



Who really wants R18+ computer games?

The Interactive Games and Entertainment Association has for some time been trumpeting the statistic that "91% of adults think there should be an R18+ classification for games". So why don't we have one?

Here's a bit of background to the answer.

In 1993/4, the relevant Federal, State and Territory Ministers, introduced a system of classification for computer games. That system allowed games with content from G (General) up to and including MA15+ (Strong impact and not legally available to those under 15 years).

At present, games with content more extreme than MA15+ level are Refused Classification. The Ministers believed that the interactive nature of games would make them more impactful: that "doing" the violence and being rewarded for it would be more harmful than just watching it (as with films). This caution has been supported by a growing body of research evidence.

However, gamers and the industry have over the past 5 years mounted a campaign to allow R18+ content. In response, the Minister for Home Affairs has called for public comment by Feb. 28. (see <http://www.ag.gov.au/gamesclassification>)

If accepted, the proposal will allow games with content more extreme than at present into the sale and hire system. By definition, R18+ content is likely to be offensive (a legal definition) to sections of the adult community, and minors should not be exposed to it.

There are many flaws in the industry's arguments, which range from "no proof of harm", and "this will provide greater protection for children", to "gamers are now older and need access to content that's age-appropriate" (Ron Curry, CEO of IGEA, 30/12), and citing the 91% survey figure above.

ACCM believes that if a survey question were framed as "There is a proposal to permit an R18+ classification for computer games. This will mean that the sale and hire system will make available games with

No. 260 Dec 2009/Jan 2010

more extreme violence, more impactful depictions of sexual activity and drug taking than at present. Do you approve of this?", the responses might not be so enthusiastic.

The fact that there are now many older gamers does not reduce the obligation to protect minors. The average age of alcohol drinkers may well be 50, but we have still have laws to protect the young.

We know that once R18+ games are in the system, children will access them. With R Rated cinema films, ticket prices and exclusion rules limit children's exposure. Not so with R18+ videos and DVDs, where access is much easier. Responsible parents, who supervise what is seen in their own home despair at what is seen elsewhere.

Australia's classification system aims to provide adult freedom to see what they want, but children must be protected. If we add in R18+ games we compound parents' problems.

Furthermore, many in the community are concerned about the impact of the strong violence found now in MA15+ games. There are growing indicators from research that playing (and being rewarded for being the best at it), rather than watching, is more influential; that gamers can

become desensitised to the use of violence by repeated exposure; that players of games where violence is glamorised risk more hostile thoughts and feelings, and display more aggressive behaviours.

Respected video game researcher Craig Anderson and his team of cross-national researchers sum up their latest meta-analytic review of the video game research studies, with:

"The pattern of results for different outcomes and research designs (experimental, cross-sectional, longitudinal) fit theoretical predictions well. The evidence strongly suggests that exposure to violent video games is a causal risk factor for increased aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition, and aggressive affect and for decreased empathy and prosocial behavior."

"It is not surprising that when the game involves rehearsing aggressive and violent thoughts and actions, such deep game involvement results in antisocial effects on the player." (Anderson, CA et al, *Psychological Bulletin*, in press)

Consideration of these issues is not advanced by the recently observed aggressive and ill-informed lobbying by gamers.

All Australian parents need to actively participate in this review.

Important Australian conference on children & the media to be opened by the Minister for Home Affairs, Brendon O'Connor

Growing up Fast & Furious, March 19 2010, Sydney, NSW



People interested in the impacts of media violence, advertising and sexualized media on children should not miss this unique opportunity to hear three leading international researchers.

Professor L. Rowell Huesmann (top R), Professor Ed Donnerstein (L), and Distinguished Research Professor Craig Anderson (lower R) will discuss their recent research on media violence.



They will be joined by Australians Professor Louise Newman talking about the sexualisation of children, Dr Wayne Warburton on violent music videos, Dr Cordelia Fine on children's understanding of advertising and Professor Elizabeth Handsley on the role of regulation and classification.

Early Bird registration has been extended to 3 February 2010.

