



Australian Children's Streaming Video Platform Habits, Fluencies, and Literacies

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Summary of Key Findings



1.

Australian Content Is Difficult For Children To Find On Streaming Platforms

- Only 17.1% of children chose Australian content when streaming independently
- Even fewer (9.4%) chose Australian content when streaming together with their parents
- Children had difficulty discovering Australian content on streaming platforms
- Parental influence does not necessarily guide children towards Australian content



2.

Australian Content Is Difficult For Children To Identify On Streaming Platforms

- Children had difficulty identifying Australian content
- Children expressed a desire to see more Australian content, but said it was difficult for them to find
- Children displayed a high degree of technical fluency with streaming platforms, but generally low cultural literacy with the national identity of programs



3.

Netflix As Children's "Go-To" And "Default" Platform

- Netflix was the most popular platform when children streamed independently (40.5%) and jointly with their parents (36.4%)
- Children expressed preference for Netflix's platform interface design, recommender system, and catalogue organisation
- Children viewed Netflix-style algorithmic and personalised recommendations as an important tool in aiding and empowering their personal content choices
- Children perceived Netflix as setting the norm and standard for the streaming video experience, with implications for local content discoverability and streaming platforms



4.

YouTube Very Popular But Source Of Child/Parent Tension

- YouTube was the second most popular platform when children streamed independently (32.4%) and with their parents (15.2%)
- YouTube Kids was not popular with children when streaming independently (5.4%) but was as popular as the main platform when streaming with parents (15.2%), suggesting that children modulate their behavior around YouTube when parents are present
- Parents expressed concern about their children's YouTube use, but mediate it through platform controls rather than expectations that children should use YouTube Kids



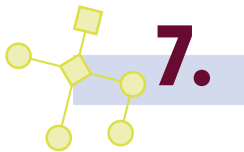
ABC Platforms Popular With Children, But Not Australian SVOD Stan

- ABC platforms were the third most popular choice amongst children when all platforms are combined (Kids, ME, iview) – 16.2% selected them when streaming independently and 18.2% when streaming with parents
- Children move fluidly across the three different ABC platforms, and used iview and ME slightly more often than the Kids platform for younger children
- Children associate ABC platforms with Australian content
- No children looked for content on Australian SVOD Stan when streaming independently



Disney+ Is A Family Co-Viewing Choice, Rather Than Being Used For Routine Viewing

- Children did not often gravitate to Disney+ when streaming independently (5.4%) nor when streaming with their parents (9.1%)
- Children and parents identified domestic contextual factors around their Disney+ use, particularly rituals around family co-viewing movie nights
- Children tended to watch TV shows (52.8%) and YouTube videos (33.3%) rather than movies (11.1%) in the study's streaming sessions, a likely factor in low rates of Disney+ use given the platform's association with movie nights



Algorithmic Recommendations Are Important To And Valued By Children

- When streaming independently, children typed a specific title into the search bar (51.4%) or scrolled through the recommended catalogue options (48.6%) at almost equivalent rates
- Catalogue organisation and algorithmic recommendations are critical to family co-viewing selections: in the joint session with their parents, children were much more likely to scroll (66.7%) rather than search (33.3%)
- Parents expressed concern about algorithmic recommendations, yet children value them
- When selecting a second piece of content independently, 39.1% of children viewed algorithmically recommended content

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Australian Children's Television Cultures (ACTC) is a research project based at Swinburne University of Technology in collaboration with RMIT University, Melbourne. In partnership with the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF), ACTC are undertaking a four-year project to investigate the roles of Australian children's television and other children's screen entertainment in people's lives, memories, families, and education. The findings and outcomes of this project are designed to inform the Australian children's television sector as it navigates an era of increased viewing options, policy changes, and new viewing practices

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Introduction

Background

Australian children now tend to use streaming video platforms to watch television on demand from extensive catalogues¹ a phenomenon that aligns with international trends. For example, UK communications regulator Ofcom finds that watching streamed content via video sharing platforms is a “near-universal” activity amongst children aged 3-17 (96%).² In Australia, since the initial rise of streaming, the Federal Government has emphasised the pressing need to better understand children’s on-demand screen entertainment access to enable an evidence-based regulatory response. For instance, the 2017 Australian and Children’s Screen Content Review identified “securing children’s content” as one of three key policy priorities, noting that “future policy settings will need to more closely align with the changing consumption habits of children” and how children engage with “different content genres online.”³ Yet since this 2017 review, the situation around Australian children’s content has become increasingly precarious. In 2020, the Federal Government removed quotas for local children’s television on commercial TV networks, a system that had been in place to scaffold the sector since 1979.⁴ The policy change was initially described as an emergency “red tape reduction” response to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵ Yet this policy setting was subsequently made permanent. As a result, by 2022, 84% less Australian children’s television was screened on commercial broadcasters compared to 2019.⁶

There are currently no concrete requirements for any TV broadcasters or streaming services to invest in or screen Australian children’s TV. While Australia’s public broadcasters, the ABC and SBS, have internal polices and charters that include children’s content,⁷ these aspirations are not associated with specific targets or quotas. The commitment of these organisations to Australian children’s television is thus discretionary and can and has changed year to year.⁸ Robust policy, regulatory, and funding support is vital given children’s television “is the clearest example of market failure in the screen sector, but also the greatest example of public value,”⁹ in that local children’s content meets the “best interests” of young audiences by encouraging reflection on and engagement with their own socio-cultural context.¹⁰ Yet in the current climate, producer bodies in Australia fear the

sector could be “wiped out” within two years.¹¹ The issue has attracted international attention, with *The New York Times* reporting that “the future of children’s television in Australia is far from assumed.”¹² The Federal Government continue to recognise the urgency of the issue, with The National Cultural Policy noting that “some content sub-genres, especially children’s content, are at serious risk.”¹³

Child Audience Research Study: Responding to Knowledge Gaps

This report intervenes into this site of industry, public, and policy concern by outlining new evidence around how Australian children use streaming video platforms to find screen entertainment content. The findings in this report are from a mixed-methods study carried out in 2022-23 with Australian children aged 7-9 (n=37) and their adult guardians. The research sought to identify how Australian children understand, identify, and discover “local” and “children’s” content on streaming platforms. It was carried out at the Swinburne University of Technology BabyLab in Hawthorn, Melbourne, a specialist facility for the study of children’s media use in relation to their psychological development.

The study drew on child psychology methods, but was grounded in screen and digital media studies methodologies building on Lead Chief Investigator (CI) Balanzategui’s and CI Baker’s programs of research around the transformation of children’s media in the age of digital platforms. This previous research has identified shifting definitions of children’s¹⁴ and family television¹⁵ in the streaming era. This work called for “the integration of traditions in screen studies – namely audience research and genre analysis – with approaches to platform analysis drawn from digital media studies” to better understand how children engage with film, television, and video content on streaming platforms.¹⁶ The incorporation of child psychology methods into this framework produced an interdisciplinary study designed to illuminate children’s streaming platform competencies and capabilities in the 7-9 age group.

A key aim of the study was to shed light on *if* and *how* Australian children find local content on streaming platforms to identify any “discoverability” challenges – the ability of audiences to find available content. While much debate about the precarity of the Australian children’s television sector has focused on declines in production, issues with children’s ability to find local productions on the various streaming platforms they most often use compounds this problem.¹⁷ To develop regulatory and industry solutions, evidence is needed around how audiences use streaming platforms to discover different content types and the key obstacles they face when trying to find local content. This includes not only discoverability, but also the degree of “prominence” of local services and content on TV devices.¹⁸ Yet as is noted in one of the few academic studies globally of audience streaming habits, “despite discoverability and prominence emerging as crucial to contemporary industry and policy debates in relation to television, there remains relatively little rich, qualitative data about how contemporary TV audiences discover content.”¹⁹ Researchers have identified the pressing need to understand “how users actually respond to recommendation algorithms”²⁰ and identified “a gap in our direct knowledge”²¹ due to there being “surprisingly little empirical research on audience attitudes to discoverability.”²² This knowledge gap is particularly pronounced in relation to children.

Streaming platform interfaces are “a new and evolving” source of “media circulation power”²³ which shape how audiences encounter screen entertainment content. It is thus crucial to better understand how children navigate and comprehend the methods by which content is delivered to them on streaming platforms – what scholars Lobato and Ryan call “distributive logics”²⁴ – which includes their interface designs, catalogue organisation, recommender systems, and content categorisation and labelling strategies. It is also important to determine how these elements influence the specific routes that children take on streaming platforms to find content, and how these pathways shape their content habits and preferences.

In examining children’s “routes to content,”²⁵ this study responds to appeals in prior research to consider “the actual practices of children to understand their relationship to and use of television.”²⁶ To achieve this, the current study seeks to overcome limitations of industry research that relies on parental reporting to illuminate children’s viewing habits²⁷ by instead directly observing and interviewing children themselves.

Finally, it must be noted that while certain streaming services capture extensive datasets about their customer’s viewing habits, “their information is largely inaccessible” to the public, to the wider industry, and to policymakers, such that we know “embarrassingly little about contemporary audiences.”²⁸ Streaming services have many strategic reasons not to disclose such data.²⁹ Furthermore, a crucial gap in this internal data is that streaming companies cannot know who is actually in the room watching and making decisions around content. This issue is particularly pertinent in relation to children, whose content viewing behaviours alternate between independence and being shaped by family dynamics and parental mediation.³⁰ Through examining children’s streaming behaviours and routes to content, the current research uses novel interdisciplinary strategies to uncover how children aged 7–9 discover content on streaming platforms – including their level of awareness of the national and cultural identity of the programs they watch – and how the design of streaming platforms impacts their decision-making and content preferences.

