverse impacts on their language development as toddlers? *Infant and Child Development*, 19: 577–593.

Mikos, L. (2009). Quality is a matter of perspective: Thoughts on how to define quality in children's television. *Televizion*, 22: 4–6.

Mistry, K.B, Minkovitz, C.S., Strobino, D.M. & Borzokowski, D.L. (2007). Children's television exposure and behavioral and social outcomes at 5.5 years: does timing of exposure matter? *Pediatrics*, 120(4): 762–769.

Moore, C. & Dunham, P.J. (1995). *Joint attention: its origins and role in development*. Hillsdale NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Morley, B. (2007). *National survey of TV food advertising to children*. Melbourne: Coalition on Food Advertising to Children.

Myers-Walls, J. (1987). Children: Vigilant Parents Fill Media's Gaps. *Media & Values*, 38: Viewed 10 November 2010 http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/children-vigilant-parents-fill-medias-gaps

Nadel, M.S. (2000). Empower Parents to Choose Quality Children's Television. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 19(1): 145–147.

Nathanson, A.I. (2001). Parent and child perspectives on the presence and meaning of parental television mediation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 45: 210–220.

Nickelodeon Australia (2010) *Nick Jr.* Viewed 23/12/10 http://www.nickjr.com.au/parents.php and http://www.nickjr.com.au/faq.php

Nunez-Smith, M., Emanuel J.E. & Gross, C.P. (2008). *Media and Child and Adolescent Health: A Systematic Review.* New Haven, CT: Common Sense Media and the Department of Clinical Bioethics, National Institutes of Health.

Office of the United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights (1990). *International Convention on the Rights of the Child.* http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm

Olds, T., Ridley, K. & Dollman, J. (2006). Screenieboppers and extreme screenies: the place of screen time in the time budgets of 10–13 year old Australian children. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 30(2): 137.

Pagani, L.S., Fitzpatrick, C., Barnette, T.A. & Dubow, E. (2010). Prospective associations between early childhood television exposure and academic, psychosocial and physical well being by middle childhood. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 164(5): 425–431.

Palmer, E.L. (1988). *Television and America's children: a crisis of neglect.* New York, US: Oxford University Press.

Plenk, A. (2009). "I think it's very good because ...": children's perspectives on quality film and television. *Televizion,* 22: 21–25

Potter, A. (2002). Internationalising Australian Children's Television Drama: The Collision of Australian Cultural Policy and Global Market Imperatives. (University of Queensland Master of Arts thesis). Viewed 29/12/10, http://eprints.qut.edu.au/16016/1/Anna_Potter_Thesis.pdf

Reich, K., Speck-Hamdan, A. & Gotz, M. (2009). Quality for educational programs. *Televizion*, 22: 40–45.

Rich, M. (2007). Is television healthy? The medical perspective. In Pecora, N., Murray, J.P. & Wartella, E.A. (eds), *Children and television: 50 years of research.* Manwah NJ,US: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Rosenkoetter, L.I., Rosenkoetter, S.E. & Acock, A.C. (2009). Television violence: An intervention to reduce its impact on children. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 30: 381–397.

Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne and Murdoch Children's Research Institute (2009). *Television and early childhood development: Policy brief 16.* Viewed 22 November 2009, www.rch.org/ccch/policybriefs.cfm

**Schmidt, M. E., Rich, M., Rifas-Shiman, S.L., Oken, E. & Taveras, E. (2009). Television viewing in infancy and child cognition at 3 years of age. *Pediatrics*, 123(3): e370-e375. http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/123/3/e370.full

Schmidt, M., Pempek, T., Kirkorian, H. L., Lund, A. F. & Anderson, D.R. (2008). The effects of background television on the toy play behavior of very young children. *Child Development*, 79(4): 1137–1151.

Schmidt, M.E. & Anderson, D.R. (2007). The impact of television on cognitive development and educational achievement. In Pecora, N., Murray, J.P. & Wartella, E.A. (eds). *Children and television: 50 years of research*. Manwah NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Schooler, C. & Flora, J. A. (1996). Pervasive Media Violence. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 17: 275–298.

Screen Australia (2010). *Children's television drama*. Viewed 22/12/10, http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/industry_support/Production/ChildrensTV.asp

Smith, S.L. & Moyer-Guse, E. (2006). Children and the war on Iraq: developmental differences in fear responses to television news coverage. *Media psychology*, 8(3): 13–237.

