

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND CHILD SEX ABUSE

A BRIEF HANDBOOK FOR ATTORNEYS AND
OTHER LEGAL PROFESSIONALS



PRESENTED BY EXODUS

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND CHILD SEX ABUSE

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SECTION 1: PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook has been created to help lawyers and other legal professionals better understand the challenges in dealing with Jehovah's Witnesses in litigating, addressing, and treating matters of child sexual abuse. Those outside of this religion who are unfamiliar with its beliefs and practices may find that information and resources for such litigation are scarce and/or difficult to understand.

By using this handbook, we hope that those who are fighting for justice for the victims of child sex abuse within the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses can better prepare their cases, and better understand those abuse victims.

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We welcome your feedback about this handbook as well as suggested edits and improvements.

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SECTION 2: REFERENCES

Note that the following references will be used repeatedly throughout this booklet:

The Australian Royal Commission Inquiry Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

The Australian Royal Commission Inquiry Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse questioned members of the Jehovah's Witnesses faith during July and August of 2015.¹ According to the website for the Royal Commission:

“The scope and purpose of the public hearing is to inquire into:

- The experience of survivors of child sexual abuse within the Jehovah's Witnesses Church in Australia.
- The response of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd to allegations, reports or complaints of child sexual abuse within the Church.
- The systems, policies and procedures in place within the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd for raising and responding to allegations of or concerns about child sexual abuse within the Church.
- The systems, policies and procedures in place within the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd to prevent child sexual abuse within the Church.
- Any related matters.”

While the Inquiry was limited to practices and experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia, the answers and information shared can be very helpful to attorneys and litigators in other countries.

The “Australian RC” will be referenced throughout this handbook. The Inquiry's **Submission of Senior Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission** will be referred to as “SSCARC” and is attached to the end of this booklet, but please also refer to their website for more information.

¹ <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/case-study/636f01a5-50db-4b59-a35e-a24ae07fb0ad/case-study-29.-july-2015.-sydney.aspx>

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October 1, 2012, Letter to All Elders Worldwide

On October 1, 2012, a letter to elders in the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses was distributed worldwide, addressing the matter of child sexual abuse. This letter is attached to the end of this booklet and will be referenced as "**Letter (2012).**"

"Shepherd the Flock of God in Your Care"

Elders in congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses refer to a handbook titled, "Shepherd the Flock of God in Your Care," and this handbook addresses, among other issues, reasons for disfellowshipping (excommunication), marking (lack of socializing with active congregation members) and the handling of matters such as child sex abuse. The handbook will be referred to as the "**Shepherd Book.**"

A copy of the "Shepherd Book" was tendered as an Exhibit for the Australian RC; it can be viewed in its entirety at the website for their exhibits:

<http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/exhibits/636f01a5-50db-4b59-a35e-a24ae07fb0ad/case-study-29,-july-2015,-sydney>

Note the exhibit titled, "Marked-up copy of Shepherd the Flock of God," Document ID: WAT.0003.001.0001

All other reference material is published by Jehovah's Witnesses unless otherwise noted.

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SECTION 3: A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

The Watchtower Bible & Tract Society of New York, commonly known as Jehovah's Witnesses, currently claims some 7 to 8 million members worldwide. The religion is most known for their door-to-door proselytizing, their Watchtower magazine, their refusal to celebrate all holidays including birthdays, and their refusal to accept whole blood transfusions for them and their children, even in life-threatening situations.

Religious Structure

Jehovah's Witnesses receive their direction from a **governing body**, a small group of men (seven, as of this writing) who work from the state of New York, U.S.A. The governing body, while not the legal officers of the organization, makes all final decisions as to the beliefs, teachings, and practices of the religion.

The governing body is assisted by **helper committees**. These oversee various aspects of maintaining the religion, including the construction of new religious buildings, translation of their literature, overseeing their legal affairs, and so on.

Throughout the world, there are several **branch offices** that exist to serve the more localized needs of Jehovah's Witnesses in various countries; one branch office may be assigned over a number of countries and not just the country where the branch is physically located. These branch offices may oversee construction of new buildings, the organization of their preaching work in local areas, the oversight of legal matters according to local laws and regulations, and so on. Those who work in these branch offices must adhere to direction given to them by the governing body, although they may alert their New York headquarters to potential conflicts in their direction when it comes to local legal issues, building plans, and the like.

Groups of several local congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses form what is called a **circuit**. Each individual congregation is directed by a body of elders, who take direction from a "circuit overseer" as well as directly from the headquarters in New York; the circuit overseer will receive his direction from the local branch office and regularly visits each congregation in his local circuit, typically twice per year.

Local bodies of elders are told to follow the instructions from the religion's governing body regarding procedural matters completely, while still having tremendous autonomy in making decisions that affect the lives of everyday Jehovah's Witnesses, including the decision to disfellowship (excommunicate) members for various perceived sins. They are also given authority to recommend other men for the appointment of becoming an elder.

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Elders are also given tremendous respect and deference in each congregation; while congregants are told to train and use their own conscience on individual, private matters, elders give instruction and counsel that may greatly influence a congregant's decisions. As an example, the September 15, 2015, Watchtower magazine stated regarding using your conscience as a guide in deciding on health-related issues:

"A branch office or the local congregation elders do not have the authority to make medical decisions for a Christian, even if he asks what to do. (Galatians 6:5) However, the elders can share what Jehovah says in order to help a Christian make a wise decision."

Jehovah's Witnesses have said that elders are appointed by god's "holy spirit,"² so everyday congregation members typically defer to their authority and opinions on many matters, as they are directed to do in the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses.³

Congregants are also often told that the elder body should be consulted in order to clear one's conscience of wrongdoing; note the April 15, 2013, Watchtower (simplified edition):

*"When Anne was in her late teens, she served as a regular pioneer. However, she began to live a double life. This affected her greatly. She states: **"What was left of my conscience felt guilty. I was unhappy and depressed all the time."** What did she do? She states that one day at the meeting, James 5:14, 15 was discussed. **Anne realized that she needed help and went to the elders for assistance.** Looking back, she says: "Those scriptures are a prescription written by Jehovah for spiritual healing. The medicine is not easy to swallow, but it does heal. I heeded the advice found in those scriptures, and it worked." Some years have passed, and with renewed strength Anne is again zealously serving Jehovah with a good conscience." (Bold added for emphasis.)*

Also, the February 15, 2011, Watchtower:

*"Consider what happened to one Christian. He says: "I secretly viewed pornography. I created a fantasy world that I thought was disconnected from the world where I served Jehovah. I knew that this practice was wrong but told myself that my service to God was still acceptable." What changed this brother's thinking? He states: **"Although it was the most difficult thing I have ever done, I decided to tell the***

² April 1, 2007, Watchtower, "These "gifts in men" are overseers, or elders, appointed by Jehovah and his Son, through holy spirit, to shepherd the sheep with tenderness."

³ Ibid, "Our heavenly Shepherds, Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, expect us to be obedient and submissive to the undershepherds whom they have placed in positions of responsibility within the congregation."

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*elders about my problem.” This brother eventually broke free from this degrading habit. “After I cleansed my life of this sin,” he admits, “**I finally felt that I had a truly clean conscience.**”” (Bold added for emphasis.)*

Elders receive direction from information given by the religious headquarters in New York, most specifically the “Shepherd Book.” This book is kept confidential from other congregants and is for the elders only. Other direction may come in the form of letters addressed to the elders alone, also to be kept confidential from other congregants, as well as direction from the local circuit overseer or branch office.

Within each congregation, members are referred to as **publishers**. This denotes their preaching work; each member of a congregation is expected to participate in their door-to-door proselytizing work, often called “field service” or “service.” In order to qualify as a publisher, children of Jehovah’s Witnesses or those who are converted from outside the religion must adhere to certain codes of conduct that are applicable to all members. This includes, among other things, being a nonsmoker, not having sex outside of marriage, not celebrating holidays or birthdays, and the like.

Publishers are required to record the number of hours they spend in their preaching work, along with the number of magazines and other books or pieces of literature they leave with others while preaching. This record may also include literature they leave in public such as at bus stops or in a doctor’s waiting room, etc. This record of hours may also include time they spend discussing the religion with someone over the phone, through email, and other electronic means; parents include time spent studying bible lessons with their children. This record is referred to as their **field service report** or simply their “service report.”

Note, congregants may believe that they “voluntarily” report this time. However, if they do not turn in a report for even one month, they are considered to be “irregular” and “spiritually sick.”⁴ Being irregular will result in being admonished by the elders to become active in the ministry again and to not miss a month, and may result in people not associating with you while you are “spiritually sick.” Since Jehovah’s Witnesses are regularly admonished to only have other Jehovah’s Witnesses as friends, this is a powerful motivating force to keep this record and continue to proselytize for the religion as much as possible.

⁴ Watchtower, November 15, 2008, “When a fellow believer is physically sick, the visit of a shepherd of God’s flock can be a source of joy and encouragement. The same can be the case when a **spiritually ailing sheep** is given personal attention. Elders may read scriptures, review an article, discuss meeting highlights, pray with the **inactive** one, and so forth.” (Bold added for emphasis.)

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The information on a person's monthly report is kept on what is called their **publisher card**, a long-term record of their monthly numbers. This card is referenced when someone is considered for any positions of authority or responsibility in the congregation; for example, when elders recommend a man to also become an elder, that man's publisher card is referenced and critiqued as part of his "qualifications." The card is also referenced in determining cases of potential wrongdoing (see Section 6: When the Accused Moves to a New Congregation).

A person is officially considered one of Jehovah's Witnesses when he or she is baptized. While Jehovah's Witnesses do not practice infant baptism and teach that being baptized is a decision that each person must make for themselves,^{5,6} very young children, including preteens and those as young as six years old, are allowed to be baptized in the religion.

Leaving the Religion

A person may leave the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses in one of three ways; one, they may be "disfellowshipped" for a perceived sin. Two, when a person officially leaves the religion by writing a letter to their congregation stating that they no longer wish to remain in the religion; they are then referred to as "disassociated." Both these forms of excommunication are followed by a public announcement that "so-and-so is no longer one of Jehovah's Witnesses." This announcement is made in their local congregation but may also be made in any congregation the person frequented often or where he or she was well known, such as the congregation where they grew up.

Three, a person who simply stops going to regular meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses and out in their preaching work, without going through the process of being disfellowshipped or of disassociating themselves; they are then called "inactive." When there is a span of six months of a person not turning in a record of their preaching activity, they are officially considered inactive. These ones may also refer to themselves as "faders," or having simply faded from the religion. Inactive ones, while not associating with Jehovah's Witnesses, are still typically regarded as needing to abide by the principles of the religion since they have not officially left. If an inactive one were to be found celebrating Christmas, living with someone who is not their spouse, smoking, etc., they may face disfellowshipping.

⁵ "Worship the Only True God" (2006), page 110-119, "Complete immersion in water is a fitting symbol of this personal dedication..."

⁶ Watchtower, January 15, 2010, "Such a dedication is a personal vow. It is followed by water baptism."

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*Disfellowshipping and Reproof*⁷

A person may be disfellowshipped for a variety of recognized sins, including smoking, gambling, and speaking out against the religion itself or disagreeing with its teachings. Elders in local congregations are given instruction as to how they handle hearings and investigations into these matters, but are also given great leeway in determining innocence or guilt when it comes to accusations of serious sins.

When a person is disfellowshipped and an announcement is made to the congregation that they are no longer considered one of Jehovah's Witnesses, there is typically no information given as to their sin or conduct that led to this decision.

Additionally, a person who has been found to be guilty of certain sins may show "repentance" and be "reproved" rather than disfellowshipped. This reproof may be public and would include a brief announcement to the local congregation that such a reproof has been administered, with no information given about their particular sin. The reproof may also be considered private, given as an official statement by the elders to the person only. This reproof process, either public or private, then also allows such a person to continue to associate with others in the congregation, albeit with some slight restrictions, rather than being shunned.

Secluded Life

While everyday Jehovah's Witnesses do not live on any type of commune or in a secluded, sequestered area, they do typically live very isolated lives.⁸ Jehovah's Witnesses are consistently counseled to avoid association with those who are not Jehovah's Witnesses.⁹ Children are often not allowed to participate in extracurricular activities and may even be homeschooled by their parents. Jehovah's Witnesses are strongly counseled against marrying or even dating non-Jehovah's Witnesses.¹⁰

⁷ "Shepherd Book" pages 58-80

⁸ The exception to living in a "commune" would be volunteers who are housed full-time at various headquarters and other such branch facilities the world. According to the 2016 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, there were 26,011 "ministers" staffing their branch facilities worldwide.

⁹ "Insight on the Scriptures" Volume 2, pages 1205-1210; "Though unavoidably living in the midst of that society of worldly persons, including those engaging in fornication, idolatry, extortion, and similar practices (1Co 5:9-13), such Christians must keep themselves clean and unspotted by that world's corruption and defilement, not entering into friendly relations with it, lest they be condemned with it."

¹⁰ "Shepherd Book" page 125; "Nonetheless, if he is dating with a view to marrying someone who is unbaptized, he is not obeying the Bible's counsel at 1 Corinthians 7:39 to marry 'only in the Lord,'

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Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate holidays including Christmas, Easter, Hanukkah, and even birthdays; children at school and those who have family that are not Jehovah's Witnesses may need to keep themselves separate during, or excuse themselves from observing, such events and celebrations.

Those who are not Jehovah's Witnesses are referred to as being in "the world" or "worldly," and these ones are spoken of in very unfavorable terms. For example, note the book, "Keep Yourselves in God's Love," (2016), page 50:

"The world' Jesus mentioned refers to all of mankind who are alienated from God, ruled by Satan, and enslaved to the selfish, prideful spirit that emanates from him. (John 14:30; Ephesians 2:2; 1 John 5:19) Indeed, 'friendship with [that] world is enmity with God.'"

Also note the June 1, 2005, Watchtower, pages 11-12:

"Another example of divine loving-kindness is that God warns his servants to remain separate from the wicked world, which he will soon destroy. We read: 'Do not be loving either the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because everything in the world—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life—does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world.' By giving heed to this warning and acting accordingly, we can literally safeguard our life for all eternity, for the text continues: 'Furthermore, the world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever.'"

This attitude toward those who are not Jehovah's Witnesses can make it difficult for congregants to approach police and other authority figures regarding child molestation charges, especially when young ones need to do this on their own. Note the testimony of one victim during the Australian RC:

"I was always terrified of being kicked out of home or disfellowshipped because I feared what Jehovah would do to me. I was taught from a young age that people outside the Church (referred to by Jehovah's Witnesses as 'worldly people') were bad and not to be trusted and they served Satan. Even the prospect of speaking to the police was extremely scary as they were also considered to be very bad people."¹¹

Shunning

and loving counsel should be given. Elders will use reasonableness and discernment in determining whether a particular situation is sufficiently serious and disturbing to require a warning talk."

¹¹ Transcript, Day 148, pages 15282-15283

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Jehovah's Witnesses practice a severe and harsh form of shunning. Those who are disfellowshipped or excommunicated are avoided and shunned,¹² even those who are close family. This is also true for those who officially leave the religion on their own, having "disassociated" themselves.¹³

While close, immediate family may have some **limited** contact with disfellowshipped or disassociated ones, this contact is typically minimal at best; persistent association or contact may result in counsel from elders or other sanctions.¹⁴ Other relatives and former friends will typically not even address such a person after they have been disfellowshipped or disassociated.

Disfellowshipping and subsequent shunning can be applied even to "young ones" in the congregation and family.¹⁵

These ones who leave are often referred to as "apostates" and have been called "mentally diseased."¹⁶

Those who become inactive or fade from the religion may not face this official shunning, but association with them is often limited if not completely cut off. During a discourse presented at the 2016 summer conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses, an example was shared of a man and his siblings who quit associating with their inactive mother, referring to their decision as "loyalty to Jehovah."¹⁷

Within the congregation, persons can be "marked," meaning that other congregants limit their socializing with that person, although not officially or completely shunning them.¹⁸

¹² "Shepherd Book" page 60, heading "Offenses Requiring Judicial Decisions" includes the bullet point, "Willful, continued, unnecessary association with disfellowshipped nonrelatives despite repeated counsel."

¹³ Watchtower, January 15, 2013, "Do not look for excuses to associate with a disfellowshipped family member, for example, through e-mail."

¹⁴ "Shepherd Book" page 116, "If members of the congregation are known to have undue association with disfellowshipped or disassociated relatives who are not in the household, elders should counsel and reason with those members of the congregation from the Scriptures. ... If it is clear that a Christian is violating the spirit of the disfellowshipping decree in this regard and does not respond to counsel, it may be that he would not qualify for congregation privileges, which require one to be exemplary."

¹⁵ 2013 public discourse by Watchtower representative Steven Bell

¹⁶ Watchtower, July 15, 2011

¹⁷ <http://jwvictims.org/2016/05/28/in-shocking-public-discourse-jehovahs-witnesses-are-told-to-shun-inactive-members-even-parents/>

¹⁸ "Shepherd Book" pages 124-125, "At times it may be necessary to mark those who display a flagrant disregard for theocratic order though not practicing a grave sin that would result in judicial action. ... If the disorderly one becomes ashamed of his ways and is moved to change, then as elders

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Family Structure

Jehovah's Witnesses follow a patriarchal family arrangement, with the husband being the "head" of his wife; she is counseled to be "submissive" to his direction and defer to his authority on all matters. This includes matters related to the home and children, her employment, and even personal matters, such as her own dress and grooming.^{19,20}

Fathers also have prime responsibility and decision making for how children are disciplined.²¹ Corporal punishment is neither forbidden nor outright endorsed by Jehovah's Witnesses.²² Personal experiences of extreme physical discipline abound from former Jehovah's Witnesses, including spankings, paddling, smacks, and the like.²³

Women in the Religion

While members of the religion are told to treat women with respect, women are not allowed to hold any positions of authority or responsibility in the religion; elders, circuit overseers, and others in positions of responsibility are always men, without any exception. Women are not allowed to have access to the same information as men in the religion; a letter sent to all elders regarding the "Shepherd Book" stated:

"Since the release of the new Shepherding textbook, several elders have asked about the possibility of having their textbook spiral bound. There is no objection if an elder personally spiral binds or laminates his own textbook or does so for other elders. If he has another baptized brother who is not an elder do the work for him, the elder must watch while the work is being done. Outside companies, unbelievers, or sisters [meaning women in the congregation] are not permitted to do this work. The material in the book is confidential, and confidentiality must be preserved."

of the congregation see the adjustment, they can individually decide to end the limitation they have put on personally socializing with him. This will indicate to the congregation that he is no longer marked."

¹⁹ "Keep Yourselves in God's Love" (2014), page 43, "When his decisions are not to her liking, she may respectfully express her thoughts, but she remains submissive."

²⁰ Watchtower, February 15, 2007, "For example, a husband may need to point out in a kind manner why some adjustment is needed if her dress or use of jewelry or cosmetics begins to stray from the modest pattern recommended in the Scriptures."

²¹ Watchtower, April 1, 2007, "Fathers in particular are instructed to provide their children with moral guidance and loving discipline."

²² Watchtower, November 1, 2006, "However, not all children need physical punishment. Proverbs 17:10 tells us: "A rebuke works deeper in one having understanding than striking a stupid one a hundred times.'"

²³ <http://jwvictims.org/2015/09/01/member-of-the-governing-body-of-jehovahs-witnesses-lies-about-corporal-punishment-abandoning-the-victims-yet-again/>

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This lack of access to equal information extends to married couples when there is a judicial committee hearing (see Section 4: Understanding the Judicial Process of Jehovah's Witnesses) for accusations of adultery. Note:

“Meeting With Marriage Mates

***If the accused is a married sister, it is best to have her believing husband present for the hearing... If the accused is a married brother, his wife would normally not attend the hearing.** However, if the husband wants his wife to be present, she may attend a portion of the hearing. **The judicial committee should maintain confidentiality.** If the husband committed adultery, he has an obligation to inform his wife of the facts. The judicial committee should promptly inquire of the Christian wife as to what her husband has told her. If he refuses to inform her of his adultery, the elders should inform her that because of her husband's conduct, it is up to her to decide whether to pursue a Scriptural divorce or not. Furthermore, they should inform the innocent mate that her resuming sexual relations with the guilty mate would negate any claim to Scriptural freedom. **But they should not give her further details.** On the other hand, the elders may find that while the husband did confess adultery to his wife, he did not tell her the full extent of his wrong conduct and left out important information that the wife should know. **The elders should not provide this confidential information to the wife,** but they can suggest that she speak with her husband again.”²⁴ (Bold added for emphasis.)*

Women are also typically expected to defer to the authority of baptized males in the congregation, and this is typically regardless of circumstances. As an example, those who wish to participate in the preaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses usually meet at a local Kingdom Hall first, to be organized into car groups and given assigned areas to preach. A baptized male who is present is expected to preside over this meeting. A woman would typically defer to this arrangement, even if that baptized male is a preteen and the women present are older than him.²⁵

When handling spiritual responsibilities that would otherwise be handled by a man in the congregation or in her own family, a woman is required to wear a head

²⁴ “Shepherd Book,” pages 84-85

²⁵ Our Kingdom Ministry, March 2015, “If a baptized brother joins the meeting after it has started, the sister would normally invite him to finish the meeting. The service overseer should try to anticipate unusual situations and give appropriate instructions so as to minimize awkwardness. For example, a very young, perhaps preteen, baptized brother might attend when a sister is assigned to conduct, but the elders feel that he is not yet qualified to conduct the meeting. In such a case, the service overseer can inform those involved that the assigned sister should conduct the meeting, but the brother should say the prayer if the elders feel that he is qualified.”

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covering of some sort.²⁶ A head covering is also required for women when publicly translating any type of presentation for the deaf.²⁷ Wearing a head covering is also required of a woman when studying the bible or giving spiritual instruction to her own son, if he is a baptized member of the congregation.²⁸

Women are also not part of the investigative process when it comes to matters of sexual abuse of children or any other judicial type of process.²⁹

²⁶ Watchtower, July 15, 2002, "Praying or preaching in the Christian congregation is normally the responsibility of a man. Hence, when a Christian woman cares for matters pertaining to worship that ordinarily would be performed by her husband or by a baptized man, she should wear a head covering."

²⁷ Watchtower, November 15, 2009, "An image of the signer's interpretation is commonly featured on a large screen, while the speaker himself may not even be visible to the audience. With these factors in mind, it would thus seem appropriate for the sister who interprets into sign language to acknowledge her secondary role as an interpreter by wearing a head covering."

²⁸ Ibid, "What, though, if a young son in the family is a dedicated, baptized servant of Jehovah God? ... If the father is absent, then the mother should wear a head covering if she conducts a Bible study with the young baptized son and the other children."

²⁹ SSCARC, page 78, "It is submitted that the current process of investigation doesn't provide for, or even allow, the involvement of women as investigators or even to receive a complainant's statement and pass it on to the investigating elders. Further, in the light of Mr Jackson's evidence that an elder, and therefore not a woman in the congregation, must determine the credibility of a witness, there is limited scope for the involvement of women in the investigation."

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SECTION 4: UNDERSTANDING THE JUDICIAL PROCESS OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

When one of Jehovah's Witnesses has been accused of or confesses a sin worthy of disfellowshipping, reproof, or some sort of counsel, an initial investigation may be conducted; elders then decide if a "judicial committee" is warranted.

This committee consists of three or more elders who hear accusations, confessions, and other such information, and then decide if a person should be disfellowshipped or reproofed, or if no action should be taken against them at all. Note some detailed information about the process itself, especially as it applies to cases of child sexual molestation.