¹ Burke, L, McIntyre, J, Balanzategui, J, & Baker, D (2022) Parents’ Perspectives on Australian Children’s Television in the Streaming Era, Swinburne University of Technology. <https://doi.org/10.26185/xx0-d294>

² Ofcom (2023) Children and parents: media use and attitudes report, 11.

³ Department of Communications and the Arts (2017) Australian and Children’s Screen Content Review Consultation Paper, 9.

⁴ Mecinski, N & Mullen, B (1999) Regulation of Children’s Television in Australia: Past and Present. Media International Australia, 93(1): 27-28; 33; 37.

⁵ Knox, D (2020) Local quotas suspended, spectrum fees waived in media rescue. TV Tonight, <https://tvtvtonight.com.au/2020/04/local-quotas-suspended-spectrum-fees-waived-in-media-rescue.html>; Balanzategui, J, McIntyre, J & Burke, L (2020) Cheese ‘n’ crackers! Concerns deepen for the future of Australian children’s television. The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/cheese-n-crackers-concerns-deepen-for-the-future-of-australian-childrens-television-147183>.

⁶ Australian Communications and Media Authority (2023) Broadcaster compliance with TV content standards.

⁷ Australian Broadcasting Corporation (2023) Editorial Policies, <https://www.abc.net.au/edpols/policies>; Special Broadcasting Service (2023) Content Commissioning, <https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/work-with-sbs/content-commissioning/>.

⁸ Potter, A (2018) Why it’s time to end the policy limbo threatening Australian children’s TV. The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/why-its-time-to-end-the-policy-limbo-threatening-australian-childrens-tv-101328>; Potter, A (2015) No dramas? What budget cuts signal for homegrown children’s shows on ABC3. The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/no-dramas-what-budget-cuts-signal-for-homegrown-childrens-shows-on-abc3-50004>; Balanzategui, J, McIntyre, J & Burke, L (2020) Cheese ‘n’ crackers! Concerns deepen for the future of Australian children’s television. The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/cheese-n-crackers-concerns-deepen-for-the-future-of-australian-childrens-television-147183>.

⁹ Dawson, E (2017) Stories to Tell: Protecting Australian Children’s Screen Content. Per Capita, <https://www.screenproducers.org.au/assets/Events/Images/Stories-To-Tell.pdf>.

¹⁰ Potter, A (2015) Creativity, Culture and Commerce: Creating Children’s Content with Public Value. Intellect, ix.

¹¹ Ward, M (2022) Netflix and Disney+ could wipe out local producers in two years. Australian Financial Review, <https://www.afr.com/companies/media-and-marketing/screen-companies-face-disaster-unless-regulators-act-on-streamers-20220329-p5a8v0>

¹² Frost, N (2022) The Future of Australian Children’s TV. The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/14/world/australia/australian-children-television-bluey.html#:~:text=Three%20decades%20later%2C%20the%20future,is%20being%20made%20in%20Australia>.

¹³ Australian Government Office for the Arts (2023) National Cultural Policy: Revive, 87-8.

¹⁴ Balanzategui, J (2021) Disturbing Children’s YouTube Content and the Algorithmic Uncanny. New Media and Society 25(2): 3521-3542.

¹⁵ Baker, D, Balanzategui, J & Sandars, D (2023) Netflix, Dark Fantastic Genres, and Intergenerational Viewing: Family Watch Together TV. London: Routledge.

¹⁶ Balanzategui, J (2020) Towards an understanding of children’s screen genres in the streaming video era. NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies, <https://mediarep.org/entities/article/f4cf7052-9db1-44b4-b018-11b69b569126>.

¹⁷ Screen Australia (2022) National Cultural Policy Submission. Sydney.

¹⁸ Australian Government (2023) Prominence for connected TV devices. <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-communications-arts/television/prominence-connected-tv-devices>

¹⁹ Johnson, C, Hills, M & Dempsey L (2023) An audience studies’ contribution to the discoverability and prominence debate: Seeking UK TV audiences’ “routes to content”. Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies: 1-21. DOI: 10.1177/09544327167940.

²⁰ Khoo, O (2022) Picturing diversity: Netflix’s inclusion strategy and the Netflix Recommender Algorithm (NRA). Television and New Media 24(3): 292.

²¹ Turner, G (2019) Approaching the Cultures of Use: Netflix, Disruption, and the Audience. Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies 14(2): 222.

²² Lobato, R & Scarlata, A (2022) Regulating Discoverability in Subscription Video-on-Demand Services. In: Flew T and Martin F (eds) Digital Platform Regulation. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 222.

²³ Hesmondhalgh, D & Lotz, A (2020) Video screen interfaces as new sites of media circulation power. International Journal of Communication 14: 389.

²⁴ Lobato, R & Ryan, M (2011) Rethinking genre studies through distribution analysis. New Review of Film & Video 9(2): 188-203.

²⁵ Johnson C, Dempsey L & Hills, M (2020). Routes to Content. Report, University of Huddersfield, UK. <https://pure.hud.ac.uk/en/publications/routes-to-content-how-people-decide-what-tv-to-watch>

²⁶ Mittell, J (2015) Children’s Television. In: Creeber G (ed) The Television Genre Book. London: BFI, 126.

²⁷ Australian Communications and Media Authority (2017) Children’s television viewing and multi-screen behaviour. Available at: <https://www.acma.gov.au/publications/2017-08/report/kids-tv-viewing-and-multi-screen-behaviour>.

²⁸ Gray, J (2017) Reviving audience studies. Critical Studies in Media Communication 34(1): 83.

²⁹ Siegel, T, & Porter, R (2021) Why Streamers Are Stalling on Sharing Data. The Hollywood Reporter, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/streamers-data-sharing-1235045041/>

³⁰ Baker, D, Balanzategui, J, & Sandars, D (2023) Netflix, Dark Fantastic Genres, and Intergenerational Viewing: Family Watch Together TV. London: Routledge.

Demographics

The study involved 44 child participants aged 7–9, however 37 are captured in this report’s sample, as only participants whose data had high fidelity and quality across the study’s video- and audio-recordings are included in this analysis.³¹ This sample size enables conclusions to be drawn about children’s competencies and capabilities in this age group, achieving data saturation – the point at which responses and already observed patterns are repeating and no further data is needed.³² The 7–9 age group was chosen because our past research with parents suggests that this age group may have developing independence and agency over their streaming platform habits, but not to the degree of children aged 12 and over.³³ The 7–9 demographic is a crucial audience for Australian children’s television, being on the younger end of Australia’s “C” classification for children under 14 but over pre-school age. 7–9-year-olds are also on the cusp of the “tween” demographic (8–12-year-olds) that is pivotal to but proving particularly challenging to cater for in Australian and international screen industries.³⁴ One or occasionally two of the child’s parents also participated in the study.³⁵

Most of the children lived in a capital city (80%), some in a metropolitan center with over 100,000 residents (14.3%), with one participant from a rural and one from a remote area. The majority of participants were city dwelling because participation necessitated in-lab observation, which involved attending the BabyLab facility in inner suburban Melbourne. This limitation will be addressed in future iterations of this research.³⁶ There was an almost equal split of female (48.6%) and male (51.4%) participants, and most of the children were in Year 2 (42.9%) with a median age of 8 years. The majority of participants identified as white (82.9%), and some identified as mixed race (8.6%), South Asian (5.7%), and Maori (2.9%). English was the first language of all children. The majority of the children came from relatively high earning income households (\$100,000–\$199,999: 48.6%), with remaining participants spread across a household income under \$49,999 (9.6%), under \$99,999 (11.4%) or above \$200,000 (25.7%). In most cases the parent joining the session was the mother (88.6%), with all remaining being the father (11.4%).³⁷

Methods

The study adapts structured observation methods used in child psychology research, in which children’s media use is observed using structured or scripted procedures. Children were observed and video-recorded using streaming platforms, and the video-recordings were subsequently analysed according to a set of key criteria (codes) to understand their navigation and content selection practices.³⁸ This approach facilitates the identification of developmental norms around media exposure.³⁹

Each child was observed selecting and watching the content of their choice on streaming platforms using a touchscreen tablet. They watched alone for approximately 10 minutes (but were not told how long they would have to watch), and then with a parent present for the same duration. This enabled comparison between the children’s independent platform use and content choices versus when watching jointly with a parent. We then conducted semi-structured interviews with both the child and their parent, first separately, and then together, to capture independent, collaborative, and negotiated responses between children and their parents, a model used in our previous audience study of Netflix and family television.⁴⁰ As well as the in-lab video-recording, the child’s use of the streaming platform was screen-recorded on the touchscreen tablet to capture a detailed picture of their navigation strategies, platform fluencies, and routes to content.

The interview with the child directly followed their independent streaming session. The researcher invited the child to show them what they had been watching and explain more about their platform and content preferences using the touchscreen tablet device. This “show-and-tell” interview structure aided children’s ability to explain how they used the platform interfaces, catalogues, and recommender systems. It adapts the “walkthrough method” from digital platform studies⁴¹ in which relationships between platform functionality and user behaviour are understood via analysis of real-time platform navigation. The walkthrough method provides “a way of engaging directly with an app’s interface to examine its technological mechanisms and embedded cultural references to understand how it guides users and shapes their experience.”⁴² This approach thus enables the findings to illuminate how children’s routes to content are influenced by platform interface, catalogue, and recommender system design.