More details: <http://www.youngmedia.org.au/>



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small screen

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EDITORIAL

Protecting the vulnerable

The gaming lobby's main argument in favour of allowing the sale and distribution of R18+ computer games is about numbers. There are so many people over 18 who play games, they argue, that the interests of children should be overlooked.

They do not deny that playing R18+ games is potentially harmful to children. They argue simply that this potential for harm is irrelevant, when so many others want to play.

Yet there are numerous instances in our society where we accept that some people - even a majority of people - should be restricted in their actions in order to protect the vulnerable.

For example, if a child is violently allergic to peanuts, no other children in his or her class are allowed to have products containing peanuts anywhere in the classroom. This is highly inconvenient to those other children and their families. But no reasonably compassionate person would demand that peanuts be allowed, and the allergic child left to suffer. This is so, no matter how large the group affected by the ban or how small the group being protected.

In my view, the more adult gamers there are who would have an interest in playing R18+ games, the greater the risk that those games would fall into children's hands.

Call for Contributions

Journal of Children & Media - Special issue
Volume 4 issue 4, December 2010:

Media policy for children: International perspectives

Guest Editor: Amy Jordan, The Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania; ajordan@asc.upenn.edu

The central presence of media in the lives of children and adolescents has led many societies to seek strategies to encourage access to potentially beneficial content (such as educational television programs) and technologies (such as broadband internet access). At the same time, governments often put in place policies to restrict access to content they fear might be harmful to youth development (such as pornography or unhealthy food advertising).

This special issue of the *Journal of Children and Media* is designed to offer a cross-cultural perspective on children's media policy. How do different countries discuss and treat the regulation of media to "protect" or "enrich" children? We seek empirical studies and theoretical essays that might include, for example, research on:

- How media "ratings" are designed, implemented and understood in different countries
- Beliefs about the potential dangers of media and how these beliefs are addressed through government regulation

To use the peanut analogy again, one might not be so concerned about allowing peanuts if we knew that only one other child in the class was likely to bring them. The risk of contamination is far greater if you know a lot of children will bring them.



Prof. Elizabeth Handsley

So with computer games: if there really are as many adult gamers as the lobby claims, we have cause to be very worried indeed about the flooding of society with ultra-violent games. If there were only a few such gamers, maybe I wouldn't be so worried.

The gaming lobby is not able to make any assurances that R18+ games would be kept out of children's hands. This is interesting, considering that when it comes to internet filtering, the 'anti-censorship' lobby is 100% certain that the black-list of banned sites WILL be leaked. You can't have it both ways.

The gaming lobby is made up of people who see it as a problem that their games aren't violent enough. I am concerned at the risk that these people, by dint of their sheer energy and vociferousness, will lead public policy.

Please listen to the voice of the ordinary mums and dads who think that computer games are already plenty violent enough.

- Industry self-regulations vs. government mandates and their perceived efficacy
- The impact of borderless satellite television on a country's ability to regulate content or advertising addressed to children
- Implications of the World Wide Web access for censorship efforts designed to protect children
- Analysis of the public protective discourse that is used to justify regulation
- Historical consideration of regulation of sexual content and the social construction of childhood

Contributions to this special issue are welcomed from a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches and political perspectives. The guest editor is particularly interested in highlighting the "regulation" of children's access to what is socially perceived as positive and negative media content in diverse countries and cultures.

Expressions of interest should be submitted to the guest editor as an e-mail attachment by no later than February 15, 2009. Please include a 300 word abstract, full contact information, and a biographical note (up to 75 words) on each of the authors. Authors of accepted abstracts will be notified by March 15, 2009 and will then be invited to submit a full paper to the guest editor. Manuscripts should be no more than 8,000 words, including notes and references, conform to APA style, and submitted by August 1, 2009. All papers will be subject to anonymous peer review following submission.

Go Girl! makes the move to TV

SALLY JACKSON

PRIMARY school phenomenon the *Go Girl!* books are to become a TV series, with publisher Hardie James Egmont teaming up with Melbourne production house Westside Film & Television.

The series will be adapted into 26 half-hour episodes of live-action drama exploring the real world and emotional lives of early primary-school age girls.

