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About the research

In 2014, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (the ACMA) conducted research to help measure the ongoing importance of children’s programs on television, including Children’s (C) and Preschool (P) programs provided by commercial broadcasters.

This research comprises two studies into children’s viewing of broadcast television:
> a community survey of parents and carers
> an analysis of children’s television audiences and program ratings between 2001 and 2013.

The first study, Attachment A: Children’s television viewing—Community research 2014, is a survey of 954 parents and carers of children aged 0–14, commissioned by the ACMA from Newspoll. This study offers a contemporary view of parental attitudes to children’s viewing patterns and behaviours.

The second study, Attachment B: Children’s television viewing—Analysis of audience data 2001–13, draws on audience data provided by the industry ratings agency, OzTAM.1 By comparing audience data over 13 years, this study identifies the longer term changes that have occurred in children’s viewing patterns.

This 13-year period has coincided with significant changes in Australia’s television viewing, with the introduction of digital television, catch-up viewing and, more recently, the availability of online and over-the-top viewing experiences. The ACMA is monitoring changes in the industry and content delivery more broadly to see how they will affect audience viewing over time.

This paper is primarily concerned with reporting the key findings from the Newspoll survey and OzTAM data.

Background

Section 122 of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (the BSA) requires the ACMA to determine standards for commercial television broadcasting licensees that relate to programs for children. Compliance with standards determined under section 122 of the BSA is a licence condition for commercial television broadcasters. In August 2009, the ACMA determined the Children’s Television Standards 2009 (the CTS). The determination followed a review of the previous standard, the Children’s Television Standards 2005 (CTS 2005).

The objectives of the CTS are to ensure that children have access to a range of quality television programs made specifically for them, including Australian drama and non-drama programs, and to protect children from the possible harmful effects of television.2

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1 This study focuses on free-to-air and subscription television viewing by children in the five metropolitan cities of Australia (Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney). The data includes live and time-shifted viewing for broadcast television but does not include online viewing of catch-up television services.
Strategies to achieve these objectives include programming quota and scheduling requirements as well as protection provisions. Under the CTS, the ACMA can classify programs as either ‘C’ or ‘P’. Commercial television broadcasters (such as networks 7, 9 and 10) must broadcast the following each year:

- 260 hours of C-classified programs within designated time bands—programs with a C classification in the TV Guide
- 130 hours of P-classified programs within designated time bands—programs with a P classification in the TV Guide.

The CTS also contain protections for children against the possible harmful effects of viewing certain material. Child protections in the CTS include that:

- no advertisements are to be shown during P-classified programs
- no alcohol can be advertised during C programs
- material during C and P programs cannot encourage children to engage in activities that are dangerous to them.

In reviewing the CTS 2005, the ACMA noted in its Children’s Television Standards Review issues paper that the revision of the standards was intended to enable them to:

- remain relevant
- continue to promote quality children’s free-to-air programs on commercial television
- continue to protect children from the potentially harmful effects of television viewing within the changing media environment.3

Since the introduction of the current CTS, television in Australia has continued to change.4

The ACMA’s 2011 research Digital Australians noted that Australians have a high awareness of the ongoing evolution of media and communications. Associated with this change are the numerous ways in which television content is now accessed—from traditional media such as free-to-air (FTA) and subscription (STV) television to new and emerging platforms such as on-demand services and internet providers. This reflects not just how viewers are watching television content, but how traditional broadcasters are now providing it.

As Screen Australia discussed in its 2013 report Child’s Play, the evolving media environment is affecting and creating challenges for children’s television.5 Since the current CTS was determined, many more STV children’s channels have been made available. Further, the national broadcaster, the ABC, is providing children’s programs all day on dedicated children’s channels and its on-demand internet service, iView.

Since legislative amendments in 2013, commercial television licensees have been permitted to meet their CTS quota obligations across their television services (that is, not solely on a licensee’s primary channel). By the end of 2013, all commercial television broadcasters were scheduling the majority of their CTS programs on non-primary channels (7TWO, GO! and Eleven). National, STV and, to a lesser extent, commercial television broadcasters are now scheduling ‘blocks’ of children’s programs and creating ‘destination’ viewing.

