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Man faces naming by court

The Nelson Mail | Tuesday, 24 July 2007

Name suppression for a former Nelson Exclusive Brethren man facing seven sexual offending charges will be lifted on Wednesday unless his lawyer successfully appeals a judge's order.

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The 72-year-old entered no plea when he appeared in the Nelson District Court on Tuesday morning on the charges, which date from 1951 to 1982, and involve four complainants from Nelson.

He faces six charges of indecent assault and one of inducing a girl to do an indecent act.

The man's lawyer, Hamish Riddoch, told the court it was likely he would apply for a stay (discharge) of the charges because of the age and nature of the allegations.

He said name suppression was sought because the matter would have to go to a depositions hearing before the stay could be granted, and he wanted a fair trial.

Mr Riddoch also presented the court with a medical certificate that related to the defendant's wife, citing it as another reason for name suppression.

Police opposed the application for name suppression, saying the public were entitled to know the accused's name.

Prosecutor Sergeant Graeme Eden said name suppression would prejudice other members of the church who may be suspected. Publicising the man's name could also help police inquiries.

Judge Tony Zohrab refused name suppression but granted interim suppression until 5pm on Wednesday, to allow time for Mr Riddoch to appeal that decision.

Judge Zohrab said "my concern is that it's been well-known for a period of time that a member of the church is facing charges and my concern is that if this man's name is suppressed the finger may be pointed at other people in the church".

The man was remanded without plea until August 14 and ordered to surrender his passport by 5pm on Tuesday.

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