³¹ See Appendix One for descriptive statistics table for in-lab streaming sessions. The table makes clear the number of participants involved across each component of the session, with a total of 37 in the study as a whole.

³² Saunders, B et al. (2018) Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality and Quantity: International Journal of Methodology* 52(4): 1893-1907.

³³ Burke, L, McIntyre, J, Balanzategui, J, & Baker, D (2022).

³⁴ Geraets, N (2024) If you think kids’ films suddenly suck, this is why. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/movies/if-you-think-kids-films-suddenly-suck-this-is-why-20240528-p5jh8o.html>.

³⁵ In the study, adult caregivers could indicate which caregiving role they identified with, and all self-identified as parents.

³⁶ Australian Research Council (2023) Jessica Balanzategui IE240100031 – RMIT University. <https://dataportal.arc.gov.au/NCGP/Web/Grant/Grant/IE240100031>

³⁷ See Appendix Two for more detailed demographic information.

³⁸ See Appendix One for the Descriptive Statistics Data Table.

³⁹ Huber, B, Yeates, M, Meyer, D, Fleckhammer, L & Kaufman, J (2018) The effects of screen media content on young children’s executive functioning. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 170: 72-85; Huber, B, Meyer, D & Kaufman, J (2020) Young children’s contingent interactions with a touchscreen influence their memory for spatial and narrative content. *Media Psychology* 23(4): 552-578.

⁴⁰ Baker, D, Balanzategui, J & Sandars, D (2023).

⁴¹ Light, B, Burgess, J & Duguay, S (2016) The walkthrough method: An approach to the study of apps. *New Media & Society* 20(3): 881-900; Ruiz-Gomez, A, Leaver, T & Abidin, C (2021) Playing YouTube: How the Nancy YouTube doll and app position children as aspiring YouTube influencers. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 25(2): 121-140.

⁴² Light, Burgess & Duguay (2016): 882.

While the walkthrough method was originally designed to be used by researchers to analyse platform interfaces, for our study we had the children conducting the platform “walkthroughs” as part of the interview process and participant observation, exhibiting their routes to content while making and explaining their content choices across various streaming platforms. As Ritter argues, “direct observations of everyday practices provide critical insights into how tacit knowledge and local meaning-making are constituted.”⁴³ In this way, “the integration of the walkthrough method with participation observation” enables systematic observation of how certain user groups – in this case 7–9-year-old children – engage with and understand streaming platform interfaces.⁴⁴ The current research also addresses Lead CI Balanzategui’s call to understand “not just how child audiences engage with new types of content on streaming video platforms, but how they interact with the architectures and interfaces of the platforms through which this content is delivered.”⁴⁵

This “show-and-tell” interview and observation strategy was particularly important given many children, and indeed often their parents, do not possess the specialised language necessary to articulate the specifics of their routes to content (such as “discoverability”, “algorithmic/personalised recommendation”).

This interview was used as the basis for the child to explain to the researcher what content they chose and how they selected the content, as a means of sparking broader discussion about their typical streaming habits, genre preferences, and navigation practices. On the tablet children used to stream, all the major entertainment-focused streaming video services available in Australia identified by parents as popular with children in our previous research were available.⁴⁶ This included the ABC’s broadcast video on demand (BVOD) platforms iView, ME, and Kids, video sharing platforms that feature user-generated content YouTube and YouTube Kids, as well as the major subscription services, Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon Prime.

While the study captured and analysed multiple data sets, the analysis in this report focuses on the video-recorded observation sessions. After coding these sessions, the results were analysed using R statistics software, with interview materials incorporated in alignment with the themes unveiled by this coding process to shed further light on the observational findings. We analysed the video footage in addition to transcripts when incorporating interview data. These mixed methods have been adopted with the rationale that “multiple approaches can generate more complete and meaningful understanding.”⁴⁷ As Bignell and Woods note, qualitative “interviews provide many kinds of evidence, and not all of it concerns the actual content of the answers to questions. Hesitations, misunderstandings of a question and apparently irrelevant digressions can be revealing about the interviewees’ attitudes to the topic they are being asked about.”⁴⁸ In the case of our interviews with children, body language and facial expressions captured in video footage constitute compelling forms of evidence around child attitudes than cannot be gleaned from their spoken words alone. In approaching the interview and observational data in this way, this report responds to calls for “rich, qualitative data about how contemporary TV audiences discover content.”⁴⁹

⁴³ Ritter, C (2022) Rethinking digital ethnography: A qualitative approach to understanding interfaces. *Qualitative Research* 22(6): 917.

⁴⁴ Ritter (2022): 918.

⁴⁵ Balanzategui (2020): 254.

⁴⁶ Burke, L, McIntyre, J, Balanzategui, J, & Baker, D (2022).

⁴⁷ Greene, J (2007) *Mixed Methods in Social Inquiry*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, xxii

⁴⁸ Bignell, J & Woods, F (2023) *An introduction to television studies*. Fourth edition. London: Routledge, 220.

⁴⁹ Johnson, C, Hills, M & Dempsey, L (2023): 2.

1. Australian content is difficult for children to find on streaming platforms

Australian content is not the primary choice for most children, but they do wish to see more of it

Children do not preference Australian content, with only 17.1% choosing Australian content as a first choice in their independent streaming sessions. Even fewer (9.4%) chose Australian content in the joint session with parents. This highlights that parental influence does not necessarily guide children towards Australian content.



Figure One: 9-year-old child and her mother watching Australian animation *Bluey* together in the joint streaming session.

Despite this, children expressed a desire to see more Australian content, but said it was challenging for them to find. Children explained that they had difficulties finding Australian content on the platforms they most often used, namely YouTube and Netflix, and often related this to the dominance of North American content across these platforms.

Researcher: Do you wish that there were more Australian shows on Netflix and iView?

Child: [Nods.]

Researcher: Yeah, how come?

Child: Because I really like them.

8-year-old girl

[Netflix and YouTube] don't have much Australian shows [...] I try looking for Australian shows and when I recognise it's not Australian I just turn it off instantly. And then I'll find another Australian show.

7-year-old boy

Researcher: Can you think of any Australian shows off the top of your head?

Child: Oh no, no. I can't think of any. Like I don't watch much. All the YouTubers I watch are basically American. Maybe Australian Ninja Warrior? I watched that last night. I'm a big fan of that.

8-year-old girl

Well, there's not much Australian things on my things [TV and iPad]. But yeah, I do [like watching Australian shows]. Bluey is Australian. I'm not sure about the other ones 'cause most of the things that are on the TV or on iPad they're not much Australian. Unless I look up 'Australia.'

9-year-old girl

In reflecting on the perceived lack of Australian content available to them, children sometimes explained how watching too much North American content had impacted them. For instance, they described developing habits of using slang terms or dialect from US rather than Australian culture, or having to look up unfamiliar words.

Researcher: Do you wish there was more on Netflix, Australian stuff?

Child: Yeah, because sometimes I wouldn't know what they're talking about because they would say something a different way than how Australians would say it and then it would kind of get me confused and I would have to go on Google or something and look up the word in a dictionary or something or the computer and then it would tell me.

9-year-old girl

Researcher: Do you wish there was more Australian shows on TV, on these apps?

Child: [Nods]

Researcher: Yeah? How come?

Child: Because I used to watch American shows a lot and I kept on speaking American and I don't want to speak American.

8-year-old girl

Researcher: Do you wish there were more Australian shows on the streaming platforms?

Child: Yeah because most of them are like, American, and when I was 6 or 7 I would just watch all the American stuff. And then I started to say 'diaper' and then my Dad kept correcting me. [...] They would say 'gas station' instead of 'petrol station' and stuff like that.

9-year-old girl

Parental influence does not necessarily guide children towards Australian content

It is notable that parental influence did not generally aid children's ability to discover Australian content nor guide them towards Australian content, given less Australian content was watched in the joint streaming sessions. Nevertheless, some parents did express a preference for Australian content.

Father: The Australian shows are good to watch, especially because they've got the sort of themes that line up with our culture, whether that's Indigenous or otherwise. But just the culture in general. The way in which people interact with each other. You can tell.

Child: Like Little Lunch!

Father: Yes! You see, I would prefer Little Lunch, well and truly, over the American sitcom version of a similar sort of thing. Because it's more about what really happens in our society. [...] So I think it's more meaningful, and that's what I prefer.

7-year-old boy and his father

However, in line with our past national research with parents,⁵⁰ interviews with parents in our BabyLab study suggested that they take Australian children's content for granted. Our interviews also revealed that parents generally do not actively have conversations with their children about the value of including local content as part of a diverse screen entertainment diet.

Researcher: So you were saying that you guys don't really watch Australian TV together. Can you think of maybe any other reasons why you wouldn't?

Mother: I don't like Australian TV.

Researcher: That's very interesting. So what are the main things about Australian TV that you're not -

Mother: I mean there's some programs that they bring out that are good, but most of them are just not my - I like American programs. My husband likes English programs.

Mother of 8-year-old boy

This suggests that parents as well as children would benefit from education initiatives designed to enhance understandings around the socio-cultural value of local content, and to encourage reflective conversations between parents and children to improve families' media literacies around streaming platform use and culturally diverse content habits.

⁵⁰ Burke, L, McIntyre, J, Balanzategui, J, & Baker, D (2022).