4 See ACMA research from 2013, Like, Post, Share, for more information.
5 Screen Australia, Child’s Play: Issues in Australian Children’s Television 2013, p. 3.
Following consultation with industry, the Department of Communications released a Deregulation Roadmap in 2014, reflecting the government's intention to reduce the regulatory burden on business and the community. One area identified for potential reform was the children’s television quota requirements. Noting that the standards were last reviewed in 2009, the ACMA considered it appropriate to undertake research that could inform any future review of the CTS.

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Summary of key research findings

1. When are children watching TV?

The OzTAM data shows that children’s viewing patterns throughout the day have remained relatively constant between 2001 and 2013. There remains a peak viewing period in the morning between 7 am and 9 am, and a higher peak in the evening between 7 pm and 8 pm.

There has been an increase in the number of child viewers in the middle of the day, evident particularly on weekdays. Between 11 am and 3 pm, the OzTAM data shows an increase of nine per cent in the child audience from 105,000 in 2001 to 114,000 in 2013. This increase can be attributed to an increase in viewing by the 0–4 age group and may relate to ‘destination’ children’s channels, including those provided by the ABC.

Figure 1 represents the weekday viewing by children aged 0–14 years on FTA television.

Data provided by OzTAM Pty Limited. Average daily audience, five metro cities, 1 January – 31 December, includes FTA main and digital multi-channels, 2013 data is consolidated.

Over this period, there has been an overall decline in the size of the child audience. The peak weekday morning audience in 2001 of 374,000 decreased by nearly a third to 253,000 children in 2013. The OzTAM data also shows a 19 per cent decrease in the evening peak from 650,000 in 2001 to 528,000 in 2013.
Overall, between 2001 and 2013 there has been a nine per cent decline in the average daily number of children watching television in metropolitan cities. Notably, there has also been a decline in child viewers—from 13 per cent to 11 per cent of the potential child audience. Commercial television licensees experienced the biggest drop in the potential child audience—from 8.5 per cent in 2001 to 4.5 per cent in 2013.

2. How much TV are children watching?

The OzTAM data shows that children aged 0–14 are spending less time watching television than they did over a decade ago. In 2013, children watched television for one hour and 54 minutes per day when averaged across all television households. Comparatively, OzTAM data for 2001 showed children watched a daily average of two hours and 24 minutes. Specifically for FTA television, the research shows that children are watching 33 fewer minutes of television each day in 2013 than they did in 2001.

There are some important differences in the amount of time spent viewing and the viewing destination across different age groups. Preschool children (0–4) are spending more time watching FTA television than older children. In 2013, preschool children watched one hour and 54 minutes per day, the 5–12 age group averaged one hour and 20 minutes per day, and the 13–17 age group averaged one hour and two minutes per day.

In 2013, children aged 0–14 watched an average of 37 minutes per day on ABC channels (taken together), and 26 minutes per day on STV (see Figure 2). This represents an increase in children’s viewing of STV channels from an average of 22 minutes per day in 2005. A number of factors may be contributing to a decline in commercial television viewing, including children spending more time watching children’s channels on the ABC and STV.

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7 The potential audience (also known as universe estimate) is the estimated population against which media audiences are calculated. See Attachment B for further information.
8 In the Newspoll research, parents reported children spending an average of just under an hour a day watching children’s television programs (6.6 hours per week).
9 See Attachment B, p. 20, for more detailed information.
10 Average time spent viewing STV makes up part of the average for all television viewing and is calculated across all television households in the five metropolitan cities. For the 31 per cent of children living in households with STV in 2013, the average amount of time spent viewing television was two hours and 13 minutes (comprising an average of one hour and 22 minutes of STV and 51 minutes of FTA television).
In 2013, each ‘Network’ shows an aggregated average for the primary channel and its digital multi-channels. Network ABC includes ABC1 and ABC2 in 2009, with the addition of ABC3 and ABC News 24 in 2013. Time spent viewing data is averaged across all metro television households. STV data was not reported by OzTAM in 2001.