Smith, S.L. & Donnerstein, E. (1998). Harmful effects of exposure to media violence: Learning of aggression, emotional desensitization, and fear. In Geen, R.G. & Donnerstein, E. (Eds). *Human aggression: Theories, research, and implications for social policy.* San Diego, CA: Academic Press. (pp. 167–202).

Sparks, G.G. (1986). Developmental differences in children's reports of fear induced by the mass media. *Child Study Journal*, 16(1): 55–66.

Steemers, J. (2009). The thin line between market and quality. *Televizion*, 22: 53–55.

Strasburger, V. & Wilson, B. (2002). *Children, adolescents and the media*. Thousand Oaks CA, US: Sage.

Thorn, W.J. (2008). Pre-school children and the media. *Communications research trends*, 27(2): 3–27.

Today Television (undated). France bans broadcast of TV shows for babies. Viewed 6 January 2011, http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/26312386/ns/today-entertainment/

Tomopoulos, S., Dreyer, B. P., Berkule, S., Fierman, A.H., Brockmeyer, C. & Mendelsohn, A.P. (2010). Infant media exposure and toddler development. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 164(12): 1105–1111.

Valkenburg, P.M. & Cantor, J. (2001). The development of a child into a consumer, *Applied Developmental Psychology*, 22: 61–72.

Van Evra, J.P. (1998). *Television and child development*. 2nd ed. Manwah NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Wainwright, D.K. (2006). *Ready to learn: Literature review series*. PBS Children's Media Center. Viewed 21 December 2010, http://pbskids.org/read/files/BOB-PARTI-ElementsofSuccessfulEdTV.PDF

Wallmark, R. (2009). Don't avoid problematic topics, but try and see them through children's eyes. *Televizion*, 22:11.

Ward, S. & Potter, A. (2010). *H2O*: just add branding. Producing high-quality children's TV drama for multi-channel environments. *Media International Australia,* 133: 31–42.

Warren, R. (2003). Parental mediation of preschool children's television viewing. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 47(3): 394–417.

Williams, F. and Williams, V. (1985). The Technological Child. *Media & Values,* 30. Viewed 20 November 2010, http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/technological-child

Young Media Australia (2008). *Resource package to support parents in reducing exposure to food ads*. Adelaide: YMA. Viewed 27 December 2010 http://www.youngmedia.org.au/pdf/TT2_product-evaluation_Apr08.pdf

Young Media Australia (2007). *Fight-free media list*. Adelaide: YMA. Viewed 27 December 2010, http://www.youngmedia.org.au/mediachildren/11_01_reel_real_reviews.htm

Young Media Australia (2007). *Reducing reel to real violence: parent survey final report*. Adelaide: YMA. Viewed 27 December 2010, http://www.youngmedia.org.au/pdf/reel_real/nccpp_final-report_may07.pdf

Young Media Australia (2001). *Submission to the OFLC review of classification guidelines*. Adelaide: YMA. Viewed 27 December 2011, http://www.youngmedia.org.au/pdf/Submissions/yma_submission_oflc_2001.pdf

Young Media Australia (1997). *Submission to the ACMA Children's Television Standards review*. Adelaide: YMA. Viewed 27 December 2010, http://www.youngmedia.org.au/pdf/Submissions/yma_submission_acma_cts_07.pdf

Young Media Australia (1995). Healthy Use of TV: Background Facts and Ideas. In *Off 'n' On Kit, Healthy Use of TV: A guide for Children's Professionals*, Adelaide: Kitchener Press.

Young Media Australia (2009). *Children's Television*. Viewed 27 December 2010, HTTP://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_91869#advertising

Appendix 1

Children's TV – What parents think

Focus group questions

SOME QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS

What they know and like or dislike now, and what they know about what upsets children or are good for them

What programs did they enjoy as a child?

Were there any programs that upset them as a child? What was it that upset them?

What programs do their children enjoy now?

- what is it that their children enjoy in those programs?

What are some of the programs that they think are good for their children?

- Names and where watched if not obvious (eg commercial channels, ABC, pay TV) Ask how many have pay TV
- What is it about those programs that makes them good?
- Content, structure, pace, style of presentation, country of origin etc

Which sort of programs (or name some) would you like to see more of?

