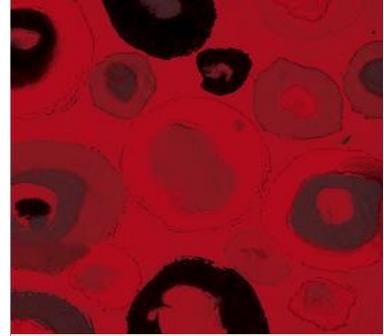




MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI

**Children's  
Commissioner**



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### **Children's Commissioner welcomes young voices talking about porn**

"Research released recently by the Chief Censor on young New Zealanders and porn, is a ground-breaking document," says Children's Commissioner Andrew Becroft. "This is not least because it conscientiously places the views of young people themselves at the centre of the discussion."

The report, "NZ Youth and Porn" looks into how and why young New Zealanders view online pornography, and does so by asking young people themselves.

"The Children's Convention reminds us that young people have a right to have a say about things that affect them," the Commissioner says. "And if one thing is clear it's that pornography affects young people. That's what they've told us in this research."

"To be honest," Commissioner Becroft says, "in the two years I've been in this role, pornography is the most significant underlying concern reported to me by youth workers, community workers and church workers engaged with young people.

"I'm certain we have underestimated its impact on the development of young people. It is the most avoided issue of our age. No-one is comfortable talking about it."

But this report has broken the silence. Through it, the young people surveyed (aged 14-17) shared a host of valuable information:

- 67% of New Zealand teens have seen porn
- 72% of recent viewers of porn saw things that made them feel uncomfortable
- 89% of young New Zealanders agree that porn isn't for children
- 71% of young New Zealand viewers believe children and teens' access to porn should be restricted
- 73% of young regular viewers use porn as a learning tool

The report tells us that, for many, porn is their primary means of learning about sex.

"This is deeply disturbing," Commissioner Becroft says. "Pornography distorts people's understanding of sex and relationships. What is encouraging is that so many young people believe access to pornography should be limited. We need to listen to them."

Listening to what children have to say can change the discussion. Young people, after all, are the experts on their own lives.

"Many of the young people surveyed are telling us they recognise that porn is bad for them, and bad for their relationships with others," Commissioner Becroft says.

And it's young people who are advocating for change.

“The report is clear that young people want more and better education about healthy sex and healthy relationships. They want more education about pornography too, so that it doesn’t bully them into unrealistic and dishonest expectations about relationships,” the Commissioner reflects.

While regulation is not enough on its own, it can protect young people from encountering pornography accidentally.

Commissioner Becroft supports age verification before gaining access to porn sites.

“It’s something that’s received support in the United Kingdom and something we could look at closely. Blocking sites and internet filtering are possibilities too.

“But we should be working through this kind of regulation with young people themselves. What do they think would work?”

“Another positive signal is that Minister Martin has indicated a determination to respond to what the young people are saying in this report. That can only bring about positive change.”

ENDS

## **About the Office of the Children’s Commissioner**

The Children’s Commissioner is an Independent Crown Entity, appointed by the Governor-General, carrying out responsibilities and functions set out in the Children’s Commissioner Act 2003. The Children’s Commissioner has a range of statutory powers to promote the rights, health, welfare, and wellbeing of children and young people from 0 to 18 years. These functions are undertaken through advocacy, public awareness, consultation, research, and investigations and monitoring. The role includes specific functions in respect of monitoring activities completed under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. The Children’s Commissioner also undertakes systemic advocacy functions and investigates particular issues with potential to threaten the health, safety, or wellbeing of children and young people. The Children’s Commissioner has a particular responsibility to raise awareness and understanding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Children’s Commissioner’s activities must comply with the relevant provisions of the Public Finance Act 1989, Crown Entities Act 2004 and any other relevant legislation.