While each television network provided programming for children of different ages in 2013, ABC2 (also known as ABC4Kids) attracted more children aged 0–4 and an increase in average time spent viewing. Conversely, each of the commercial networks, STV and ABC3 attracted more viewers aged 5–12.

3. What types of TV programs do children watch?

While parents in the Newspoll survey reported that nine in 10 children aged 14 and under watch children’s television programs, OzTAM data showed that programs made specifically for children were watched most commonly by those aged 0–4.\(^\text{11}\)

For children aged 5–12, movies made for family or general audiences were most popular on FTA television.

Table 1 shows that, for the accumulative 0–14 age group on FTA television, the number of programs by program category watched by children has varied little over time.

For STV, the top 30 programs watched by children aged 0–14 were broadcast on children’s channels or were live sports events.

\(^{11}\) ACMA, Children’s Television Standards Review, Issues Paper, June 2007, p. 4.
Table 1 Number of programs by program category—top 30 programs watched on FTA television by children aged 0–14, 2001–13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program category</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children's programs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies—feature films</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality television</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light entertainment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infotainment/Lifestyle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specials</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29*</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The ACMA only obtained details for the top 29 programs in 2005.
Sports programs have been excluded from this list to maintain a focus on other programs.

4. What are the most popular TV programs children watch?

As shown in Table 1, the top 30 FTA television programs watched by children aged 0–14 in 2013 were predominantly of family appeal. The program list comprised 16 movies, including Toy Story 3, Despicable Me and Hop, up from 12 movies in both 2001 and 2005.

Among the FTA television programs most watched by children in 2013 were ‘children’s programs’ such as Room on the Broom and Shaun the Sheep broadcast on ABC2. All three commercial networks and the ABC feature in the top 30 FTA television programs watched by children 0–14 (see Table 2).

OzTAM data focusing on children aged 5–12 highlights the prevalence of content of family appeal with 20 of the top 30 programs being movies and all of the programs on the list being provided by commercial television (see Attachment B).

Table 2 Top 30 programs watched by children aged 0–14 on FTA television, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Program category</th>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Average 0–14 audience</th>
<th>TARP %</th>
<th>No. of episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*The Block Sky High—Grand Final</td>
<td>Reality</td>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>368,000</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*The X Factor Grand Final</td>
<td>LE</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>335,000</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*The Voice—Wednesday</td>
<td>LE</td>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>295,000</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*My Kitchen Rules—Winner Announced</td>
<td>Reality</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>290,000</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toy Story 3</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>282,000</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toy Story of Terror</td>
<td>Children's</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>269,000</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despicable Me</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>261,000</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hop</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>256,000</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*The Block: All Stars—Grand Final</td>
<td>Reality</td>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>253,000</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamish &amp; Andy’s Gap Year Asia</td>
<td>LE</td>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>242,000</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Blitz—The Block to the Rescue</td>
<td>I/L</td>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>227,000</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lion King</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>219,000</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Big Brother—Winner Announced</td>
<td>Reality</td>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>211,000</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Smurfs</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>203,000</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room on the Broom (am)</td>
<td>Children’s</td>
<td>ABC2</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>196,000</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 ‘Children’s programs’ are defined, in this context, by the television channels to OzTAM.
Kung Fu Panda 2 | Movie | Ten | USA | 195,000 | 6.6 | 1
Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs | Movie | Nine | USA | 192,000 | 6.6 | 2
Shaun the Sheep (am) | Children’s | ABC2 | UK | 190,000 | 6.5 | 1
Finding Nemo | Movie | Seven | USA | 184,000 | 6.3 | 1
Polar Express | Movie | Nine | USA | 179,000 | 6.1 | 1
Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory (ev.) | Movie | GO! | USA | 177,000 | 6.0 | 1
Dr Seuss’ how the Grinch Stole Christmas! | Movie | Seven | USA | 177,000 | 6.0 | 1
How to Train your Dragon | Movie | Seven | USA | 175,000 | 6.0 | 1
Cars 2 | Movie | Seven | USA | 174,000 | 5.9 | 1
Up | Movie | Seven | USA | 173,000 | 5.9 | 1
Ben and Holly’s Little Kingdom (am) | Children’s | ABC2 | UK | 172,000 | 5.9 | 105
The Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause | Movie | Seven | USA | 168,000 | 5.7 | 1
Peppa Pig (pm) | Children’s | ABC2 | UK | 167,000 | 5.7 | 1,098
How Many More Minutes Until Christmas? (am) | Children’s | ABC2 | UK | 167,000 | 5.7 | 1
Gnomeo & Juliet | Movie | Seven | USA | 165,000 | 5.6 | 1

