

Order Sought against Childrens' Porn Game

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Press Release: Society For Promotion Of Community Standards Inc.
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The Society has made an application for an interim restriction order to stop all further "supply" to the public of a controversial computer game that allows thousands of children to practice interactive pornography. The game which the society does not wish to identify by name (it does not wish to assist sales of state-sanctioned "smut") has been widely promoted and sold through leading retail stores in New Zealand. It teaches players to take on the persona of a well known promiscuous and geriatric male pornographer in order to set up a porn empire, by learning to recruit "sexy" women for nude centre-fold photo-shoots, arranging multiple "sexual" encounters in party environments where semi-nude female models and their clients get drunk, and selecting the locations where "sex" is to take place. The player can manipulate the environment to ensure that certain types of "sexual" encounters can take place.

Chief Censor Bill Hastings classified the game R16 to ensure that thousands of 16-year old school children would not be denied the opportunity of purchasing the smutty game and share the practice of interactive pornography with their friends. The Society appealed his Office's decision to the Film and Literature Board of Review under s. 47 of the Films, Videos and Publications Classification Act (1993). Leave was granted to the Society by the Secretary of Internal Affairs, Mr Christopher Blake, for the review to proceed. He acknowledged that the Society had established a prima facie case that justified the review proceeding. The Society presented its written case to the Film and Literature Board of Review in early June 2005, for the computer game to be reclassified R18, bringing it into line with the age restriction recommended by the manufacturer. It pointed out to the Board that the Chief Censor's Office had acknowledged that the game taught children that sexual exploitation and manipulation of women employees in the workplace by their male employers was acceptable and that a number of aspects of the game degraded, dehumanised and demeaned women. And yet his Office cleared it for purchase by 16-year olds.

The Society is not surprised that the Dominion Post (25 July) has reported that an Internal Affairs Department study published this year found that teenagers were the biggest viewers of child pornography, and suggested there could be a link between viewing child porn and offending against children. It is not surprised to read that "a study by a Southland psychologist into 150 cases of sexual abuse handled by Child, Youth and Family found that in a third of them the

offenders were teenagers or children.”

“With a Chief Censor and his deputy, Ms Nicola McCully, happy for 16-year olds to purchase computer games that allow children to practice interactive pornography, is it any wonder,” asks Society president Mike Petrus, “that children as young as five are being treated at a counselling programme for sexual abusers?”

“How many 16 year olds would be aware that it is a serious offence to supply a R16 publication to a person under that age?” he asks. “Very few” he suggests. “Many male 16 year owners of such games have every opportunity to share them with other kids including those younger than 16, doing so well beyond the control of their parents and guardians. The sexual titillation gained by players of such games, in a context where women are degraded and manipulated, sends out all the wrong signals to young men,” says Petrus.

The Board having met to reclassify the computer game in early June 2005 has not yet issued its decision. Meanwhile the game continues to be sold and hired out to 16 year olds. The Society is seeking an interim restriction to be placed on the publication by the Board president, until such time as her Board clears it for purchase by 16 year olds, or raises the age restriction, by issuing a new classification.

Reference.

Dominion Post, “Primary age sex abusers treated,” by Anna Saunders. 25 July 2005.

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