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Australian childcare worker charged with creating abuse videos

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Tiffanie Turnbull

BBC News, Sydney



Getty Images

Australia is facing questions over how it regulates its childcare sector

An Australian childcare worker has been charged with filming child abuse material inside his Sydney workplaces.

Artarmon man David James, 26, is accused of creating "explicit" images or videos of 10 children, aged between five and six, during his employment at six out-of-school-hours care services between 2021 and 2024.

He has been remanded in custody since October, but his name was suppressed while the Australian Federal Police (AFP) identified his alleged victims and notified their families.

It comes as Australia faces a reckoning on safety within its childcare sector, after a series of high-profile cases of alleged sexual and physical abuse.

"Any form of child sexual abuse is confronting. Even more so when the alleged perpetrator is an individual trusted with the care of our children," AFP Acting Assistant Commissioner Brett James (no relation) said at a press conference on Thursday.

He said the discovery of child abuse material on the dark web - which he declined to discuss the nature of - had led detectives to David James.

He was also a former officer. In a statement, New South Wales Police confirmed that David James had been employed as a probationary constable, but failed to complete his probation, and continued on in civilian roles from December 2021 to May 2023. They were unaware that he was also working in childcare at the same time, the statement said.

The 26-year-old had worked at almost 60 childcare providers, however, there is no evidence to suggest any further offending outside of the six centres identified, Assistant Commissioner James said.

"It is very important for me to reassure parents and carers about this investigation. If you have not heard from the AFP, it is because we have no evidence which has linked your family to this man's offending."

David James is charged with nine counts of aggravated use of a child to make child abuse material, one count of using a child to make abuse material, two counts of possessing abuse material and one count of refusing officers access to his phone. He is due back in court in three weeks.

Earlier this month, about 2,000 children in the state of Victoria were urged to undergo infectious disease testing after a childcare worker, Joshua Dale Brown, was charged with 70 offences including child rape.

Late last year, another former childcare worker Ashley Paul Griffith - dubbed "one of Australia's worst paedophiles" - was sentenced to life in prison for raping and sexually abusing almost 70 girls.

In response to the string of cases, the federal government is rushing a suite of "tougher child safety rules" through parliament - though experts say greater reform, including a national register for workers, is needed.

Australia

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