2. Australian content is difficult for children to identify on streaming platforms

Children had difficulty *discovering* and also *identifying* Australian content

Children had high fluency with streaming platform mechanics, but generally low *cultural literacy* with the national identity of programs. They were often confused when asked about whether they enjoy Australian shows because they struggled to identify them across streaming platforms.

Researcher: Do you like watching Australian shows?

Child: Like what do you mean?

Researcher: So shows that have been made in Australia or the characters are Australian or they have they live in Australia or they have Australian accents, or there's....

Child: I don't think so.

Researcher: You don't think so? How would you know if something was Australian? Because it can be tricky to tell.

Child: Probably [pause] I don't know.

8-year-old boy

Researcher: Do you like watching Australian TV shows?

Child: I don't even know what the Australian TV shows are.

Researcher: How would you know if something was Australian?

Child: I don't know.

7-year-old girl

Researcher: Do you watch any Australian TV shows?

Child: No.

Researcher: No? What would give you a clue if a show was Australian or not?

Child: I don't know.

7-year-old girl

If content did not carry explicit signifiers of Australiana like the outback and kangaroos as in the examples below, children struggled to identify if it was Australian and often expressed confusion.

As child is scrolling through platform interface tiles:

Researcher: How do you know if a TV show is Australian or not? Do you have any clues that you might look for that give you hints if something's in Australia?

Child: Little J & Big Cuz, that's like the outback.

Researcher: The outback. Okay. So if something's in the outback you're pretty sure it's in Australia?

Child: [The movie] Back to the Outback, there's animals that we have in Australia. Like scorpions, snakes.

8-year-old boy

Discussing the interface tile for Little J & Big Cuz on SBS On-Demand:

Child: By the picture it looks like it's Australian.

Researcher: And why do you think that?

Child: Because there's some kangaroos in the background.

8-year-old girl

Occasionally children were surprised to learn that their favourite shows were Australian, suggesting that there is cultural identity confusion even around the programs they most enjoy and regularly watch.

Researcher: Do you like watching Australian shows?

Child: Not really, I think. I don't really know about any Australian shows that I really watch.

[Later in the interview, child identifies *The InBESTigators* and *Little Lunch* as two shows they most enjoy after seeing them in a streaming interface]

Interviewer: Did you know that *InBESTigators* and *Little Lunch* are Australian?

Child: They are?!

7-year-old boy

Child: I watch a lot of American. [...] They always show the flag and speak American. America's a crazy place [...] I do like American shows a lot, but not really Australian shows.

Researcher: But what about *Little Lunch* and *InBESTigators*? [two Australian shows the child had previously identified as his favourites].

Child: *Little Lunch* is definitely American.

Researcher: No, that one's an Australian show!

Child: [Physically recoils. Shocked pause] Well... *InBESTigators* is American!

Researcher: *InBESTigators* is Australian too!

Child: [Shocked pause] WHAT!?

[Later in interview]

Researcher: Do you think streaming platforms could do anything to make finding Australian content easier?

Child: Yes. Some apps should be all Australian. Or all American.

8-year-old boy



Figure Two: 8-year old boy recoils in surprise when learning his two favourite shows, *Little Lunch* and *InBESTigators*, are Australian, not American.

These findings shed further light on prior industry research with parents that found that children do not care about the national provenance of the programs they watch.⁵¹ The results of the current study instead reveal that while children value Australian content, they have difficulties finding it in the streaming era. They also struggle to articulate if and how they value it given challenges around identifying it. Indeed, as in the cases above, sometimes children said they did not watch Australian content, yet did not realise that some of their favourite programs were in fact Australian.

Children's low cultural literacies with Australian content can be seen as related to the broader local content discoverability issues they identify. As will be further detailed in other sections of this report [see page 11], the cultural literacy issues around content must therefore be understood as intertwined with the popularity amongst children of US-based global platforms Netflix and YouTube, which tend to algorithmically prioritise non-Australian and in particular North American content. Catalogue organisation, labelling, and interface tile imagery are also key factors, given the way content is packaged across platforms generally makes it difficult for children to identify Australian content unless tiles display stereotypical signifiers of Australiana.

⁵¹ Australian Communications and Media Authority (2017) Children's television viewing and multi-screen behaviour. Available at: <https://www.acma.gov.au/publications/2017-08/report/kids-tv-viewing-and-multi-screen-behaviour>.

Children had high *fluency* with streaming platforms

Children’s low cultural literacy with content was contrasted with their high “technical fluency” – their capacity to understand and fluidly navigate platform interfaces, catalogue designs, recommender systems, and classification display systems. For instance, in the “show-and-tell” observation sessions, children were able to display to the researcher how to find the ratings (G and PG) for shows across different platforms, such as Netflix and ABC iview, as in the below example.



Figure Three: 8-year-old girl demonstrating how she finds classifications on Netflix and ABC iview.

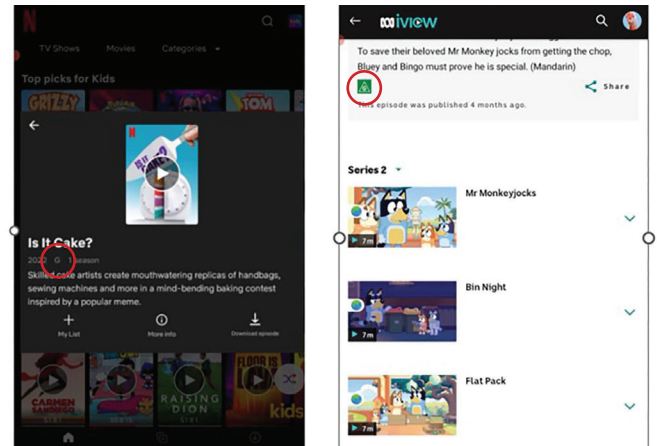


Figure Four: Corresponding screen-recording shots capturing the above 8-year-old girl successfully pointing to how to find the “G” classification on Netflix and on ABC iview.



Figure Five: 8-year-old boy “showing and telling” the researcher how he navigates interfaces across multiple platforms to find content.



3. Netflix as children's "go-to" and "default" platform

Netflix was the most frequently accessed platform across both the independent (40.5%) and joint (36.4%) streaming sessions, with YouTube the second most popular (detailed later in report: see page 12). That these two US-based global platforms were most popular is significant for considerations of local content discoverability and accessibility, given the current study and our prior research⁵² finds that children and their families find it difficult to locate Australian content on these platforms.

Netflix's popularity with children aligns with findings from streaming audience research in the UK that Netflix operates as a "default" option for younger adult audiences.⁵³ These researchers found that amongst young adults, Netflix has replaced national public service broadcasters like the BBC in the public consciousness as the "go-to" source for a wide range of high-quality content. In the current study, children also identified Netflix as their "go-to" platform.

Children value Netflix's interface design and algorithmic recommendation features

Netflix's "go-to" status amongst children was related not just to the available content but to their perceptions that Netflix had the most useful and sophisticated interface and catalogue organisation to aid their content search and selection. Children identified Netflix's aesthetics, profile display set-up, and recommender system as well aligned with their viewing practices. They valued being able to select based on interface images and "more like this"/ "continue watching" recommendations.

Child when asked what their ideal streaming platform would look like:

Child: I think it might look like Netflix.

7-year-old girl

Child when asked how they first found their favourite show, LEGO Friends:

Child: It just came up on Netflix and so I just decided to watch it.

7-year-old girl

Father: Which one would you go to first if you were like, I'm bored I just want to watch TV?

Child: Netflix.

Father: And then you'd be in the Netflix Kids' section, and you'd just scroll through until you found something interesting?

Child: Yep.

Father: Looking at the pictures?

Child: Yep. And sometimes there are like these 'bits' which are mini-clips that just display. They just come up. And I also like to look at the description.

8-year-old boy and his father

Child explaining to and showing the researcher how he would typically select content on Netflix, his preferred platform:

Child: We would go onto Netflix. There would be 'Continue watching for kids' and -

Researcher: So at home you would normally go to 'Continue watching'? [Child continues to demonstrate] You would just normally scroll down until you saw the picture?

Child: Yeah.

Researcher: Okay, cool. Would you ever type something in to look for it?

Child: No.

Researcher: No?

Child: We could just go 'Continue watching for kids'. [...]

Researcher: And do you have your own profile at home?

Child: Yes.

7-year-old boy

⁵² Burke, L., McIntyre, J., Balanzategui, J. & Baker, D. (2022).

⁵³ Johnson C, Dempsey L & Hills, M (2020); Johnson, C, Hills, M & Dempsey L (2023).

Children thus viewed Netflix-style algorithmic and personalised recommendation as an important tool in aiding and empowering their personal content choices. This became particularly clear when they compared Netflix’s platform to local platforms like ABC Kids that do not feature personalised algorithmic recommendations.

Child: *ABC Kids I don't think we can get anymore and also because it has lots of things that we don't really watch. And also we don't get to choose on ABC ME. It just shows random shows. So it's like, Oh I like this one! Oh it ended...now it's Peppa Pig. [slumps back disappointed in chair]*

8-year-old boy

While previous research identified adult audience concerns about algorithmic intervention in their personal choices,⁵⁴ this research finds that by contrast, children consider the lack of such features as a limitation on their personal choice and agency.

Netflix sets the standard for children’s streaming video expectations

Children perceive Netflix as setting the norm and standard for the streaming video experience, with implications for local content discoverability and local streaming platforms. Catalogue research has found very low rates of local content on Netflix, with a 2019 review finding only 1.7% of titles were Australian.⁵⁵ Thus, children’s preferences for Netflix and YouTube should be understood as a factor in their low rates of opting for Australian content and challenges they have around identifying local versus international content.