Westside, which also makes kids series *Snake Tales* and *Holly's Heroes*, is seeking finance and hopes to start filming late next

year. The *Go Girl!* series started in 2005 with four titles and now comprises more than 50, with about 1.6 million copies sold in Australia. The books have also been reprinted in the US, Britain, Canada, Brazil, Turkey, Argentina and India.

The series will be aimed primarily at girls aged five to 11 with a core audience of seven to nine-year-olds.

That age group was not well catered to by networks, which tended to concentrate on the "tween" audience of eight to 12-year-olds, said Westside managing director and series execu-

tive producer Ann Darrouzet. "The books identified a gap in the market and (it's) similar on TV," Darrouzet said. "We have a lot of later-age programming, but a girl of eight isn't seeing (herself) played on screen in very many programs at all."

"The books identified a gap in the market, and it's similar on TV"

ANN DARROUZET
MANAGING DIRECTOR, WESTSIDE

The Australian, 30 November 2009

However, the age group is beginning to get more attention now with the ABC soon to launch new digital channel ABC3, which will target six to 15-year-olds.

The *Go Girl!* series will deal with topics such as your first sleepover, someone reading your diary and playground politics.

"We have done a lot of vox pops with girls and they say it really reflects their world," said series co-producer Moira Moss.

Tess Adams, 7, and Kate Pritchard, 8, said they enjoyed reading stories about girls their own age. Tess said a TV series of the books would be "awesome".

Games inquiry 'poorly timed'

CHILD protection campaigners have attacked the federal government for its decision to call for comment on a possible R18+ rating for video games during the Christmas-new year period when many families will be on holidays.

The government has agreed to assess the possibility of an R18+ rating for games. Home Affairs Minister Brendan O'Connor announced the review of the classification scheme on Tuesday in a move that has been welcomed by the games industry.

However, the timing has come under fire from parent groups. Elizabeth Handsley, professor of law at Flinders University and vice-president of the Australian Council on Children and the Media, said many parents who may have a view on the classification review would be unaware of it.

"It is an extraordinary time frame to have any kind of review," she said.

Barbara Biggins, the council's honorary CEO, said the review should have been delayed.

SIMON CANNING

The Australian, 18 December 2009

AUSTRALIANS should be rejoicing at Stephen Conroy's proposal to block the darkest content on the internet. It fails all reason to argue that child porn and other unclassifiable and illegal material should be available on-line. To those who are calling this censorship, get real!

Gabrielle Walsh, Kew, Vic

PORNOGRAPHY on the internet ensnares children every day of the year. Let adults go elsewhere for their delights. Parents deserve help.

Joe Lopez, Warrimoo, NSW
Weekend Australian, 19-20 December 2009

THIS YEAR'S MOST WANTED

- Nintendo DS/ Nintendo Wii
- iPod Touch
- Transformers merchandise
- Ben 10 products
- Barbies
- Trampolines
- Outdoor jungle gyms
- Scooters
- Unusual requests:
 - Adelaide's giant pandas Wang Wang and Funi
 - A ride on a Reindeer/ Rudolph as a pet
 - A flute
 - Plane ticket to Queensland
 - Butterflies you can feed
 - A solution for climate change
 - World peace and happiness
 - A winning Lotto ticket

The Advertiser, 19 December 2009

Michaela's Wild Challenge

ABC3, 9am

MORE pap posing as quality kiddie content on Rudd's favourite ABC channel, the culprit this time around is a perky Englishwoman who laughs too much and probably describes herself in her Facebook profile as having "a bubbly personality". Michaela Strachan was a staple of Saturday morning TV in the 1980s but, more recently, she was a wildlife show presenter. Like a hundred or so TV crews before her, she travels the world in search of challenges involving wildlife and exotic locales. Tonight, it's the Caribbean, where she will don a steel mesh suit and hand-feed reef sharks, "dance" with wild dolphins and "look inside" orphaned manatees. The latter at least sounded intriguing enough before an ultrasound monitor was produced. This was made in 2003, when inexpensive, inoffensive content that could be aired on subscription and digital channels anywhere was in high demand. It's a schedule-filler that at least you don't have to pay an additional subscription fee to watch, but that's about all.

