



Press Release

Child protection – or school statistics?

According to a report in The Press today a man charged with possessing and distributing child pornography has been granted bail and name suppression until his sentencing in February 2012. The 33 year old had his laptop computers and a camera seized and was found to contain pictures of boys aged from five years to their late teens, nude or in sexualised poses. Although the man admitted the charges his defense argued for name suppression on the grounds that a school who was his former employer supported name suppression as they “were struggling for enrolments.”

Alan Bell, Director of the child protection agency ECPAT Child ALERT comments *“Whilst it is understandable that the school should not be penalised for this crime their concern for enrolments leading to supporting name suppression of a child pornography offender is questionable. The question must be asked which is actually more important – the roll strength or seeing justice dealt out to an offender. The fact that the man remains on bail with name suppression is of concern.”*

The man admitted charges of possessing and distributing objectionable material. He admitted to investigators that he had uploaded and downloaded files. Some of the files were protected by passwords and could only be accessed later, when a further 3000 objectionable files were found.

*“The man’s actions indicate a person who was very deliberate and resolute in his offending. He protected his horde of child sex abuse images and was aware he was acting illegally. Each of these images represents a real person who has been exploited and every time they are accessed the crime is repeated and the support for an illegal industry trading in children’s images as commodities to be stored, distributed and sold is perpetuated.”* Says Mr. Bell *“It would have been better for the school to separate itself from this man and his crimes and increase their enrolments by demonstrating that they found his actions totally unacceptable and that they would not tolerate any such action in their efforts to provide a safe environment for prospective pupils.”*

The issue of child sex abuse images is commonly referred to as child pornography. This is a global phenomenon and statistics gained through the Department of Internal Affairs Censorship Compliance Unit confirm that New Zealand is not exempt from this criminal activity and in fact matches most other developed countries around the world due to the availability and ease of access to this material via the Internet.

ECPAT Child ALERT is a registered charitable trust working to prevent the sexual exploitation of children.

Contact: Alan Bell; 09 3765252; 021 826137