Confidentiality of Rules Governing Judicial Process

It is important to note that the judicial process of Jehovah's Witnesses is conducted according to the guidelines set out in the "Shepherd Book," however, only elders are allowed access to this book and those subsequent guidelines.³⁰ This can result in congregants not understanding the information needed by elders to fully weigh accusations made regarding child sexual abuse, the processes they must go through when bringing about those accusations, or even the purpose of some steps in those processes. Note the testimony of one victim offered during the Australian RC (bold added for emphasis):

*"I remember meeting with the Elders (Dino, Ron and Kevin) by myself on a number of occasions for a couple of hours at a time. On one occasion, they brought my father into the room so that I could tell him what I had told the Elders. I cannot recall exactly how many times I had to meet with the Elders. I didn't want to be there and I felt so uncomfortable. I had nobody to support me. **I don't remember anyone really explaining the purpose of the Committee Meetings to me, but I understood at the time that the Elders were investigating what I had alleged.**"³¹*

Confronting Abuser

Jehovah's Witnesses are counseled and encouraged to speak personally with someone who has committed a serious offense against them. From the August 15, 2011, Watchtower:

³⁰ August 23, 2010, letter accompanying distribution of textbook, "We would like to emphasize the importance of keeping these new textbooks secured and confidential, both before and after they are distributed. ... The information is designed for use by the elders only, and other individuals should not have any opportunity to read the information."

³¹ Transcript, Day 148, page 15287

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“What can we do to solve the problem? Matthew 18:15 says: “If your brother commits a sin, go lay bare his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” Even though Matthew 18:15-17 talks about a serious sin, we could use the principle, or lesson, in verse 15 in other situations. So when we have a problem with someone, it is best to talk to him alone about it. We should talk to our brother kindly and try to have peace with him again.”

During the Australian RC, one victim stated in her testimony that the elders instructed her that she needed to first speak to her father herself about his molestation of her before they could assist.³²

If elders do become involved in matters between congregants, they require that someone making an accusation face the person whom they are accusing, if there is no confession from the accused:

“If the accused denies the accusation, the investigating elders should try to arrange a meeting with him and the accuser together. (Note: If the accusation involves child sexual abuse and the victim is currently a minor, the elders should contact the branch office before arranging a meeting with the child and the alleged abuser.)”³³

The exception to this would be if they needed to put their accusations in writing because of living some distance away.

This confrontation is done in the presence of the accused and investigating elders only. During such judicial meetings, elders are told that “observers should not be present for moral support.”³⁴

Elders and Questioning

As said, elders in the congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses are always male. When a child sex abuse victim, whether male or female, confronts their abuser, they will do so in the presence of these male elders only. During the Australian RC, victims who said that having to speak to a panel of all elders not only made them uncomfortable but also resulted in them not disclosing the full extent of their abuse.³⁵

Another point to note is that elders in congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses have no formal training as to rape crisis counseling, child abuse counseling or investigation,

³² Transcript, Day 148, page 15286, “I also tried speaking to another Elder called Dino Ali. ... Dino said to me, 'No, you have to talk to your father first or he must be present'. I said to him, 'I can't do that'. ... I called Dino to try to talk to him about my father at least twice.”

³³ “Shepherd Book” page 72

³⁴ Ibid, page 90

³⁵ SSCARC, page 33

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psychology, psychotherapy, criminal investigations, and the like. This is despite the fact that questioning children regarding sexual abuse, if not done by a trained professional, may upset the victim³⁶ and also contaminate their testimony if they were later called on in a court of law.

Elders also do not have any type of training as to how to conduct such questioning and are given virtual free reign to ask any question or discuss any type of subject when investigating these abuses:

- One victim interviewed during the Australian RC stated in her testimony, “The elders asked me questions like, ‘Did you enjoy it?’” and also stated, “At times, it felt as though they were getting off on what I was telling them.”³⁷
- The point was made during the Australian RC that responding to children making accusations of sexual abuse is a “specialist area” but that the roles of elders could not be given up to “a professional outside of the church,” referring to counselors or a psychiatrist.³⁸

Lack of Questioning Guidelines or Restraint for Accused

There are no guidelines as to how an accused person may respond to such accusations during the judicial committee process.

- During the Australian RC, one victim who was accusing her father of sexual abuse stated that he became angry and belligerent and even threatened bodily harm to her during the judicial meeting. The elders present did nothing to stop such threats until the man began making physical advances toward the girl.³⁹
- In 2014, in the UK, a man by the name of Mark Sewell was being investigated for raping a girl in his local congregation and, during his judicial committee meeting, it was said that he demanded the girl note how far apart her legs were spread during the attack. This was so that Sewell, a rather large man, could demonstrate with his own wife that he could not have raped her without her legs being even further apart.⁴⁰

³⁶ Transcript, Day 148, page 15295, “I thought that Jehovah and the Elders would protect me and my sisters. Instead I felt that rather than protect me as the victim, the Elders primarily sat in judgment of me and my credibility as a witness.”

³⁷ Transcript, Day 148, page 15288

³⁸ Transcript, Day 148, page 15241

³⁹ Transcript, Day 148, page 15289, “My father got very angry and said to me, ‘I will kill you.’ He stood up and started to move towards me, but the Elders stopped him. I felt very intimidated and anxious about the threats that he had made and I didn't feel at all protected by the Elders.”

⁴⁰ <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/jehovahs-witness-mark-sewell-jailed-7339113>

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- In 2014, also in the UK, a man by the name of Jonathan Rose was allowed to “grill” his victims of child sexual assault even after having served time in prison for the offense. It was reported that his victims, aged 5 and 10 at the time of their assault, were asked if they had “enjoyed it at all.”⁴¹

⁴¹ <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/convicted-paedophile-jonathan-rose-grilled-7151197>

SECTION 5: THE "TWO WITNESS RULE"

Jehovah's Witnesses adhere to a "two witness" rule when it comes to acting on matters of pedophilia, meaning that they require a second witness to the incident before they will remove an accused pedophile from their congregation. Note instructions given to elders:

*"There must be two or three eyewitnesses, not just people repeating hearsay; no action can be taken if there is only one witness."*⁴²

*"If the accuser or the accused is unwilling to meet with the elders or if the accused continues to deny the accusation of a single witness and the wrongdoing is not established, the elders will leave matters in Jehovah's hands."*⁴³

Dismissing Witnesses

During the Australian RC inquiry, it was revealed that in one case in particular, four daughters of the same man all said that they had been molested by him, the wife of the man noted that he had confessed to sexually abusing the daughters, and the man himself confessed to the actions. However, elders in the case dismissed the testimony of the family and the man himself as being unreliable.⁴⁴ This would be in direct conflict with their direction that two witnesses can be satisfactory to establish guilt; in this case, there were four victims and two adults (the man and his wife) who attested to his behavior, and the allegations were still dismissed.

Destroying Notes

Jehovah's Witnesses consider a witness to the same type of wrongdoing as a needed second witness; note:

"If there are two or three witnesses to the same kind of wrongdoing but each one is witness to a separate incident, the elders can consider their testimony. While such

⁴² "Shepherd Book," page 71

⁴³ Ibid, page 72

⁴⁴ SSCARC, page, 44, "[Abuse victim] BCG said that although she told the elders about her sisters' sexual abuse allegations against BCH, the elders did not take those allegations into account in their consideration of BCG's allegation against BCH. BCG said that [elder] Mr. De Rooy told her that the elders could not consider the evidence of her sisters' abuse as they were too young to know what they were talking about and were not witnesses to the 'same event'."

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evidence is acceptable to establish guilt, it is preferable to have two witnesses to the same occurrence of wrongdoing.”⁴⁵

Despite this direction, during the Australian RC, it was revealed that congregation elders habitually destroyed notes and records of allegations of various sins, including child sexual abuse.⁴⁶

In the UK, “the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse will investigate whether public bodies and other non-state institutions have taken seriously their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse in England and Wales.” This process is often called the Goddard Inquiry because it is being overseen by the Honorable Dame Lowell Goddard, DNZM.⁴⁷ On August 19, 2015, the Inquiry issued “retention instructions” that said, in part:

“The Inquiry has issued retention instructions to a range of institutions requesting the preservation of all records relating to the care of children so that they remain available for inspection by the Inquiry ... Under Section 21 of the Inquiries Act 2005 the Inquiry has the power to order the production of documents. Failure to comply with such an order without reasonable excuse is an offence punishable by imprisonment (Section 35 of the Inquiries Act 2005). It is also an offence for a person, during the course of an Inquiry, to destroy, alter or tamper with evidence that may be relevant to an Inquiry, or deliberately to do an act with the intention of suppressing evidence or preventing it being disclosed to the Inquiry ... Institutions therefore have an obligation to preserve records for the Inquiry for as long as necessary to assist the Inquiry.”⁴⁸

In November of 2015, the elders in congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses received notice that they should perform an “Audit of File.” This audit would include the destruction of agenda and minutes of elders’ meetings, personal notes taken at elders’ meetings that include reference to any individual, correspondence, and any other personal notes that reference any individual.⁴⁹

BBC’s Radio 4 program for Sunday, February 14, 2016, featured a 10-minute segment about this issue. The host noted that any concerns a congregation may

⁴⁵ “Shepherd Book,” page 71-72

⁴⁶ Transcript, Day 147, page 15185, “There are brief notes kept in the file, but all other notes are destroyed. ... we don’t want them to fall into the wrong hands and other people to find them and they go through them.”

⁴⁷ <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/sites/default/files/retention-instructions-and-data-protection-requirements.pdf>

⁴⁹ <https://jwvictims.org/2016/03/11/the-bbc-thinks-jehovahs-witnesses-have-some-explaining-to-do-when-it-comes-to-destroying-documents-relating-to-child-molestation/>

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have about their records “are trumped” by the order from the Inquiry. He also asked the very legitimate question, “Why then were Jehovah’s Witnesses told last year to destroy all those documents by the end of December?” A legal analyst was also quoted on the program as saying, “It looks as if the Jehovah’s Witnesses have a certain amount of explaining to do.”⁵⁰

This habitual and purposeful destroying of notes all but eliminates any opportunity the elders have to compare previous allegations of child sexual assault with current allegations. In turn, this necessary “second witness” to the “same type of wrongdoing” would not be discovered.

Hypocrisy of Judging Adult Rape Victims

While Jehovah’s Witnesses state that “no action can be taken if there is only one witness,” note also their direction when it comes to cases of “porneia” or sexual immorality:

“One who was raped would not be guilty of porneia. Discernment is needed in considering claims of rape, taking into consideration such factors as the mental disposition of the person, the circumstances that led up to the incident, and any delay in reporting.”⁵¹

The point being, Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that there is scriptural precedent for needing two witnesses to any accusations, including cases of child sexual abuse, in order to take judicial action against the accused. However, they will use “discernment” in taking into account claims of an adult woman being raped, without requiring two witnesses to her conduct or to the incident in question.

⁵⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0709v34>

⁵¹ “Shepherd Book,” page 59

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SECTION 6: WHEN THE ACCUSED MOVES TO A NEW CONGREGATION

The following instructions are given to elders for when an accused child molester moves to a different congregation:

“In a case in which a brother denies an allegation of child abuse and he has been accused by only one witness, the following direction is given if he moves to another congregation. The elders should consult the branch office before sending any information regarding the accusation to the elders in the new congregation. It would be helpful if your letter to the branch office provided a detailed summary of the matter and explained the spiritual condition and personal circumstances of the accused and the accuser. With regard to the accused, the following questions should be answered: (1) What is his interaction with children? (2) Does he admit to any activity with the accuser that could have been misinterpreted by the accuser as sexual abuse, or does he claim to have a poor memory of the accusation? (3) What is his response to why the accuser has made the allegation? (4) Has he had to be counseled for any other matters of a sexual nature, such as inappropriate conduct with adult sisters or pornography? (5) What is the level of his spirituality? (6) Do all the elders on the body believe that he can be trusted with children? The following questions should be answered with regard to the accuser: (1) What is the level of maturity of the child or youth? (2) Is he (or she) describing conduct that one his age would not normally know about? (3) Is the child or his parents known to be serious, mature? (4) Is his memory consistent, or is it intermittent, or does it involve repressed memories? (w95 11/1 pp. 25-26) (5) What is the reputation of the parents? (6) Are they spiritually and emotionally mature? After carefully considering the matter, the branch office will then give you direction as to what information about the allegation should be shared, if any, with the elders of the new congregation.”⁵²

Note a few key points from these instructions:

- *“Does he admit to any activity with the accuser that could have been misinterpreted by the accuser as sexual abuse...”* It is immediately suggested that children may misinterpret actions of the accused as being sexual molestation. As said, elders of Jehovah’s Witnesses have no formal training in child psychology or criminology so as to be able to discern this.
- *“...inappropriate conduct with adult sisters or pornography?”* Sexual relations with adults and viewing of pornography in of themselves are not indicators of

⁵² “Shepherd Book,” page 132-133

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potential danger to children; only the viewing of child pornography would indicate a risk factor for pedophilia.

- *“What is the level of his spirituality?”* A person’s activities within a religion are not in of themselves indicators of potential danger to children, or lack thereof. If the majority of elders feel that the accused is very “spiritual,” this may simply indicate that a molester has been successful in “grooming” their victims or in deceiving other adults as to their overall nature and personality. The National Association of Adult Survivors of Child Abuse states; “Many pedophiles are extremely clever, often charming, patient people, frequently thought of as among the most valued of community members. That's because they spend a lot of time grooming the parents, friends and neighbors of the children around them ... pedophiles are as clever as can be in grooming the adults around them.”⁵³
- *“What is the level of maturity of the child or youth?”* This question is ambiguous; note, too, that a child who is relatively immature may not be offering incorrect, dishonest, or untrustworthy testimony regarding sexual abuse.
- *“Is the child or his parents known to be serious, mature?”* The maturity level, spirituality, and seriousness of the parents are not a determining factor for discerning allegations of child molestation. The “seriousness” of a child is also ambiguous, and also is not a determining factor for discerning allegations of molestation.
- *“Is his memory consistent, or is it intermittent, or does it involve repressed memories?”* Only trained experts can and should evaluate memories of traumatic events, as studies suggest that these may not always be consistent even though they may be reliable.⁵⁴ There is also debate among experts as to the subject of repressed memories and if “guided imagery” may be a contributing factor⁵⁵; this, too, is why such questioning is best left to trained professionals who can discern the trustworthiness of a child’s memories.
- *“What is the reputation of the parents?”* This question endorses hearsay and gossip, and leaves the elders open to involve their own opinion of the parents; as stated above, a parent’s reputation may also have little to no bearing on the trustworthiness of a child’s statements.

⁵³ <http://naasca.org/2012-Articles/040512-GroomingWillingVictims.htm>

⁵⁴ Zoellner LA, Bittenger JN. On the uniqueness of trauma memories in PTSD. In: Rosen GM, editor. Posttraumatic stress disorder: issues and controversies. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons; 2004. pp. 147-162.

⁵⁵ McNally, Richard J., Department of Psychology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; http://www.psychologicalscience.org/journals/cd/12_1/McNally.cfm

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- “*Are they spiritually and emotionally mature?*” Children in families where one or both parents experience mental health challenges are actually at an elevated risk for abuse.⁵⁶ Such families might be discriminated against while the children remain at a higher risk of continued abuse.⁵⁷

These directions openly state that information regarding allegations may potentially not be shared with a new congregation. Parents in the new congregation would not be alerted as to the allegations against a potential pedophile. As stated, this also eliminates the possibility of elders acting on their own counsel of needing a second witness to the same conduct, if they are not told that a person faced allegations of the same conduct in a previous congregation.

⁵⁶ Australian Institute of Family Studies, NCPC Issues No. 33 – December 2010; “Children are also at risk of sexual abuse from extra-familial perpetrators, especially when the child is at risk of supervisory neglect.” <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/issues-safety-and-wellbeing-children-families/how-do-drug-and-alcohol-misuse-mental>

⁵⁷ National Association of Adult Survivors of Childhood Abuse; “Children from broken homes and troubled families are easy targets. The more unlovable the child feels and appears, the less likely the child is to tell on someone who displays love and the less likely anyone is to believe the child if the child ever tells.” <http://naasca.org/2012-Articles/040512-GroomingWillingVictims.htm>

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SECTION 7: PEDOPHILIA AS A "SIN"

Jehovah's Witnesses treat child molestation as a "sin," equivalent to adultery, fornication, and other forms of immorality. Note:

*"Shocking as it is, even some who have been prominent in Jehovah's organization have succumbed to **immoral** practices, including homosexuality, wife swapping, and child molesting."*⁵⁸ (Bold added for emphasis.)

*"If the person is not repentant over the gross **sin**, disfellowshipping action would be warranted. If the decision is to reprove, the reproof should be announced."*⁵⁹ (Bold added for emphasis.)

In a December 3, 1993, letter to a body of elders in a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Fremont, California, the New York headquarters addressed a question the elders had regarding a man by the name of Jonathan Kendrick. Kendrick had been caught fondling the breasts of his teenage stepdaughter while she slept. The response as to how to handle this matter stated:

*"Uncleanness includes an intentional momentary touching of sexual parts or caressing of breasts. Such **minor uncleanness** can be handled at the discretion of an elder or two; it does not require a judicial committee hearing."*⁶⁰ (Bold added for emphasis.)

"Repentant" Molesters Allowed to Remain in Congregation

Because child molestation is considered a sin, those who have been found guilty of this act through the internal judicial committee process may be deemed "repentant" and are then only counseled for their actions and not removed from the congregation.

Someone who has been disfellowshipped for these actions can then also be deemed repentant at a later date and reinstated:

"Loving elders should take steps to protect children, especially when a judicial committee determines that the one who has sexually abused a child is repentant and will be allowed to remain a member of the Christian congregation. The same concern

⁵⁸ Watchtower, January 1, 1986

⁵⁹ Letter (2012), page 3, paragraph 11

⁶⁰ Attached at the end of this section

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would be shown when one who has sexually abused a child is disfellowshipped, later cleans up his life, and is reinstated.”⁶¹

Confidentiality Granted to Known Child Molesters

Even if child molesters are allowed to remain in the congregation, no announcement or information is given to other congregants, with only a slight exception:

*“Not every individual who has sexually abused a child in the past is considered a “predator.” The branch office, not the local body of elders, determines whether an individual who has sexually abused children in the past will be considered a “predator.” If the branch office determines that an individual will be considered a “predator,” **parents with minor children will need to be warned** of the danger that exists so that they can protect their children. In such a case, and only after receiving direction and instructions from the Service Department, two elders should be assigned to meet with the parents of minor children in order to provide a warning.”⁶² (Bold added for emphasis.)*

Note that, according to this direction:

- Only when a child molester is deemed a “predator” by a branch office of Jehovah’s Witnesses will a warning be given to any congregation member. This branch office relies on information provided by local elders and may not even be located in the same country as the individual in question.
- If a warning is given, only parents of “minor children” are included. This may be ambiguous; it doesn’t state if this refers to the legal definition of “minor.” Elders may, at their discretion, assume that “minor” refers to preteen children, assuming that older children and teens are not at risk from a sexual predator.
- As only **parents of minor children** are warned, this can put many other children at risk. As an illustration, a single woman without children of her own may begin to unknowingly date a child molester in her congregation, not being warned of his past behavior; this would put her underage relatives or non-familial children she may care for at risk of becoming victims of his behavior; should they have children of their own, they too may be at risk for becoming victims of molestation.

⁶¹ Letter (2012), page 3, paragraph 12

⁶² Letter (2012), page 4, paragraph 13

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FOOTNOTE 60



SCN:SST December 3, 1993

BODY OF ELDERS
NORTH CONGREGATION OF
JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES, FREMONT, CA
C/O MICHAEL J CLARKE
32852 BASS LAKE ST
FREMONT CA 94555

Dear Brothers:

Your letter dated November 15, 1993, has been received. As you will note from the enclosed S-52 form, Brother Jonathan Kendrick has been deleted from serving as a ministerial servant on the grounds of "uncleanness."

Your letter states: "He confessed to touching the breasts of his stepdaughter while she was sleeping. She was awakened instantly and knew what had happened." Since this incident is known by outside members of the family, it is appropriate that Brother Kendrick be deleted from serving as a ministerial servant with your congregation.

On page 92 of the Kingdom Ministry School textbook the following is stated: "Uncleanness includes an intentional momentary touching of sexual parts or caressing of breasts. Such minor uncleanness can be handled at the discretion of an elder or two; it does not require a judicial hearing. There is a need for strong counsel, admonition, and assistance to help the individual to maintain chaste conduct in the future."

In harmony with the above, it will not be necessary for a judicial committee to handle the "uncleanness" committed by Brother Kendrick. However, it would be appropriate for two elders to meet with him and provide him with strong Scriptural counsel so as to avoid a repetition of such a serious offense.

We trust the above comments will be helpful to you. With this letter we are pleased to send you an expression of our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

cc: R. Rainer, CA #40

Watchtower B. & T. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.

SECTION 8: LACK OF REPORTING

Jehovah's Witnesses report to law enforcement any accusations and known cases of child molestation only where and when required by law:

*"Most states have child-abuse reporting laws that, depending on the facts, mandate elders to report an accusation to the authorities. Thus, when elders learn of an accusation of child abuse, two elders from their congregation should immediately call the Legal Department for legal advice."*⁶³

Note the key point here; elders are instructed to first call the Legal Department of their local branch office for legal advice; they are not instructed to immediately call the police and report this crime.

Australian RC Finding Regarding Reporting

Note one key finding from the Australian RC regarding the failure of elders to report allegations of child sexual abuse to law enforcement:

*"Since 1950, the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia has received allegations of child sexual abuse against 1,006 of its members relating to at least 1,800 victims, and has in that period not reported a single allegation to the police or other authorities, even though 579 of those against whom allegations were made confessed to having committed child sexual abuse."*⁶⁴

Threats to Victims Regarding Reporting

Elders in the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses have been given the following instructions:

*"Child abuse is a crime. Never suggest to anyone that they should not report an allegation of child abuse to the police or other authorities. If you are asked, make it clear that whether to report the matter to the authorities or not is a personal decision for each individual to make and that there are no congregation sanctions for either decision. Elders will not criticize anyone who reports such an allegation to the authorities. If the victim wishes to make a report, it is his or her absolute right to do so."*⁶⁵

⁶³ Letter (2012), page 1, paragraph 4

⁶⁴ SSCARC, page 22

⁶⁵ "Shepherd Book" pages 131-132

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However, during the Australian RC, one victim testified:

“After [elder] Ron de Rooy told me about my father's reinstatement, I said to Ron, 'Well, I want to take it to the police because the congregation is not safe. Children are at risk.' Ron replied to me, 'He is now a Brother again' and he quoted me the scripture that says that we don't take brothers to court. Ron said to me, 'So if you take it to the police, you will bring reproach upon Jehovah's name and you can be disfellowshipped for doing that.’”⁶⁶

Note also these instructions given to elders:

At 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, the apostle Paul gave strong counsel that Christians should not take other Christians before secular courts to settle personal disputes that should be settled with the help of the congregation elders ... If an individual ignores God's Word on this matter, it may affect his congregation privileges.⁶⁷

While elders are told not to “criticize” or “sanction” any individual who decides to report child molestation accusations to secular authorities, this directive above may be the guidance they give any individual who approaches them for *advice* as to whether or not such a report would be warranted. Elders may advise them on the counsel to not bring their brothers to court; even if they don't sanction or criticize such persons or outright tell them what to do, this may be the *tone* of their advice, as mentioned in the victim's testimony above. In turn, this may result in many cases of child molestation not being reported to police.

