

Child Protection Agency says sentencing too light

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Yesterday a Palmerston North man was convicted on 18 counts of possessing objectionable material. This material included bestiality movies depicting children and animals in grotesque sexual acts described as "disturbing" by a judge. Each charge carries a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment or a \$50,000 fine.

Jonathan Peter Champion was sentenced to 10 months' home detention and ordered to pay a \$10,000 fine in the Palmerston North District Court yesterday.

Alan Bell, National Director of ECPAT Child ALERT says the sentencing is not in keeping with the serious nature of the offence. *"This man had a history of collecting and viewing child sex abuse images of a serious nature. According to Judge Alistair Garland there were "disturbing images" involving men and young girls and animals and children. Two computers, five laptops and several storage devices were seized and 20,000 objectionable images or movies were discovered. Mr Bell asks "How much more disturbing do the images have to be before a stronger sentence is applied?"*

The 40-year-old single man's decade-long addiction to child pornography ended in April, after the Luxembourg police alerted New Zealand authorities to his illegal downloading. .

Champion listened intently as his lawyer Fergus Steedman explained how his client didn't realise he was hurting the girls, some as young as 4, by downloading the pornography. Champion was remorseful and embarrassed and had lost his job as a salesman once his illegal activity became public, Mr Steedman said.

ECPAT Child ALERT says *"Every child sex abuse image viewed is that of a real child victim who will have been scarred for life. How could a person not realise the damage done. To be embarrassed and remorseful is insignificant compared to the suffering of the victims. Continued access to these illegal sites only perpetuates the evil industry that trades on the gratuitous appetites of people willing to satisfy their own desires at the cost of destroying the innocence of children."*

Judge Garland banned Champion from accessing the internet for 16 months as he undergoes more counselling and treatment.

ECPAT Child ALERT is a registered charitable trust committed to the prevention of sexual exploitation of children.

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