



30 September 2004

Hundreds netted in nationwide crackdown on childporn

Hundreds of people across Australia will be prosecuted for child sex offences following the nation's largest ever crackdown on internet child pornography.

The investigation, codenamed Operation Auxin, began last March and culminated this week with the execution of around 400 search warrants across all capital cities and a number of regional and country areas.

The Operation was coordinated by the Australian High Tech Crime Centre (AHTCC), which was set up to investigate internet based crime. It involved the collaborative efforts of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and all State and Territory police agencies.

Director of the AHTCC Mike Phelan said the police operation, which is part of a sustained campaign, should send a clear message that child exploitation will not be tolerated.

“Conducting business from behind a computer screen doesn't make the crime any less heinous and doesn't guarantee the perpetrator's protection from police detection,” he said.

“Some people involved in this type of activity don't see that viewing and disseminating photographs is a crime but every child pornographic image portrays a real victim and records an act of abuse against a child.”

Over the past six days police have uncovered what appears to be child pornography photographic studios hidden within suburban homes, as well as libraries involving hundreds of thousands of images dating back more than two decades.

Police in all States and Territories, assisted by AFP, have seized computer hard drives, boxes of images, cameras and other equipment believed to be used in the manufacture and distribution of child pornography.

More than 150 people have already been charged with 2,000 offences including child sex tourism, sexual abuse and downloading, possessing or distributing child pornographic images. Hundreds more are expected to be summonsed to appear before court where they will be formally charged with similar offences.

“The scale of this operation paints a worrying picture in relation to the extent and spread of online child pornography,” said Federal Agent Phelan.



“In this electronic age, child pornography has become a global crime. Operation Auxin is the result of extensive intelligence analysis including information from a large U.S. investigation last year called Operation Falcon.

“The final statistics from Operation Auxin will not be known for several days. However there is no doubt that this operation has been a very successful collaborative effort between Australian and overseas police jurisdictions as well as the internet industry, financial institutions, child protection agencies and the Australian Institute of Criminology,” said F/A Phelan.

We are confident that this operation will have a strong deterrent affect on others who might be tempted to engage in online child pornography.

It should also serve as a timely reminder to Australian parents to educate themselves and their children about the risk of online exploitation. Further information about internet safety and child sexual exploitation can be found on the AHTCC web site at www.ahtcc.gov.au

Media enquiries regarding national campaign

AFP Media: 02 6275 7100

State based media enquiries:

NSW Police Media: 02 8263 6100

Victoria Police Media: 03 92475205

South Australia Police Media: 08 8207 4484

West Australia Police Media: 08 92221217

Queensland Police Media: 07 33646668

Northern Territory Police Media: 08 89223535

Tasmania Police Media: 03 62302867

AFP ACT Policing Media: 02 62567460