⁶⁶ Transcript, Day 148, page 15291

⁶⁷ “Shepherd Book” page 133

SECTION 9: PUTTING KNOWN PEDOPHILES IN POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY

Known pedophiles may be given positions of authority or privileges in the congregation:

“It cannot be said in every case that one who has sexually abused a child could never qualify for privileges of service in the congregation. However, the elders will certainly want to be very cautious, especially when dealing with one who had repeatedly engaged in this kind of wrongdoing or who had been disfellowshipped for such an offense. Before privileges can be extended, such a man must meet the Scriptural qualifications of being “self-controlled” and “irreprehensible.” He must “also have a fine testimony” from individuals inside and outside the congregation. (Titus 1:6-8; 1 Tim. 3:2, 7) Elders should keep in mind what is stated in the January 1, 1997, Watchtower article “Let Us Abhor What Is Wicked,” page 29, paragraph 2: “Child sexual abuse reveals an unnatural fleshly weakness. Experience has shown that such an adult may well molest other children. True, not every child molester repeats the sin, but many do. And the congregation cannot read hearts to tell who is and who is not liable to molest children again. (Jeremiah 17:9) Hence, Paul’s counsel to Timothy applies with special force in the case of baptized adults who have molested children: ‘Never lay your hands hastily upon any man; neither be a sharer in the sins of others.’ (1 Timothy 5:22).”

*Hence, privileges of service should never be extended hastily. **Considerable time should always pass before one who has sexually abused a child is recommended**, if ever. It would be up to the local body of elders to determine whether such a recommendation should be made to the branch office, taking into account all factors in each individual case.”⁶⁸ (Bold added for emphasis)*

Note:

- It is outright stated that a man who has sexually abused a child could be given positions of authority or privileges in the congregation.
- While the letter states that “considerable time” should pass before such recommendations are made, it does not state what is meant by this phrase.

Having Authority in the Congregation

⁶⁸ Letter (2012), page 5, paragraph 22

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Having authority as an elder in the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses can have great impact on other members; as said, congregants may defer their own opinions and preferences to the elders themselves. Note direction given to Jehovah's Witnesses about obeying the elders in their congregations:

*"These 'gifts in men' are overseers, or elders, appointed by Jehovah and his Son, through holy spirit, to shepherd the sheep with tenderness." And, "Our heavenly Shepherds, Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, expect us to be obedient and submissive to the undershepherds whom they have placed in positions of responsibility within the congregation."*⁶⁹

*"...when we obey the elders, we show respect for Jehovah and Jesus, the two greatest Shepherds. (Luke 10:16) This is the main reason why we willingly obey the elders."*⁷⁰

*"A third way that all of us prove that we are friends of Christ is by cooperating with the direction provided by congregation elders. These men are appointed by holy spirit under Christ's direction. (Eph. 5:23) "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive," wrote the apostle Paul. (Heb. 13:17) At times, we may find it a challenge to obey the Bible-based direction given to us by the local elders. We are likely aware of their imperfections, and this may distort our view of their counsel. Still, Christ, the Head of the congregation, is pleased to use these imperfect men. Therefore, the way we react to their authority directly influences our friendship with Christ. When we overlook the faults of the elders and joyfully follow their direction, we prove our love for Christ."*⁷¹

*"Why do we obey the elders? Because we appreciate these "gifts in men" and we love Jehovah and Christ, the Head of the congregation."*⁷²

As congregation members are outright directed to be obedient to, and cooperative with, local elders, this can create difficulties in protecting children from pedophiles. For example, a man may use his position as an elder to "groom" a prospective victim, insisting that a child accompany him in their preaching work or come to his home under the pretense of studying the bible with him or her. Unsuspecting parents or even those warned about the molester's past behavior may accommodate his wishes, in order to be obedient to his authority, as instructed.

This position of authority in the congregation may also make it very difficult for victims to discuss their abuse or make their allegations heard. Note one victim's

⁶⁹ Watchtower, April 1, 2007

⁷⁰ Watchtower, November 15, 2013

⁷¹ Watchtower, October 15, 2009

⁷² Watchtower, June 15, 2014

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testimony during the Australian RC, regarding an elder who was sexually abusing her:

“I respected Bill because he was an elder. He was also [BCE]'s dad and head of the Neill household. But I had also come to fear him. Because of his position as an elder, I felt that I couldn't tell anyone about what he was doing to me. I felt that if I told someone, it would upset Bronwyn [the man's wife] and [BCE] as well as the members of the congregation.”⁷³

Respect for Elders

Because of this respected position in the congregation that elders hold, parents who have not received any type of notification as to a man's actions or accusations may actually encourage their children to participate in the preaching work alone with these men, visit their home for recreation or bible study, go on trips with elders and their families, and the like. They may view it as a “privilege” to associate or have their children associate with these men; note the wording of the personal experience related in the July 15, 2015, Watchtower study edition:

*“I served for 16 years in Rhode Island, where I made many friends. I still remember the excellent elders with whom I served. I am also thankful for the many traveling overseers who helped me. **It has been a privilege to serve Jehovah along with men who have kept their first love for Jehovah.** In 1987, we moved to North Carolina where the need was greater, and there we also made many good friends.”*
(Bold added for emphasis.)

⁷³ Transcript, Day 147, page 15159

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SECTION 10: A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE EFFECTS ON VICTIMS

Victims of child sex abuse will always experience different results of their abuse and information as to the effects on victims is plentiful; however, note that many studies suggest that victims of childhood sexual abuse are more likely to suffer from drug and alcohol dependency, eating disorders, major depression, panic disorder, conduct disorder, social anxiety, and attempted suicide.⁷⁴

The Australian RC

The following submissions were made by the Senior Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission regarding victim “BCB”:⁷⁵

- BCB told the Royal Commission about the long term effect that Bill Neill’s abuse has had on her. She said that the abuse changed who she was, destroyed her confidence, and held her back from living a normal life. BCB continued to feel as though she was Bill Neill’s victim well into her adult life.
- BCB told the Royal Commission that she had a nervous breakdown 10 years ago and has had a lot of therapy to address Bill Neill’s abuse. The Royal Commission heard that the abuse has impacted on BCB’s health such that she has required ongoing medical and therapeutic treatment. BCB gave evidence that her medical treatment has cost her money and that she would welcome compensation if it were to be offered to her by the Jehovah’s Witness organisation.
- BCB said that she felt brainwashed into believing that speaking with ‘worldly’ people would bring reproach upon Jehovah’s name. BCB said that, as a result of reporting her story to the Royal Commission, she is riddled with guilt for betraying the Jehovah’s Witness organisation and for ‘dragging Jehovah’s name through the mud’.

The following submissions were made by the Senior Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission regarding victim “BCG”:⁷⁶

- BCG told the Royal Commission that she experienced depression during her teens and that after she was sexually abused by her father her depression became worse. BCG attempted suicide as a result of her experience of the committee meetings with the elders in the Mareeba Congregation. BCG stated

⁷⁴ <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/long-term-effects-child-sexual-abuse/>

⁷⁵ SSCARC, pages 39-40

⁷⁶ SSCARC, page 59

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND CHILD SEX ABUSE

that, at the time, she couldn't bear the judgement and public vilification by those around her.

- BCG told the Royal Commission that she has at times feared being ostracised, shunned and vilified by those around her. She said that she has always lived in fear of her father, and that she had lived in fear of Jehovah.
- BCG told the Royal Commission that during the criminal proceedings against her father, she was terrified that Jehovah would kill her for having reported to the police and for bringing reproach upon his name.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND CHILD SEX ABUSE

SECTION 11: GENERAL INFORMATION REGARDING PEDOPHILES

Please note the following brief and general information about pedophiles that may add to the culpability of Jehovah's Witnesses and their policies regarding accusations of molestation and abuse.

Inability of Pedophiles to Change

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) has classified pedophilia as a “mental disorder,” and classifies it along with other sexual disorders, or those that involve non-human objects, non-consenting adults, and the like.⁷⁷

Harvard Medical School, in a paper titled, “Pessimism About Pedophilia,”⁷⁸ stated, “*When confronted about sexual abuse, convicted pedophiles often rationalize their actions, such as insisting that a victimized child acted seductively or enjoyed the encounter. These rationalizations may reflect an inability to empathize with the child, which could be part of a co-occurring antisocial or narcissistic personality disorder.*”

Also, “*Classified as a paraphilia, an abnormal sexual behavior, researchers have found no effective treatment. ... The goal of treatment, therefore, is to prevent someone from acting on pedophile urges — either by decreasing sexual arousal around children or increasing the ability to manage that arousal.*”

The paper also states, “*Outcomes are better when treatment combines psychotherapy and medication.*”

Abusewatch.net, in a special article titled, “A Profile of Pedophilia: Definition, Characteristics of Offenders, Recidivism, Treatment Outcomes, and Forensic Issues,”⁷⁹ stated, “*The fact that 70% to 85% of offenses against children are premeditated speaks against a lack of perpetrator control.*”

These findings highlight and stress that pedophiles are not likely to be able to “pray away” their actions or use simple willpower to change their behavior.

Finding Victims

⁷⁷ <http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/features/explaining-pedophilia>

⁷⁸ http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/pessimism-about-pedophilia

⁷⁹ <http://www.abusewatch.net/pedophiles.pdf>

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The Harvard paper above states (bold added for emphasis), “*Most pedophiles who act on their impulses do so by manipulating children and gradually desensitizing them to inappropriate behavior. Then they escalate it. Pedophiles are able to do this because **in most cases they already know the children or have access to them.** In about 60% to 70% of child sexual abuse cases involving pedophiles, the perpetrator is a relative, neighbor, family friend, teacher, coach, **clergyman**, or someone else in regular contact with the child. Strangers are less likely to sexually abuse children...*”⁸⁰

Abusewatch.net also states (bold added for emphasis), “*For nonparental incest and nonviolent incidences of pedophilia, the child knows the offender (eg, neighbor, relative, family friend, or **local individual with authority**) an estimated 60% to 70% of the time. Pedophiles often intentionally try to place themselves in a position where they can meet children and have the opportunity to interact with children in an unsupervised way, such as when babysitting, doing volunteer work, doing hobbies, or coaching sports. Pedophiles usually obtain access to children through means of persuasion, friendship, and behavior designed to gain the trust of the child and parent.*”⁸¹

This too stresses that **more** precautions should be considered in situations where pedophiles are in positions of authority, such as with molesters who may be members of clergy.

⁸⁰ http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/pessimism-about-pedophilia

⁸¹ www.abusewatch.net/pedophiles.pdf

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND CHILD SEX ABUSE

SUMMATION

In summary:

- The patriarchal arrangement of the religion and lack of empowerment for women, as well as not allowing women to be part of the investigative process when it comes to child sexual abuse, may make it easier for male members of the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses to prey on victims. It may also be more difficult for female victims in particular to discuss their abuse with congregation elders, as those investigating these claims internally within the religion will be an investigative panel of all men.
- The authority of elders and trust that congregants give to them can increase the likelihood that children are left alone with such men, unsupervised. This allows a pedophile to gain the trust of these children and their families, and gives them more opportunity to groom their victims.
- Jehovah's Witnesses insist on a child molestation victim producing a second witness to their abuse, or there being a second victim to this abuse, before they will take action against the accused. Despite this directive, they are known to destroy records of past abuses and accusations, making it difficult for this "second witness" or second victim to be established.
- Elders in the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses have no training as to investigating child sexual abuse accusations or in how to address such victims.
- The harsh practice of disfellowshipping and shunning any who disagree with policies of Jehovah's Witnesses, along with their socially secluded lifestyle and insistence that no one "bring reproach" on their religion, can make it difficult for victims to approach police, counselors, and other authority figures outside the religion regarding child molestation accusations.
- Jehovah's Witnesses consider pedophilia and child molestation a "sin" and believe that a person can be "sorry" for this sin and therefore avoid repeating their actions; this allows an accused or known molester to remain in the congregation and eventually qualify for positions of authority.
- Because of their belief that child molestation is a sin tantamount to adultery or other such behavior, Jehovah's Witnesses believe in protecting the privacy of such "sinners." This results in a lack of warning to parents in a congregation that a known child molester is in their ranks, with only a few slight exceptions.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND CHILD SEX ABUSE

As parents do not know of a person's past behavior, they may give ultimate trust to those in authority, thereby unknowingly risking their child's safety.

- Unless required by law, Jehovah's Witness elders typically do not report accusations of child molestation to police. Their instructions are to call a branch office or headquarters of their religion for direction before they call police, no matter any immediate danger to children.

End



**ROYAL COMMISSION INTO INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES
TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

AT SYDNEY

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Royal Commissions Act 1902

NEW SOUTH WALES

Royal Commissions Act 1923

QUEENSLAND

Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO

**THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND WATCHTOWER BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA
LTD**

CASE STUDY 29

SUBMISSIONS OF SENIOR COUNSEL ASSISTING THE ROYAL COMMISSION

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Introduction

About the public hearing

- 1 The 29th public hearing of the Royal Commission was held in Sydney from 27 July to 5 August 2015 and on 14 August 2015.
- 2 The scope and purpose of this public hearing was to inquire into:
 - a) The experience of survivors of child sexual abuse within the church of the Jehovah's Witnesses (the **Jehovah's Witness Church**) in Australia.
 - b) The responses of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and its corporation, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd (**Watchtower Australia**), to allegations, reports or complaints of child sexual abuse within the Church.
 - c) The systems, policies and procedures in place within the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and Watchtower Australia for raising and responding to allegations of or concerns about child sexual abuse within the Church.
 - d) The systems, policies and procedures in place in the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and Watchtower Australia to prevent child sexual abuse within the Church.
 - e) Any related matters.
- 3 During the public hearing, the Royal Commission heard evidence from two survivors, BCB and BCG, who were abused by those in positions of authority within the Jehovah's Witness organisation in the period between approximately 1982 and 1988.
- 4 The Royal Commission also heard evidence from:
 - a) eight congregational elders who were involved in handling the allegations of child sexual abuse reported by the survivors
 - b) three senior members of the Australia Branch Office of the Jehovah's Witness organisation
 - c) a member of the Governing Body of the Jehovah's Witnesses organisation
 - d) a consultant in the field of prevention and response to child sexual abuse by religious organisations engaged by Watchtower Australia, and
 - e) a former solicitor of the Queensland Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

What the case study considered

- 5 The case study explored in detail the experiences of two survivors of child sexual abuse and the Jehovah's Witness organisation's response to their complaints of sexual abuse whilst they were members of the organisation. Twelve institutional witnesses gave evidence about the organisation's response.
- 6 The case study also examined the systems, policies and procedures in place within the Jehovah's Witness organisation for responding to allegations of child sexual abuse, and

the mechanisms in place to prevent child sexual abuse within the Jehovah's Witness organisation.

- 7 The case study also considered the role of Watchtower Australia and the Governing Body in the organisation's response to allegations of abuse.

Part 1 Overview of the Jehovah's Witnesses

- 8 The Jehovah's Witness organisation was founded towards the end of the 19th century in Pennsylvania by a small group of Bible students led by Charles Taze Russell.¹ Russell had become disillusioned with mainstream Christianity, which he argued had strayed from the first century vision of Christianity described in the Bible.² In 1884, Taze's Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society was incorporated and carried on the business of publishing and disseminating millenarian literature – that is, literature based on the belief that the end of the world is imminent.³
- 9 Today, the religion has a worldwide presence of 8.2 million active members in 239 countries.⁴ Over the last 25 years, the active membership of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide has increased from four million members in 1990.⁵
- 10 The Jehovah's Witness organisation has been active in Australia since 1896, with a Branch Office first established in 1904 (the **Australia Branch Office**).⁶ The Australia Branch Office is based in Sydney and coordinates the activities of all congregations in Australia, New Zealand and 'various other islands'.⁷

1.1 Organisational structure

- 11 The primary legal entity used by the Jehovah's Witness organisation today is the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (**Watchtower Pennsylvania**).⁸ The headquarters of Watchtower Pennsylvania is in Brooklyn, New York and is also known as 'Bethel' meaning 'House of God'.⁹

The Governing Body

- 12 The activity of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide is overseen by the Governing Body.¹⁰ The Governing Body is a council of elders who consider themselves to be anointed by Jehovah God and who look to Jehovah and to Jesus Christ for direction in all matters.¹¹ It is based at the world headquarters of the Jehovah's Witness organisation in the United States and is at the apex of a highly centralised and hierarchical structure.¹²

¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WEB.0053.002.0001 at 0004 (Tab 102).

² Exhibit 29-0003, WEB.0053.002.0001 at 0007 (Tab 102).

³ Exhibit 29-0003, WEB.0053.002.0001 at 0005 (Tab 102).

⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.003.0001 at 0004 (Tab 132);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0004 (Tab 133).

⁵ Exhibit 29-0029, WAT.9999.012.0001.

⁶ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [6].

⁷ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [8];

Exhibit 29-0025, Second statement of Terrence O'Brien at STAT.0592.002.0001 at [9].

⁸ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [12].

⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0075 (Tab 109).

¹⁰ Exhibit 29-0025, Second statement of Terrence O'Brien at STAT.0592.002.0001 at [8].

¹¹ Exhibit 29-0028, EXH.029.028.0001_R at 0005_R;
Transcript of G W Jackson, T15938:10-18 (Day 155).

¹² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0007-13 (Tab 109).

- 13 The Royal Commission heard evidence from one of seven current members¹³ of the Governing Body, Geoffrey Jackson. Mr Jackson has been a member of the Governing Body since September 2005.¹⁴ He was appointed to the Governing Body because of his spiritual qualifications.¹⁵ The work of the Governing Body is undertaken by several committees on which serve a total of 30 ‘helpers’, and the work of each committee is overseen by the Governing Body itself.¹⁶ Each member of the Governing Body is assigned to one or more of those committees.¹⁷ Mr Jackson told the Royal Commission that he serves on three committees, namely the Teaching, Writing, and Personnel Committees.¹⁸
- 14 Mr Jackson told the Royal Commission that the Governing Body is ‘a spiritual group of men who are the guardians of our doctrine’ and is responsible for ‘giving direction and impetus to Kingdom Work’ in all matters.¹⁹ When asked if the Governing Body members saw themselves as disciples of Jesus, Mr Jackson did not answer in the affirmative but told the Royal Commission that the members of the Governing Body ‘hope to be [Jesus’s] disciples’.²⁰
- 15 Similarly, when asked if the Governing Body members saw themselves as ‘Jehovah God’s spokespeople on earth’, Mr Jackson did not answer, instead telling the Royal Commission that it ‘would seem to be quite presumptuous to say that we are the only spokesperson that God is using’.²¹ Mr Jackson’s professed humility is not, however, supported by the Jehovah’s Witness organisation’s own publications. The organisation’s handbook for members, *Organised to Do Jehovah’s Will*, teaches with reference to the ‘faithful and discreet slave’ (and thus, the Governing Body)²² for instance, that the congregation hopes to ‘draw ever closer to Jehovah by manifesting complete trust in the channel that He is using to direct His people today’.²³ A confidential manual produced by the Governing Body and entitled *Branch Organization January 2015* (the **2015 Branch Organization Manual**) records that the Governing Body ‘is organized to take the lead as Jehovah directs it by Holy Spirit’.²⁴ Thus the Governing Body is believed by Jehovah’s Witnesses to be the ‘channel’ by which Jehovah’s will is communicated to the ‘Christian’ congregation and the Governing Body is directed by Jehovah in all that it does. It was Mr O’Brien’s evidence that the Governing Body is Jehovah God’s representative on earth providing definitive Scriptural interpretation.²⁵

¹³ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15931:43-44 (Day 155).

¹⁴ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15931:18-20 (Day 155).

¹⁵ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15932:1-2 (Day 155).

¹⁶ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15932:34-T15933:7, T15933:20-27, T15977:9-11 (Day 155).

¹⁷ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15842:18-21 (Day 153).

¹⁸ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15931:37-39 (Day 155).

¹⁹ Exhibit 29-0028, EXH.029.028.0001_R at 0005_R;
Transcript of G W Jackson, T15933:32-45 (Day 155);
Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15818:23-41 (Day 153).

²⁰ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15937:29-33 (Day 155).

²¹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15937:35-38 (Day 155).

²² Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15822:15-18 (Day 153).

²³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0007 (Tab 109).

²⁴ Exhibit 29-0028, EXH.029.028.0001_R at 0005_R [1].

²⁵ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15817:17-127 (Day 153).

- 16 Mr Jackson said that the members of the Governing Body regard themselves as having been appointed by the Holy Spirit and as among the 144,000 anointed Jehovah's Witnesses who will go to heaven when they die.²⁶

Branch Offices

- 17 The pattern of organisation and operation of the Jehovah's Witness organisation today is said to adhere to that of first century Christian congregations.²⁷ The Governing Body provides 'unified theocratic direction to Branch and Country committee members worldwide' in the *2015 Branch Organization Manual*.²⁸
- 18 The Governing Body supervises more than 90 branches worldwide.²⁹ A Branch Office is the headquarters for the Jehovah's Witness organisation in a particular country or region and is also referred to as 'Bethel'.³⁰
- 19 Each Branch Office is supervised by a Branch Committee which oversees districts within the branch.³¹ The Australia Branch Office is represented around Australia by circuit overseers, who have pastoral responsibility for about 20 congregations (that is, a circuit).³² A circuit overseer travels weekly to different congregations in his circuit and is responsible for, among other things, ensuring that each congregation is complying with all theocratic direction given by the Governing Body.³³ Branch Committee members and circuit overseers are appointed by the Governing Body.³⁴
- 20 Congregations form the basic organisational unit of the Jehovah's Witness organisation.³⁵ Each congregation is overseen by a body of elders.³⁶ Each congregation in Australia is, in the legal sense, a voluntary association and a separately registered charity.³⁷

The Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia

- 21 There are currently 821 congregations in Australia with over 68,000 active members.³⁸ Over the past 25 years, the active membership of the organisation in Australia has grown

²⁶ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15937:1-5, 11-27 (Day 155).

²⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0008 (Tab 109).

²⁸ Exhibit 29-0028, EXH.029.028.0001_R at 0004_R.

²⁹ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [8].

³⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0012 (Tab 109).

³¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0012 (Tab 109).

³² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0009 (Tab 133).

³³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0009 (Tab 133);

Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [43].

³⁴ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15816:12-14, T15820:2-29 (Day 153);

Exhibit 29-0028, EXH.029.028.0001_R at 0005_R and 0011_R;

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0032 (Tab 109);

Transcript of V J Toole, T15756:21-35 (Day 153);

Transcript of G W Jackson, T15940:41-T15941:3 (Day 155).

³⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0010-0011 (Tab 109);

Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [6]-[8].

³⁶ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [9].

³⁷ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [23].

³⁸ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15844:11-21;

29% from approximately 53,000 members in 1990.³⁹ In the same period Australia's population growth has been approximately 38%.⁴⁰

- 22 The Australian Branch Office relevantly comprises the following structures:
- a) the Branch Committee, an ecclesiastical body of (currently) 12 full-time elders,⁴¹ which oversees and manages the operation of the Australia Branch Office⁴²
 - b) the Legal Department,⁴³ and
 - c) the Service Department and Desk, which care for all aspects of the spiritual activities of the Jehovah's Witness organisation.⁴⁴
- 23 The function of each of the above structures is relevant to the Royal Commission's examination of the Jehovah's Witness organisation's response to child sexual abuse in its ranks. The Royal Commission heard evidence from three institutional witnesses who serve in each of these structures.
- 24 Terrence O'Brien is the Coordinator of the Branch Committee and a director and Secretary of Watchtower Australia.⁴⁵ He has actively served with the Jehovah's Witness organisation for 40 years.⁴⁶
- 25 Rodney Spinks is the senior Service Desk elder who has served in the Service Department since January 2007.⁴⁷ He is specifically responsible for inquiries relating to child sexual abuse and for assisting congregation elders to implement the Australia Branch Office's guidelines for handling child abuse allegations and providing victim support.⁴⁸ The Service Desk currently comprises five Branch Office staff.⁴⁹
- 26 Vincent Toole is a solicitor who has, since 2010, overseen the operation of the Legal Department within the organisation's Australia Branch Office.⁵⁰ Mr Toole told the Royal Commission that he has been involved with the Legal Department since 1989.⁵¹

Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [6].