- Stories,
- Cartoons
- Magazine ie short items with presenter etc
- Documentaries
- Music
- Educational
- Australian as opposed to US, UK
- Programs from other ethnic, language backgrounds

Which kinds of programs (or names) are suitable for children under 2?

What is about those programs that makes them suitable?

Prompt if needed general qualities:
- Australian
- If from overseas universal in theme
- Sensitive to and inclusive of gender, ethnicity
- Well structured
- Clearly well written or prepared, not just off the cuff
- Good stories that have cultural significance
- Attention to children's needs as opposed to presenter as the primer focus
- Examples of considerate, kind behaviour
- Aesthetically pleasing – look good, written well, use dance, music or other art forms
- Not aimed at marketing as the prime focus
- Non violent
- Not scary
- Not sexually loaded

For under two:
- Language is simple, not too rushed
- Emphasis on what can be seen, heard as opposed to abstract concepts
- Repetition of themes and concrete examples
- Familiar characters occur
- In stories: Beginning, middle and end are clear, structure is simple
- Opportunities for children to act out stories, songs etc
- Activities are appropriate for the stage of development in terms of coordination, complexity etc.
- Presenters are warm and caring, not unduly imposing themselves on the audience
- Emphasis on learning forms like rhymes, how things sound etc
- Content is mostly based on familiar family activities, toys, pets, the neighbourhood

Do you think there are enough programs for children under 2?

Which kinds of programs (or names) are suitable for children under 5?

What is about those programs that makes them suitable?
- Australian
- If from overseas universal in theme
- Sensitive to and inclusive of gender, ethnicity
- Well structured
- Clearly well written or prepared, not just off the cuff
- Good stories that have cultural significance
- Attention to children's needs as opposed to presenter as the primer focus
- Examples of considerate, kind behaviour
- Aesthetically pleasing – look good, written well, use dance, music or other art forms
- Not aimed at marketing as the prime focus
- Non violent
- Not scary
- Not sexually loaded
- Encourage active as opposed to passive pastimes
- Not just a marketing exercise

Specific to under 5
- Programs relate to basic numeracy, literacy
- More emphasis on relating to others, sharing etc
- Show children having opportunities to learn novel tasks, learning positively from adults and peers
- De-emphasise competition, comparison
- Themes relate to the world outside home as well as within
- Encourage expression in art, music,dance
- Encourage curiosity about nature, how things work

Do you think there are enough programs for children under 5?

Which kinds of programs (or names) are suitable for children under 8?

How does this change now children are at school?

What is about those programs that makes them suitable?

- Australian
- If from overseas universal in theme
- Sensitive to and inclusive of gender, ethnicity
- Well structured
- Clearly well written or prepared, not just off the cuff
- Good stories that have cultural significance
- Attention to children's needs as opposed to presenter as the primer focus
- Examples of considerate, kind behaviour
- Aesthetically pleasing – look good, written well, use dance, music or other art forms
- Not aimed at marketing as the prime focus
- Non violent
- Not scary
- Not sexually loaded
- Encourage active as opposed to passive pastimes
- Not just a marketing exercise

For children 5–8
- Show children as confident in tasks and standing up for themselves in social situations
- Show children being positive in conflict situations, not using aggression to solve problems
- Show children having opportunities to learn novel tasks, learning positively from adults and peers
- Children are treated as sensible by presenters and others, not encouraged to be silly

No undue emphasis on competition
The arts, sport, academic activities are shown in a positive light
Don't stereotype activities as for boys or for girls
De-emphasise competition, comparison
Introduce the idea of moral choices
Show children as appropriately creative
Show children reasoning about their behaviour, making choices
Show children being caring for younger children, family members
Have positive messages about science, the environment, society

Do you think there are enough programs for children under 8?

What are some of the programs that you don't like your children to watch?

Are some of those children's programs? What is it you don't like?

- Violence
- Scary characters, monsters witches etc
- Inappropriate sexual content

Is your child too young/ too old for those programs?

- Are some of the programs for older audiences or grownups?

What sorts of things in those programs didn't you like?

Did they upset your children?

If something like that occurs, how would you deal with it – talk about different approaches for different ages.