The Age Green Guide, 31 December 2009

Don't let up on local content

As the Australian television landscape changes – new free-to-air digital channels and an evolving pay-TV platform – the question of local content is back in the spotlight. The existing framework – a combination of legislation, obligation and victory-by-democracy – is under constant pressure from TV networks trying to push the quota down and the production community trying to push it up.

Current legislation requires commercial networks to broadcast a minimum of 55 per cent local content between 6am-midnight, Australian drama equal to a minimum of 250 "points" a year (and 860 every three; using a calculation based on whether it is a serial, series, telemovie or miniseries) as well as sub-quotas for children's TV and documentaries.

In the realm of pay TV, 10 per cent of a channel's budget (with some exceptions) must be spent on local production.

This makes Stephen Conroy's recent announcement that all new free-to-air digital channels would be spared any local production obligations for the foreseeable future all the more extraordinary.

Such logic works in a world where new free-to-air channels have negligible footprints but Nine's Go! commands half the audience share of SBS, while Seven, Nine and Ten are all drawing new revenue through their spin-off channels. The result is an inexplicable situation where the networks boast about their new cash cows but cry poor when anyone raises the subject of local content.

Rather than dole out yet another free kick, it's time the Government put its constituency – the audience and the electorate, who are one and the same – at the forefront of their interest and tied every TV channel's production obligation to the size of its market share.

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MULTIMEDIA

See Michael Idato and Doug Anderson's daily web show at smh.com.au/video/theguide.



Sydney Morning Herald Guide, 14-20 December 2009

ABC3 aims for place at heart of children's TV

AMANDA MEADE

KEVIN Rudd will on Friday flick the switch to turn on ABC3, the country's first public, advertising-free dedicated children's TV channel.

ABC managing director Mark Scott has called it an early Christmas present to the children of Australia — at least those who have digital television.

The feature attraction on ABC3 is *My Place*, a majestic 13-part historical series based on the award-winning 1988 picture book by Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins.

The Prime Minister is a fitting guest of honour, as he appears in the first episode of *My Place*, the story of Laura, set in 2008 on the day the Prime Minister apologised to the Stolen Generations.

The inclusion of the apology was a decision made by independent producer Penny Chapman, who wanted to bring the book right up to the modern day by adding another 20 years to the original storyline.

The political event is handled deftly by the writers and is shown through the eyes of a 10-year-old child who is struggling to apologise to a friend for an adventure in a dinghy that went wrong.

As the Aboriginal adults gather around a TV to watch the historic apology live, Laura sits at the back of the room uncomprehending, lost in her own world of childhood high jinks.

Later, one of her aunts sits with her at the foot of the giant fig tree that has been the emotional

heart of all the children's lives through the ages, and explains what Sorry Day is all about.

The series works in this way throughout: explaining the historical through the personal. There are no dry history lessons here.

Co-producer Helen Panckhurst (whose recent work includes *First Australians* and *RAN: Remote Area Nurse* for SBS) told *Media* that she and Chapman took little clues from the book and developed them with a table of nine writers including Leah Purcell

'It's not a lecture. We've backed away from proselytising'

HELEN PANCKHURST
MY PLACE SERIES CO-PRODUCER

and Brendan Cowell, who also doubled as actors.

"It's not a lecture," says Panckhurst. "What we were trying for is the child's perspective on understanding that saying sorry is an important thing. We've backed away from proselytising."

Chapman, a former head of television at the ABC, took inspiration from the pages of *My Place*, but had to create original stories about each child living through each generation — from 2008 back to 1888 — because the book is largely historical.

Some of the child actors will be speaking at the hour-long party at the ABC's Ultimo, Sydney, studios on Friday, mingling with Mr

Rudd, Communications Minister Stephen Conroy and ABC chairman Maurice Newman. The switch-on party will be televised live on ABC1 from 5pm. Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull has accepted an invitation, but a leadership challenge may change his plans.

The strength of the *My Place* series is the compelling stories, as each child has a tendency to get into trouble and we watch as they extricate themselves from some pretty uncomfortable situations.

There is sexism in the 1980s, Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s and a Greek migrant boy who struggles to be accepted in the 1950s.