³⁹ Exhibit 29-0029, WAT.9999.012.0001.

⁴⁰ See Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing 6 August 1991: Australia in Profile* (1993) (population recorded as 17.28 million), and Australian Bureau of Statistics Population Clock at http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs%40.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/1647509ef7e25faac_a2568a900154b63?OpenDocument accessed on 22 September 2015 at 9.37pm, recording current Australian population as 23,905,342.

⁴¹ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15815:10-12, 40-42 (Day 153).

⁴² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0012 and 0037-0038 (Tab 109);

Exhibit 29-0025, Second statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.002.0001 at [9].

⁴³ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15656:37-40 (Day 152).

⁴⁴ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15657:25-27 (Day 153);

Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [52].

⁴⁵ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [3] and [45];

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0009.001.0001 at 0006 (Tab 134).

⁴⁶ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [41].

⁴⁷ Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [16] and [53].

⁴⁸ Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [20] and [53].

⁴⁹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15656:8-9 (Day 152).

⁵⁰ Exhibit 29-0023, Statement of Vincent Toole, STAT.0593.001.0001_R at [11].

⁵¹ Transcript of V J Toole, T15751:27-33 (Day 153).

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd

27 Watchtower Australia is the legal entity which facilitates the production and distribution of Bible-based literature for the organisation throughout Australasia.⁵² Watchtower Australia is a public company limited by guarantee and a registered charity.⁵³ For ease of reference and unless otherwise specified, a reference to the Branch Office or Australia Branch Office will include a reference to Watchtower Australia.

1.2 Congregational membership

Elders and ministerial servants

28 Within each congregation, the members comprise elders, ministerial servants and publishers.⁵⁴ Publishers are the ordinary congregation members. Only a male publisher can make spiritual advancement by first becoming a ministerial servant and then an elder.⁵⁵ Mr Jackson and Mr O'Brien each gave evidence that a woman can never be an elder in the Jehovah's Witness organisation.⁵⁶

29 Congregational responsibilities are split between elders and ministerial servants. Elders and ministerial servants are volunteer roles taken up by men who have been actively involved in the congregation for a period of time. The Jehovah's Witness organisation does not have a salaried clergy and therefore considers that it has no employees.⁵⁷ Appointments are based on Scriptural qualifications and there is prescriptive guidance as to how a ministerial servant and an elder should serve, act and behave at all times.⁵⁸ Mr Spinks and Mr O'Brien told the Royal Commission that elders must be experienced men who have displayed a pattern of integrity in their lives over a period of time as ministerial servants.⁵⁹

30 Each congregation is overseen by a body of elders.⁶⁰ Elders are appointed to shepherd the congregation and oversee spiritual matters.⁶¹ Their primary responsibilities include organising field work (or door-to-door preaching), running congregational disciplinary

⁵² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0011 (Tab 109);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0005 (Tab 133);
Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [21].

⁵³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0009.001.0001 (Tab 134);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0005 (Tab 133).

⁵⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0025 and 0028 (Tab 109).

⁵⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0069-0070 (Tab 109).

⁵⁶ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15951: 23-26 (Day 155).

Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15863:19-45 (Day 153).

⁵⁷ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [9].

⁵⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0013-0022 (Tab 109);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0033 [7] (Tab 120).

⁵⁹ Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [73];

Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [40].

⁶⁰ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [9].

⁶¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0018 and 0023 (Tab 109);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0007 [1] and 0008 [3] (Tab 120);

Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15847:13-18 (Day 153).

committees, leading the congregation services and Bible studies and attending to the pastoral care of the congregation.⁶² Upon appointment, each elder is given a copy of the *Shepherd the Flock* handbook which is designed to ‘supply vital information that will help them care for congregation matters’.⁶³

- 31 Ministerial servants predominantly provide administrative support and practical assistance to the elders and service to the congregation.⁶⁴ They care for organisational tasks such as acting as an attendant at congregation meetings, handling sound equipment, distributing literature, managing congregation accounts, and general maintenance at the Kingdom Hall (the place of worship for Jehovah’s Witnesses).⁶⁵
- 32 Mr Jackson confirmed that it is the belief of Jehovah’s Witnesses that elders and ministerial servants are appointed by the Holy Spirit.⁶⁶

Publishers

- 33 Members of the congregation are called ‘publishers’ and call each other ‘brother’ and ‘sister’.⁶⁷ Publishers may be baptised or unbaptised. Baptism is a symbol of the publisher’s dedication to Jehovah.⁶⁸ Un-baptised publishers are those who have not been baptised but have been given approval to join the congregation’s formal ministry and to identify themselves publically with the Jehovah’s Witness organisation.⁶⁹
- 34 When a publisher qualifies to share in the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ preaching work, just prior to baptism he or she is provided with a copy of the *Organized to do Jehovah’s Will* handbook.⁷⁰
- 35 Publishers who wish to devote many hours to field service preaching may be appointed as pioneers.⁷¹ Regular pioneers are exemplary congregation members who have volunteered to spend a certain amount of time in the public preaching activity each month.⁷² Special pioneers serve full-time in preaching work and are selected from experienced long-serving regular pioneers.⁷³

⁶² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0005 (Tab 133);
Exhibit 29-0016, Statement of Albert Ronald De Rooy, STAT.0597.001.0001_R at [1.3].

⁶³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0007 [2] (Tab 120).

⁶⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0042 (Tab 109);
Exhibit 29-0019, Statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [71].

⁶⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0041-0045 (Tab 109);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0005 (Tab 133);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0077 (Tab 109).

⁶⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0014, 0015, 0023, 0024, 0044 (Tab 109);
Transcript of D Ali, T15363:9-13 (Day 148);
Transcript of G W Jackson, T15936:42-T15937:5 (Day 155).

⁶⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0069 (Tab 109);
Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15844:23-31 (Day 153).

⁶⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0060 (Tab 109).

⁶⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0065 (Tab 109).

⁷⁰ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15843:34-36 (Day 153).

⁷¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0071-72 (Tab 109).

⁷² Exhibit 29-0019, Statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [66];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0072 (Tab 109).

⁷³ Exhibit 29-0019, Statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [69];

1.3 The practice of being a Jehovah's Witness

Publications

- 36 The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the teachings promulgated by the Governing Body are 'based on God's Word. So, what is taught is not from men but from Jehovah God. – Isa. 54:13. Matt. 24:14, 45-47'.⁷⁴ The teachings and direction of the Governing Body take the form of *Awake!* and *Watchtower* magazines, letters containing directives to branch offices and elders, handbooks, and other publications.⁷⁵
- 37 The Jehovah's Witness organisation told the Royal Commission that the *Awake!* and *Watchtower* magazines are the most widely distributed periodicals in the world.⁷⁶ The *Awake!* magazine is published by the Jehovah's Witness organisation for those with little knowledge of 'Christian teachings' to 'build faith in the Bible and ... understand that Jehovah's Witnesses are different from other religious groups'.⁷⁷ The *Watchtower* magazine is published as a public edition (for those who are unfamiliar with Jehovah's Witness concepts) and as a study edition (for Jehovah's Witnesses and those who attend meetings).⁷⁸

Scriptural literalism

- 38 The key imperative belief of the Jehovah's Witness organisation is that the Bible is the inspired word of God.⁷⁹ Jehovah's Witnesses interpret much of the Bible literally and take living in accordance with Bible principles extremely seriously.⁸⁰ The Bible is used by the Jehovah's Witnesses to set policy and religious practice⁸¹ and was described by Mr Jackson as the Jehovah's Witness organisation's 'constitution'.⁸²

Way of life

- 39 Being a Jehovah's Witness is a way of life for all members.⁸³ Devotees are expected to adhere to all doctrines established by the Governing Body through its interpretation of the Bible, the implementation of which is overseen by the Branch Committees and congregational elders.⁸⁴ Members of the Jehovah's Witness organisation are taught to

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0073 (Tab 109).

⁷⁴ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [13].

⁷⁵ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15816:34-42 (Day 153);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0004 (Tab 133);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 (Tab 109);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 (Tab 120).

⁷⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0004 (Tab 133).

⁷⁷ Exhibit 29-0028, EXH.029.028.0001_R at 0136_R [8].

⁷⁸ Exhibit 29-0028, EXH.029.028.0001_R at 0136_R [8].

⁷⁹ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15828:41-T15829:2 (Day 153);
Exhibit 29-0003, WEB.0053.002.0001 at 0007 (Tab 102).

⁸⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WEB.0053.002.0001 at 0007 and 0016 (Tab 102).

⁸¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0006 (Tab 133).

⁸² Transcript of G W Jackson, T15935:20-23 (Day 155).

⁸³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0097-0098 (Tab 109).

⁸⁴ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15933:32-45, T15939:20-26 (Day 155);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0075 and 0107 (Tab 109);
Transcript of V J Toole, T15754:11-15 (Day 153).

be obedient and submissive to those in the organisation in positions of authority, including elders.⁸⁵ Members of the Jehovah's Witness organisation are expected to adhere to a strict code of moral conduct based on the Scriptures and enforced by a highly formalised disciplinary process for dealing with wrongdoing.⁸⁶

Separateness from the world

- 40 The Jehovah's Witness organisation teaches that 'it was of great importance to Jesus that his followers keep separate from the world' and offers guidance as to how its members might themselves go about keeping separate from the world.⁸⁷ The organisation encourages its members to exercise caution when associating with those who are not members.⁸⁸ Non-Jehovah's Witnesses are referred to within the organisation as 'worldly' people and those who are 'not in the Truth'.⁸⁹
- 41 The Jehovah's Witness organisation acknowledges that its members can benefit from a basic secular primary and high school education.⁹⁰ However the organisation counsels against pursuit of further education, the involvement of children in extra-curricular activities and attendance in sex education classes.⁹¹ Documents in evidence show that Jehovah's Witness parents are encouraged by the organisation to school their own children in matters of sex education, because the alternative of school-based sex education is considered likely to result in immorality.⁹²
- 42 Mr Spinks and Mr Toole told the Royal Commission that members of the Jehovah's Witnesses organisation are instructed to subject themselves to secular laws and government to the extent that such subjection does not conflict with Biblical law.⁹³ The *Organized to do Jehovah's Will* handbook explains that this is because secular authorities have been 'placed in their relative positions by God'.⁹⁴ However, the same handbook considers 'circumstances under which a Christian would refuse to obey worldly rulers' and counsels that '[w]e must obey God as ruler rather than men. – Acts 5:29'.⁹⁵ Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that 'Jehovah's Witnesses will always obey Scripture ... [specifically Acts 5:29] ... where there is a clear Bible principle that' conflicts with secular law.⁹⁶

⁸⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0024 and 0039 (Tab 109).

⁸⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0084-0091 (Tab 109);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0059-0081 (Tab 120).

⁸⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WEB.0053.001.0001 at 0007 (Tab 127).

⁸⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0082 (Tab 109).

⁸⁹ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [19].

⁹⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0081 (Tab 109).

⁹¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0081 (Tab 109);
Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [15];
Transcript of BCB, T15171:4-6, 20-26 (Day 141).

⁹² Exhibit 29-0003: WAT.0001.004.0225 (Tab 75);
WAT.0001.004.0223 (Tab 76).

⁹³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0099 (Tab 109);
Transcript of V J Toole, T15767:38-T15768:9 (Day 153);
Transcript of R P Spinks, T15700:25-37 (Day 152).

⁹⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0099 (Tab 109).

⁹⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0105 (Tab 109).

⁹⁶ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15700:25-37 (Day 152).

- 43 Further, relatively recent publications such as *Keep Yourself in God's Love* counsel that, as Paul says in Ephesians 6:12, '[w]e have a struggle ... not against blood and flesh, but against the governments, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places'.⁹⁷ Moreover, the same publication states that Paul's use of the words 'governments' and 'authorities' suggests that 'attacks from the spirit realm are highly organized and deliberate'.⁹⁸
- 44 In the light of such doctrinal teachings, it is submitted that the message published to members of the Jehovah's Witness organisation about their relationship with secular authorities is not as simple as that described by Messrs Toole and Spinks. It is submitted that, in fact, the organisation presents its members with conflicting and ambiguous teachings regarding their relationship with secular authorities, thereby fostering a distrust of such authorities.

Millenarianism

- 45 Mr O'Brien told the Royal Commission that the Jehovah's Witnesses have a doctrinal understanding of Bible prophecies regarding the 'conclusion of the system of things', which is also referred to as 'the last days'.⁹⁹ He said that 'the Bible foretells the end of the present system of things',¹⁰⁰ meaning the 'end of the world'.¹⁰¹
- 46 The Jehovah's Witnesses are taught that the end of the world is something to look forward to and that 'God will "cut off" the wicked so that good people can truly enjoy life on earth'.¹⁰² A June 1982 edition of *Awake!* magazine, for instance, tells readers that the only way to finally end child abuse is to 'embrace God's Kingdom under Christ' and to 'love God with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself' so as to be saved when the end comes.¹⁰³
- 47 The Jehovah's Witnesses recognise that they 'have had wrong expectations about when the end would come'¹⁰⁴ following 'failed prophecies of 1914, 1918, 1925 and, most significantly, 1975'.¹⁰⁵ However, the Jehovah's Witnesses are counselled that 'even more important than focusing on when the end will come, [they] must be confident that it will come, and ... act accordingly'.¹⁰⁶ Mr Geoffrey Jackson told the Royal Commission that the world's end is now imminent as the 'Jehovah's Witnesses believe these are the last days'.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WEB.0053.001.0001 at 0016 (Tab 127).

⁹⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WEB.0053.001.0001 at 0017 (Tab 127).

⁹⁹ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [33] and [35].

¹⁰⁰ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [34].

¹⁰¹ Exhibit 29-0024, Annexure 2, STAT.0592.001.0024 at 0032.

¹⁰² Exhibit 29-0024, Annexure 2, STAT.0592.001.0024 at 0032.

¹⁰³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0223 (Tab 76).

¹⁰⁴ Exhibit 29-0024, Annexure 2, STAT.0592.001.0024 at 0033.

¹⁰⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WEB.0053.002.0001 at 0005-0006 and 0008.

¹⁰⁶ Exhibit 29-0024, Annexure 2, STAT.0592.001.0024 at 0034.

¹⁰⁷ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15937:41-44 (Day 155).

Evangelism

- 48 Members of the Jehovah's Witness organisation evangelize to glorify God and are instructed to go and make disciples of all people.¹⁰⁸ Jehovah's Witnesses view evangelizing as a personal responsibility and the extent to which they engage in this activity is a personal decision that they make as an expression of their love for God.¹⁰⁹ Documents in evidence show that the Jehovah's Witness organisation expects that each member places his or her evangelising obligations above secular employment.¹¹⁰
- 49 Jehovah's Witnesses worship and praise Jehovah by attending organised meetings, Bible study, Theocratic Ministry Schools and field service.¹¹¹ Jehovah's Witness meetings are generally held in the Kingdom Hall.¹¹² A study edition of *The Watchtower* magazine containing four to five articles is published by the Governing Body each month for study by the congregations over the course of that month.¹¹³

Male headship

- 50 Documents in evidence show that the Jehovah's Witness organisation teaches that being in subjection to God is essential and that it is important to observe the headship principle.¹¹⁴ Mr O'Brien explained that the headship principle accepted by Jehovah's Witnesses is that 'the head of every man is the Christ, in turn the head of a woman is the man'.¹¹⁵ Mr O'Brien's evidence revealed that this belief is reflected in the patriarchal structure of the organisation, where men hold positions of authority within congregations and headship in the family.¹¹⁶ Women are expected to defer to the authority of their husbands and children are taught to obey their parents.¹¹⁷

Available findings on the Jehovah's Witnesses relationship with secular authorities

- F1 The Jehovah's Witness organisation presents its members with conflicting and ambiguous teachings regarding their relationship with secular authorities, thereby fostering a distrust of such authorities.

¹⁰⁸ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [30].

¹⁰⁹ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [31].

¹¹⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0082 (Tab 109).

¹¹¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0045-0058 (Tab 109).

¹¹² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0077 (Tab 109).

¹¹³ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15843:15-25 (Day 153);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0047-0048, 0051 (Tab 109).

¹¹⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0096 (Tab 109).

¹¹⁵ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [38];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0096 (Tab 109).

¹¹⁶ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [37];
Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15863:19-28 (Day 153).

¹¹⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0099 (Tab 109).

Part 2 Historical child sexual abuse data

- 51 In investigating the response of the Jehovah's Witness organisation to child sexual abuse, the Royal Commission sought from Watchtower Australia all documents evidencing or relating to allegations or complaints of child sexual abuse involving members of the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia.¹¹⁸
- 52 In response to the Royal Commission's summons to produce, Watchtower Australia produced some 5,000 documents comprising, among other things, files relating to some 1,000 alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse dating back to 1950. Royal Commission staff analysed those files and produced the following data which was for the most part uncontested by the organisation.¹¹⁹

2.1 Data extracted from Watchtower Australia files

- 53 Since 1950, Watchtower Australia has recorded allegations, reports or complaints of child sexual abuse against 1,006 members of the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia.¹²⁰
- 54 Those recorded allegations, reports or complaints relate to at least 1,800 alleged victims of child sexual abuse.¹²¹
- 55 The files record that 579 of those against whom allegations were made confessed to having committed child sexual abuse.¹²²
- 56 Of the 1,006 members against whom allegations of child sexual abuse were made, 108 were elders or ministerial servants at the time of the first instance of alleged abuse.¹²³ The files do not reveal how many of the alleged perpetrators were elders or ministerial servants at the time of any subsequent instances of alleged child sexual abuse. The files record that 28 alleged perpetrators were appointed as elders or ministerial servants after having been the subject of an allegation of child sexual abuse.¹²⁴
- 57 Finally, the files record that 401 alleged perpetrators were disfellowshipped in relation to an allegation of child sexual abuse,¹²⁵ and that 230 of those alleged perpetrators were

¹¹⁸ Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.999.013.0001_R.

¹¹⁹ Exhibit 29-0031, WAT.0021.001.0001;
Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.9999.013.0005_R.

¹²⁰ Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.9999.013.0012 at [1].

¹²¹ Exhibit 29-0031, WAT.0021.001.0001;
Exhibit 29-0031, WAT.0021.001.0001 – the figure in the table at the bottom of the column entitled 'Total number of alleged victims' does not take into account cells where the number of victims was recorded as '10+'.

¹²² Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.9999.013.0012 at [8].

¹²³ Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.9999.013.0012 at [6].

¹²⁴ Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.9999.013.0012 at [16].

¹²⁵ Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.9999.013.0012 at [12].

subsequently reinstated.¹²⁶ Of those disfellowshipped, 78 were disfellowshipped on more than one occasion in relation to an allegation of child sexual abuse.¹²⁷

Oral evidence on the number of recorded alleged perpetrators

- 58 Mr Spinks pointed out that while he did not wish to diminish the significance of the number of alleged perpetrators identified in the case files, 199 of the 1,006 alleged perpetrators were not Jehovah's Witnesses at the time of the first reported allegation.¹²⁸ He however accepted that it 'was probably true' that the 199 alleged perpetrators identified in the case files went on to become Jehovah's Witnesses, and that in many cases they were the subject of subsequent allegations of child sexual abuse while they were Jehovah's Witnesses.¹²⁹
- 59 Mr Toole told the Royal Commission that for approximately the last two years he has been responsible for receiving telephone calls from congregational elders about allegations of child sexual abuse on behalf of the Legal Department.¹³⁰ He estimated that, over that period, he had received and continues to receive 'three, sometimes four' calls each month.¹³¹
- 60 Mr Toole's evidence as to frequency of calls regarding child sexual abuse is consistent with the number and frequency of allegations of child sexual abuse that is evidenced in the files produced to the Royal Commission.

2.2 Data on reporting to police

- 61 The analysis conducted by Royal Commission staff showed that of the 1,006 alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse identified by the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia, not one was reported to police or other secular authority by the Jehovah's Witness organisation (including by elders within the organisation).¹³² With reference to the files, no instance was identified by the Jehovah's Witness organisation of an allegation having been reported by the organisation to the police or other authorities.¹³³
- 62 It was put to Mr Toole that there is no record in the case files of an elder having ever reported an allegation of child sexual abuse to the police or secular authorities.¹³⁴ Mr Toole accepted that 'if that is the way the files read, I assume that must be correct'.¹³⁵
- 63 The analysis demonstrated that 161 of the alleged perpetrators recorded in the files had nevertheless been convicted of a child sexual abuse offence,¹³⁶ indicating that in spite

¹²⁶ Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.9999.013.0012 at [14].

¹²⁷ Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.9999.013.0012 at [13].

¹²⁸ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15663:39-44 (Day 152).

¹²⁹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15718:43-T15719:9 (Day 152).

¹³⁰ Transcript of V J Toole, T15760:18-30 (Day 153).

¹³¹ Transcript of V J Toole, T15760:18-30 (Day 153).

¹³² Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.9999.013.0012 at [20].

¹³³ Transcript of V J Toole, T15777:24-T15778:22 (Day 153).

¹³⁴ Transcript of V J Toole, T15777:42-44 (Day 153).

¹³⁵ Transcript of V J Toole, T15777:42-T15778:3 (Day 153).

¹³⁶ Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.9999.013.0012 at [19].

of it not having been reported by the organisation, the alleged perpetrator had still come to the attention of police.

- 64 In a letter dated 20 July 2015, Watchtower Australia advised the Royal Commission that it had conducted a search of key words in the case files (such as ‘police’, ‘child services’, ‘authorities’, ‘charge’, ‘court’, ‘welfare’).¹³⁷ According to the results of its search, Watchtower Australia contended that ‘383 alleged perpetrators had been dealt with by either police or secular authorities in the respective States or Territories in which they reside’.¹³⁸ This figure was reiterated by Mr Spinks in oral evidence.¹³⁹
- 65 Mr Toole accepted in examination that the conclusion asserted in the letter of 20 July 2015 was questionable because the search methodology may have yielded results even in cases where there was, for example, an instruction not to involve secular authorities.¹⁴⁰

Available findings on historical child sexual abuse data

- F2 Since 1950, the Jehovah’s Witness organisation in Australia has received allegations of child sexual abuse against 1,006 of its members relating to at least 1,800 victims, and has in that period not reported a single allegation to the police or other authorities, even though 579 of those against whom allegations were made confessed to having committed child sexual abuse.
- F3 The Jehovah’s Witness organisation in Australia receives approximately three to four reports of allegations of child sexual abuse each month.

¹³⁷ Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.0018.001.0001_R at [10].

¹³⁸ Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.0018.001.0001_R at [10].

¹³⁹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15717:4-T15718:3 (Day 152).

¹⁴⁰ Transcript of V J Toole, T15777:6-22 (Day 153).

Part 3 Historical policies and procedures

- 66 The Royal Commission heard evidence from two survivors of child sexual abuse, BCB and BCG, whose complaints of abuse were first handled by the Jehovah's Witness organisation in or around 1992 and 1989 respectively.
- 67 This Part of these submissions provides an overview of the systems, policies and procedures in place within the Jehovah's Witness organisation for responding to complaints of child sexual abuse at the time that BCB and BCG first raised their abuse with the organisation, and in the years following. The policies and procedures governing the organisation's ongoing response to the management of BCG's abuser from 2010, and to BCB's second disclosure to the organisation in 2012, are dealt with in Parts 7 and 8 of these submissions.
- 68 Broadly speaking, allegations of child sexual abuse were handled in the relevant periods in the same way as any sin was handled according to a system requiring reporting of serious wrongdoing to congregational elders. The elders would then investigate with a view to determining the veracity of an allegation. If an allegation was proved in accordance with Scriptural standards, then the elders would form a judicial committee to determine the degree of repentance of the accused and the appropriate sanction.