*Only the top-ranking single episodes of Reality Television and Light Entertainment programs are included in this list. Other episodes also rated highly with viewers aged 0–14 and are not listed to avoid duplication of individual program titles.

†LE = Light Entertainment, I/L = Infotainment/Lifestyle. Program categories are defined by television networks.

‡Number of episodes—the breakdown of program episodes is determined by the television networks. Where there is more than one episode, audience size and TARPs are averaged across those episodes.

Sports programs have been excluded from this list to maintain a focus on other programs. Sporting events such as grand finals attracted relatively high audience ratings with children aged 0–14 years as they did with viewers generally.

5. What are the most popular children’s programs?

In contrast to the programs of any sort most watched by children, the top 30 programs made for children watched by children aged 0–14 in 2013 were all broadcast on ABC2 (which is designed to appeal primarily to preschool children from 5 am to 7 pm daily).13

OzTAM data shows that these top 30 children’s programs attracted between 4.5 and 6.7 per cent of the potential child audience (TARP). In 2013, 21 of the top 30 programs were sourced from the United Kingdom and only three were Australian, a 75 per cent decrease from the 12 Australian titles in 2012. Table 3 provides a snapshot of the popular children’s programs on FTA television in 2013.

Table 3 Top 10 children’s programs watched by children aged 0–14 on FTA television, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Average audience</th>
<th>% TARP</th>
<th>No. of episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Room on the Broom (am)</td>
<td>ABC2</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>196,000</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaun the Sheep (am)</td>
<td>ABC2</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>190,000</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben and Holly’s Little Kingdom (am)</td>
<td>ABC2</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>172,000</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppa Pig (pm)</td>
<td>ABC2</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>167,000</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Many More Minutes Until Christmas? (am)</td>
<td>ABC2</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>167,000</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octonauts Special: A Very Vegimals Christmas (pm)</td>
<td>ABC2</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>157,000</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaun the Sheep: Championsheeps (pm)</td>
<td>ABC2</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>155,000</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Rabbit’s Christmas Tale (pm)</td>
<td>ABC2</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>154,000</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octonauts (am)</td>
<td>ABC2</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>151,000</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pajanimals (ev)</td>
<td>ABC2</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>151,000</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Toy Story of Terror was categorised by Channel 7 as a ‘children’s program’ but has been excluded from this list because it builds on characters from the Toy Story movies that attract a relatively high adult audience. Toy Story of Terror was a half-hour program broadcast immediately before a repeat screening of Toy Story 3.

13 See www.abc.net.au/abcforkids/about/about.htm.
6. What channels are popular with kids?
The ABC has played a significant role as a broadcaster of children’s programs for many years. OzTAM data for the ABC network shows increased children’s viewing since 2009 and this can be attributed mainly to children aged 0–4 watching ABC2 throughout the day until early evening. During this time, ABC2 has provided ‘destination’ viewing comprising preschool children’s programs.

Unlike commercial television broadcasters, there is no obligation for the ABC to meet C and P quotas.

Figure 3 highlights the popularity of children’s programs on ABC2 and ABC3, according to OzTAM data, compared to those shown on the commercial FTA networks and STV channels.