- Turn off/ Tell them it is just a story
- Tell them it turned out alright in the end, so not to worry
- Try to get them distracted so they won't think about it

Under 2

Under 5

Under 8

How they go about choosing?

Let's talk about how you find good programs for your children:

What are some of the ways that you choose programs ?

Perhaps your children know what they want?

What would they ask for?

- Names of programs, types, favourite,recording etc.

If you choose:

- would you use the program guide? Always/ sometimes?
- would you rely on the classification of the program? If not why not?
- what does P or C mean to you?
- do you sample programs you're unfamiliar with to see if they'd suit?

Would you commonly use only one or two channels – if so what is it about those channels that appeals?

- Do you trust the ABC to put on programs that are Ok for kids
- What do you think about programs on ABC2/ ABC 3?
- Would you choices include Pay TV? Which channels?

What other ways do you use to find TV watching for your child?

- use DVDs?
- use iView? R
- record programs?

How important to you is it to find the programs your child will enjoy and which won't do them any harm?

Do you think that's mostly what's on, if it's for children, it will be OK? Is there plenty of good stuff to choose from?

What sorts of things on TV when your children are around annoy you, or do you resent? Anything you'd like to have stopped?

Can it be hard to find good programs for your children?

Would you like some help?

Let's talk about what might help.

If you could get reliable information about the sorts of programs that are on or are going to be on, and which age groups they'd suit best, would you think that was a good thing?

What sort of info would you want?

- Theme – the underlying topic and the basic story
- Type of program (cartoon/ live action drama/ doco/ magazine/)
- Age suitability
- Other?

Would you use it if it was supplied?

Where would it be best/ easiest to find such information?

- In the program guide?
- In an email sent to you each week
- On air in some way- at the beginning of the program, as a symbol on the screen?- as an electronic program guide?
- A channel lock? To block out the stuff you don't like?
- Being able to retrieve the classification and consumer advice at any time during a program?
- What else??

Show age suitability thermometer chart (as per commonsense media)

– is this useful?

Is there anything else you would like to say?

Thank you for participating – Here are some gifts to thank you for your assistance.

Appendix 2

Media Gauge examples

Shaggy and Scooby-Doo Get a Clue!

TV Program

Is it age appropriate?

Key:

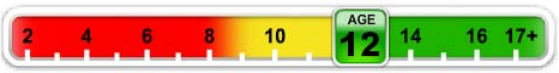
- - Not Age Appropriate
- - Some Iffy Stuff
- - Age Appropriate

Is it any good?

Harry Potter & the Deathly Hallows Part 1

Movie

Is it age appropriate?



Key:

- - Not Age Appropriate
- - Some Iffy Stuff
- - Age Appropriate

Is it any good?

Adapted from Commonsense Media 2010
www.commonsensemedia.org

Appendix 3

Children's TV – What parents think: online survey questions

The aim of this survey is to understand what parents think about children and their TV viewing, and what can be done to improve choices in TV for children.

*** 1. Where did you hear about this survey?**

2. How many children do you have?

3. What is the age range of your children?

	Under 18 months	18 months to 3 years	3-5 years	5-8 years	Over 8
My eldest (or only) child	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My youngest child	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

4. Please tell us about yourself.

- ☐ I am male
- ☐ I am female
- ☐ I am aged under 25 years
- ☐ I am between 26 and 35 years
- ☐ I am over 35 years

5. My highest level of education so far is

- ◯ High School
- ◯ TAFE
- ◯ University

6. Did you watch TV as a child in Australia?

- ◯ Yes I lived in Australia as a child and watched TV at home
- ◯ No I lived in Australia but did not watch TV at home
- ◯ I lived overseas during my childhood and watched TV at home
- ◯ I lived overseas during my childhood and did not watch TV at home

7. Can you remember any TV programs which you particularly enjoyed as a young child? If so, could you please list one or two here

Page 1

8. Please tell us about the availability of television in your home, what kind of sets you have and what programs are available to you.