"We're hoping all of these things are conversation starters, we're not trying to sanitise life," Panckhurst says.

"Children are watching what is going on in their world and so we wanted it to be emotionally truthful for the children watching (the series)."

Making quality live-action children's television is expensive — and all too rare in this country. The federal government allocated \$67 million in the May budget to fund ABC3 for the next three years.

Much of the material on the new channel will be repeats and buy-ins from overseas, supplemented with local hosts chosen in a public competition.

My Place will screen at 8pm on Friday on ABC3 and then each weeknight from December 7. It will also be screened on ABC1 in the new year on a date yet to be announced.

The Australian, 30 November 2009

R-RATED MOVIES Display laws

FILMS which carry an R18+ rating will in future have to be kept in a separate section of video stores, to comply with new laws passed in Parliament.

The Family First initiated law requires video store operators to place R18+ video and DVD movies in a separate, marked and covered area of their premises, and prohibits them from showing trailers or other promotional material with an R18+ rating or greater in video stores.

The new laws will come into effect in coming months but will not apply to adult shops.

The Advertiser, 5 December 2009

RADIO CODE Safeguards to protect minors

AUSTRALIA'S commercial radio industry needs to develop codes to prevent children being exploited in live radio programs, the nation's communications watchdog states.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority has released its report into the adequacy of safeguards for participants in live hosted programs.

It follows an incident last year on the Kyle and Jackie O show, in which a teenage girl attached to a lie detector was quizzed about her sexual conduct and revealed she'd been raped.

The codes must include measures to stop members of the public being exploited, the report says.

The Advertiser, 16 January 2010

'Slap on wrist' for Kyle and Jackie O

By **ARI SHARP**
COMMUNICATIONS CORRESPONDENT

THE media watchdog will impose new restrictions on Sydney radio station 2Day FM following the infamous Kyle Sandilands and Jackie O lie detector interview, but a loophole in radio rules means the broadcaster will escape a fine.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority yesterday released the findings of an investigation into the breakfast-show broadcast, in which a 14-year-old girl said she had been raped, saying 2Day had breached the radio code of practice.

As a consequence, the sta-

tion will have extra licence conditions that mean any broadcast involving someone under 18 must put the child's best interests first, avoid causing them unnecessary distress or anxiety, and avoid exploiting and humiliating them.

Unlike cash-for-comment rules, which recently led to 2UE (owned by Fairfax Media, which also owns *The Age*) being fined \$360,000 for John Laws improperly naming sponsors on air, the code of practice is not part of broadcast regulations and cannot lead to fines.

At most, breaches can lead to licence changes. Only then, and with more violations, can a broadcaster be fined or have its

broadcast rights threatened. 2Day can challenge any new licence conditions, but Peter Harvie, chairman of the station's owner Austereo, said it would accept them.

"2Day FM accepts the findings and is committed to the new systems and structures implemented by the station to control content standards," he said, referring to the seven-second delay introduced since the live July broadcast.

In delivering the finding against 2Day, the media authority's chairman Chris Chapman said the offence was the segment's concept, not just the girl's rape revelation or Mr Sandilands asking her if it was

the "only experience you've had".

"The real essence of the problem here was not the presenters or their comments in the segment, but that such a segment could occur at all," Mr Chapman said.

Communications law academic Michael Fraser described the ruling as a "slap on the wrist" and said there was a need for financial penalties through incorporating the protection of children in broadcast standards.

"It just shows the depths some of these programs will sink to chase ratings that you actually need to have this written as an additional condition of their licence," the University

of Technology Sydney professor said.

Sandilands and Jackie O have finished the year as the top-rating FM breakfast show in Sydney — though behind two AM talk stations — and lifted the audience by 1.5 per cent in the final ratings survey.

Professor Fraser said this showed that "part of the community enjoys this kind of entertainment which is based on unfairly bullying people. If you serve that kind of thing up, you can get an audience for it."

Next week, the watchdog plans to release findings of a review into the protection of participants in live radio, which may impose standards.