Figure 3 Average child audience watching the most popular children’s programs across television platforms, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Average number of children aged 0–14 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STV children's channels</td>
<td>64,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's programs on commercial free-to-air television</td>
<td>117,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC2 and ABC3</td>
<td>196,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data provided by OzTAM Pty Limited. Children 0–14 years, five metro cities, 1 January – 31 December 2013, Consolidated.*

The Newspoll survey found a similar preference for ‘destination’ viewing on the ABC. Parents reported that two in three children prefer watching children’s programs on ABC channels. This compared with 22 per cent for STV children’s channels (Figure 4). ABC2 is preferred (by around 70 per cent) for children under five.

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14 ACMA, *Children’s viewing patterns on commercial, free-to-air and subscription television*, 2006.
7. Is commercial television relevant to children’s programming?

Based on responses to the Newspoll survey, parents remain interested in commercial television licensees providing content for children. The older the child, the more parents consider it important that commercial television licensees show children’s programs. Seventy per cent of parents of children aged 10–14 considered it important for commercial television broadcasters to show children’s programming. However, this desire can be juxtaposed against the declining number of older children watching commercial FTA television (see Figure 5).

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* Four per cent of respondents indicated that the ABC was their child’s favourite channel, without being able to name the specific channel.
8. What is the audience for C and P programs?

The CTS quotas are designed to ensure that children have access to Australian stories and Australian voices in television programs broadcast on commercial television.

The OzTAM data indicates the audience for C and P programs has declined, while there remains a significant audience for children’s programs on ABC channels, and across television more generally.

The potential audience for the top 10 C and P programs has become smaller—falling from a range of 1.6 to 7.1 per cent in 2005 to 0.2 to 1.0 per cent in 2013.15 Notably, there were two high-rating C telemovies in 2005—Blinky Bill’s White Christmas and Hildegarde, A Duck Down Under. OzTAM data indicates a small increase in the audience size between 2012 and 2013, as shown in Figure 6.

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15 2001 data on top C and P programs was not obtained.
Figure 6 Summary of viewing trends of highest rating C and P programs on commercial television, by children aged 0–14, 2005–13

There is also evidence that FTA digital multichannels are serving a significant child audience. In 2013, GO! (one of the Nine Network’s digital multichannels) broadcast more than half of the top C and P programs (14 out of 26 programs).16

The top three C programs in 2013 were Wakkaville, Flea Bitten and Pixel Pinkie. These three Australian drama programs were each broadcast as part of the Saturday morning block of children’s programming on GO!. The large majority of C drama programs were broadcast on weekends and public holidays.

9. How are parents involved in their children’s TV viewing?

The Newspoll survey identified the role that parents have in determining what their children watch on television and how much they watch.

Six in 10 parents said adults were present all or most of the time during weekdays (65 per cent) or weekends (58 per cent) when their child watched children’s television programs. There is a correlation between the presence of an adult and the age of a child—adult supervision is over 80 per cent when a child is under five years of age compared to 40 per cent or fewer when a child is aged 10 or older.

Seventy-one per cent of parents said they were involved in choosing the channel or programs their child watched. Again, there was a direct relationship between parental involvement and the age of a child.

Parents indicated the factors that are important to them when choosing a TV channel or program for their child to watch. Nearly all respondents (99 per cent) considered the appropriateness of a program for the child’s age to be very important. Additionally, over three-quarters of parents considered it very important that their child like a TV channel or program and/or that a program is shown at the right time (see Figure 7).

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16 See Attachment B for program list.
When parents were asked to select the most important factor when choosing a TV channel or program for their child, a large majority (78 per cent) chose ‘programs [that] are suitable or appropriate for child’s age’.

10. What rules and restrictions do parents place on children’s viewing?

Almost all families (94 per cent) in the Newspoll survey reported having rules and restrictions for what their children watch on television. Families, on average, had more than three rules or restrictions in place.

The most common rules relate to limiting the type of programs (78 per cent), the channels viewed (57 per cent overall or 67 per cent for families with STV) and the time spent viewing (77 per cent). Sixty-eight per cent of respondents had rules that restricted the time of day that children can watch television.