	Yes	No
We have an old analogue TV with the basic channels	◯	◯
We have a TV with a set top box that lets us see digital channels	◯	◯
We have a digital TV and can see the digital channels	◯	◯
We have a recorder and copy programs for our children from local TV stations	◯	◯
We have access to Pay TV with children's programming	◯	◯
We use our computer to get access to children's TV from local channels which is available online (e.g. iView on ABC)	◯	◯
We use our computer to play children's TV available from Youtube and similar sources	◯	◯
We have some favourite DVDs we play often	◯	◯

9. How closely do you keep an eye on what TV programs your child watches? Choose the response which best matches your view. (Only one response)

◯ I don't allow my child/children to watch TV much at all

◯ I choose carefully what my child/children will watch on the basis of published program material

◯ I let my child/children watch at times when I know the programs are suitable but do not check every one

◯ I intervene when programs are unsuitable but generally the children turn on the TV

◯ The children watch whatever the rest of the family does

◯ The children watch in their own rooms

10. Would you say it is easy or hard to find good TV programs for your children to watch? (Choose one response per line)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It's generally easy	◯	◯	◯	◯
It's easy at some times of day but not others	◯	◯	◯	◯
I find it hard but I record good programs or use DVDs instead	◯	◯	◯	◯
It's not something that I really think about	◯	◯	◯	◯

11. How do you find out what are good programs for your children to watch? (Please choose one answer per line.)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
I choose Australian programs where possible	◯	◯	◯	◯
I let the children decide for themselves	◯	◯	◯	◯
I watch programs myself before I let my child watch them	◯	◯	◯	◯
I read the TV guide in the newspaper	◯	◯	◯	◯
I get information from friends and other parents	◯	◯	◯	◯
I have a general idea what programs are on when	◯	◯	◯	◯
I trust the ABC children's channel	◯	◯	◯	◯
I assume that good programs will be on early in the morning and in the afternoon	◯	◯	◯	◯
I check the classification on programs	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other (please specify)

12. What do you think about these views on children's TV?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Programs which are good for 10 year-olds might be harmful for younger children	◯	◯	◯	◯
Programs need to be carefully fitted to the age and stage of development of children	◯	◯	◯	◯
Programs which are too young for children will bore them	◯	◯	◯	◯
Programs which are too old for children go right over their heads	◯	◯	◯	◯

13. My knowledge of how children of different ages are affected by watching TV and other media comes from .... (Please choose one option per row which indicates the importance of this source)

	Very important	Important	Not important	Does not apply to me
being a parent	◯	◯	◯	◯
being one of a large family	◯	◯	◯	◯
picking things up as I go from friends, magazines etc	◯	◯	◯	◯
reading widely by myself	◯	◯	◯	◯
information from various professionals like child health workers	◯	◯	◯	◯
formal study in the area of media	◯	◯	◯	◯
formal study of child development	◯	◯	◯	◯

14. Are you concerned about the quality of TV available for children? Choose one response from the list below.

◯ Yes I worry about what is available for children

◯ No it doesn't worry me

◯ I haven't really thought about it

◯ I don't have an opinion one way or another

15. These TV programs are currently available for children. If you are familiar with them, please rate them as appropriate for particular age groups.
If you are filling out the survey with pencil and paper, age groups are A. 18 months and up, B. 3 and up, C. 5 and up, and D. 8 and over. Tick the last column to indicate that you have watched the program.
If you are doing the survey online, use the drop-down menu.

	Age Group	Have you watched this?
Thomas and Friends		
In the Night Garden		
Play School		
H20: Just add water		
Hi-5		
Teletubbies		
Bindi: The Jungle Girl		
Yo Gaba Gaba		
Sesame Street		
Marine Boy		
Teletubbies		
Puzzle play		
Ben 10		
The Book Place		
Boo Bah		
Angelina Ballerina		
Toybox		

16. Please name the favourite programs of the child or children in your household.

17. Please name the program(s) you think is/are the best currently available for the age group of your children.

18. What kind of programs would you like to see more of?

19. Are there any kinds of programs you think are actually bad for children?

20. How often do you use these ways of managing your child's TV viewing?

	Always	Sometimes	Never	This doesn't apply to me
I turn off programs I think will be scary or violent	◯	◯	◯	◯
I deliberately choose programs that show caring relationships	◯	◯	◯	◯
I record programs and view them before my child watches them	◯	◯	◯	◯
I play good programs more than once	◯	◯	◯	◯
I avoid TV where there is advertising	◯	◯	◯	◯
I limit my child's viewing to set times each day	◯	◯	◯	◯
I stop my child watching news programs	◯	◯	◯	◯
I use a child lock to limit my child's viewing choices	◯	◯	◯	◯
I allow my child to watch pay TV for children	◯	◯	◯	◯
I allow my child to watch ABC TV for children	◯	◯	◯	◯
I allow my child to watch commercial TV	◯	◯	◯	◯
I choose programs which are classified as suitable for my child's age group	◯	◯	◯	◯