The Age, 17 December 2009

2000-09: The roaring noughties

Cameron Stewart

Maggie Hamilton, author of the book *What's Happening to our Girls: Too Much Too Soon*, says it's children who have faced the greatest changes in the past decade. "I think it has forever changed the face of childhood and teenage life," she tells *Inquirer*. "Kids now have access to a world of information which gives them great opportunities but can also be cause for great concern."

Hamilton fears that the popularity of social websites such as Facebook is giving children a false sense of intimacy.

"The number of people you have on your Facebook does not relate to your number of real friends or help you understand the complexities of real friendships, which is what helps us grow as human beings."

British neuroscientist Susan Greenfield believes repeated exposure to such sites could effectively rewire developing brains, reducing attention spans, encouraging instant gratification and making people more self-centred. "My fear is that these technologies are infantilising the brain into the state of small children who are attracted by buzzing noises, bright lights, who have a short attention span and who live for the moment," she told Britain's *Daily Mail* earlier this year.

An excerpt from the article

Weekend Australian, 26-27 December 2009

TREND TRACKER

Toys for the boys

What are little boys made of?
Frogs and snails and puppy dogs' tails
What are little girls made of?
Sugar and spice and all that's nice

WHY IS IT, AFTER NEARLY 50 years of growing gender equality, that little girls persist in playing with girly toys – Barbies, baby dolls and tea sets – and shun the toys little boys love: monster trucks, model planes and action figures? Indeed, nowhere does the gender gap appear wider than in the choice of toys between boys and girls. And according to a spate of studies, this may never change, as it's hard-wired into our brains. Even infant apes prefer toys that correspond with human gender stereotypes.

Which isn't to discard upbringing altogether. Kimberley O'Brien, principal child psychologist at the Quirky Kid Clinic in Sydney, says it's true that girls prefer creative toys while boys like those that gratify their more energetic nature, but that doesn't justify the abundance of violent toys marketed at boys. "In my experience I've not seen boys going for guns unless

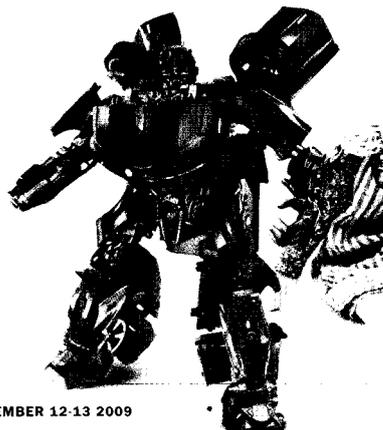
Shame for my imperfect form

IT'S wonderful, in theory, that a major women's magazine is willing to admit its own "flaws" by publishing a picture of a woman whose body has been untouched by technology's scalpel. However, like Melinda Tankard Reist ("Mags' flawed obsession with the body perfect", *Commentary*, 5/1) I too think the choice of Jennifer Hawkins as an example of a woman brave enough to bare her flaws is mind-boggling.

Putting an untouched nude picture of one of the world's most beautiful women on the cover of *Marie Claire* with her so-called imperfections has not given me enlightenment but makes me want to avert my eyes so as not to feel any further shame for my imperfect form. If *Marie Claire* really wanted to inspire women, it would have found a more realistic mentor to champion the healthy perception of body image to young women. But that just wouldn't be marketable now would it?

As a woman who has battled with her own self-esteem demons all her life, I now find a new challenge ahead of me as I raise my three-year-old girl to appreciate the body she was given and to carry with her the wisdom that the true beauty of a female lies deep within her imperfect skin.

Leanne Torres, Leichhardt, NSW
The Australian, 6 January 2010



TALKING POINT

Sex(ism) sells

IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY caught Shakira's latest music video, *She Wolf*, here's a précis. Clad in a flesh-coloured bodysuit, the Colombian superstar is prowling inside a cage, shaking her bon-bons and half-naked tush at the camera, breathily intoning lyrics such as, "My body's craving, so feed the hungry."

Recently voted No.2 in the Top Ten Sexy Videos by website Muzu.tv (after Britney Spears' *Toxic*), you can catch *She Wolf* on cable music station Channel V – in between countless other videos featuring scantily clad pop princesses pole dancing (or choreography inspired by it). The Pussycat Dolls, Christina Aguilera, Jessica and Ashlee Simpson, Lady Gaga, Hilary Duff and the mother of the genre, Britney Spears, all make the leotard-clad, shimmying Beyoncé look like a Carmelite nun.