Rules and restrictions are in place in households with or without STV. However, STV families tend to have rules that limit viewing to certain channels and they are more likely to use a parental lock to restrict children’s access to certain channels or programs. In households with STV, 24 per cent of respondents reported using a parental lock device, compared with seven per cent of households without STV.

The Newspoll survey results show that parents rely on rules and restrictions to help facilitate and control what their children watch. The results also show that parents rely on their child, someone else, advertisements, promotions and—to a lesser extent—electronic program guides to inform them about new or interesting children’s television programs that their child may be interested in watching.
Conclusion

Children—especially young children—still watch programs that are specifically made for them. Further, while parents believe it is important that commercial television licensees continue to provide children’s programming, the research shows that ‘dedicated’ ABC children’s channels are consistently attracting a higher proportion of the younger child audience than commercial television. Block programming on commercial multi-channels (for example, on weekend mornings) is also successful in attracting a higher child audience. At the same time, commercial television broadcasters are attracting an older child audience aged 5–12 years, watching more movies and general entertainment programs that have family appeal.

When parents are involved in selecting a TV channel or program for their child to watch, they still consider it very important that the content is appropriate, the child ‘likes’ the TV channel or program and a program is shown at the right time.

While the research has not specifically examined the importance, if any, that parents and children place on access to Australian programs, the OzTAM data shows that Australian television programs have generally maintained their popularity with children aged 0–4, 5–12 and 13–17 between 2001 and 2013. The OzTAM data also indicates that the source of the top programs watched by children aged 0–4 has shifted from Australia to the United Kingdom, which is likely a reflection of the availability of programs on the dedicated ABC channel for children in this age group. In 2013, Australian programming such as reality television and infotainment/lifestyle programs were especially popular with the 13–17 age group.

Methodology

Newspoll survey

The Newspoll omnibus research was conducted nationally with 1,137 respondents aged 18 years and over with a child aged 0–15 living in their household. This included 954 respondents who were the parent, guardian or carer of a child aged 0–14. Random sampling was used to select respondents.

Telephone interviews were conducted with respondents between 16 May and 1 June 2014 (using three rounds of the Newspoll national telephone omnibus). The main focus of the Newspoll research was to:

> gain a better understanding about parents’ preferences for the times children’s television programs are scheduled and the extent of their involvement in choosing the television channel(s) and programs their children watch
> identify the rules or restrictions parents have for their children about watching television, and the tools (if any) they use to enforce any rules or restrictions on viewing
> gain a better understanding about whether parents co-view with children watching children’s programs on television or whether children view alone
> gain a better understanding about the importance of children’s television programs from a parent’s perspective.

OzTAM audience data

The OzTAM audience research provides insight into children’s television viewing including:

> patterns of children’s viewing and program ratings for commercial and ABC channels between 2001 and 2013
> specific analysis of audiences for C and P programs, as well as focusing on children’s viewing of FTA television in the five metropolitan cities
> children’s viewing of STV, where relevant.
The analysis of OzTAM audience and ratings data provides information on:

- the size and availability of the child audience, as indicated by patterns of viewing over the day
- the amount of time children spend watching FTA, STV and commercial television
- the most watched programs on FTA television—overall and for children’s programs
- viewing of C and P programs by their respective target audiences, including case studies of specific C programs
- differences in viewing patterns and preferences between children at different developmental stages, with data presented for children aged 0–4, 5–12 and 13–14 years
- trends in children’s television viewing with data points from 2001 to 2013.

Unless stated otherwise, the OzTAM data cover five metropolitan Australian cities—Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney combined. Annual averages are calculated over a calendar year from 6 am to midnight. From 2009, the FTA television data includes both the primary channels and digital multi-channels, and the 2013 data is consolidated, including ‘live’ and ‘playback’ viewing.

researchacma

Our research program—researchacma—underpins our work and decisions as an evidence-informed regulator. It contributes to our strategic policy development, regulatory reviews and investigations, and helps us to make media and communications work for all Australians.

researchacma has five broad areas of interest:

- market developments
- media content and culture
- social and economic participation
- citizen and consumer safeguards
- regulatory best practice and development.

This research contributes to the ACMA’s media content and culture research theme.