Children’s perception that Netflix sets a “default” standard for how a user-friendly streaming environment should operate poses challenges for Australian platforms that do not have the same level of resources to deliver personalised recommendations integrated with the interface. This situation also has implications for current policy developments around the prominence of local providers on devices like smart televisions.⁵⁶ Both the current study and our prior research finds that the TV remains by far the most common way for children to watch television (94%) even though it is usually streamed.⁵⁷ Yet smart TV discoverability research finds that local providers like Australian Broadcast Video on Demand (BVOD) platforms tend to be “poorly integrated into search results on smart TVs.”⁵⁸ Conversely, services like YouTube and Netflix are prioritised in interface placements through commercial arrangements, an issue exacerbated by self-preferencing of such platforms in search results on certain models of smart television.⁵⁹ Children’s gravitation to Netflix as their “default” platform should thus be understood in the context of an environment which disadvantages local streaming providers.



⁵⁴ Johnson, C, Dempsey, L & Hills, M (2020).

⁵⁵ Lobato, R & Scarlata, A (2019) Australian content in SVOD catalogs: availability and discoverability - 2019 edition. Report, RMIT University, Australia. Available at: <https://apo.org.au/node/264821>

⁵⁶ Parliament of Australia (2024) Communications Amendment (Prominence and Anti-siphoning) Bill 2023.

⁵⁷ Burke, L, McIntyre, J, Balanzategui, J & Baker, D (2022).

⁵⁸ Lobato, R, Scarlata, A. & Schivinski, B (2023) Smart TVs and Local Content Prominence. Analysis and Policy Observatory. Available at: <https://apo.org.au/node/321605>. 22-23.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

4. YouTube very popular with children but associated with child/parent tensions

Popularity of YouTube and parental concerns around inappropriate content

Behind Netflix, YouTube was the second most popular platform in both the independent (32.4%) and joint streaming session with parents (15.2%). While the main YouTube platform was popular with children, the version of the platform specifically designed for this age-group, YouTube Kids, was not a popular choice in the independent streaming sessions (5.4%).

Children explained how they found new YouTube content based on interface tile imagery and enjoyed a wide variety of genres on the platform. Children often had rituals around certain YouTuber personalities and developed “parasocial relationships” with them: close emotional and psychological bonds that audiences develop with media personalities.⁶⁰

Researcher: How would you find the stuff you like watching on YouTube? Would you usually just search it or...

Child: Yeah, I have to search it. Or if I watched it recently then it just – I guess it’s up there already unless I close it.

Researcher: How do you find new stuff on YouTube? Do you ever look at new stuff, or is it mainly the same type of content?

Child: Mainly the same type, but sometimes if I just see something that’s a bit interesting, like the thing on the front...

Researcher: The picture?

Child: Yeah.

Researcher: [Pointing to what the child is showing them on the tablet] Like that picture?

Child: I like animations.

Researcher: Okay, so you’ll watch animations on YouTube

Child: Sometimes.

Researcher: And do you have any favourite YouTubers that you watch every time they post a new video? Do you ever wait a for a video from a special YouTuber?

Child: I like Mariah Elizabeth, yeah because, well she posts on Friday, but I get it, because she’s in America I think, and so it comes out on Friday. I mean it comes up on Saturday. So I watch it every Saturday after class, or if I’m at my dad’s then I watch it on Sunday after.

9-year-old girl

Child describing why they were watching and like YouTuber “Unspeakable”:

Child: Some of their videos are funny, some of them get me wrapped up and I like them so much, I just can’t stop. [...] I could watch them forever.

Researcher: Forever, wow.

Child: Because it’d just get boring watching the same video over and over again. So I’m always on their case and looking for new videos.

9-year-old boy

The popularity of the main YouTube platform rather than the Kids platform is notable given the high profile controversies faced by the main platform around child safety.⁶¹ These controversies culminated in a \$170 million US fine on YouTube by the US Federal Trade Commission in 2019, the largest of its type in history.⁶² YouTube responded by making clear that their Terms of Service deem the platform unsuitable for users under 13 years, directing younger users and their parents to YouTube Kids.⁶³ Despite this, after the FTC fine YouTube did make changes to how child content is organised, uploaded, and displayed on the platform, however ambiguities around child-appropriate content persist.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Tolbert, A., & Drogos, K.L. (2019) Tweens’ Wishful Identification and Parasocial Relationships with YouTubers. *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02781>

⁶¹ Balanzategui, J. (2021) ‘Disturbing’ Children’s YouTube Content and the Algorithmic Uncanny. *New Media and Society* 25(12): 3521–3542; Nansen, B & Balanzategui, J. (2022) Visual tactility: ‘Oddly satisfying’ videos, sensory genres and ambiguities in children’s YouTube. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 28(6): 1555–1576.

⁶² Kelly, M. (2019) Google will pay \$170 million for YouTube’s child privacy violations: It’s the largest COPPA fine in history. *The Verge*, <https://www.theverge.com/2019/9/4/20848949/google-ftc-youtube-child-privacy-violations-fine-170-million-coppa-ads>

⁶³ YouTube (2023) Terms of Service. <https://kids.youtube.com/t/terms#:~:text=You%20must%20be%20at%20least,a%20parent%20or%20legal%20guardian>

⁶⁴ Nansen, B & Balanzategui, J. (2022).

Case Study: Dark version of *Thomas the Tank Engine* on YouTube Kids

Parents often expressed discomfort around their children's use of YouTube in interviews.

One parent for instance identified a video depicting a "dark" version of *Thomas the Tank Engine* in which Thomas the Train seemingly commits suicide and characters talk about murdering the Fat Controller. This is an example of a content type popular on YouTube that has sparked controversy, in which popular children's television shows are edited to carry disturbing themes.⁶⁵ The mother described how her son had become fixated with this troubling video. She explained she had initiated conversations with him about why it was not a good choice, and had blocked the video from his YouTube Kids account.

In his independent streaming session, the child quickly found this video using the recommended "more like this" queue after watching an official *Thomas & Friends* video. He explained that he had originally found this video through this same "route" through recommendations after the official video. The child became fixated and was reluctant to stop watching it when the researcher commenced the interview phase of the study. This example highlights how despite being designed for younger children, YouTube Kids harbours problematic content.

Mother in individual interview:

Mother: He was fascinated with it and he kept repeating it. So that's why we started to tune in a bit more and ask what's this about, what are they actually saying? He kept asking to watch it, after we blocked it. But we had to explain him why some of these things just aren't good to watch. And that wasn't a good choice.

Mother of 7-year-old boy

Child in individual streaming show-and-tell interview explaining why he chose the video:

Child: I've always watched it but we've blocked that video.

Researcher: Why did this one get blocked?

Child: Because it was a bit annoying.

Researcher: Why is it annoying?

Child: Because it wasn't a very good video. But, to me it was.

7-year-old boy



Figure Six: Screen-recording captures of 7-year-old boy finding a problematic video on YouTube Kids through recommendations – red circle in top left image captures the child selecting the video from the "more like this" queue after watching an official *Thomas & Friends* video. The child had previously developed this route to content at home.

Parents tended to be aware of the risks involved in their children's YouTube use. Yet generally, rather than disallowing use of the main platform and encouraging use of YouTube Kids, they instead used a range of parental mediation strategies such as blocking videos, supervised and/or timed usage, or restricting content in an ad-hoc way. A factor of this strategy could be that, as in the *Thomas the Tank Engine* case study, parents had found that even on YouTube Kids such restrictions proved necessary to support access to age-appropriate content.

The issue with YouTube is that your imagination is your search engine. So, that's what we have to limit, what he's looking at. So, if we can direct him in a certain area or find something and say 'have a look at this', or he tells us about something, we have to make sure it's suitable.

Mother of 7-year-old boy

Furthermore, some parents who described themselves as protective of their children's media use were not aware of the existence of YouTube Kids, even though their children knew about it. This reveals how children themselves often act as the "media brokers" of their families,⁶⁶ introducing the household to new platform and content types, a phenomenon also observed in our prior research on Netflix and family television.⁶⁷ The *Thomas the Tank Engine* example highlights the problematic dimensions of this phenomenon in relation to YouTube.

