

# Chief censor says New Zealand needs to do more to tackle porn problems

Chief censor David Shanks says more needs to be done to understand porn use, and the effects. Then NZ can get to work. Chief censor David Shanks says more needs to be done to understand porn use, and the effects. Then NZ can get to work tackling the issue.

The chief censor says New Zealand needs to take a societal approach to tackling the pervasive effects of porn, including further regulation.

Family First national director Bob McCoskrie is calling for an expert panel to better understand the breadth and nature of the health and social issues created by pornography, and how to tackle it.

More than 22,000 people signed McCoskrie's petition, and this week he spoke to the Governance and Administration Select Committee at Parliament, where he said porn was "feeding the health crisis of the digital age".

Parliament's Governance and Administration Select Committee is currently considering a petition on whether to appoint an expert advisory panel to look into NZ's porn use, the issues caused by porn, and potential solutions.

In 2017, there were 28.5 billion visits to the popular site Pornhub, and in 2015 New Zealand ranked fifth for the number of visits per capita.

New Zealanders spent an average of 9 minutes and 37 seconds on the site, and 35 per cent of Kiwis that visited the site were women – above the international average of 23 per cent.

The chief censor David Shanks and McCoskrie said a multi-tier, societal approach needed to be taken to better understand the extent of the issue in New Zealand, along with what harm was being done, and how best to tackle it.

McCoskrie said parents, like himself, were worried about how to deal with porn in an age when the internet is so ubiquitous, and anyone, including those under 18, could get easy access to porn.

In a 2017 stakeholder survey, called porn and young people in New Zealand, 95 per cent of youth organisations and sexual healthcare providers said pornography was an issue for young Kiwis.

And international research had correlated porn use with issues like increased sexual aggression and sexual entitlement, coercion, risky sexual behaviour, addiction and

compulsive behaviour, and porn-induced erectile dysfunction. However, it is contested whether porn use is the cause of these issues.

The availability, affordability, and anonymity of the internet, meant what used to be considered "hardcore" porn was now mainstream, McCoskrie said

If New Zealand wanted to tackle societal attitudes and rape culture, it needed to better understand the implications of using porn.

Bob McCoskrie, director of the New Zealand social conservative group Family First, is calling for Parliament to set up an expert advisory panel to address the changing nature, and associated problems, of pornography.

Shanks agreed with McCoskrie in that New Zealand needed to take a societal approach. That meant education, public messaging, getting internet service providers (ISP) on board, schools, and businesses. As well as amending the law.

"The picture that's emerging is concerning," he said.

"We don't have a simple, single answer, but there are some reasonable things we can do."

However, Shanks was not sold on the need for an expert panel.

An expert panel may have the capacity to assess the situation, pull together the research, and decide the next steps, Shanks said his office and Netsafe were already doing this.

The Office of Film and Literature Classification, headed by the chief censor, was dedicating its major research project for the year to the prevalence, and effects of porn.

As far as regulation goes, Shanks said New Zealand could consider making similar moves to the United Kingdom, where anyone wanting to watch online porn had to go through an official age verification process.

An ISP-level ban, where pornography viewers had to "opt in" to viewing pornographic content, could also be part of the solution.

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No matter what people think of porn, and about the debate around freedom of expression, everyone agreed it was not for children, he said.

Having laws in place that meant there were safeguards for people under 18 was one part of the puzzle.

The renewed calls for regulation, and other measures, come after the deputy chief censor made similar points in 2016.

At the time, deputy chief censor Jarred Mullen called for the government to put more options on the table for regulating online pornography.

In an article for the censor's website, Mullen detailed the harm increasingly extreme pornography could cause, and outlined some possible steps towards regulating it.

Last year, the Ministry of Health said 80 per cent of online pornography depicted violence towards women and girls, and the nature of porn had changed significantly over the past 20 years, to become "more extreme, deviant, and violent".

The submission also referred to Australian research that found 28 per cent of children have viewed porn by age 11, increasing to 93 per cent of boys and 62 per cent of girls by age 16.

And earlier this month, the Child Rescue Coalition launched a campaign warning parents they may be unintentionally exploiting their children online, by using certain hashtags.

The not-for-profit organisation said most parents would post 1500 photos of their child before they turned five. Using hashtags like #pottytraining, #nakedkids and #kidsbathing might seem cute and increase likes, but it overexposed children by showcasing private moments, making them vulnerable to paedophiles and sex offenders.

There were about 100 hashtags that served as flags to communities, and rings, of child sex offenders, the Child Rescue Coalition said.

Justice Minister Andrew Little said he was aware of the issues surrounding pornography use, and he was open to suggestions on what regulatory approach New Zealand could take to tackle problems. However, there was no specific legislation in the pipeline at the moment.

- Stuff

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/103015377/chief-censor-says-new-zealand-needs-to-do-more-to-tackle-porn-problems>