

Brandon Chell, you plead guilty to two counts of grooming with intent to expose a young person to indecent material and two counts of attempting to involve a person under 18 years in the production of child exploitation material. The crimes were committed between April and August 2023. At the time you were 25 and employed as a teacher's aide at a high school in Launceston. There are three victims, each a male who was a student at the school. To protect their identities I will refer to them by false initials.

AB was aged 15 and 16. In about April 2023 you became friends with him on Snapchat and began to exchange messages of a social nature. Before long you began to send messages of a sexual nature. Over a period of about four months you sent him still and video images of yourself, usually on a daily basis late at night and often on multiple occasions during a single night. The images were of you either nude or semi-nude, playing with your penis and including you masturbating to ejaculation. When sending the images you asked AB to send you images of his penis. The requests were accompanied by sexualised comments like "send your dick, I bet you have a huge one" and other similar remarks. On occasion at school you bought him food and drinks. That engagement was followed by other on-line requests at night for him to send you images of himself. It is not asserted that AB in fact sent you images of himself. One grooming count and one child exploitation material count relate to this complainant.

At around the same time you also befriended CD on Snapchat. He was 15. There were occasional messages of a social nature, until, after a few months, you sent him a Snapchat message saying "I bet you have a big dick, show me". He blocked you a few minutes later. The second child exploitation material charge relates to this complainant.

EF was another student you befriended on Snapchat at the beginning of 2023. He was 15. You began to send him images of yourself almost daily. At first, the images were of a generally social nature, but they then took on a sexual connotation. In July 2023 you sent him an image of yourself with your penis exposed accompanied by an offensive message. He did not reply and stopped communicating with you. The second grooming count applies to this complainant.

None of these young men said anything to anyone until teachers at the school became suspicious in about August or September 2023 and the police were notified. As each victim learned that others were being spoken to they came forward and disclosed what had happened to them. Your phone was seized and examined. It contained many images of you with your body and penis exposed. It also had on it classroom selfies, that is, photographs of students taken by themselves on your phone.

Your personal circumstances were outlined by your counsel and in a report prepared by a forensic psychologist, Dr Georgina O'Donnell. No mental impairment relevant to sentence is raised. You are now aged 28. Your alcoholic father was violent and abusive towards your mother. Following his death in 2018 you began to abuse alcohol and illicit drugs yourself. You now live in Western Australia. You have full time employment in transport. You provide physical, financial and emotional support to your mother and younger brothers. Your imprisonment will have a significant impact on your mother and other members of your family but that is part of the price to be paid for serious crime. You have no relevant prior convictions. You have two children from a prior heterosexual relationship. References from your mother and

new partner attest to your character, but if it had been otherwise you would not have been in a position to offend.

Some mitigation arises from your plea of guilty, although it was entered only a week or so before your trial was about to commence. The complainants faced the prospect of having to give evidence until then, but did not ultimately have to do so. The plea has a utilitarian value and indicates some acceptance of responsibility. It was the first indication of any remorse. In the investigation conducted by the Education Department you sought only to minimise your conduct. You have now reflected on your actions and are sorry for them. The letter from you which your counsel showed me today indicates that you now realise the significance of what you did and the effect it will have on others, and you promise to reform. Any prospect of continued employment in education is permanently lost, but that is something you brought upon yourself.

At the time of these crimes you were involved in many Snapchat groups. You widely shared sexual images of yourself to many persons, including by an Only Fans page. It was suggested that your use of alcohol and drugs led you to become reckless and to overshare the material you were producing. However to characterise your conduct in this case, as you did to Dr O'Donnell, as irresponsible or immature is to greatly understate the seriousness of it. The gravity of your crimes arises from your sending of indecent images with intent to expose children to them, and your express attempts to have two of those children send you indecent sexual images of themselves.

The dominant sentencing consideration in matters of this nature is the protection of children. Offenders must not only be punished and denounced, but there is a strong need for general deterrence and protection of the public. Such offences are difficult to detect. Victims are often reluctant to come forward. Communications sent from phones and computers and other electronic devices, especially on Snapchat, occur privately and in secret, away from the supervision of parents and others who are responsible for the safety and protection of the young person. The potential for corruption and psychological harm is considerable. Fortunately, two of the complainants had the fortitude to cease communicating with you. One of the complainants, AB, did not immediately cease corresponding with you but it was not his responsibility to do so. There was a considerable power imbalance. Moreover, it is the duty of sentencing courts to protect children from their own vulnerability, immaturity and misjudgment by imposition of sentences which seek to deter those who would take advantage of them. Victim impact statements from two complainants describe the type of impact which is to be expected. They remain disturbed, uncomfortable and pre-occupied with what happened.

Many of the aggravating circumstances listed in the *Sentencing Act*, s 11A, do not apply, but one particularly important one does. In your employment you were in a position of care, supervision and authority over these children. As a person employed in a school you were trusted by them, by their parents, by your colleagues and employer to educate the students entrusted to you and keep them safe. By your actions you committed a serious breach of that trust. The nature of these offences is such that I could not be satisfied that you do not present a material risk of future offending. Your counsel did not submit otherwise.

Brandon Chell, you are convicted on each count on the indictment. I make an order under the *Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2005* directing that the Registrar cause your name to be placed on the Register and that you comply with the reporting obligations under that Act for a period five years from your release. I impose one sentence. You are sentenced to

imprisonment for 15 months from 12 June 2026. I order that you not be eligible for parole until you have served half of that term.