3.1 Key documents recording systems, policies and procedures in 1989 and 1992

- 69 In 1989 and 1992, the Jehovah's Witness elders handling BCG's and BCB's complaints of child sexual abuse was required to be governed by the policies and procedures set out in the *Pay Attention to Yourselves and All the Flock* elders' handbooks of 1981 and 1991 respectively (hereinafter, ***Pay Attention 1981*** and ***Pay Attention 1991***).¹⁴¹ Those elders' handbooks were from time to time supplemented by letters from the Branch Office containing direction on the application of Scriptural principles and procedures,¹⁴² and by other Jehovah's Witness organisation publications including the *Awake!* and *Watchtower* magazines.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001;
Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of Albert Ronald De Rooy, STAT.0597.001.0001_R at [3.2];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 (Tab 80);

Exhibit 29-0002, Statement of Max Horley, STAT.0601.001.0001_R at [2.1].
¹⁴² Exhibit 29-0004, Statement of Doug Jackson, STAT.0600.001.0001_R at [3.1];
Exhibit 29-0002, Statement of Max Horley, STAT.0601.001.0001_R at [3.1];
Exhibit 29-0004, Statement of Doug Jackson, STAT.0600.001.0001_R at [3.2];
Exhibit 29-0005, Statement of Joseph Bello, STAT.0594.001.0001_R at [3.2];
Exhibit 29-0007, Statement of Dino Ali, STAT.0598.001.0001_R at [3.2];
Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of Albert Ronald De Rooy, STAT.0597.001.0001_R at [3.4];
Exhibit 29-0010, Statement of Kevin Bowditch, STAT.0602.001.0001_R at [3.3].

¹⁴³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0033 (Tab 80).

70 In 1989 and 1992, general information as to reporting and disciplinary procedures was available to ordinary publishers like BCG and BCB in the form of the *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry* (published in 1983).¹⁴⁴

3.2 Reporting child sexual abuse

Reporting within the Jehovah's Witness organisation

71 In 1989 and 1992, ordinary publishers within the Jehovah's Witness organisation were encouraged to report serious sins such as fornication, adultery and homosexuality to the elders.¹⁴⁵ Once a sin was reported to elders, publishers were advised that they could 'leave the problem in the hands of the responsible members of the congregation and trust in Jehovah that it will be resolved'.¹⁴⁶

72 From 1991, elders were instructed that a person with knowledge of 'wrongdoing' had an obligation to report that wrongdoing in order to keep the congregation clean.¹⁴⁷

73 Elders themselves were obliged, from 1991, to report their own 'gross wrong[s]' to the body of elders as they would no longer be qualified to continue in their 'appointed' role.¹⁴⁸

74 From at least 1991, the types of sin that a person might report to elders as child sexual abuse included one or a combination of the following:¹⁴⁹

- a) 'Uncleanness includes an intentional momentary touching of sexual parts or caressing of breasts. (1 Thess. 4:7, 8; 1 Tim. 5:1,2)'
- b) 'Loose conduct is a shocking, flagrant disregard for Jehovah's moral standards. (Gal. 5:19; w83 3/15 p. 31; w739/15 pp. 574-6)', and
- c) 'Por-nei'a involves immoral use of the genitals of at least one human (whether in a natural or a perverted way) ...' and includes the 'sexual abuse of children'.

75 With respect to 'porneia', *Pay Attention 1991* instructed elders to 'do what they reasonably can to protect children from further abuse; follow the Society's directives on such matters'.¹⁵⁰

76 On the evidence before the Royal Commission, it was not until at least 1992 that elders were given an explicit directive to immediately contact the Branch Office for advice if they received a report or allegation of child sexual abuse.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁴ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15843:27-39 (Day 153);

Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0004.

¹⁴⁵ Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0100.

¹⁴⁶ Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0101.

¹⁴⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0028-0029 (Tab 80).

¹⁴⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0029 (Tab 80).

¹⁴⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0024-0026, 0028 (Tab 80).

¹⁵⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0025 (Tab 80).

¹⁵¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0001 at 0003 (Tab 81).

Reporting to authorities

- 77 In 1989 and 1992, elders were under no specific direction to either report child sexual abuse to authorities themselves or to encourage the survivor of the alleged abuse to report to authorities. Instead, *Pay Attention 1981* advised elders that ‘the law on ecclesiastical privilege in many countries does not require elders to report the offender or the offense to secular authorities’.¹⁵² *Pay Attention 1991* suggested that the elders encourage the accused to report himself to authorities.¹⁵³
- 78 *Pay Attention 1991* otherwise discouraged Jehovah’s Witnesses from taking fellow Christians to secular courts to settle personal disputes and counselled that such disputes should be settled with the help of the congregation elders.¹⁵⁴ Failure to observe this injunction could result in restriction of congregational privileges.¹⁵⁵

Investigation and establishment of a judicial committee

- 79 In both 1989 and 1992, reports or allegations of serious wrongdoing were to be investigated by elders in order to determine if there was substance to a given report or allegation and if there was therefore a need to form a judicial committee.¹⁵⁶
- 80 Elders were instructed that an accusation had substance if it was an ‘offense serious enough to result in disfellowshipping’,¹⁵⁷ and if there are ‘either two witnesses or a confession of wrongdoing’.¹⁵⁸ *Pay Attention 1981* also specifically instructed that testimony from ‘another witness to the same type of sin on the part of the accused person ... would be basis to convoke a judicial committee’ (sic).¹⁵⁹
- 81 If there was insufficient evidence to form a judicial committee but ‘serious questions’ were raised then, from 1991, two elders might have investigated the matter further in any event.¹⁶⁰ In the case of reports of ‘gross’ or ‘serious’ sins that might ‘contaminate’ the congregation or that have brought the congregation into disrepute, a body of elders was directed to investigate and, if necessary, establish a judicial committee to handle the matter.¹⁶¹ *Pay Attention 1991* does not, however, specifically define what constitutes a ‘gross’ or ‘serious’ sin.
- 82 More minor transgressions such as ‘minor uncleanness’ could be handled ‘at the discretion of an elder or two’ and did not require the formation of a judicial

¹⁵² Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0019.

¹⁵³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0062-0063 (Tab 80).

¹⁵⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0064 (Tab 80).

¹⁵⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0064 (Tab 80).

¹⁵⁶ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0032;
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0041 (Tab 80).

¹⁵⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0041 (Tab 80).

¹⁵⁸ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0035;
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0041 (Tab 80).

¹⁵⁹ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0035.

¹⁶⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0029 and 0041 (Tab 80).

¹⁶¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0029 (Tab 80).

committee.¹⁶² The *Pay Attention 1991* handbook did not offer specific guidance as to what might constitute ‘minor uncleanness’.

- 83 Ultimately though, if an accused person denied wrongdoing and there was only one witness to the alleged wrongdoing, then a judicial committee would not be formed and the matter would be left in Jehovah’s hands.¹⁶³

Investigating elders and judicial committee members

- 84 The role of an elder in handling an allegation of wrongdoing was described in *Pay Attention 1981* and *1991* as being to act as a judge and ‘readjust’, ‘reprove’ those who are repentant, or ‘remove unrepentant wrongdoers’ from the congregation.¹⁶⁴

- 85 *Pay Attention 1991* directed elders to be impartial at all times.¹⁶⁵ Accordingly, ‘[a]n elder who ... has had a special friendship with [the accused] should not normally serve on the [judicial] committee ...’.¹⁶⁶

Judicial committee

- 86 *Pay Attention 1991* provided that evidence and testimony of witnesses were to be considered by a judicial committee prior to any decision about the action necessary in respect of the accused person.¹⁶⁷ That handbook further provided that no action should be taken by a ‘committee’ against an accused person ‘unless the evidence clearly proves this necessary’.¹⁶⁸

- 87 *Pay Attention 1991* then set out the types of evidence that would be acceptable in clearly proving that action in respect of the accused was necessary:¹⁶⁹

- a) ‘the testimony of two or three eyewitnesses ...; no action could be taken if there was only one witness (Deut.19-15; John 8:17)’ (the **two-witness rule**)
- b) a confession from the accused, ‘which may be accepted as conclusive proof without other corroborating evidence. (Josh. 7:19)’
- c) strong circumstantial evidence ‘such as pregnancy or evidence (testified to by at least two witnesses) that the accused stayed all night in the same house with a person of the opposite sex ... under improper circumstances’, and
- d) the testimony of two or three witnesses to the same kind of wrongdoing but each is a witness to a separate incident.

¹⁶² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0025 (Tab 80).

¹⁶³ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0035;
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0050 (Tab 80).

¹⁶⁴ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0032;
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0024 (Tab 80).

¹⁶⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0039 (Tab 80).

¹⁶⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0067-0068 (Tab 80).

¹⁶⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0042-0043 (Tab 80).

¹⁶⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0043 (Tab 80).

¹⁶⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0043 (Tab 80).

- 88 From 1981, elders were directed that the judicial committee was to probe in an effort to establish facts, ascertain the attitude of the accused, and determine if there was evidence to establish serious wrongdoing.¹⁷⁰ From 1991, however, elders were instructed to avoid ‘probing questions [that] go into needless details, especially in regard to sexual misconduct, unless this [was] absolutely necessary, such as in determining whether ‘por-neia’ had been committed’.¹⁷¹
- 89 From at least 1981, in the absence of a confession by the accused, the accuser was required, even in cases of sexual abuse, to make her allegation before her abuser during either or both of the investigation and judicial committee stages of the process.¹⁷² Both *Pay Attention 1981* and *Pay Attention 1991* instructed elders that the rationale for this was that an accuser should be willing to assume responsibility ‘as was the case in Israel’.¹⁷³
- 90 From at least 1981, elders were instructed to invite the accused person to make a statement at the commencement of a judicial committee hearing. From 1991, elders were also directed to treat the accused kindly, making sure that he was put at ease.¹⁷⁴ *Pay Attention 1991* directed all elders on a judicial committee to weigh carefully both the interests of the accused and those of the congregation as a whole.¹⁷⁵
- 91 From 1991, provision was also made for the accused to bring witnesses who could speak in his defence.¹⁷⁶ No equivalent entitlement was prescribed in respect of the complainant.
- 92 Although not explicitly stated in either *Pay Attention 1981* or *1991*, it would appear that in 1989 and 1992 elders handling a complaint of child sexual abuse were required by the Jehovah’s Witness organisation to assess the evidence of the complaint before them according to the Scriptures at both investigative and judicial committee stages of the process.

Assessment of repentance

- 93 When elders had determined that there was sufficient evidence to establish the truth of an allegation, *Pay Attention 1991* and *1981* directed them to assess whether the wrongdoer was repentant in order to determine the appropriate judicial sanction.¹⁷⁷
- 94 *Pay Attention 1991* instructed elders that a judicial committee’s primary consideration in determining the appropriate sanction is the ‘the individual’s sincere repentance or

¹⁷⁰ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0033-0034.

¹⁷¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0043-0044 (Tab 80).

¹⁷² Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0035;
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0050-0051 (Tab 80).

¹⁷³ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0035;
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0050-0051 (Tab 80).

¹⁷⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0044 (Tab 80).

¹⁷⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0048 (Tab 80).

¹⁷⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0042 (Tab 80).

¹⁷⁷ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0033-34.

the lack of it'.¹⁷⁸ Among other things, whether the individual had apologised to the person offended by his conduct (in the case of child sexual abuse, the victim) was a relevant consideration in the assessment of repentance.¹⁷⁹ Elders were instructed that '[n]either the gravity of the wrong nor bad publicity finally determines whether the person should be disfellowshipped'.¹⁸⁰

3.3 Outcomes and sanctions

Deletion of elders

95 *Pay Attention 1991* directed that a wrongdoer who was an elder, ministerial servant or a pioneer would not qualify to continue in his appointed position of service and should be removed.¹⁸¹ This is because elders, ministerial servants and pioneers were required to be irreprehensible and serve with a clean conscience.¹⁸² It also instructed that an elder or a ministerial servant who committed a 'gross wrong' was morally obligated to inform the body of elders of his being reprehensible.¹⁸³

Disfellowshipping and reproof

96 Depending upon the degree of repentance of a person found by investigating elders to be guilty of child sexual abuse, that person would either be disfellowshipped or reproofed.

97 From at least 1981, elders were directed to expel unrepentant wrongdoers who were guilty of 'gross, serious' sins from the congregation, thus denying them fellowship with Jehovah's clean congregation.¹⁸⁴ Disfellowshipping action served to protect other members of the congregation from the bad influence of the wrongdoer, safeguard the purity of the congregation and uphold Jehovah's good name.¹⁸⁵

98 From at least 1981, elders were directed that a truly repentant wrongdoer should be reproofed rather than disfellowshipped.¹⁸⁶ Administering reproof, either privately or before onlookers concerned in the case, served to discipline the wrongdoer and instil a wholesome fear in the onlookers.¹⁸⁷

99 In 1983, *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry* advised publishers that the judicial committee would inform the wrongdoer of the decision to disfellowship him from the

¹⁷⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0045 (Tab 80).

¹⁷⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0046-47 (Tab 80).

¹⁸⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0045 (Tab 80).

¹⁸¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0029-0030 and 0056 (Tab 80).

¹⁸² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0029-0030 (Tab 80).

¹⁸³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0029-0030 (Tab 80).

¹⁸⁴ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0050;
Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0102-0104.

¹⁸⁵ Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0103-0104;
Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0048-0050.

¹⁸⁶ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0048;
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0052 (Tab 80).

¹⁸⁷ Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0103.

congregation and would clearly state the Scriptural reason(s) for the disfellowshipping action.¹⁸⁸ A direction to this effect was included in *Pay Attention 1991*.¹⁸⁹

- 100 Following a decision to disfellowship or to publicly reprove, a brief announcement would be made to the congregation stating only that the person had been disfellowshipped¹⁹⁰ or reprovved,¹⁹¹ but not the reason for the sanction. This announcement served to alert faithful members of the congregation to stop associating with the disfellowshipped person.¹⁹²
- 101 Members of the congregation were counselled against having contact and spiritual association with disfellowshipped persons¹⁹³ and told that it was necessary to shun disfellowshipped persons in order to have a good relationship with Jehovah.¹⁹⁴
- 102 Both *Pay Attention 1981* and *Pay Attention 1991* provided that if a disfellowshipped person believed that a serious error in judgment was made, he was allowed seven days to appeal the committee's decision by writing a letter to the body of elders of the congregation which took the disfellowshipping action clearly stating his reasons for the appeal.¹⁹⁵
- 103 An appeal committee would hear the original evidence and any new evidence relevant to the case.¹⁹⁶

3.4 Reinstatement as a Jehovah's Witness

- 104 *Pay Attention 1981* and *Pay Attention 1991* provided that a disfellowshipped person could be reinstated in the congregation when he gave clear evidence of repentance, demonstrating that he has abandoned his sinful course of conduct and was desirous of having a good relationship with Jehovah.¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁸ Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0104.

¹⁸⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0053 (Tab 80).

¹⁹⁰ Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0105.

¹⁹¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0055 (Tab 80);

Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0050.

¹⁹² Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0105.

¹⁹³ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0042-0043;

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0035 (Tab 80);

Exhibit 29-0007, Statement of Dino Ali, STAT.0598.001.0001_R at [2.3];

Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of Albert Ronald De Rooy, STAT.0597.001.0001_R at [2.3];

Exhibit 29-0010, Statement of Kevin Bowditch, STAT.0602.001.0001_R at [2.5].

¹⁹⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0035 (Tab 80).

¹⁹⁵ Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0104;

Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0051-0053.

¹⁹⁶ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0051-0053.

¹⁹⁷ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0037;

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0060 (Tab 80);

Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0106.

- 105 Elders were directed not to be hasty in reinstating individuals, being careful to allow sufficient time, perhaps many months, a year or even longer, for the disfellowshipped person to prove genuine repentance.¹⁹⁸
- 106 Generally, the decision to reinstate was made by a judicial committee of the congregation that took the disfellowshipping action.¹⁹⁹ If the disfellowshipped person moved congregations, the reinstatement plea could be heard by the new local judicial committee.²⁰⁰ Thereafter, that local committee would give the body of elders of the original congregation that disfellowshipped the individual its recommendation.²⁰¹

3.5 Support offered for survivors of child sexual abuse

- 107 *Pay Attention 1991* directed elders to treat victims of sexual abuse with extreme thoughtfulness and kindness and to do what they reasonably could to protect children from further abuse.²⁰²
- 108 In 1992, the Branch Office directed elders to '[h]elp [victims] see that their worth as individuals is not diminished by the shameful way they were treated. The important thing is how Jehovah views them'.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0106;
Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0037.

¹⁹⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0060 (Tab 80);
Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0053-0054;
Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0106.

²⁰⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0060 (Tab 80);
Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0106.

²⁰¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0060 (Tab 80);
Exhibit 29-0032, WAT.0020.001.0001 at 0106.

²⁰² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0025 (Tab 80);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0205 at 0210 (Tab 78);
Exhibit 29-0019, Statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [33];
Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [51].

²⁰³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0001 (Tab 81).

Part 4 BCB

- 109 BCB grew up on a farm in Western Australia.²⁰⁴ She began associating with the Jehovah's Witness organisation when she was 10 years old and was formally baptised as a Jehovah's Witness at age 18.²⁰⁵
- 110 BCB is now 47 years old and is a mother of two children.²⁰⁶ BCB is still a Jehovah's Witness²⁰⁷ but since reporting to the Royal Commission in about September 2014, she has stopped attending congregational meetings.²⁰⁸

4.1 BCB's abuse by Bill Neill

- 111 Between 1980 and 1986 when BCB was aged between 12 and 18, she regularly stayed overnight at the home of her friend, her friend's father, Bill Neill, and their family.²⁰⁹ Bill Neill was an elder in the Narrogin congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Western Australia.²¹⁰ BCB attended weekly Bible studies led by Bill Neill at the Narrogin Kingdom Hall and at the Neill family house.²¹¹
- 112 Bill Neill discouraged BCB from forming friendships with non-Jehovah's Witnesses.²¹² BCB left high school at the end of Year 10,²¹³ encouraged by the Neill family who preferred marriage or full-time preaching over pursuit of a further education.²¹⁴
- 113 The Royal Commission heard that from 15 years of age, BCB was groomed and sexually abused by Bill Neill.²¹⁵ Bill Neill remained a respected elder within the congregation whilst he continued to abuse BCB.²¹⁶ Notwithstanding his abuse of her, BCB continued to respect Bill Neill and felt unable to disclose the abuse because of his position of authority in the congregation.²¹⁷
- 114 BCB told the Royal Commission that Bill Neill's position as an elder contributed to his power over her.²¹⁸

²⁰⁴ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [6].

²⁰⁵ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [5] and [7].

²⁰⁶ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [3]-[4].

²⁰⁷ Transcript of BCB, T15175:15-16 (Day 147).

²⁰⁸ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [73]-[74].

²⁰⁹ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [16].

²¹⁰ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [14]-[15].

²¹¹ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [16].

²¹² Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [17].

²¹³ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [30].

²¹⁴ Transcript of BCB, T15171:1-14 (Day 147).

²¹⁵ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [20]-[46].

²¹⁶ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [40].

²¹⁷ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [25].

²¹⁸ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [79].

4.2 BCB's disclosure to the Narrogin Congregation elders

- 115 BCB first disclosed her abuse by Bill Neill to a Jehovah's Witness acquaintance in about 1991.²¹⁹ BCB gave evidence that about a week after she disclosed to her acquaintance, another elder in the Narrogin congregation, Mr Horley, approached her about Bill Neill's conduct.²²⁰ Implicit in that is that the acquaintance had passed on BCB's disclosure to Mr Horley.
- 116 Mr Horley told the Royal Commission that, on his recollection, he first came to hear of the allegations against Bill Neill when BCB and her husband, BCC, came to visit him at his home to disclose the abuse.²²¹
- 117 This difference in these recollections of BCB and Mr Horley as to how Mr Horley came to learn of BCB's allegations against Bill Neill is unimportant for present purposes and is therefore not necessary to resolve.

4.3 The response of the Narrogin congregation elders to BCB's disclosure

- 118 At the time of BCB's disclosure, Mr Horley and Bill Neill were the only two elders serving in the Narrogin congregation.²²² At that time, Mr Horley had known Bill Neill for 16 years.²²³
- 119 Mr Horley told the Royal Commission that he did not remember speaking to Bill Neill about BCB's allegation on his own and that he and Mr Doug Jackson, the then circuit overseer, spoke to Bill Neill together during one of Mr Doug Jackson's visits to the congregation.²²⁴

BCB's meeting with Mr Horley and Bill Neill

- 120 BCB gave evidence that shortly after she initially spoke with Mr Horley, he arranged a meeting at her house between himself, Bill Neill, BCB and BCC.²²⁵
- 121 Mr Horley told the Royal Commission that he was unable to recall this first meeting with BCB.²²⁶

²¹⁹ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [48]; Transcript of BCB, T15173:3-35 (Day 147).

²²⁰ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [49]; Transcript of BCB, T15173:37 – T15174:32 (Day 147).

²²¹ Transcript of M Horley, 15184:17-20 (Day 147).

²²² Transcript of M Horley, T15181:3-10 (Day 147).

²²³ Transcript of M Horley, T15220:3 (Day 147).

²²⁴ Exhibit 29-0002, Statement of Max Horley, STAT.0601.001.0001_R at [5.1].

²²⁵ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [51]; Transcript of BCB, T15174:34-38 (Day 147).

²²⁶ Transcript of M Horley, T15189:10-43 and T15215:14-19 (Day 147).

- 122 BCB gave evidence that, during this first meeting, Bill Neill made inappropriate jokes about his alleged conduct.²²⁷ BCB also gave evidence that she was pressed by Mr Horley for intimate details or her abuse.²²⁸
- 123 BCB told the Royal Commission that it was very distressing for her to have to discuss her abuse in front of a room full of men, including her abuser.²²⁹ BCB said that she felt unable to report the full extent of Bill Neill's abuse at the meeting.²³⁰

BCB's meeting with Mr Horley, Mr Doug Jackson, and Bill Neill

- 124 BCB gave evidence that Mr Horley also arranged a second meeting, again at her house, between himself, BCB, BCC, Bill Neill, and Mr Doug Jackson.²³¹
- 125 As noted above, Mr Horley told the Royal Commission that it was at this meeting that he recalls BCB first making her allegations against Bill Neill.²³²
- 126 BCB gave evidence that during the second meeting Bill Neill was defensive and said that she used to wear revealing clothing.²³³ BCB also gave evidence that she did not feel supported and that her credibility was being tested by the elders.²³⁴
- 127 The Royal Commission heard that again BCB felt too uncomfortable to disclose to the elders the full extent of her abuse by Bill Neill.²³⁵
- 128 BCB told the Royal Commission that nobody explained to her the purpose of either meeting.²³⁶ Mr Horley gave evidence that he could not recall what was explained to BCB.²³⁷
- 129 BCB said that after the second meeting, Mr Doug Jackson encouraged her to read an *Awake!* magazine about child sexual abuse, but that nobody explained to her what the outcome of the meetings was or if anything would happen to Bill Neill.²³⁸

Mr Horley's evidence about the investigation of BCB's allegation

- 130 Mr Horley told the Royal Commission that at the time, he understood that Biblical principles required the accuser to face the accused²³⁹ and that the relevant procedure was that set out in *Pay Attention 1991*.²⁴⁰

²²⁷ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [51].

²²⁸ Transcript of BCB, T15175:43-T15175:7 (Day 147).

²²⁹ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [80].

²³⁰ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [52]-[53].

²³¹ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [53]-[54].

²³² Transcript of M Horley, T15189:10-43 and T15215:14-19 (Day 147).