Father: *What actually would be really, really good, and I don't know if it exists, so have you heard of Kiddle? Kiddle is a Kid friendly Google search engine [...] If there was a YouTube version of that, that would be excellent: kid-friendly YouTube!*

Child: *There is!*

7-year-old boy and his father

Discrepancies between YouTube Kids use when children stream independently versus with parents

While YouTube Kids was not popular with children when streaming independently (5.4%) it was as popular as the main platform when joint streaming with parents (15.2%). This suggests that children modulate their behavior around YouTube when parents are present, perhaps aware of their parents' concerns around the the main YouTube platform. Children explained their preference for the main YouTube platform in terms of its wider variety of content. Yet, notably YouTube's guidelines around use of the Kids rather than main platform for users under 13 relate to the "smaller selection of content than regular YouTube - selected through a combination of human review, curated playlists from experts, and algorithmic filtering."⁶⁸

Researcher: *Why did you choose that YouTube rather than YouTube Kids this time, any reason?*

Child: *No, I kind of like this because there were just some other videos that I love to watch on YouTube that aren't on YouTube Kids.*

8-year-old boy

The popularity of YouTube amongst 7–9-year-olds has implications for current policy considerations around classification regulation that is fit-for-purpose to support children's access to age-appropriate content in the streaming era.⁶⁹ It is also relevant to current policy considerations around raising the minimum age for children to register social media accounts, including a proposed trial.⁷⁰ As a video sharing platform featuring a wealth of user-generated content, YouTube is not governed by classification frameworks. The Stevens Review into Australia's Classification Framework highlights "deficiencies with current classification arrangements" and offers recommendations around "significant changes to take into account the increase in content available online and the convergence of media platforms."⁷¹ The Review asserts: "Minors should be protected from content likely to harm or disturb them,"⁷² and highlights that YouTube is one such problematic arena, given it does not have classifications at all. While the Review notes that "it would be unrealistic to expect all YouTube content to be classified", it points to initiatives in the UK and Netherlands that have experimented with user-driven classification content on video sharing platforms like YouTube.⁷³

⁶⁶ Burgess, J (2018) What fake Peppa Pig videos can teach us about trust. In: Trust and its Discontents Workshop, Australian Academy of the Humanities, Melbourne, VIC, Australia, 28 September 2018; Balanzategui, J (2019) In an age of Elsa/Spider-Man romantic mash ups, how to monitor YouTube's children's content? The Conversation <https://theconversation.com/in-an-age-of-elsa-spider-man-romantic-mash-ups-how-to-monitor-youtubes-childrens-content-123088>

⁶⁷ Katz, VS (2010) How children of immigrants use media to connect their families to the community. *Journal of Children and Media* 4: 298–315.

⁶⁸ Baker, D Balanzategui, J & Sandars, D (2023): 121-122.

⁶⁹ YouTube (2023) My Family: Exploration Starts Here. <https://www.youtube.com/myfamily/>

⁷⁰ Australian Government (2024) Modernising Australia's National Classification Scheme – Stage 2 Reforms. <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/have-your-say/modernising-australias-national-classification-scheme-stage-2-reforms>

⁷¹ Middleton, K & Taylor, J (2024) Anthony Albanese backs campaign to ban children under 16 from social media. *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/article/2024/may/21/anthony-albanese-social-media-ban-children-under-16-minimum-age-raised>

⁷² Stevens, N (2020/3) Review of Australian Classification Regulation. <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/media/publications/review-australian-classification-regulation-stevens-review>, 8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

5. ABC platforms popular, but not local SVOD Stan

Children associate ABC platforms with Australian content

ABC platforms were the third most popular choice amongst children when all platforms were combined (Kids, ME, iview) – 16.2% selected them in the independent and 18.2% in the joint session with parents. Usage was quite evenly spread across the different platform types, although children gravitated towards the mainstream “adult” version, iview, and ME for older children (7-18) slightly more often than the Kids platform for younger children. Children described moving fluidly between the different ABC platforms under different circumstances. They sometimes considered the “Kids” platform as skewing too young for them, even if they did use it.

Child: *I don't use [ABC Kids] but I use [hesitation] I don't use it often because it's more younger. But Bluey's an older kind of one, for older people. So I only watch that from ABC Kids, I guess.*

9-year-old girl

Even the ABC platform for older children, ME, was sometimes associated with an age group too young for the children.

Researcher: *Are there any platforms you don't use as much now that you're older?*

Child: *I've stopped using ABC ME... Because, like, [it has] the things that I'm not really into, or I guess things that I liked as a little kid but now I don't really like. [...] I've come back one time and watched The Penguins of Madagascar. It felt kind of relaxing, I was like 'I watched this 3 years ago.'*

9-year-old boy

While children often struggled to identify the provenance of programs during “show-and-tell” interview sessions, they did associate ABC platforms with Australian content. Thus, the ABC platforms perform a crucial role in children's ability to discern and discover Australian content, reinforcing the importance of prominence regulation to ensure these services are easily accessible for children on smart televisions.

Researcher: *How do you know that Bluey is an Australian show?*

Child: *I went onto ABC ME, and I'm pretty sure my grandpa or grandma said that most of the shows on ABC ME are Australian shows.*

Researcher: *So, you noticed it because your grandma or grandpa told you?*

Child: *Yes.*

Researcher: *Is there anything else in the show that might give you a bit of a hint that it might be Australian?*

Child: *Not really.*

[Later in interview]

Researcher: *Are there any streaming platform that you use specifically to watch these Australians shows?*

Child: *I only just use ABC.*

Researcher: *Just use it to find those [shows]?*

Child: *If I wanted to watch something that's Australian.*

9-year-old girl

Researcher: *And which streaming platform is the easiest to use?*

Child: *Probably ABC ME. Because it's mainly all Australian, and only a few of them aren't, and you know that if you just scroll a little bit, you're gonna find a good kids' show.*

9-year-old girl

Australian SVOD Stan not popular with children

No children opted to look for content on Stan, Australia's major local subscription service, during the independent streaming session. This is notable given that catalogue research has found that Stan had the highest proportion of local content in its catalogue when compared to major US-based SVOD competitors Netflix and Amazon Prime.⁷⁴ Stan also has an “ongoing commitment to deliver more world-class, locally produced original films and series”⁷⁵ including a recently launched Australian children's film fund in partnership with the Australian Children's Television Foundation. Stan's acquisition

and production of local content specifically for Australian audiences “serves as a key differentiator between Stan and Netflix,”⁷⁶ and the 2019 catalogue research found that children’s content constituted 27% of all Stan’s local television titles.⁷⁷

No children selected content on Amazon Prime in their independent session either. In the joint session with parents, Stan and Amazon Prime were selected by one child/parent dyad each. This suggests that these two services did not hold great appeal to children, particularly as no children selected them when they browsed without adult supervision. These results are consistent with our national surveys of parents around their children’s television habits, which found that platforms like Amazon Prime that do not have a well-organised, aesthetically pleasing or clearly demarcated kids’ section are not as frequently used.⁷⁸

The only child that did access Stan during the joint session with their parent explained that they opted for Stan to see what it is like given they do not have this platform at home:

Mother: *We found a platform that we don’t normally watch. It’s Stan. We don’t have Stan at home.*

Child: *We have a button – but it’s not downloaded.*

Mother: *We don’t have a subscription.*

Researcher: *Right. So you guys went to Stan to have a look at something new, something you don’t have at home?*

Mother: *Yeah.*

8-year-old boy and his mother

Stan is positioned well to perform a crucial role ensuring Australian children are able to access quality local content, complementing the cultural function currently performed by the ABC platforms. The SVOD platform is thus poised to fill an important gap post the sharp reduction in Australian children’s content on commercial broadcasters between 2019–2022 (see Introduction, page 1). However, this research suggests awareness-building amongst Australian families is required to ensure children and their parents recognise Stan as a key destination delivering local content for Australian children.



⁷⁶ Lobato, R & Scarlata, A (2019) Australian content in SVODs, 2.

⁷⁵ Jaspan, C (2021) Stan commits to more local content with new Aussie shows and films announced. Mumbrella, <https://mumbrella.com.au/stan-commits-to-more-local-content-with-new-aussie-shows-and-films-announced-699530>

⁷⁶ Lobato, R & Scarlata, A (2019) Australian content in SVODs, 9.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p 9.

⁷⁸ Burke, L, McIntyre, J, Balanzategui, J, & Baker, D (2022): 11.

6. Disney+ as a family co-viewing choice, particularly for movie nights

Children did not tend to gravitate to Disney+ in the independent (5.4%) or joint sessions with parents (9.1%). These results contrast with our national parents' survey, in which Disney+ was identified as one of the most popular choices amongst children (56%)⁷⁹, a finding consistent with the family-friendly and child-centric identity of this platform.⁸⁰ Children did often speak about how they enjoyed using the platform in interviews.

Researcher: Do you have a favourite streaming platform out of all of these that you like the best?

Child: Disney+.

Researcher: And why do you like that one?

Child: Because it has lots of TV shows that I like, and it has The Simpsons. [...] and I like Pixar, and I like Star Wars.

8-year-old boy

This discrepancy can be explained by the specific contexts in which families tend to use Disney+. Our previous national parents' survey found that Disney+ was particularly popular for co-viewing and family movie nights.⁸¹ This finding was reinforced in the BabyLab study's interviews. Children regularly spoke about the ritual of using Disney+ for special occasion, co-viewing, or weekly family viewing nights. Netflix remained the "default" and "go-to" platform for routine television viewing, in alignment with findings from previous audience research with adults.⁸²

Child: Sometimes we use Disney, because today for us is movie night: every Saturday. [...]

Researcher: And do you have a favourite streaming platform, a favourite one that you use most?

Child: Probably Netflix.

Researcher: And why is Netflix your favourite?

Child: Because it has lots of shows that I like, like Ninjago, Pokemon, Kung Fu Panda, Sea Beast and all sorts of others ones, like Is It Cake?"

7-year-old boy

Researcher: Do you go to Netflix when you watch with your brother or do you go to Disney or YouTube?

Child: Usually Disney.

Researcher: Is that because you think you'll find something that both of you will like there?

[Child nods]

[...]

When asked how their "ideal" streaming platform would look:

Researcher: Would it look different to Netflix or would it look different to Disney or which one do you think it would look like if you could make it look any way you wanted?

Child: I think Netflix.

