


## Presentation key points:

**Leading Practice Conference** “Growing Capacity, Creating Opportunities,  
Strengthening Outcomes for Children, Families and Communities”

28th - 30th July 2014, Novotel Rooty Hill.

Name	Wayne Warburton
Biography	<p>Dr Wayne Warburton has a PhD in Psychology from Macquarie University, where he is a Senior Lecturer in developmental psychology and Deputy Director of the Children and Families Research Centre. Wayne is also a registered psychologist and has a strong research interest in the fields of aggressive behaviour, media psychology and parenting. He has a number of publications in scientific journals and books, primarily on topics around aggressive behaviour and the impact of violent and pro-social media. He is co-author of the International Society for Research on Aggression ‘<i>Statement on Media Violence</i>’ and the testimony of world experts on violent video game effects in the ‘<i>Gruel Amicus Curiae Brief</i>’ for the US Supreme Court case of California vs. Entertainment Merchants. His most recent book, <i>Growing Up Fast and Furious: Reviewing the Impacts of Violent and Sexualised Media on Children</i> (with Danya Braunstein) is available from The Federation Press.</p>
(plus photo-optional)	

## Key points from Presentation

- Video games and mass media can have many benefits including for teaching, skill acquisition, learning prosocial behaviours, coordination and spatial cognition, identity, sense of agency, connecting with peers, pain relief, exergames, and meeting key needs
- Along with the positives, there are some potential issues – overuse and addiction, attention deficits, school performance decrements, misogyny, stereotyping/prejudice, aggression
- Two key periods in neural development – young children rapidly ‘wiring up’ neural connections, teenagers – pruning unused synaptic connections and making more permanent the connections that are used.
- The human brain wires up every second of every day in response to what we experience, and children in 2014 experience a lot of media (5+ hrs per day in Australia; 7 1/2+ hrs in US)
- Experiencing violent and pro-social media can cause both short- and long-term changes to the way people think, feel and behave
- There is a strong convergence of scientific evidence, across many types of scientific studies, around a number of well demonstrated impacts of exposure to violent media:
  - Increased likelihood of aggressive behaviour in short- and long-term
  - Desensitisation to violence in short- and long-term
  - Tendency to see the world as more hostile than it really is, others as more hostile
  - Increased fearfulness
  - Greater tendency to see aggression as a normal way of resolving conflict
  - Decreases in pro-social/helping behaviour and in empathy
- The opposite also applies – exposure to pro-social media increases empathy and helping and decreases aggression and hostility.
- Brain imaging studies consistently find that exposure to violent media is associated with a reduction of the use the prefrontal cortex, where humans curb impulsivity, think ahead and think through the consequences of their actions, and desensitisation to violence. There is also disproportionate activation in the right hemisphere, where negative emotions tend to be stored.
- The amount of research is not trivial: Hundreds of studies on violent video games alone, with >170,000 participants. The size of the effects found compare with other health/development related impacts considered to be very important such as the effect of homework on school achievement, lead intake on IQ and calcium intake on bone mass.
- Researchers take a ‘risk factor approach’ to strong aggression and violence: Such phenomena always have multiple risk factors, none of which are necessary or sufficient to lead to violence alone. However the impact of media violence exposure is one factor which society can do something about in homes, in professional practice and in public policy
- Risk factors can be balanced by protective factors such as warm and involved parenting
- The ideal is that children and teenagers, with the help of parents, family workers, schools, professionals and policy makers, work towards developing a healthy media diet.
- Like a healthy food diet, this would mean having regard to:
  - How much (2 hours a day of recreational media is recommended by the AAP)
  - Content (less of content that is not helpful for development, more of the good stuff)
  - Age suitability (is it right at the child’s developmental stage?)
- Co-viewing/playing/listening to media must be active
- Parental monitoring of media use has been linked to less screen time, more sleep for kids, better grades, lower obesity, less violent media exposure, more helping and less aggression
- Media sources are best kept out of bedrooms
- Kids are more likely to learn good media habits when parents are good media role models
- A healthy media diet for our kids should involve a collaboration between family workers, professionals who work with children, teachers, parents, communities and policy makers
- Healthy media use benefits everyone, so let’s move towards evidence based practice!

**Presentation key points: Permission to publish online:**  
**Leading Practice Conference** “Growing Capacity, Creating Opportunities,  
Strengthening Outcomes for Children, Families and Communities”  
28th - 30th July 2014, Novotel Rooty Hill.

Name	Wayne Warburton
Address	Department of Psychology, Macquarie University, NSW, 2109.
Permission to publish on website	I Wayne Warburton give FWT+DP permission to publish “key points’ from my presentation <i>Media violence and children</i> on the Leading Practice Website <a href="http://www.leadingpractice.org.au">www.leadingpractice.org.au</a>