²³³ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [55]-[56].

²³⁴ Transcript of BCB, T15176:45-T15177:4 (Day 147).

²³⁵ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [55]-[56].

²³⁶ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [51],[54].

²³⁷ Transcript of M Horley, T15196:11-18 (Day 147).

²³⁸ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [58]-[59].

²³⁹ Transcript of M Horley, T15189:45-T15190:2 (Day 147).

²⁴⁰ Transcript of M Horley, T15190:39-T15191:36 (Day 147).

- 131 Mr Horley accepted in evidence that it is inappropriate to require an accused and his accuser to meet together, but said that he did not reflect on it at the time because he was just following the then procedure.²⁴¹ He agreed that it would be very hard for an abused person to disclose the full detail of her abuse before the accused and at least two other men.²⁴²
- 132 It is submitted that Mr Horley's application of the procedure set out in *Pay Attention 1991*, which required BCB to face her abuser, caused significant distress to BCB and prevented her from disclosing the full extent of her abuse.
- 133 Mr Horley accepted, and it is submitted, that it was totally inappropriate of him to take a person accused of child sexual abuse into the victim's home.²⁴³

Mr Doug Jackson's evidence about the investigation

- 134 Mr Doug Jackson agreed that the purpose of the meetings with BCB and Bill Neill was to establish the truth of BCB's allegation in accordance with the Jehovah's Witness organisation protocol.²⁴⁴ He did not accept that BCB was unaware of the purpose of those meetings, because, he said, although he couldn't remember what he told BCB, he 'would have told her why we were meeting'.²⁴⁵

Sufficiency of evidence

- 135 Mr Horley gave evidence that because Bill Neill denied any intentional misconduct or deliberate touching on his part, the rule requiring two or more witnesses meant that BCB's allegations could not be proven according to the Scriptures and so the matter could not progress to a judicial committee.²⁴⁶ This was the case even in circumstances where he had no reason to disbelieve BCB's allegations.²⁴⁷

Further disclosure / reporting

- 136 BCB gave evidence that following the committee meeting, Mr Horley discouraged her from discussing her abuse 'out of respect for the Neill family'.²⁴⁸ Mr Horley told the Royal Commission that he had discouraged further disclosure because he believed 'that gossip and speculation about the matter would be hurtful to BCB and her family, and to Bill and his family'.²⁴⁹ Mr Horley denied that he was trying to cover the matter up.²⁵⁰

²⁴¹ Transcript of M Horley, T15189:45-T15190:27 (Day 147).

²⁴² Transcript of M Horley, T15199:25-38 (Day 147).

²⁴³ Transcript of M Horley, T15216:18-21 (Day 147).

²⁴⁴ Transcript of D J Jackson, T15228:15-18, and T15228:20-24 (Day 147).

²⁴⁵ Transcript of D J Jackson, T15227:23-27, and T15227:29-33 (Day 147).

²⁴⁶ Exhibit 29-0002, Statement of Max Horley, STAT.0601.001.0001_R at [5.1];

Transcript of M Horley, T15192:37-39 (Day 147);

Transcript of M Horley, T15202:19-24 (Day 147);

Transcript of M Horley, T15207:5-12 (Day 147).

²⁴⁷ Transcript of M Horley, T15203:1-7 (Day 147).

²⁴⁸ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [62].

²⁴⁹ Exhibit 29-0002, Statement of Max Horley, STAT.0601.001.0001_R at [5.3].

²⁵⁰ Transcript of M Horley, T15199:40-T15200:17 (Day 147).

- 137 However, Mr Horley accepted that BCB would have felt silenced and unsupported by his instruction not to speak with others about her abuse.²⁵¹
- 138 BCB did not remember discussing reporting her complaint to the police with anybody before or after the meetings.²⁵²
- 139 Mr Horley told the Royal Commission that he never said anything to BCB about ‘whether she should or should not report Bill Neill’s behaviour to the authorities’.²⁵³ Mr Horley said that he gave no consideration to whether he or BCB should report the matter to police.²⁵⁴
- 140 Mr Horley said that there were very few internal policies and procedures at the time about whether elders should go to police when faced with allegations like those brought by BCB.²⁵⁵

4.4 Bill Neill’s removal as an elder

- 141 BCB told the Royal Commission that a few weeks after the meetings with Mr Horley and Mr Doug Jackson, Bill Neill stepped down as an elder.²⁵⁶ The fact, but not the grounds, of Bill Neill’s deletion as an elder was announced to the congregation.²⁵⁷
- 142 Mr Horley said that BCB’s allegations had cast a cloud over Bill Neill’s qualifications as an elder²⁵⁸ and that he, together with Mr Doug Jackson, recommended that Bill Neill step down.²⁵⁹ Mr Doug Jackson also said that he considered that Bill Neill no longer met the Scriptural qualifications for serving as an elder since he was guilty of uncleanness and not free from accusation.²⁶⁰
- 143 BCB gave evidence that even after she had disclosed her abuse by Bill Neill, she was still expected to attend Bible study organised by Mr Horley²⁶¹ and held at Bill Neill’s house.²⁶² She said that she continued to see Bill Neill several times a week at congregational meetings.²⁶³

²⁵¹ Transcript of M Horley, T15200:19-T15201:41 (Day 147).

²⁵² Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [60].

²⁵³ Transcript of BCB, T15175:29-38 (Day 147);
Exhibit 29-0002, Statement of Max Horley, STAT.0601.001.0001_R at [5.4].

²⁵⁴ Transcript of M Horley, T15188:10-16 (Day 147).

²⁵⁵ Transcript of M Horley, T15205:3-32 (Day 147).

²⁵⁶ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [63].

²⁵⁷ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [63];
Exhibit 29-0002, Statement of Max Horley, STAT.0601.001.0001_R at [6.1].

²⁵⁸ Exhibit 29-0002, Statement of Max Horley, STAT.0601.001.0001_R at [5.1].

²⁵⁹ Exhibit 29-0002, Statement of Max Horley, STAT.0601.001.0001_R at [6.1].

²⁶⁰ Exhibit 29-0004, Statement of Doug Jackson, STAT.0600.001.0001_R at [6.1].

²⁶¹ Transcript of BCB, T15169:37-T15170:23 (Day 147).

²⁶² Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [65].

²⁶³ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [65].

- 144 BCB gave evidence that she was left feeling unsupported by the congregation and was instead encouraged to respect her abuser.²⁶⁴
- 145 Mr Horley told the Royal Commission that he and Mr Doug Jackson did not consider it necessary to impose any specific restrictions on Bill Neill.²⁶⁵
- 146 Mr Horley agreed, and it is submitted, that restricting Bill Neill's privileges would have been appropriate in relation to some situations.²⁶⁶

The report to the Branch Office

- 147 In a letter dated 1 February 1992, Mr Horley and Mr Doug Jackson reported to the Branch Office on the outcome of their investigation into BCB's allegations.²⁶⁷ The letter reported the recommendation that Bill Neill step down as an elder because Mr Horley and Mr Doug Jackson had concluded that 'uncleanness' had been committed 'on several occasions (sic)'.²⁶⁸
- 148 The letter of 1 February 1992 further reported that both Mr Horley and Mr Doug Jackson were 'impressed by Brother Neill's acceptance of counsel and his humility throughout the ordeal' and recommended that he be appointed as an elder again 'once this has died down'.²⁶⁹ Mr Horley told the Royal Commission that in this regard the letter used 'unfortunate wording' and he acknowledged that '[m]atters of this nature take many years, if ever, to die down completely'.²⁷⁰
- 149 The *Pay Attention 1991* handbook to which Messrs Horley and Jackson would have had regard directed that the privilege of serving as ministerial servant or elder could be recommended only after the individual had ample time to prove himself to be irreprehensible and again 'free from accusation' and had 'freeness of speech'.²⁷¹ It is submitted that to simply wait for the matter to 'die down' before reappointing Bill Neill would not have been in accordance with the direction of the Governing Body as recorded in *Pay Attention 1991*.
- 150 Mr Horley gave evidence that although he signed the letter to the Branch Office,²⁷² he did not believe that Bill Neill had only committed uncleanness 'on several occasions'. Mr Horley accepted that BCB had made other allegations against Bill Neill, but could not

²⁶⁴ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [62] and [64].

²⁶⁵ Transcript of M Horley, T15209:11-15;
Exhibit 29-0002, Statement of Max Horley, STAT.0601.001.0001_R at [9.1];
Exhibit 29-0004, Statement of Doug Jackson, STAT.0600.001.0001_R at [9.2];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0504_R (Tab 70).

²⁶⁶ Transcript of M Horley, T15209:4-25 (Day 147).

²⁶⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0504_R (Tab 70).

²⁶⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0504_R (Tab 70).

²⁶⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0504_R (Tab 70).

²⁷⁰ Transcript of M Horley, T15209:39-43 (Day 147).

²⁷¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0061-0062 (Tab 80);

Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0037-0038.

²⁷² Transcript of M Horley, T15205:34-T15206:2 (Day 147).

explain to the Royal Commission why those allegations had not been detailed in the report to the Branch Office.²⁷³

- 151 The letter of 1 February 1992 also reported that ‘unfortunately there may be worldly people who also know’ about Bill Neill’s conduct.²⁷⁴ Mr Horley told the Royal Commission that he had included an expression of concern about how widely known BCB’s allegations were because he had wanted to preserve the cleanness of the congregation and was concerned about the reputation of Jehovah’s name.²⁷⁵
- 152 Mr Horley ultimately accepted that he was concerned with Bill Neill’s efficacy as an elder, his qualification to teach, and the proper functioning of the organisation.²⁷⁶ Mr Horley conceded that his concern was ‘probably not’ about protecting children in the congregation.²⁷⁷

Available findings on BCB’s first disclosure

- F4 The elders bringing the man whom BCB accused of abusing her to her home was unjustified and traumatising for BCB and should not have occurred.
- F5 Although the elders may have been following the documented procedure at the time and they may have believed that Scriptural principle required that the accuser face the accused with her allegations, it was distressing to and unsupportive of BCB to require that of her.
- F6 It was distressing for BCB to be required by the elders to tell of what had happened to her to a group of men, including the man whom she accused of abusing her, and it was not likely to, nor did it, result in BCB disclosing the full extent of her abuse.
- F7 It was inconsistent with the elders’ professed sympathy for BCB for them not to have offered her the opportunity of the support and involvement of women in the process of investigating her allegations of abuse.
- F8 The elders did not explain to BCB the purpose of their investigation and the meetings with her such as to ensure that she had an understanding of that purpose, which left her confused and disempowered.
- F9 The application of the two-witness rule meant that there was insufficient evidence for the elders to act against BCB’s abuser even though they believed her, which left her feeling disbelieved and unsupported, and it left the abuser in the congregation where he may have been a risk to other children.
- F10 Mr Horley telling BCB that she should not discuss her abuse with anyone left her feeling silenced and unsupported.
- F11 BCB was not told by the elders that she could, let alone should, report her abuse to the authorities.
- F12 In circumstances where both investigating elders agreed that there was substance to BCB’s allegations, they should have taken steps against Bill Neill, at least by imposing some

²⁷³ Transcript of M Horley, T15207:36-T15208:38 (Day 147).

²⁷⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0504_R (Tab 70).

²⁷⁵ Transcript of M Horley, T15206:26-34 (Day 147).

²⁷⁶ Transcript of M Horley, T15210:13-31 (Day 147).

²⁷⁷ Transcript of M Horley, T15209:45-T15210:31 (Day 147).

restrictions on his activities involving children and thereby addressing the potential risk that he posed to other children.

F13 It was traumatic for BCB and inappropriate of Mr Horley for him to have required BCB to attend Bible study at Bill Neill's home when he knew that BCB accused Bill Neill of abusing her.

F14 The recommendation of the elders to the Branch Office that Bill Neill be reinstated as an elder 'once this has died down' and their expressed concern 'that there may also be worldly people who also know' demonstrates that they were more concerned about the reputation of Bill Neill and the congregation than about the risk that he posed to children.

4.5 BCB's disclosure in 2012

153 In 2012 in a written statement, BCB disclosed her abuse by Bill Neill to two elders in her local congregation, Joe Bello and David Wood.²⁷⁸

154 In a letter dated 18 December 2012, Messrs Bello and Wood forwarded BCB's written statement to the Branch Office.²⁷⁹

155 BCB told the Royal Commission that in July 2014, when Mr Bello was visiting her house on an unrelated matter she told him that she was considering reporting her abuse to the Royal Commission.²⁸⁰ BCB gave evidence that at around the same time, Mr Bello telephoned her husband, BCC, and asked if BCB 'really wants to drag Jehovah's name through the mud'.²⁸¹

156 Mr Bello accepted, and it is submitted, that he was wrong to have said what he said to BCC and that he should never want to 'discourage someone from going to the authorities'.²⁸² It is further submitted that Mr Bello's discouragement of BCB through what he said to BCC was in direct contravention of the Jehovah's Witness organisation's explicit directive to '[n]ever suggest to anyone that they should not report an allegation of child abuse to the police or other authorities'.²⁸³

157 Upset by Mr Bello's visit, BCB wrote a second letter recording her feelings about her abuse.²⁸⁴ Under cover of a letter dated 17 December 2014, Mr Bello, Mr Wood, and Mr Robert Boardman of BCB's local congregation forwarded BCB's second letter to the Branch Office.²⁸⁵

²⁷⁸ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [69]; Exhibit 29-0005, Statement of Joseph Bello, STAT.0594.001.0001_R at [5.1].

²⁷⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0501_R (Tab 71);

²⁸⁰ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [70].

²⁸¹ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [71]; Exhibit 29-0005, Statement of Joseph Bello, STAT.0594.001.0001_R at [5.12].

²⁸² Exhibit 29-0005, Statement of Joseph Bello, STAT.0594.001.0001_R at [5.13].

²⁸³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0132 [19] (Tab 120).

²⁸⁴ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [72].

²⁸⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0495 (Tab 72).

Mr Horley's correspondence with the Branch Office in 2015

- 158 In a letter dated 6 January 2015, Mr Horley provided, at the request of the Service Desk at the Branch Office,²⁸⁶ a brief summary of events leading to the deletion of Bill Neill as an elder in 'in around 1993'.²⁸⁷ In his letter, Mr Horley reported that '... it became a matter of her word against his as there were no witnesses to the alleged events. BCB was an attractive young sister and often got around the house in her nightwear ...'.²⁸⁸ Mr Horley told the Royal Commission that this latter observation was in fact a comment that Bill Neill had made to him.²⁸⁹ Mr Horley said that Bill Neill's comment 'should have raised stronger warning bells than it did at the time'.²⁹⁰
- 159 Mr Horley accepted, in evidence, that a child cannot validly consent to being sexually abused or be blamed for it.²⁹¹

Available findings on BCB's second disclosure

- F15 It was wrong of Joe Bello, and contrary to the Jehovah's Witness organisation's own direction in that regard, to discourage BCB from reporting to the Royal Commission by asking whether she 'really wants to drag Jehovah's name through the mud'.
- F16 The elders in BCB's present congregation should have supported BCB in her reporting to the Royal Commission if that is what she wanted to do.

4.6 The impact on BCB of the abuse and of the organisation's response

- 160 BCB told the Royal Commission about the long term effect that Bill Neill's abuse has had on her. She said that the abuse changed who she was, destroyed her confidence, and held her back from living a normal life.²⁹² BCB continued to feel as though she was Bill Neill's victim well into her adult life.²⁹³
- 161 BCB told the Royal Commission that she had a nervous breakdown 10 years ago²⁹⁴ and has had a lot of therapy to address Bill Neill's abuse.²⁹⁵ The Royal Commission heard that the abuse has impacted on BCB's health such that she has required ongoing medical and therapeutic treatment.²⁹⁶ BCB gave evidence that her medical treatment has cost her

²⁸⁶ Transcript of M Horley, T15210:46-T15211:25 (Day 147).

²⁸⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0493_R (Tab 74).

²⁸⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0493_R (Tab 74).

²⁸⁹ Transcript of M Horley, T15212:42-9 (Day 147).

²⁹⁰ Transcript of M Horley, T15213:11-16 (Day 147).

²⁹¹ Transcript of M Horley, T15213:18-28 (Day 147).

²⁹² Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [74]-[75].

²⁹³ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [76].

²⁹⁴ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [77].

²⁹⁵ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [78].

²⁹⁶ Transcript of BCB, T15171:41-T15172:34 (Day 147);

Transcript of BCB, T15178:47-T15179:6 (Day 147).

money and that she would welcome compensation if it were to be offered to her by the Jehovah's Witness organisation.²⁹⁷

162 BCB said that she felt brainwashed into believing that speaking with 'worldly' people would bring reproach upon Jehovah's name.²⁹⁸ BCB said that, as a result of reporting her story to the Royal Commission, she is riddled with guilt for betraying the Jehovah's Witness organisation²⁹⁹ and for 'dragging Jehovah's name through the mud'.³⁰⁰

163 BCB told the Royal Commission that, in her view:

- a) the elders should have encouraged her to go to the police³⁰¹
- b) she should not have been confronted by her abuser in her own home,³⁰² and
- c) there should have been women involved to support her through the process.³⁰³

²⁹⁷ Transcript of BCB, T15179:8-13 (Day 147).

²⁹⁸ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [77].

²⁹⁹ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [73].

³⁰⁰ Transcript of BCB, T15171:28-39 (Day 147).

³⁰¹ Transcript of BCB, T15178:5-7 (Day 147).

³⁰² Transcript of BCB, T15178:19-22 (Day 147).

³⁰³ Transcript of BCB, T15178:24-26 (Day 147).

Part 5 BCG

- 164 BCG was born in Queensland and grew up in a strict Jehovah's Witness family.³⁰⁴ BCG's father, BCH, joined a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Queensland when she was very young, and her mother joined the same congregation a short time thereafter.³⁰⁵ BCG was formally baptised as a Jehovah's Witness when she was about 16 years old.³⁰⁶
- 165 BCG is 43 years old and the mother of four children.³⁰⁷ She is currently in the final year of a law degree³⁰⁸ and is no longer a Jehovah's Witness.³⁰⁹

5.1 BCG's abuse by her father, BCH

- 166 BCG's father, BCH, was appointed as a ministerial servant in the Mareeba Congregation in Far North Queensland when BCG was about 13.³¹⁰ BCH was well respected within the congregation and was given special privileges by the congregation elders, including conducting private Bible studies, managing door-to-door preaching and teaching and counselling the members of the congregation.³¹¹
- 167 As head of the household, BCH dictated and enforced compliance with household rules.³¹² BCG said that her father would make her deliver Scriptural talks before the Congregation from the platform in the Kingdom Hall and take part in door-to-door preaching.³¹³ As a Jehovah's Witness, BCG was taught to love and fear Jehovah and to never question her parents or their decisions.³¹⁴
- 168 BCG was not permitted to associate with people outside the Jehovah's Witness community.³¹⁵ She was taught from a young age that 'worldly' people, including the police, were bad and not to be trusted as they served Satan.³¹⁶ BCG's parents did not allow BCG to attend sex education classes at school or participate in extra-curricular activities, such as sport, because the organisation advised against it.³¹⁷ BCG said that she was not permitted to attend school after Year 10 because choosing higher education over Jehovah was frowned upon by the Jehovah's Witness organisation.³¹⁸

³⁰⁴ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [14].

³⁰⁵ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [7].

³⁰⁶ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [5].

³⁰⁷ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [3].

³⁰⁸ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [3].

³⁰⁹ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [66].

³¹⁰ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [9].

³¹¹ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [9].

³¹² Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [13]-[14].

³¹³ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [11].

³¹⁴ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [17].

³¹⁵ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [14].

³¹⁶ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [14] and [19].

³¹⁷ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [14].

³¹⁸ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [15].

169 The Royal Commission heard that when she was 17, BCG was sexually abused by BCH on a number of occasions over a two week period whilst her mother and siblings were away on holiday.³¹⁹

5.2 BCG's attempted disclosure to the Mareeba Congregation elders

170 BCG told the Royal Commission that she initially tried to report her father's abuse to Mr Ali and Mr Bowditch, two elders in the Mareeba Congregation who were also friends of her father's.³²⁰ BCG said that both elders refused to speak with her before she spoke to her father, or without her father being present.³²¹

171 Mr Ali told the Royal Commission that he had no recollection of any such conversation with BCG.³²² Mr Ali agreed, however, that to require a person to speak to her father in the first instance was 'consistent with the teaching of the [organisation]'.³²³

172 Mr Bowditch recalled his wife raising with him that BCG needed to talk with him but could not recall his response.³²⁴ He did not however accept that he would have required BCH to be present before speaking with BCB.³²⁵

5.3 Investigation and judicial committee

173 About eight months after BCG was sexually abused by her father while her mother and siblings were away, BCH left BCG's mother for another woman and moved out of the family home.³²⁶ It was not until this time that BCG found the courage to tell her male friend, BCJ, about the abuse.³²⁷ BCJ approached BCG's father to confront him about the abuse and subsequently arranged for BCG to meet with the elders of the Mareeba Congregation.³²⁸

174 At the time that they became aware of BCG's allegation, Messrs Ali, Bowditch and De Rooy, were already members of a judicial committee considering BCH's extra-marital relationship.³²⁹ Mr Bowditch said that there was a lot of overlap between BCG's complaint and the matters already before the judicial committee and therefore some of BCG's complaint was investigated concurrently.³³⁰ Mr Ali said that the same judicial

³¹⁹ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [26]-[27].

³²⁰ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [37] and [38].

³²¹ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [37] and [38].

³²² Transcript of D Ali, T15323:5-15, T15324:1-2 (Day 148).

³²³ Transcript of D Ali, T15325:12-T15326:18 (Day 148).

³²⁴ Transcript of K D Bowditch, T15393:46-T15396:3 (Day 149).

³²⁵ Transcript of K D Bowditch, T15394:5-T15396:19 (Day 149).

³²⁶ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [39].

³²⁷ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [39].

³²⁸ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [39]-[40].

³²⁹ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15540:37-44 (Day 151).

Transcript of D Ali, T15327:42-45 (Day 148).

Transcript of K D Bowditch, T15396:23-37 (Day 149).

³³⁰ Transcript of K D Bowditch, T15397:6-13 (Day 149).

committee members also dealt with BCG's allegations and that 'it was tied in pretty much together'.³³¹

Interviewing of BCG

- 175 BCG told the Royal Commission that she was interviewed by Mr De Rooy, Mr Ali and Mr Bowditch on a number of occasions.³³² BCG said that, on each occasion, she was alone and without any support.³³³ On at least one occasion, BCH was also present at the meeting.³³⁴
- 176 BCG said that did not remember anyone explaining the purpose of the meetings to her, but that she understood that the elders were investigating her allegations.³³⁵
- 177 BCG told the Royal Commission that instead of being protected and supported as a victim of child sexual abuse, she felt that the elders sat in judgement of her credibility as a witness and made her feel to blame for what had happened.³³⁶ She said that because the elders were all male and were friends of her father's she was reluctant to speak in any detail about BCH's abuse.³³⁷
- 178 BCG said that, at one of the meetings, the elders forced BCG to directly confront her father with her abuse allegations.³³⁸ BCG told the Royal Commission that when her father was brought into the room she was extremely terrified.³³⁹ In the meeting, BCH threatened BCG verbally and physically and blamed her for seducing him.³⁴⁰
- 179 Mr Bowditch and Mr Ali accepted that requiring BCG to make her allegations in front of BCH would have been a traumatising experience for BCG and that the process of requiring a victim of child sexual abuse to make her allegation in the presence of her offender was not conducive to arriving at the truth.³⁴¹

Allegations of sexual abuse of BCG's sisters

- 180 Not long after disclosing her abuse to the elders, BCG disclosed to her mother, BCI. BCI told BCG that her father had previously abused BCG's older sister.³⁴² At around the same time, BCG's two younger sisters each told BCG and her mother that they had also been sexually abused by BCH.³⁴³

³³¹ Transcript of D Ali, T15339:26-37 (Day 148).