8-year-old girl

Disney+ is generally used by children and their families to locate movies and related content for co-viewing on key nights of the week, rather than to structure their daily viewing habits, as is the case with Netflix and YouTube. Furthermore, as our research has previously established,⁸³ Disney+ does not build the user experience around personalised recommendations in the way that Netflix does, instead using catalogue organisation and interface design that emphasises the Disney brand and its subsidiary entertainment brands. Given children's preference for Netflix's recommendation system and interface as their "default" platform (see page 10 in this report and above examples), this could also be a factor in its lack of popularity with children in the independent streaming session. Notably, it was almost twice as popular in the joint session (9.1%), again reinforcing its use as a co-viewing platform.

Another notable factor is that across both independent and joint streaming sessions, the predominant content choice was TV shows (52.8% and 45.5% respectively). Children exhibited a greater inclination towards watching movies when watching with a parent (24.2%) than when streaming independently (11.1%). This further supports that movies and Disney+ are more associated with co-viewing rituals and behaviours.

⁷⁹ Burke, L., McIntyre, J., Balanzategui, J., & Baker, D. (2022): 11.

⁸⁰ Baker, D. & Balanzategui, J. (2023) Heritage child stars on Disney+: the liquidities of child stardom in the SVOD era. *Celebrity Studies* 14(2): 186-199.

⁸¹ Burke, L., McIntyre, J., Balanzategui, J. & Baker, D. (2022): 18-19.

⁸² Johnson C, Dempsey L & Hills, M (2020).

7. Algorithmic recommendations are important to and highly valued by children

Search versus Scroll: Children are fluent with both searching and recommendations

When streaming independently, children typed a specific title into the search bar (51.4%) or scrolled through the recommended catalogue options (48.6%) at almost equivalent rates. This suggests that children used their independent streaming time to locate the desired title/s of their choice, approaching their content selection with intentionality. Yet these results also highlight how important catalogue organisation and recommendation systems are to children's "routes to content," given almost half of the children made their choice by scrolling through platform catalogues and recommendations. Children would often comment on the appeal of specific elements of the interface tile design or imagery in making their selections,⁸⁴ and on features like "continue watching."

Researcher: What made you choose Supernatural Academy, to try that one?

Child: I was scrolling through, and I liked her blue hair, so I clicked on it.

9-year-old girl

Child: On Netflix, if I don't know what to watch, I just scroll down and find things. But yes, I do look at searching.

Researcher: Have you got your own profile on Netflix?

Child: Yes.

Researcher: So do you find often if you go into that profile it will just have pictures of the shows you want to watch?

Child: Yes.

9-year-old girl

Child explaining why Netflix is their favourite platform and why they find it easiest to use:

Child: Well, on Netflix, it says, "Continue watching," and then it would have all the videos and movies that I have been watching, and then I can easily go back to them. Whereas YouTube, if you click on one and then you lose it, you won't be able to find it again that easily if you can't remember the name.

9-year-old girl

In the joint session with their parents, children were much more likely to scroll (66.7%) rather than search (33.3%), suggesting that catalogue organisation and algorithmic recommendations are critical to family co-viewing selections.

The duration children browsed before making their content choice varied between independent and joint streaming sessions as well. On average, children spent 1 minute and 16 seconds (SD = 1 minute and 10 seconds) browsing independently, compared to 47 seconds (SD = 49 seconds) when accompanied by a caregiver. Similarly, children watched their first selected content for an average of 6 minutes and 58 seconds (SD = 6 minutes and 28 seconds) independently, and 10 minutes and 50 seconds (SD = 4 minutes and 54 seconds) with a caregiver.

These findings indicate longer browsing, yet shorter viewing durations when children stream independently, perhaps a result of the lack of parental mediation of and intervention in their choices, with children seeking to harness their independent streaming time to locate content they would like to watch alone. Notably, children and parents often explained that they had selected a beloved, oft-watched content type that they knew they both liked in the joint session.

⁸³ Baker, D & Balanzategui, J (2023).

⁸⁴ This aligns with research on adult streaming users, with 82% of Netflix users reporting that thumbnail images on the interface were the primary influence in choosing content: Khoo, O (2023) Picturing Diversity: Netflix's Inclusion Strategy and the Netflix Recommender Algorithm. Television and New Media, 24(3): 284.

Researcher: Did you just choose something different because your Mum was here or not?

Child: I chose something that we both liked – that she would enjoy.

Researcher: That's nice. So is that something that happens at home a lot as well, that you guys will make compromises and put something on that you'll both like to watch?

Mother: Yeah. She'll often ask me do I want to watch Bluey with her, or sometimes she'll just watch it herself as well. But she'll check in with me if I want to watch with her, and we'll make it a thing that we sit together. She likes it to be a bit more social, I think.

9-year-old girl

When selecting a second piece of content independently (N=23), 39.1% of children viewed recommended content presented by an algorithm. Thus, while children were slightly more likely to use search functions to find a desired piece of content across platforms at the beginning of their independent session, they were more reliant on algorithmic recommendations if they moved on to a second piece of content. 21.4% of children opted for algorithmically recommended content when accompanied by a caregiver (N=14).

Platform design features to maximise Australian content discoverability

While children valued algorithmic recommendations, parents expressed suspicion or discomfort with them, findings which align with previous streaming audience research with adults in the UK.⁸⁵

Researcher: Do you think that there's anything platforms could do to make finding and choosing the content that you like easier?

Mother: Sometimes I feel like the algorithm is complicated. Sometimes I just want the list and I know I can go to search and I know it will just search by it but sometimes even that is not as natural. Sometimes the options that come up that are automated, that automatically come up, are not necessarily logical. It feels like they're not logical. I don't know why. I can't really put a finger on why. [...] It restricts in a strange way.

Mother of 8-year-old girl

Researcher: And do you think that streaming platforms could do anything different to make finding and selecting the content that you like easier?

Mother: I do. Often they say, "recommended for you" and it's a show that I'm like, "There's no way I'd ever watch that," so I do feel that they could be a little bit better at predicting –

Researcher: So, like, the actual algorithm itself?

Mother: Yeah. I'm like, "Oh" – [...] They often recommend to me shows that I might start and watch five minutes of and then just it's not for me.

Researcher: What about Australian content specifically?

Mother: Yeah. I mean I suppose if there was an Australian content section I could go to it.

Mother of 7-year-old girl

The above mother of an 8-year-old girl contrasted the contemporary streaming experience with searching for titles at video stores, which she found more amenable to personal choice and discovery. Children however do not have such pre-streaming memories and do not see anything unusual nor restrictive in the way that streaming platforms suggest content to them. This suggests the need for critical literacy initiatives around streaming platform distribution strategies, so children understand how and why content is algorithmically curated, to help them make informed content choices and support their ability to discover new, age-appropriate, and local content.

Children and parents articulated the need for more discoverable Australian content on streaming platforms and on smart televisions.

⁸⁵ Johnson, C, Hills, M & Dempsey, L (2023).

Mother: When I think about the adult stuff, Netflix doesn't have—maybe it does—doesn't have an obvious category of local content or Australian content, so it would be mashed in and hard to find.

Researcher: So you'd like it kind of like as you open on the home page—

Mother: That would certainly make me see it more.

Mother of 7-year-old girl

There is a separate section for 'Australian content' on one of the platforms, but I don't think it's on all. So it would help to have 'home-grown' or something like that on all so you can easily look and browse through.

Mother of 9-year-old girl

Father: You've got Smart TVs internal menus, and they've got baked in Netflix and all this other stuff, and then you've got boxes, [...] So this is my point, what these people could do to make it easier to find content, is there are so many boxes within boxes within boxes, [...] I think if some smart cookie came along and aggregated all of this and just put it alphabetised on one tier, they're going to make millions. Because at the moment there's just too many options. [...] There's just too many scattered sort of items all over the place.

Researcher: And what about Australian content specifically?

Child: If it's streaming, it doesn't really tell you if it's Australian or not. It'll just tell you 'it's on, it's this episode, it's G or it's PG, and it's on for this long.'

Father and 9-year-old girl

Mother: It would be great if [Australian content] was "sectioned" within the streaming platform. Most definitely. Rather than all mixed in. I would really like that.

Researcher to child: Do you feel the same?

Child: I would go to an Australian section.

Mother and 9-year-old boy



Conclusion

This research finds that children have high levels of *technical fluency* with streaming platforms. However, despite their fluency with streaming platforms, children’s *cultural literacy* with the national identity of programs – and their *critical literacy* with the role of algorithmic curation in their choices – tends to be low. Children described challenges in both *identification* and *discoverability* of Australian content. Both parents and children expressed that clearer labelling and catalogue organisation strategies that make it easier to find Australian content would help to resolve these issues. These findings support Screen Australia’s assertion that discoverability is a “fast-evolving policy area” becoming “more crucial as time passes. It is important that audiences are presented with Australian options, including for content that algorithms may not necessarily present.”⁸⁶

Discoverability of local and age-appropriate content for children must be understood as not just a platform-specific issue, but one that is impacted by the structure of the streaming sector. Children do sometimes watch Australian content on Netflix and YouTube, but expressed that it is difficult for them to find across these two platforms most popular with them. The popularity of Netflix and YouTube with 7- to 9-year-olds – to the extent that Netflix is their “default” and “go-to” platform – should also be understood in relation to a broader context in which these services tend to be prioritised on smart television devices,⁸⁷ particularly as the television is the device children most often use to stream content.⁸⁸

Discoverability challenges must also be understood in relation to children’s low cultural and critical literacies with streaming platforms. Children value the algorithmic recommendation, catalogue organisation, and interface design strategies of their “go-to” platform, Netflix. However, they do not yet understand the role of algorithmic curation and intervention in their content choices. Unlike their parents, they do not have attachments to broadcast scheduling nor memories of video stores. Netflix operates for them as a “norm”, and the “default” against which other streaming experiences are measured. This has implications for local streaming providers that do not have the level of resources required to provide this type of experience.