21. Please tell us your views about the effect of watching violence on TV.

	I agree	I disagree	I don't know
The more violence children see on TV the less effect it has on them	◯	◯	◯
Children know TV violence is not real so it doesn't affect them	◯	◯	◯
Children who act out violent scenes they see on TV are more likely to be violent to others	◯	◯	◯
Watching violence on TV actually helps children get rid of their anger	◯	◯	◯
Children under 18 months don't really pay attention to violent actions on TV	◯	◯	◯
Violence in cartoons or fantasy stories is not seen in the same way as violence in more realistic programs	◯	◯	◯
Children are less likely to copy violent acts if they are performed by the good or powerful characters in a story	◯	◯	◯
Happy endings to stories are important as they help children overcome any bad feelings they may have from seeing violence in TV programs	◯	◯	◯
Children who see violence on TV are less likely to worry about it in real life	◯	◯	◯
Violent actions are much more common in TV programs than in real life	◯	◯	◯

22. Some images may be scary or uncomfortable to look at. What do you think about how these might affect children? Please choose a response to each statement.

	I agree	I disagree	I don't know
Scary images have been part of childhood forever. It's no different now and no worse	◯	◯	◯
A particular image might be startling to begin with, but children get used to them if they see them often and are no longer concerned	◯	◯	◯
Vivid images can stay in children's minds and cause unnecessary distress	◯	◯	◯
It's especially important to avoid exposing very young children to scary images as they can't understand their significance	◯	◯	◯

23. Many parents are concerned that advertisers are directing material to children which treats them in a manner inappropriate for their age and emotional or sexual development. Does this concern you?

	I agree	I disagree	I don't know
It's not the fault of advertisers that parents let their children see images that are inappropriate	◯	◯	◯
Advertisements often make children worry about how they look as opposed to who they are	◯	◯	◯
Obvious sexual messages in TV advertising directed to adults are seen by children when they are too young to understand them	◯	◯	◯

24. Please tell us what you think about TV advertising for food which is on at times when children are likely to be watching.

	I agree	I disagree	I don't know
Children are very likely to be influenced to request foods linked with special toys	◯	◯	◯
I approve of the selling of fast foods by linking them with special toys only available if you buy the food	◯	◯	◯
Children who are exposed to advertising from an early age are less affected by it over time	◯	◯	◯
Children are not stupid; they can tell when advertisers are not telling the truth	◯	◯	◯
Food habits formed early in life are the hardest to break	◯	◯	◯
Children are less likely to follow the food choices of high profile individuals such as TV presenters than their parents' choices	◯	◯	◯
Manufacturers have a right to make money; it is not their fault if parents do not provide a balanced diet	◯	◯	◯
Foods advertised on TV are a balanced sample of the normal diet	◯	◯	◯
There are rules to prevent the exploitation of children in advertising and they are strictly followed	◯	◯	◯

25. The Federal Government has put in place a classification system for TV programs. Can you explain what these symbols mean?

P

C

PG

G

Page 9

26. Please choose 1 for most preferred choice for improving children's TV to 8 for least preferred. If you are doing this survey in paper and pencil form, please tick column 1 for your first choice, column 2 for your second, down to 8 for your least preferred.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Limit types of TV programs and advertising during daytime hours	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Provide special children's channels free to air	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Educate parents on effects of TV viewing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Leave it up to parents to do what's best for children	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Provide federal funding for more quality local TV for children	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Pass laws to make all TV channels show more quality children's programs	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Provide onscreen information about the content and age suitability of all programs	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Allow adults to block unsuitable programs using electronic means	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

27. If you were able to do something to change the way TV is provided for children, in terms of programs, advertising etc., what would it be? Feel free to mention things you would like to see stopped, or things you think could be improved.

*** 28. Please enter the postcode of your home address in the box below**