³³² Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [42]-[43].

³³³ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [42].

³³⁴ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [42] and [49].

³³⁵ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [42].

³³⁶ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [43], [78] and [80].

³³⁷ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [44].

³³⁸ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [49].

³³⁹ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [49].

³⁴⁰ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [50];

Transcript of K D Bowditch, T15399:14-22 (Day 149).

³⁴¹ Transcript of K D Bowditch, T15399:14-33 (Day 149);

Transcript of D Ali, T15376:17-33 (Day 149).

³⁴² Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [46].

³⁴³ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [47].

- 181 BCG said that although she told the elders about her sisters' sexual abuse allegations against BCH, the elders did not take those allegations into account in their consideration of BCG's allegation against BCH.³⁴⁴ BCG said that Mr De Rooy told her that the elders could not consider the evidence of her sisters' abuse as they were too young to know what they were talking about and were not witnesses to the 'same event'.³⁴⁵
- 182 Mr De Rooy, Mr Ali and Mr Bowditch each told the Royal Commission that they did not recall being told about the abuse of BCG's sisters during the judicial committee meetings.³⁴⁶

The investigating/judicial committee's conclusion as to the sufficiency of evidence

- 183 Mr De Rooy, Mr Ali and Mr Bowditch all believed that BCG had been abused by BCH.³⁴⁷ Despite their belief as to the truth of BCG's allegations, they concluded that without a confession by BCH they were bound by the two-witness rule and had insufficient proof to take action.³⁴⁸ Mr De Rooy accepted that this outcome was 'not fair' for BCG, but told the Royal Commission that the elders were bound by their Biblical principles.³⁴⁹

Mr Ali's notes of the judicial committee

- 184 During the public hearing, Mr Ali was shown a document comprising some 23 pages of photocopied handwritten notes.³⁵⁰ He told the Royal Commission that the document constituted notes that he had taken during the judicial committee process regarding BCH.³⁵¹ He agreed that the page numbers also appeared to be in his handwriting.³⁵²
- 185 Mr Ali did not dispute that the pages appeared to be ordered consecutively starting at '1', with each page following the numbered page being the reverse of its respective numbered page.³⁵³ He acknowledged that where a page, such as the page between the pages numbered 14 and 15, was unnumbered, it stood to reason that the unnumbered page was the reverse of the preceding numbered page.³⁵⁴

³⁴⁴ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [48];
Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [52].

³⁴⁵ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [52].

³⁴⁶ Transcript of D Ali, T15334:45-47 (Day 148);
Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15554:20-33 (Day 151);
Transcript of K D Bowditch, T15405:40-43 (Day 149).

³⁴⁷ Transcript of K D Bowditch, T15404:5-9 (Day 149);
Transcript of D Ali, T15330:36-T15331:29, T15330:42-43 (Day 148), T15353:1-13, T15361:10-17 (Day 149);
Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15547:1-5, T15548:26-42 (Day 151).

³⁴⁸ Exhibit 29-007, Statement of Dino Ali, STAT.0598.001.0001_R at [5.5] and [5.6];
Transcript of D Ali, T15331:1-29 (Day 148);
Exhibit 29-006, Statement of Albert Ronald De Rooy, STAT.0597.001.0001_R at [6.1].

³⁴⁹ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15547:1-40 (Day 151).

³⁵⁰ Exhibit 29-0008, QLD.0068.001.1478_R.

³⁵¹ Transcript of D Ali, T15342:20-22, T15348:3-5 (Day 149).

³⁵² Transcript of D Ali, T15342:37-38 (Day 149).

³⁵³ Transcript of D Ali, T15342:33-35, T15343:29-T15344:32 (Day 149).

³⁵⁴ Transcript of D Ali, T15343:8-T15344:32 (Day 149).

- 186 Mr Ali agreed that the first page of the notes was dated 1 June 1989, or possibly 1 May 1989.³⁵⁵ It is submitted that it can be accepted that the date is 1 June 1989: the manuscript is clear enough and each of the dates appearing thereafter is either that date or a later date with there being no date recorded between 1 May and 1 June.
- 187 At the foot of the reverse of the page numbered 14 was written '19-7-89 [BCH] appeals, fax to Kevin'.³⁵⁶ Mr Ali told the Royal Commission that the pages which precede the reverse of page 14 'possibly' record matters dealt with by the judicial committee prior to the date on which BCH lodged his appeal against the committee's decision to disfellowship.³⁵⁷ It is submitted that the notes clearly record such matters, there being no other sensible reading of them.
- 188 Mr Ali accepted that his notes appeared to be structured in such a way as to first record the name of the person to whom the notes refer, then either by use of a colon or a dash, record what that person told the committee.³⁵⁸

What Mr Ali's notes say about the abuse of BCG's sisters

- 189 Mr Ali was taken to pages 4 and 5 of his notes, which relevantly record the following:³⁵⁹

Page 4

[BCG] and [BCI] – molesting! 4 – 5 times.

...

- Says [BCH] has abused 2 younger children, possibly [BCK] too at age 2.

Page 5

[BCK] (by herself)

...

On abuse to [BCK]

Yes, at age 3 (remembers vividly).

- 190 Mr Ali was taken to page 8 of his notes, which relevantly records the following:³⁶⁰

She does not like what her dad is doing with [redacted] and commendably, when pulled up before [redacted] by [BCH] to deny charge of molestation to [BCK] she insisted on the truth despite [BCH's] efforts to the contrary.

- 191 Mr Ali agreed that the 'she' referred to on page 8 of his notes as extracted above was BCG's older sister, BCK.³⁶¹ He agreed that the notes record that BCK herself told the

³⁵⁵ Transcript of D Ali, T15342:40-47 (Day 149).

³⁵⁶ Exhibit 29-0008, QLD.0068.001.1478_R at 1495_R.

³⁵⁷ Transcript of D Ali, T15343:3-27 (Day 149).

³⁵⁸ Transcript of D Ali, T15344:45-T15346:20 (Day 149).

³⁵⁹ Exhibit 29-0008, QLD.0068.001.1478_R at 1481_R and 1482_R.

³⁶⁰ Exhibit 29-0008, QLD.0068.001.1478_R at 1485_R.

³⁶¹ Transcript of D Ali, T15348:45-T15349:10 (Day 149).

judicial committee of himself and Messrs De Rooy and Bowditch, about having been sexually abused by her father.³⁶²

- 192 Mr Ali was taken to the foot of page 11 of his notes which records the date ‘17.6.89’ and below the date ‘Met with [BCI] and [BCG]’, and then to the reverse of page 11 of his notes, which relevantly records the following:³⁶³

...

Interesting that both mentioned [BCK] as admitting to another “attempt” of molesting by [BCH] when going to school at later age...

...

[BCH] took [BCK’s] hand to place it on his private parts.

she pulled hand away and refused to speak with him for some time.

- 193 Mr Ali agreed that, on or around 17 June 1989, during the judicial committee process before himself and Messrs De Rooy and Bowditch, BCG and her mother reported to the committee an incident of abuse against BCK by BCH.³⁶⁴

What Mr Ali’s notes say about BCH’s confession

- 194 Page 12 of Mr Ali’s notes records that the judicial committee met on 10 July 1989 to discuss disfellowshipping BCH on ‘charges of “LOOSE CONDUCT” and “Lying”’.³⁶⁵ On the same page, the notes record that an appointment was made over the telephone with BCH and someone else to meet at the Kingdom Hall at 7.30pm on 12 July 1989.³⁶⁶

- 195 Mr Ali was taken to page 14 of his notes, which relevantly recorded the following:³⁶⁷

[BCH] – told of charges “Loose conduct + lying”

...

[BCH] has admitted to all things and also said that whatever [BCG] had said on molesting was true.

- 196 Having previously agreed to the possibility that the pages prior to the reverse of the page numbered 14 record matters dealt with by the judicial committee prior to BCH’s appeal on 19 July 1989,³⁶⁸ Mr Ali agreed that the notes record BCH confessing to the judicial committee to abusing BCG.³⁶⁹ Mr Ali agreed that in spite of having confessed to the sexual abuse of his daughter, BCG, BCH was subsequently disfellowshipped by the

³⁶² Transcript of D Ali, T15347:46-T15348:5 (Day 149).

³⁶³ Exhibit 29-0008, QLD.0068.001.1478_R at 1489_R.

³⁶⁴ Transcript of D Ali, T15350:32-43 (Day 149).

³⁶⁵ Exhibit 29-0008, QLD.0068.001.1478_R at 1490_R.

³⁶⁶ Exhibit 29-0008, QLD.0068.001.1478_R at 1490_R.

³⁶⁷ Exhibit 29-0008, QLD.0068.001.1478_R at 1494_R.

³⁶⁸ Transcript of D Ali, T15343:3-27 (Day 149).

³⁶⁹ Transcript of D Ali, T15351:20-26 (Day 149).

committee on grounds relating only to his extra-marital relationship and not to the sexual abuse of BCG.³⁷⁰

Submissions in relation to the evidence before the judicial committee

- 197 Each of Messrs Ali, Bowditch and De Rooy told the Royal Commission that owing to the passage of time, they were unable to recall specific details or the sequence of events in the case of BCG.³⁷¹
- 198 Mr De Rooy denied in evidence that the judicial committee considering BCG's allegations was made aware of the allegations of abuse in respect of BCG's sisters.³⁷² He told the Royal Commission that had the judicial committee been made aware it would have acted.³⁷³ Mr De Rooy's evidence was that, in spite of the allegations recorded in the notes, 'we did not know of that information'.³⁷⁴ Mr De Rooy told the Royal Commission that his memory was vague and acknowledged that the notes were likely to be a more reliable record of what information was considered by the judicial committee at the time than his own memory, but insisted that the judicial committee was not aware of the additional allegations.³⁷⁵
- 199 Mr De Rooy also told the Royal Commission that it was his recollection that BCH did not confess to abusing BCG until the appeals committee meeting, however Mr De Rooy could not provide any explanation for the confession recorded in Mr Ali's notes.³⁷⁶
- 200 In the light of Mr De Rooy's concession as to the reliability of the notes, and Mr Ali's evidence as to their provenance and arrangement, it is submitted that where the notes are reasonably clear they should be accepted in preference to the recollection of the elders. In particular, it should be accepted that:
- a) on or about 1 June 1989, the elders were advised by BCG and her mother that BCG's older sister and her two younger sisters had each been sexually abused by BCH, and
 - b) between 12 and 19 July 1989, and before the judicial committee's decision to disfellowship BCH, BCH confessed to the judicial committee his sexual abuse of BCG.
- 201 It is submitted that contrary to evidence given before the Royal Commission by Messrs Ali, Bowditch, and De Rooy, the judicial committee had before it sufficient evidence in the form of the allegations of BCG's sisters to conclude, according to the evidentiary requirements set out in *Pay Attention 1981*,³⁷⁷ that BCH had sexually abused BCG.

³⁷⁰ Transcript of D Ali, T15351:20-26 (Day 149).

³⁷¹ Exhibit 29-0007, Statement of Dino Ali, STAT.0598.001.0001_R at [5(1)];
Exhibit 29-0010, Statement of Kevin Bowditch, STAT.0602.001.0001_R at [4.1];
Exhibit 29-0016, Statement of Albert Ronald De Rooy, STAT.0597.001.0001_R at [5.1].

³⁷² Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15553:13-22 (Day 151).

³⁷³ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15553:22, 34-36 (Day 151).

³⁷⁴ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15553: 13-22 (Day 151).

³⁷⁵ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15553:38-45 (Day 151).

³⁷⁶ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15557:15-T15558:28 (Day 151).

³⁷⁷ Exhibit 29-0033, WAT.0019.001.0001 at 0035.

202 It is submitted that the judicial committee of Messrs Ali, Bowditch and De Rooy failed to take account of the evidence of BCG's sisters and of the confession of BCH in deciding the grounds upon which to disfellowship BCH.

The decision to disfellowship BCH

203 BCH was ultimately disfellowshipped, not for child sexual abuse, but for 'loose conduct' in relation to his extra-marital relationship and for 'lying' about it.³⁷⁸

The report to the Branch Office about the decision to disfellowship BCH

204 The report of the judicial committee to the Branch Office regarding the decision to disfellowship BCH referred only to the charges of 'loose conduct' and 'lying'.³⁷⁹ The report did not mention BCG's allegation of child sexual abuse against BCH or the investigation undertaken by Messrs De Rooy, Ali, and Bowditch.³⁸⁰

205 Mr Bowditch was unable to explain why the report did not mention BCG's allegation of child sexual abuse.³⁸¹

206 Mr De Rooy told the Royal Commission that the report did not refer to BCG's allegations because, in his view, the investigation into her allegations was still ongoing.³⁸² He agreed however that there can be no ongoing investigation of a disfellowshipped person.³⁸³

207 When asked what would have become of BCG's allegation had BCH not appealed the decision to disfellowship him, Mr De Rooy told the Royal Commission that he felt that BCG had the right to go to the police.³⁸⁴

208 Mr De Rooy was unable to recall if he supported or encouraged BCG to report her allegations to the authorities.³⁸⁵

5.4 BCH's appeal

209 On 19 July 1989, BCH sent a fax to Messrs De Rooy, Bowditch and Ali appealing the judicial committee's decision to disfellowship him for 'loose conduct' and 'lying'.³⁸⁶ An appeal committee was convened and was comprised of three new elders, Joe Mirariz,

³⁷⁸ Exhibit 29-0007, Statement of Dino Ali, STAT.0598.001.0001_R at [5.1], [5.6] and [6.1]; Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of Albert Ronald De Rooy, STAT.0597.001.0001_R at [6.1]; Exhibit 29-0010, Statement of Kevin Bowditch, STAT.0602.001.0001_R at [5.1];

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0134_R (Tab 3);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0135_R (Tab 5);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0136_R (Tab 26).

³⁷⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0134_R (Tab 3).

³⁸⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0134_R (Tab 3).

³⁸¹ Transcript of K D Bowditch, T15405:26-28 (Day 149).

³⁸² Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15559:3-31 (Day 151).

³⁸³ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15560:33-41 (Day 151).

³⁸⁴ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15561:23-26 (Day 151).

³⁸⁵ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15562:11-16 (Day 151).

³⁸⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1474_R (Tab 4).

Don Wilson and Jim Bennett.³⁸⁷ The appeal committee elders were from other congregations in the area.³⁸⁸ Mr De Rooy, Mr Ali and Mr Bowditch also attended the appeal committee meeting as observers.³⁸⁹

- 210 Mr Ali told the Royal Commission that BCG's allegations of sexual abuse resurfaced during the appeal committee meeting.³⁹⁰ As a result, BCG was brought, alone, before BCH and the six male elders to be interviewed again.³⁹¹
- 211 Messrs Bowditch and De Rooy told the Royal Commission that during the appeal committee meeting BCH confessed to abusing BCG.³⁹²
- 212 The appeal committee upheld the decision to disfellowship BCH for 'loose conduct' and 'lying', and added, relevantly, the ground of 'porneia' to reflect BCH's confession to 'gross sexual acts against' BCG on five or six occasions.³⁹³
- 213 In spite of the decision of the appeal committee to add the ground of 'porneia', the form recording BCH's disfellowshipping only recorded the charges of 'loose conduct' and 'lying'.³⁹⁴ In oral evidence, Mr De Rooy accepted that this was an oversight.³⁹⁵
- 214 Mr Bowditch told the Royal Commission that the Mareeba Congregation was not informed of the reason for BCH's disfellowshipping.³⁹⁶
- 215 Mr De Rooy and Mr Ali told the Royal Commission that, despite BCH's admission to the appeal committee, they did not consider reporting the matter to police.³⁹⁷ Mr Ali and Mr Bowditch accepted that the result of this was that BCH, a man they knew to have confessed to child sexual abuse, was left at large in the community.³⁹⁸

BCG's reaction after BCH's disfellowshipping

- 216 BCG told the Royal Commission that she was devastated by the decision of the original judicial committee to disfellowship BCH on grounds unrelated to his sexual abuse of

³⁸⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0135_R (Tab 5).

³⁸⁸ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [54].

³⁸⁹ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [54].

³⁹⁰ Transcript of D Ali, T15357:10-12 (Day 149).

³⁹¹ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [53];

Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of Albert Ronald De Rooy, STAT.0597.001.0001_R at [6.2].

³⁹² Exhibit 29-0010, Statement of Kevin Bowditch, STAT.0602.001.0001_R at [4.12];

Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of Albert Ronald De Rooy, STAT.0597.001.0001_R at [6.2].

³⁹³ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [57] and [58];

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0135_R (Tab 5).

³⁹⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0136_R (Tab 26).

³⁹⁵ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15581:27-45 (Day 151).

³⁹⁶ Transcript of K D Bowditch, T15408:39-41 (Day 149).

³⁹⁷ Transcript of D Ali, T15358:10-15 (Day 149) and T15358:39-T15359:2 (Day 149);

Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15564:25-28 (Day 151).

³⁹⁸ Transcript of K D Bowditch, T15409:10-11 (Day 149);

Transcript of D Ali, T15358:45-T15359:2 (Day 149).

her.³⁹⁹ It appeared to her that BCH's abuse of her did not qualify as wrongdoing in the eyes of the Jehovah's Witness organisation.⁴⁰⁰

- 217 Mr Ali's handwritten notes of the original investigation and judicial committee record that BCG was counselled by the elders against speaking to others, including her soon to be fiancé, about her case.⁴⁰¹ Mr De Rooy told the Royal Commission that the counsel was aimed at protecting the confidentiality of the matter and that this was intended to be for BCG's benefit.⁴⁰² Mr De Rooy accepted that such counsel may have had the effect of making BCG feel silenced.⁴⁰³
- 218 BCG told the Royal Commission that, following BCH's disfellowshipping, many people in the congregation accused her of lying about BCH's abuse and that, as a result, she felt worthless, helpless and embarrassed.⁴⁰⁴
- 219 BCG told the Royal Commission that after and as a result of her experience of the committee meetings with the elders, she attempted suicide.⁴⁰⁵ BCG said that she reported her suicide attempt to the elders as it was considered a sin by the Jehovah's Witness organisation.⁴⁰⁶ BCG gave evidence that she was chastised by Mr De Rooy for attempting suicide because it was viewed as a serious wrongdoing.⁴⁰⁷ Mr De Rooy was unable to recall speaking to BCG about her attempted suicide.⁴⁰⁸

Available findings on the investigation and judicial committee processes following BCG's disclosure

F17 The elders did not explain to BCG the purpose of their investigation and their meetings with BCG such as to ensure that she had an understanding of that purpose, which left her confused and disempowered.

F18 It was traumatising for BCG to be required by the elders to tell what had happened to her to a group of men, including the man whom she accused of sexually abusing her, and it was not likely to, nor did it, result in BCG disclosing the full extent her abuse.

F19 It would have been supportive of the elders to offer BCG the opportunity of the support and involvement of other women in the process of investigating her allegations of abuse.

F20 During their judicial committee investigation or proceedings the elders received evidence that BCH had abused BCG's elder sister and her two younger sisters, but they took no action in relation to that evidence.

F21 The evidence presented to the judicial committee of BCH having abused his other daughters satisfied the Jehovah's Witness organisation's own rules with regard to sufficiency of evidence

³⁹⁹ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [53].

⁴⁰⁰ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [53].

⁴⁰¹ Exhibit 29-0008, QLD.0068.001.1478_R at 1482_R and 1499_R.

⁴⁰² Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15598:9-17 (Day 151).

⁴⁰³ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15598:19-22 (Day 151).

⁴⁰⁴ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [59].

⁴⁰⁵ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [72].

⁴⁰⁶ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [60].

⁴⁰⁷ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [60].

⁴⁰⁸ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15565:43-45 (Day 151).

to establish that BCH had abused BCG, but the elders wrongly ignored that evidence and accordingly failed to uphold BCG's complaint against BCH.

F22 In the course of the judicial committee process, and before the elders reached a conclusion on BCH's guilt in relation to his extra-marital conduct, BCH confessed to having abused BCG.

F23 The elders inexplicably and wrongly ignored BCH's confession to having abused BCG and thereby, within the precepts of the Jehovah's Witness organisation's own rules and procedures, failed to uphold BCG's complaint against BCH.

F24 BCG was not told by the elders that she could, let alone should, report her abuse to the authorities.

F25 The appeal committee's requirement that BCG give evidence of her sexual abuse by her father to a group of seven men including her named abuser was unjustified and traumatising to BCG and should never have happened.

F26 The failure by the elders to report BCH's sexual abuse of BCG to the police had the result that BCH remained at large in the community and a risk to children, and reflects that the elders were not concerned with child safety but rather with keeping their organisation 'clean'.

F27 The judicial committee's failure to uphold BCG's complaint of abuse by BCH conveyed to BCG that the organisation tolerated child sexual abuse within its ranks.

F28 The advice given by the elders to BCG that she not speak about her abuse to anyone had the effect of silencing her.

F29 The elders' treatment of BCG was unsympathetic and unsupportive and left her feeling worthless and helpless.

5.5 The reinstatement of BCH

220 In February 1990, less than eight months after the appeal committee's decision to disfellowship him, BCH applied to the Beenleigh East Congregation for reinstatement as a Jehovah's Witness.⁴⁰⁹

221 Mr Spinks and Mr Monty Baker were both elders in the Beenleigh East Congregation at the time that BCH applied for reinstatement.⁴¹⁰

222 In a letter dated 19 March 1990, the elders of Beenleigh East Congregation wrote to the Mareeba elders seeking further information about the circumstances of BCH's disfellowshipping.⁴¹¹ That letter did not refer to or seek further information in relation to BCH's sexual abuse of BCG.⁴¹²

223 Mr Baker said that he and his fellow elders at the Beenleigh East Congregation must have been told about the sexual abuse because it was discussed at the first meeting of the Beenleigh East judicial committee.⁴¹³ Mr Baker said that the primary concern of the

⁴⁰⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1466_R (Tab 10).

⁴¹⁰ Exhibit 29-0019, Statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [82]-[83].

⁴¹¹ Exhibit 20-0003, WAT.0006.001.0036_R (Tab 7).

⁴¹² Exhibit 20-0003, WAT.0006.001.0036_R (Tab 7);
Transcript of M J Baker, T15619:19-22 (Day 151).

⁴¹³ Transcript of M J Baker, T15619:24-30 (Day 151).

Beenleigh East judicial committee was nevertheless BCH's conduct in relation to the charges of 'loose conduct' and 'lying'.⁴¹⁴

- 224 In a letter dated 23 April 1990, the elders at the Mareeba Congregation replied to the Beenleigh East elders recommending that BCH's application for reinstatement be rejected on the basis that BCH was not repentant for his wrongdoing.⁴¹⁵
- 225 Mr De Rooy accepted that although the letter of 23 April 1990 referred to BCH 'sexually molesting his two eldest daughters', the reasons given by the Mareeba elders for rejection of BCH's reinstatement application were concerned only with the continuing relationship between BCH and another woman.⁴¹⁶ Mr De Rooy did not accept that the absence of a reference to child sexual abuse in their reasons suggests that the Mareeba judicial committee did not take the child sexual abuse allegations seriously.⁴¹⁷
- 226 In around June of 1990, the Beenleigh East judicial committee rejected BCH's first application for reinstatement on the basis, Mr Spinks said, that BCH had not displayed 'godly sadness' or have a record of 'works that befit repentance'.⁴¹⁸ In its report of 15 June 1990, the committee noted that BCH 'denied any incest' and claimed that his confession before the appeal committee at Mareeba had been made 'under pressure'.⁴¹⁹
- 227 Between September 1990 and April 1992, BCH sent a series of letters to elders from the Mareeba, Beenleigh East and St George Congregations, as well as to the Australia Branch Office. In each letter BCH made a plea for reinstatement.⁴²⁰
- 228 In April 1992, both the Branch Office and elders from the Mareeba Congregation sent letters to the St George Congregation, where BCH was at the time attending, advising that the elders at St George should display caution in believing any display of repentance by BCH.⁴²¹
- 229 On 19 October 1992, elders from the St George Congregation wrote to the Mareeba Congregation recommending that there were now 'ample reasons' to support BCH's reinstatement, including that he had expressed 'sincere remorse over his past conduct'.⁴²²

⁴¹⁴ Transcript of M J Baker, T15621:44-47 (Day 151).