To get to the top of pop these days, you have to (a) dress down and (b) get down, so dominated is the field by solo sex kittens. Teenage boys may be driven wild, but what kind of messages do they convey about young women in the 21st century?

Feminists who complain that women are treated as sex objects must have apoplexy when they see Nelly's *Tip Drill* video, which portrays women as sexual appliances, and Benny Benassi's *Satisfaction*, which shows a team of oiled-up bikini girls wielding power tools. They may be on to something: a study at Princeton University monitored the brainwaves of 21 male undergrads as they looked at pictures of girls in provocative poses and it found the section of their grey matter that lit up was the same that activates when they use manual and electric tools.

"Cringe-worthy" and "hypersexualised hokum" is how *Newsweek* described *She Wolf*, but you can't stop progress, Muriel. The single is roaring up the charts.

8 THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN MAGAZINE / DECEMBER 12-13 2009



Government of South Australia
Attorney-General's Department

NEW LAWS FOR R18+ FILMS

From 10 January, 2010 new laws will apply to the display, exhibition and promotion of R18+ films.

The new laws apply to premises where films in any format (including DVD, video, Blu-Ray) are sold or rented, other than adult-only premises.

The new laws may affect your business. You should read them and seek legal advice if you are unsure what they mean for you.

Further information on the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (R18+ Films) Amendment Act 2009* is available at www.agd.sa.gov.au

www.agd.sa.gov.au

Too much TV leads to an early grave

LEIGH DAYTON
SCIENCE WRITER

COUCH potatoes sit up and take notice. Every hour spent veging in front of the television increases the risk of early death.

And it's not because of lack of exercise, claim Australian and French researchers, who report their findings today in *Circulation*, the journal of the American Heart Association.

Even fit TV fans increase their risk of premature death from heart disease by 18 per cent for each hour spent in front of the box. They also have a 9 per cent increased risk of endometrial and colorectal cancer and, similarly, an 11 per cent increased risk of death from all causes.

That's even people meeting recommended exercise guidelines of at least 30 minutes a day of moderate or higher activity, or 150 minutes of such exercise a week.

While the study focused on television viewing, that's really a "proxy" for sedentary behaviour, said team leader David Dunstan, an exercise physiologist specialising in the link between physical activity and health.

"Too much sitting is bad for

your health. Stand up. The more you move, the greater the health benefits," claimed Dr Dunstan, with the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute in Melbourne.

Along with colleagues at Monash, Deakin, Queensland, Edith Cowan and Paris universities, Dr Dunstan tracked 8800 men and women, aged 25 and over, identified from the Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study database.

They divided participants into three groups: those watching fewer than two hours a day; two to four hours daily; and four or more hours. Average viewing was about three hours daily.

The team found that compared with people who watched fewer than two hours of TV a day, those who watched four or more hours had a 46 per cent higher risk of early death from all causes and an 80 per cent increased risk of dying prematurely from heart disease.

The unhealthy consequence of sitting hour after hour is a limited muscle movement. "Our muscles aren't moving, we're not burning energy and we're disrupting our normal regulatory processes," Dr Dunstan said.

The result: abnormal metabolism of glucose and fat.

The Australian, 12 January 2010

Turning the muck filter on

The Australian, 17 December 2009

Free speech claims are no defence of online crimes

UNLIKE television, the internet is not universal in our houses, but it is getting there, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics reporting yesterday that nearly two-thirds of homes have broadband connections. So why is anybody upset over Communications Minister Stephen Conroy's plan to bring control over internet content into line with other mass media — television and DVDs, print and computer games? The answer is: nobody is, other than contrarians with a contempt for common sense. Senator Conroy wants to require internet service providers to block illegal material, such as bestiality and child pornography, from turning up on Australian computers, just as the screening and publishing of illegal images is banned in all other media.