Notably, a key Action in the Australian Federal Government’s new National Cultural Policy is to “invest in digital and media literacy to empower Australian children and young people to become critical, responsive and active citizens online.”⁸⁹ Education initiatives around streaming media for children in this age group would help to build their literacies around Australian content and its place and role in a streaming landscape dominated by US-based global platforms. Such programs could also build children’s *critical algorithmic literacies* so they are able to reflect on how algorithmic curation may impact their content choices, habits, and ability to discover Australian and age-appropriate content. Such programs are particularly important for the 7–9 age group, given the growing popularity of algorithmic video sharing platforms like TikTok amongst Australian children,⁹⁰ and escalating concerns about the role of such platforms in children’s everyday lives.

Parents may also benefit from education initiatives to help them develop effective, informed mediation strategies to support their children’s streaming platform use. Parents were confused about the current streaming landscape and expressed difficulties navigating it. The research finds that parents often take Australian content for granted, and do not tend to have active conversations with their children about algorithmic curation nor the value and role of Australian content in a diverse streaming media diet.

The ABC platforms are a popular option with 7–9-year-olds and are associated with Australian content. They thus play a critical cultural role in supporting children’s access to Australian content. There are opportunities for local SVOD Stan to enhance awareness of its own role as a key provider of quality local children’s content in the contemporary landscape, in which children tend to choose their own streaming content on demand.

This research demonstrates that children generally have very sophisticated technical skills with streaming platforms, in some cases being more fluent with the various platforms than their parents and introducing new content and platforms to the household. These technical skills, and the agencies children tend to have over their own content choices, make child literacies with the cultural identity of content and with streaming platform interfaces and catalogues all the more important to ensure children are equipped to make informed choices.

⁸⁶ Screen Australia (2022) National Cultural Policy Submission. Sydney, 19.

⁸⁷ Lobato, R, Scarlata, A & Schivinski, B (2023).

⁸⁸ Burke, L, McIntyre, J, Balanzategui, J, & Baker, D (2022).

⁸⁹ Australian Government Office for the Arts (2023) National Cultural Policy: Revive. Available at: <https://www.arts.gov.au/what-we-do/national-cultural-policy>, 85, 105.

⁹⁰ Roy Morgan (2020) Nearly 2.5 million Australians using TikTok. <https://www.roymorgan.com/findings/nearly-2-5-million-australians-using-tiktok-up-over-850000-52-4-during-first-half-of-2020>

Recommendations

- 1.** While production has been a key focus to date, local content *discoverability* should be accounted for when developing policy around quotas or expenditure requirements for SVODs operating in Australia to ensure accessibility of local content for child audiences.
- 2.** Media education initiatives are required to develop children's understandings of the cultural identity of content and to support critical reflection on the role of algorithmic curation in their streaming media consumption.
- 3.** Clearer labelling and/or organisation of Australian content on streaming platforms would improve families' abilities to find and identify local content.
- 4.** Given children's preferences for and technical fluencies with on-demand streaming, local streaming platforms perform vital cultural functions in that they provide ease of access to local content at higher rates than US-based global providers. Indeed, the ABC platforms are popular with children and are associated with Australian content. There are opportunities for local SVOD Stan to increase awareness of its suitability for Australian children and families. The research evidences demand and cultural need in the market for child-friendly platforms or platform sections dedicated to quality local content.
- 5.** YouTube is very popular with children but is a source of tension and concern in Australian households. YouTube provides pathways to inappropriate content, and parents often do not have a robust understanding of what their children watch on YouTube. Parental literacy initiatives could help to build more effective and informed strategies amongst parents to aid their mediation strategies around algorithmic video sharing platforms like TikTok and YouTube.
- 6.** Ongoing policy considerations around classification regulation that is fit-for-purpose in the streaming era should continue to consider strategies for video sharing platforms featuring user-generated content like YouTube. These could look to international precedents that have experimented with self-classification on such platforms. YouTube Kids contains inappropriate content despite being positioned for children, and the main platform remains very popular with children despite YouTube's guidelines that it is for users 13 and over and recent international controversies. These findings illuminate that YouTube poses ongoing challenges for child viewers and their parents which warrant further policy consideration in relation to classifications and user age limits for social media platforms.

Appendix One:

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for In-Lab Streaming Sessions

When a child first receives the tablet...	Independent Session	Joint Session
...do they type to search?	N=37	N=33
No	18 (48.6%)	22 (66.7%)
Yes	19 (51.4%)	11 (33.3%)
...which platform do they go to?	N=37	N=33
ABC iview	3 (8.1%)	2 (6.1%)
ABC Kids	2 (5.4%)	1 (3.0%)
ABC ME	1 (2.7%)	3 (9.1%)
Disney Plus	2 (5.4%)	3 (9.1%)
Netflix	15 (40.5%)	12 (36.4%)
YouTube	12 (32.4%)	5 (15.2%)
YouTube Kids	2 (5.4%)	5 (15.2%)
Stan	0	1 (3.0%)
Amazon Prime	0	1 (3.0%)
...what type of content to they watch?	N=36	N=33
Advertisement	1 (2.8%)	0
Movie	4 (11.1%)	8 (24.2%)
TV show	19 (52.8%)	15 (45.5%)
YouTube video	12 (33.3%)	10 (30.3%)
...is Australia content their first choice?	N=35	N=33
No	29 (82.9%)	30 (90.9%)
Yes	6 (17.1%)	3 (9.1%)
...how long do they browse before selecting content?	N=37	N=33
Mean (SD)	1 minute and 16 seconds (1 minute and 10 seconds)	10 minutes and 50 seconds (4 minutes and 54 seconds)
Median (Min, Max)	54 seconds (13 second, 5 minutes and 58 seconds)	12 minutes and 28 seconds (0 seconds, 17 minutes)

Table 1: the descriptive statistics for in-lab streaming sessions, encompassing 37 paired independent and joint sessions. The analysis explores various facets of children's streaming behaviour, including search habits, platform preferences, content choices, and browsing and viewing durations.

Appendix Two: Demographics

Demographics

Demographic Information	Freq (Overall N=37)	Percentage
Location		
Capital city	28	80%
Large rural centre (area with 25,000 to 99,999 residents)	1	2.9%
Other metropolitan centre (a city with over 100,000 residents)	5	14.3%
Other remote centre (area with under 5,000 residents)	1	2.9%
Child Gender		
Female	17	48.6%
Male	18	51.4%
School Year Level		
Year 1	7	20.0%
Year 2	15	42.9%
Year 3	8	22.9%
Year 4	5	14.3%
Child Racial Identity		
Māori	1	2.9%
Mixed Race (Please select as many other options as apply)	3	8.6%
Unspecified	1	2.4%
South Asian (E.g. Bangladeshi, Indian, Sri Lankan)	2	5.7%
White	29	82.9%
Is English the child's first language?		
Yes	35	100%
Does the child experience atypical development?		
No	28	80%
Yes	7	20%
Does the child experience hearing/visual impairments?		
No	30	85.7%
Yes, hearing impairment	1	2.9%
Yes, visual impairment	4	11.4%
Annual Household Income		
\$100,000 to \$199,999	17	48.6%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	2	5.7%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	4	11.4%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	2	5.7%
Above \$200,000	9	25.7%
Under \$25,000	1	2.9%
Participating Caregiver Racial Identity		
Māori	1	2.9%

About the Authors

Jessica Balanzategui is Associate Professor in Media at RMIT University. Her research examining how technological change impacts entertainment cultures, industries, and aesthetics has been widely published in top international journals including *New Media and Society*, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *Television and New Media*, *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* and *The Journal of Visual Culture*. Jessica's current focus is screen genres for and about children in the streaming video era. She was awarded an Australian Research Council Industry Fellowship to examine how children discover content on streaming platforms. She is the author of the monographs *Netflix, Dark Fantastic Genres, and Intergenerational Viewing: Family Watch Together TV* (with Baker and Sandars, Routledge, 2023) and *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema* (Amsterdam UP, 2018), Founding Editor of Amsterdam University Press's book series, *Horror and Gothic Media Cultures*, and Founder of the Streaming Industries and Genres Network (SIGN).

Djoyimi Baker is Lecturer in Media and Cinema Studies at RMIT University, and formerly worked in the Australian television industry. She has published work on children's television history, family television in the streaming era, and intergenerational television fandom. Her other research interests include film and television genres, myth in popular culture, and the ethics of representing the non-human on screen, from animals to aliens. Djoyimi is the author of *To Boldly Go: Marketing the Myth of Star Trek* (IB Tauris, 2018) and the co-author of *The Encyclopedia of Epic Films* (with Santas, Wilson and Colavito, Rowman & Littlefield, 2014) and *Netflix, Dark Fantastic Genres and Intergenerational Viewing* (with Balanzategui and Sandars, Routledge, 2023). Her work can be found in leading journals such as *Critical Studies in Television*, *Celebrity Studies*, *Convergence*, and *Studies in Documentary Film*.

Georgia Clift is a Senior Consultant at ARTD Consultants, a leading Australian-owned public policy consulting firm, established in 1989. An advocate for Open Science, her research focuses on reproducibility and replicability in developmental psychology, along with exploring the viability of remote testing methods for young children. She has collaborated on various projects with the Swinburne Babylab, delving into expressions of altruism, theory of mind, and fairness across different developmental stages.

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