

# Rotorua man jailed on child pornography charges

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Mathew Graeme Stark has been jailed for possessing child pornography. Photo / Stephen Parker



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A married Jehovah's Witness devotee has been jailed for possessing a collection of nearly 200 pornographic images of children.

Mathew Graeme Stark, 33, was sentenced in Rotorua District Court today to 14 months and two weeks in prison after previously pleading guilty to six representative charges of unlawful possession of objectionable material, commonly known as child pornography.

The material was 195 images of vulnerable children, ranging from toddlers to adolescents. Of those images, 87 were deemed to be in the most serious category, Category A, containing penetrative sexual activity.

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A further 63 images were Category C and the remainder into the Category C classification.

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"None are appropriate in civilised society," Judge Maree Mackenzie remarked.

The collection included "sadistic" images of a girl with a caption "ready for torture".

Stark's lawyer Scott Mills said the criminality was in the "support of industry that victimises and brutalises young children around the world".

He said while at first glance it appeared Stark was in possession of a lot of images, in comparison to other cases, the collection was modest.

"There is no suspicion he was involved in the distribution or making of these images, they were just for his personal use," Mills said.

Stark was visibly distressed throughout his sentencing, crying and shaking in the dock.

At one point a child entered the public gallery, prompting Judge Mackenzie to ask that he leave as, "no child needs to hear this".

In reading the summary of facts, Judge Mackenzie said the images were discovered after a search warrant was conducted at Stark's house on May 26.

Various devices were taken by police and when Stark's cellphone was analysed, the 194 images were discovered.

He originally claimed in a police interview that he did not know how the images came to be on his cellphone.

Analysis of Stark's search engine history and saved computer tabs revealed a number of pornographic sites and videos containing underage sexual activity.

Judge Mackenzie said Stark's offending was at the "end of the chain" but it was his "deviancy that fuels demand".

"This offending takes place in secret, often at home. Possession of this kind of material is the last step in the chain. These vulnerable children are exploited for financial gain and sexually abused around the world and while there are people like you who want to or do possess this material, it will continue."

Judge Mackenzie also revealed that one of the victims had been identified and found to be a Danish citizen, now an adult woman.

"She has to live with the ongoing victimisation, knowing the images will live forever on the internet"

internet.

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She said Stark had displayed insight into the impact of his offending and had prospects for rehabilitation.

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"Up until now you have had a job for many years, you are married, part of the Jehovah Witness faith and have a wife willing to support you in your rehabilitation."

Stark mouthed "I love you" and waved to his family in the public gallery before leaving the dock.

Judge Mackenzie ordered the destruction of all objectionable material and forfeiture of Stark's computer and devices.