It is that simple. The ban Senator Conroy wants to put in place has nothing to do with suppressing ideas; if officials start censoring political expression, public opinion will soon stop them. It does not reflect a wowsers' wish to stop adults indulging in erotica. Nor is it about stigmatising the consensual sexual preferences of any Australians. Instead, the minister is determined to defend boundaries of behaviour that no significant group

wants breached. Arguments that the technology will not work, blocking innocent images or slowing the system down, are misleading when they are not plain wrong. Certainly, curious young netizens will defy the most vigilant parents and find ways around online filters, but this is like arguing against a minimum drinking age because teenagers illegally access alcohol. While a trial run of the filters blocked innocent sites, the software will improve with use. And assertions the filtering process will slow downloads are outrageous, given the way ISPs now artificially reduce speeds to push people to pay more for online access.

With the exception of old hippies fighting the censorship struggles of the 1960s and sneering sophisticates — *The New York Times* compared Australia's internet plan to Iran and China yesterday — the people opposed to the Conroy plan are in the industry. ISPs are unhappy at the time and expense in maintaining the filters. Tough. They operate under an implicit licence that requires them to place the rights of the vast majority of Australians who do not want sexually violent images on their computer screens above the desires of the very few who do.

The songs that are as harmful as junk food

Michaela's Wild Challenge ABC3, 9am

MORE pap posing as quality kiddie content on Rudd's favourite ABC channel, the culprit this time around is a perky Englishwoman who laughs too much and probably describes herself in her Facebook profile as having "a bubbly personality". Michaela Strachan was a staple of Saturday morning TV in the 1980s but, more recently, she was a wildlife show presenter. Like a hundred or so TV crews before her, she travels the world in search of challenges involving wildlife and exotic locales. Tonight, it's the Caribbean, where she will don a steel mesh suit and hand-feed reef sharks, "dance" with wild dolphins and "look inside" orphaned manatees. The latter at least sounded intriguing enough before an ultrasound monitor was produced. This was made in 2003, when inexpensive, inoffensive content that could be aired on subscription and digital channels anywhere was in high demand. It's a schedule-filler that at least you don't have to pay an additional subscription fee to watch, but that's about all.

The Age Green Guide, 31 December 2009

BOSTON: Songs by Jamie Foxx and Lady Gaga have been branded the musical equivalent of junk food by an initiative to encourage healthy teen relationships.

They feature in a top 10 of songs with "unhealthy relationship ingredients" created by a teen panel working with the Boston Public Health Commission.

Mario's Break Up featuring Gucci Man and Sean Garrett and Jamie Foxx's *Blame It* featuring T-Pain topped the list for the most unhealthy relationship songs of 2009.

Lady Gaga's *Bad Romance* and Pitbull's *Hotel Room Service* also made the list.

At the other end of the scale, *Miss Independent* by Ne-Yo and *Meet Me Halfway* by the Black-Eyed Peas were recognised as having healthy themes.

The "sound relationships nutrition label" — which was used to rate the songs — was developed by 14 teens who attended a seven-week course on promoting healthy relationships and preventing violence.

The teens were also taught to evaluate music based on themes of power, control, equality and gender roles.

They developed their list after analysing songs from Billboard's Hot 100 chart.

The Advertiser, 5 December 2009

Where will this stop?

AS AN adult and an Australian citizen, I have concerns about the Government's planned internet censorship.

At first Stephen Conroy wanted to "filter" child abuse. Some might say "fair enough". Then he said he planned to "filter" refused classification sites. Some might say "I am an adult, I can watch whatever I wish to". Then Conroy stated he wanted to censor websites that import R18 games into Australia, because we are the only Western democracy without an 18 rating for video games. Where will it stop?

This is not about protecting the children, or "refused classification". It is about the Government being scared of something it perceives as a threat and trying to control it.

Sebastian Lardler, Mount Waverley

Saving the children

WHILE I understand the importance of retaining our freedom to choose what we access on the internet, what of the rights of the children used in child pornography? Sexual exploitation of children in any form should not be tolerated, and banning such sites on the internet is just one small step in the right direction.

Catherine Manning, Cardinia

The Age, 17 December, 2009

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Early Childhood Australia Biennial Conference

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