

Join the fight to protect children by signing this letter to the Prime Minister

30th May 2008

Dear Prime Minister

On behalf of those who work to prevent harm to children and believe in the right of children to be free from all forms of sexual exploitation, assault and abuse, we would like to thank you for your courageous leadership in speaking against the exploitative use of children in the work of Bill Henson.

We are appalled by the level of support given to Henson in light of the police seizure of his photographs, which has been issued primarily by people defending the rights and freedoms of artists at the expense of the rights and freedoms of children. There is no denying that art has an important role in society. But artists, like every other adult, have a responsibility to protect children from exploitation. The artistic pursuit of personal emotion, curiosity or expression cannot be sanctioned where this pursuit violates existing human rights and betrays the same laws by which the rest of society lives.

The sexualisation of children and young people for the alleged purpose of art - or any other purpose - is counterproductive to the best interests of child protection. It plays directly into the hands of those who want to liberate children and young people from the laws which protect them.

Please know that while some high profile Australians are promoting Henson's work as art, there are many ordinary Australians who oppose the art community's celebration of the sexualised use of children in the commission of his work. The main issue that the sexualisation of children presents to the wider community is not what it is labelled, or the rights of adults to photograph and watch it, but the right of children to live in a world where their naked bodies are not sold for public consumption. No-one, not even people called artists, should consider that they are above the application of the laws that exist to defend the rights of the child.

Thank you again Prime Minister for speaking up for the rights of children and not ceding to the pressure to accept the apparently fashionable illusion that sexual images of children should be quarantined from law and called art.