⁴¹⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0006.001.0026_R (Tab 8).

⁴¹⁶ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15572:13-16 (Day 151).

⁴¹⁷ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15573:12-18 (Day 151).

⁴¹⁸ Exhibit 29-0018, Statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [85].

⁴¹⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0006.001.0034_R (Tab 9).

⁴²⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1465_R (Tab 10);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0006.001.0017_R (Tab 14);

Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1457_R (Tab 17).

⁴²¹ Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1450_R (Tab 22);

Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1449_R (Tab 23).

⁴²² Exhibit 29-0003 QLD.0068.001.1448_R (Tab 24).

- 230 By 4 November 1992, elders from the Mareeba Congregation had agreed to ‘go along with [the St George Congregation’s] recommendation for reinstatement’.⁴²³
- 231 BCH was reinstated on 13 November 1992.⁴²⁴ Mr De Rooy said that despite agreeing to BCH’s reinstatement, he was ‘very hesitant’ about BCH being reinstated at the time.⁴²⁵
- 232 Mr De Rooy accepted that an important component to consider in any decision to reinstate a perpetrator of child sexual abuse is whether or not the perpetrator apologised to the victim.⁴²⁶ Mr De Rooy said that, as far as he could recall, BCH never issued such an apology to either BCG or her older sister.⁴²⁷
- 233 It is submitted that in circumstances where Mr De Rooy remained hesitant about agreeing to reinstate BCH and where BCH had not showed repentance by apologising to BCG,⁴²⁸ the elders from Mareeba Congregation should not have agreed to reinstate BCH in 1992.

BCG’s reaction to BCH’s reinstatement

- 234 BCG said that when she learned that her father had been reinstated, she told Mr De Rooy that she was concerned for the safety of the congregation and that she intended to report the matter to the police.⁴²⁹ BCG said that Mr De Rooy responded that if she reported to police, she would be disfellowshipped.⁴³⁰ Mr De Rooy could not recall this conversation with BCG and did not accept that he might have said that to BCG.⁴³¹

5.6 BCG’s correspondence with the Branch Office

- 235 On 19 December 1995, BCG wrote to the Branch Office expressing concern about her father’s premature reinstatement.⁴³² In her letter, BCG informed the Branch Office that she was concerned that BCH would sexually abuse other children within the Jehovah’s Witness organisation.⁴³³
- 236 On 26 February 1996, the Service Desk at the Branch Office responded to BCG, telling her that they would investigate the matter and counselled her to have faith in Jehovah and the elders in her congregation.⁴³⁴

⁴²³ Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1447_R (Tab 25).

⁴²⁴ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [61]; Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0136_R (Tab 26).

⁴²⁵ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15580:47-T15581:1 (Day 151).

⁴²⁶ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15580:7-29 and T15584:1-4 (Day 151); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0046.

⁴²⁷ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15580:7-29 (Day 151).

⁴²⁸ See Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0046-47 (Tab 80).

⁴²⁹ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [62].

⁴³⁰ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [62].

⁴³¹ Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15584:23-29 (Day 151).

⁴³² Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [64]; Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1410_R (Tab 29).

⁴³³ Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1410_R at 1417_R (Tab 29).

⁴³⁴ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [64];

- 237 BCG told the Royal Commission that upon receiving the Branch Office's letter, she felt angry, upset and let down.⁴³⁵ BCG told the Royal Commission that she had already put her faith in the elders when she reported the abuse to them but felt that they didn't protect or support her.⁴³⁶ Mr Geoffrey Jackson told the Royal Commission that he expected any letter from a Branch Office to be written with a spirit of love and concern, and that the Australia Branch's letter did not, on its face, reflect that love and concern.⁴³⁷
- 238 On 25 July 1996, the Service Desk at the Branch Office wrote to the body of elders at the Mareeba Congregation asking whether the fact that BCH had not apologised to BCG was a factor taken into consideration in the decision to reinstate BCH.⁴³⁸ In its letter the Service Desk noted that it undertook to BCG to follow up on this matter, and asked the body of elders to reassure BCG that this was the case.⁴³⁹
- 239 There is no evidence that the Jehovah's Witness organisation took any action subsequent to its letter of 25 July 1996 to address the concerns expressed by BCG in her letter, to respond to her letter, or to offer her support.

Available findings on the reinstatement of BCH

- F30 BCH was reinstated as a Jehovah's Witness little more than three years after he had been disfellowshipped for, amongst other things, five or six counts of sexual abuse of his daughter.
- F31 The decision to reinstate BCH took no account of the risk that BCH posed to children, paid little regard to the fact that he had been disfellowshipped because of child sexual abuse, and was focussed principally on his extra-marital relationship.
- F32 The decision to reinstate BCH took no account of BCH's failure to apologise to BCG, a factor relevant to consideration of sincere repentance, or of what BCG might have had to say about BCH being reinstated.
- F33 The decision to reinstate BCH was disrespectful and unsupportive of BCG.
- F34 The Branch Office's response to BCG on 26 February 1996 caused BCG to feel angry, upset and let down, and did not convey support and concern to BCG on the part of the Jehovah's Witness organisation.

5.7 BCG's report to police

- 240 In or around 1998 or 1999, BCG decided to leave the Jehovah's Witness organisation.⁴⁴⁰ BCG said that, as a result of this decision, she was shunned, ostracised and actively avoided by members of her local congregation.⁴⁴¹

Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1409_R (Tab 30).

⁴³⁵ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [65].

⁴³⁶ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [65].

⁴³⁷ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15993:42-T15994:5 (Day 155).

⁴³⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1408_R (Tab 31).

⁴³⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1408_R (Tab 31).

⁴⁴⁰ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [66].

⁴⁴¹ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [66].

- 241 After leaving the Jehovah's Witness organisation, BCG reported the abuse by her father to the police.⁴⁴² In around 2001, criminal proceedings commenced against BCH in relation to his sexual abuse of BCG.
- 242 The Royal Commission heard evidence from Mr Jason Davies, who was then a case lawyer with the Queensland Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (**DPP**) assigned to the case of BCH. Mr Davies told the Royal Commission that in preparing the case for prosecution he became concerned that the inculpatory admissions made by BCH during the committee meetings would be rendered inadmissible at trial.⁴⁴³ Mr Davies said that his concern arose in relation to BCH's admission because of the circumstances in which it was made and that an incentive to early confession was the prospect of reduced punishment.⁴⁴⁴ Mr Davies said that after preparing the indictment he had no further involvement in the case, but that it was reported to him that ultimately BCH's inculpatory statements had been excluded on voir dire at the first trial.⁴⁴⁵
- 243 BCH's first trial resulted in a hung jury while his second trial was declared a mistrial.⁴⁴⁶ After a third trial which concluded in December of 2004, BCH was convicted for the unlawful and indecent assault and attempted rape of BCG and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment.⁴⁴⁷
- 244 The Royal Commission heard that the elders from the Mareeba Congregation who had presided over the committee meetings and appeal committee meetings gave evidence at the first trial of BCH.⁴⁴⁸
- 245 BCG told the Royal Commission that her experience of the three criminal trials was significantly less traumatic than her experience sitting through the committee meetings.⁴⁴⁹

Available findings on the impact of the judicial committee process on criminal proceedings against BCH

F35 The judicial committee and appeal committee processes that preceded BCG reporting her abuse by her father to the police complicated the criminal proceedings because of the numbers of people involved in those processes and the telling and retelling of the experience.

⁴⁴² Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [67].

⁴⁴³ Exhibit 29-0011, Statement of Jason Davies, STAT.0595.001.0001_R at [16].

⁴⁴⁴ Transcript of J P Davies, T15423:17-32 (Day 149).

⁴⁴⁵ Transcript of J P Davies, T15421:25-29 (Day 149).

⁴⁴⁶ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [69];

⁴⁴⁷ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [69]; Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.003.0104 (Tab 45).

⁴⁴⁸ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [69].

⁴⁴⁹ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [70].

5.8 The second disfellowshipping of BCH

- 246 The Royal Commission heard evidence from Mr Allan Pencheff who was an elder in the Loganholme Congregation between 1991 and 2005.⁴⁵⁰
- 247 Mr Pencheff told the Royal Commission that following BCH's reinstatement in 1992, BCH started attending the Loganholme Congregation in Queensland.⁴⁵¹
- 248 In a letter dated 17 December 1992, the Mareeba Congregation recommended certain restrictions be placed on BCH due to the 'gravity of the wrongs committed' but did not refer to BCH's charge of child sexual abuse, nor recommend any restrictions regarding BCH's exposure to children.⁴⁵²
- 249 Mr Pencheff gave evidence that at the time BCH joined the Loganholme Congregation he was restricted from answering at meetings and giving talks from the platform.⁴⁵³ Mr Pencheff said that he was not aware of any reason to restrict BCH's contact with children.⁴⁵⁴ He said that he only became aware of BCH's history of child sexual abuse when criminal proceedings were commenced against BCH in 2001.⁴⁵⁵
- 250 In circumstances where *Pay Attention 1991* provided that privileges could be 'restored progressively when it is determined that the individual has progressed spiritually ...',⁴⁵⁶ it is submitted that by omitting reference to the nature of the 'sin' for which BCH had been disfellowshipped the elders at the Mareeba Congregation made it impossible for the elders at the Loganholme to apply restrictions commensurate with the gravity of the 'sin' and to properly assess if BCH had made spiritual progression in accordance with the direction in *Pay Attention 1991*.
- 251 On 1 November 2002, the Service Desk at the Branch Office wrote to the Loganholme Congregation advising that BCH had 'recently been prosecuted for sexually interfering with' BCG and her younger sister.⁴⁵⁷ In its letter, the Service Desk noted that until 'his recent guilty plea' BCH had consistently denied that he had sexually abused his daughters.⁴⁵⁸ It is not clear why the Service Desk was under the impression that BCH had pleaded guilty, as there is no evidence to suggest that he did so at any time other than before the Mareeba judicial and appeal committees.
- 252 The Service Desk instructed two elders of the Loganholme Congregation to meet with BCH to investigate his lying to elders about the abuse of his daughters.⁴⁵⁹ The Loganholme elders were instructed that if BCH refused to confess to his wrongdoing, he

⁴⁵⁰ Transcript of A C Pencheff, T15642:39-42 (Day 152).

⁴⁵¹ Transcript of A C Pencheff, T15643:38-45 (Day 152).

⁴⁵² Exhibit 29-0003, QLD.0068.001.1446_R (Tab 27).

⁴⁵³ Exhibit 29-0018, Statement of Allan Pencheff, STAT.0604.001.0001_R at [6.3].

⁴⁵⁴ Exhibit 29-0018, Statement of Allan Pencheff, STAT.0604.001.0001_R at [6.4].

⁴⁵⁵ Exhibit 29-0018, Statement of Allan Pencheff, STAT.0604.001.0001_R at [5.1].

⁴⁵⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0061 (Tab 80).

⁴⁵⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0112_R (Tab 40).

⁴⁵⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0112_R (Tab 40).

⁴⁵⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0112_R at 0113_R (Tab 40).

should be informed that he would likely be disfellowshipped for sexually abusing BCG's younger sister as well as for dishonesty.⁴⁶⁰

253 In a memorandum to the Service Desk dated 23 January 2003,⁴⁶¹ Mr Toole (writing from the Legal Department) observed that the primary issue before the Loganholme judicial committee in 2003 was BCH's lying, as opposed to his sexual abuse of BCG.⁴⁶² Mr Toole did not accept that it was reasonable to conclude from his memorandum that he considered BCH's dishonesty as being more serious than the child sexual abuse.⁴⁶³

The decision to disfellowship BCH for lying

254 Mr Pencheff gave evidence that he was one of the two elders that met with BCH and later chaired the Loganholme judicial committee that was established to consider whether to disfellowship BCH for lying.⁴⁶⁴

255 Mr Pencheff told the Royal Commission that the Loganholme judicial committee accepted the allegations of BCH's three daughters as sufficient evidence to establish that in addition to abusing BCG, BCH had also abused BCG's three sisters.⁴⁶⁵

256 In March 2003, despite accepting the truth of the allegations of BCH's three daughters, and the instruction from the Service Desk that upon conviction BCH 'will likely be disfellowshipped for sexually abusing' BCG's younger sister, the elders at Loganholme Congregation disfellowshipped BCH for 'deliberate, malicious lying and bearing false witness' and not for child sexual abuse.⁴⁶⁶

257 Mr Pencheff did not accept that the reasons for BCH's disfellowshipping recorded in the judicial committee's report suggest that, at the time, the judicial committee considered the charge of lying to be more serious and pressing than a charge of 'porneia' or child sexual abuse.⁴⁶⁷ Mr Pencheff said that the charge of child sexual abuse and the charge of dishonesty went 'hand in hand' and that the judicial committee took the charge of child sexual abuse very seriously.⁴⁶⁸

258 It is submitted that the reasons recorded in Mr Toole's memorandum to the Service Desk,⁴⁶⁹ the notification of disfellowshipping form,⁴⁷⁰ and the judicial committee's

⁴⁶⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0112_R at 0113_R (Tab 40).

⁴⁶¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0109 (Tab 41).

⁴⁶² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0109 (Tab 41);
Exhibit 29-0023, Statement of Vincent Toole, STAT.0593.001.0001_R at [25].

⁴⁶³ Transcript of V J Toole, T15786:39-41 (Day 152).

⁴⁶⁴ Exhibit 29-0018, Statement of Allan Pencheff, STAT.0604.001.0001_R at [1.4], [5.5], and [7.1];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0107_R (Tab 42).

Transcript of A C Pencheff, T15645:16-24 (Day 152).

⁴⁶⁵ Transcript of A C Pencheff, T15646:43-47 (Day 152).

⁴⁶⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0107_R (Tab 42);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0108_R (Tab 43).

⁴⁶⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0108_R (Tab 43);
Transcript of A C Pencheff, T15650:30-47 (Day 152).

⁴⁶⁸ Transcript of A C Pencheff, T15650:30-47 (Day 152).

⁴⁶⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0109_R (Tab 41).

⁴⁷⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0107_R (Tab 42).

report regarding their decision to disfellowship BCH,⁴⁷¹ do not support Mr Pencheff's evidence that the Loganholme judicial committee did not consider a charge of lying to be more serious than one of child sexual abuse.

- 259 It is submitted that despite having evidence that BCH had sexually abused BCG's three sisters, the judicial committee disfellowshipped BCH for dishonesty in relation to child sexual abuse, not for the child sexual abuse itself, and that this decision prioritised the charge of dishonesty over the charge of child sexual abuse.

Available findings on the risk management and second disfellowshipping of BCH

F36 When BCH was reinstated no restrictions were placed on him which were relevant to his risk to children despite his established history of child sexual abuse.

F37 BCH was disfellowshipped a second time for lying in relation to child sexual abuse rather than for child sexual abuse itself.

F38 The reasons canvassed and then given for the second disfellowshipping of BCH show that those from the Jehovah's Witness organisation who were involved were more concerned about a charge of lying than they were about BCH's sexual abuse of his daughters.

5.9 BCH's repeated requests for reinstatement

- 260 Since at least May 2006 BCH has continued to make repeated applications for reinstatement, firstly to the Loganholme Congregation in Queensland, and later to the Kalamunda Congregation in Western Australia.⁴⁷²

- 261 Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that the Service Desk has been closely involved in providing guidance to the elders on the respective judicial committees that have been responsible for considering BCH's applications for reinstatement in the Loganholme and Kalamunda Congregations.⁴⁷³ Mr Spinks said that '[c]lear direction had been given to the elders that, until [BCH] fully acknowledges his sins of child abuse and lying in connection with these offences, it would be difficult for the committees or the victims to consider that he was repentant'.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0108_R (Tab 43).

⁴⁷² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0104_R (Tab 46);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0012.001.0004_R (Tab 51);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0012.001.0005_R (Tab 53);
Exhibit 29-0003, LOCO.0001.001.0018_R (Tab 56);
Exhibit 29-0003, LOCO.0001.001.0025_R (Tab 57);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0012.001.0007_R (Tab 59);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0101_R (Tab 61);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0098_R (Tab 64);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0096_R (Tab 65);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0094_R (Tab 67).

⁴⁷³ Exhibit 29-0019, Statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [88]-[89].

⁴⁷⁴ Exhibit 29-0019, Statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [89];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.002.0091_R (Tab 69).

262 As at the date of the public hearing, BCH remained disfellowshipped as a Jehovah's Witness.⁴⁷⁵

5.10 Impact of abuse

263 BCG told the Royal Commission that she experienced depression during her teens and that after she was sexually abused by her father her depression became worse. BCG attempted suicide as a result of her experience of the committee meetings with the elders in the Mareeba Congregation.⁴⁷⁶ BCG stated that, at the time, she couldn't bear the judgement and public vilification by those around her.⁴⁷⁷

264 BCG told the Royal Commission that she has at times feared being ostracised, shunned and vilified by those around her. She said that she has always lived in fear of her father, and that she had lived in fear of Jehovah.⁴⁷⁸

265 BCG told the Royal Commission that during the criminal proceedings against her father, she was terrified that Jehovah would kill her for having reported to the police and for bringing reproach upon his name.⁴⁷⁹

5.11 Redress

266 In her written statement, BCG told the Royal Commission that the current beliefs and practices of the Jehovah's Witness organisation – specifically the two-witness rule, the practice of not reporting to authorities outside the organisation, and the factors taken into account when reinstating an alleged perpetrator of child sexual abuse – appear to favour and even protect paedophiles.⁴⁸⁰

267 BCG told the Royal Commission that in her view it was essential that uniform mandatory reporting laws are introduced across Australia to apply to organisations like the Jehovah's Witnesses in order to protect children.⁴⁸¹

268 BCG also gave evidence that the Jehovah's Witness organisation needed to be made financially accountable in order to redress the suffering of past, present and future victims of child sexual abuse within the Jehovah's Witnesses organisation.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁵ Exhibit 29-0019, Statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [88]-[89].

⁴⁷⁶ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [72].

⁴⁷⁷ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [72].

⁴⁷⁸ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [74].

⁴⁷⁹ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [75].

⁴⁸⁰ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [82].

⁴⁸¹ Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [82].

⁴⁸² Exhibit 29-006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [82].

Part 6 A Scriptural approach to child sexual abuse policy

6.1 Policies based on the Scriptures

269 The Jehovah's Witnesses organisation relies primarily on Bible passages to set policies and practices.⁴⁸³ The Jehovah's Witnesses organisation says that it has had Bible-based policies on child sexual abuse for over 30 years and that it is only authorised to address child sexual abuse in accordance with Scriptural direction.⁴⁸⁴ These policies have been refined and periodically addressed in various publications over the past several decades.⁴⁸⁵

6.2 Governing Body responsible for Scriptural interpretation and policy formulation

Interpreting the Scriptures

270 Mr Jackson gave evidence that the primary role of the Governing Body is to interpret the Scriptures.⁴⁸⁶ He confirmed in evidence that the Governing Body's interpretation of the Scriptures in relation to particular issues might change or develop from time to time and confirmed that one example of such development was in relation to the relaxation of the prohibition on blood transfusions to allow for blood fractions.⁴⁸⁷

271 Mr O'Brien told the Royal Commission that the Branch Committee is not involved in Scriptural interpretation because it is the Governing Body which provides the definitive Scriptural interpretation.⁴⁸⁸ Mr O'Brien said that he was not aware of there being any scope for the Australia Branch to adopt a different Scriptural interpretation to that provided by the Governing Body.⁴⁸⁹

Formulation and promulgation of policy

272 Mr Jackson agreed that all policies of the Jehovah's Witness organisation are subject to Scriptural principles and that the Governing Body approves all policies to ensure that they are in keeping with the Scriptures.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸³ Exhibit 29-0024, First statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [75]; Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [23]-[24]; Transcript of R P Spinks, T15682:22-29 (Day 152).

⁴⁸⁴ Exhibit 28-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0006 and 0012 (Tab 133).

⁴⁸⁵ Exhibit 29-0024, First statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [66].

⁴⁸⁶ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15945:17-19 (Day 155).

⁴⁸⁷ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15945:25-36 (Day 155).

⁴⁸⁸ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15817:6-22 (Day 153).

⁴⁸⁹ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15817:29-31 (Day 153).

⁴⁹⁰ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15977:20-28 (Day 155).

- 273 The Governing Body gives final approval for new publications and audio and video programmes.⁴⁹¹ Mr Jackson agreed that the Governing Body gives final approval for such publications as the:⁴⁹²
- a) *Awake!* and *Watchtower* magazines
 - b) *Shepherd the Flock* elders' handbook
 - c) *Organized to do Jehovah's Will* handbook
 - d) *2015 Branch Organization Manual*
 - e) letters signed on behalf of the Governing Body, and
 - f) templates for letters to bodies of elders.
- 274 Branch offices around the world, including the Australia Branch Office,⁴⁹³ may write articles for the *Awake!* and *Watchtower* publications, but the articles must be submitted to the Governing Body's Writing Committee for approval.⁴⁹⁴
- 275 Mr Jackson and Mr Toole told the Royal Commission that policy letters issued by the Governing Body may be adjusted locally by branch offices to reflect the requirements of local laws.⁴⁹⁵ Mr Jackson said that it would be unusual for a branch office to publish its own manual or guidelines in relation to responding to allegations of child sexual abuse.⁴⁹⁶
- 276 From at the least the 1990s, the Australia Branch Office has, under the direction of the Governing Body,⁴⁹⁷ periodically issued directives in the form of letters addressed to all bodies of elders providing instruction on how to respond to allegations of child sexual abuse.⁴⁹⁸

6.3 Australia Branch Committee authority to produce or revise policy

- 277 Mr Jackson said that it is the Governing Body's expectation that the branch offices around the world will act in accordance with the procedures and guidelines set out in

⁴⁹¹ Exhibit 29-0028, EXH.029.028.0001_R at 0005_R;
Transcript of G W Jackson, T15940:30-39 (Day 155);
Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15819:13-20, 30-47 (Day 153).

⁴⁹² Transcript of G W Jackson, T15941:23-T15942:4 (Day 155);
see also transcript of T J O'Brien, T15840:25-30 (Day 153).

⁴⁹³ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15819:22-28 (Day 153).

⁴⁹⁴ Exhibit 29-0028, EXH.029.028.0001_R at 0138_R [12], [15]-[16].

⁴⁹⁵ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15942:30-46 (Day 155);
Transcript of V J Toole, T15752:34-41, T15753:10-17 (Day 153);
Exhibit 29-0028, EXH.029.028.0001_R at 0067_R [29]-[30].

⁴⁹⁶ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15952:42-T15953:3 (Day 155).

⁴⁹⁷ Exhibit 29-0003: WAT.0001.004.0007 (Tab 87); WAT.0012.001.0025 (Tab 90); WAT.0004.001.0021 (Tab 98); WAT.0001.004.0020 (Tab 99); WAT.0001.004.0023 (Tab 110); WAT.0001.004.0075 (Tab 126).

⁴⁹⁸ Namely, but not limited to:

Exhibit 29-0003: WAT.0001.004.0004 (Tab 81); WAT.0001.004.0005 (Tab 83); WAT.0001.004.0011 (Tab 89); WAT.0002.001.0001 (Tab 97); WAT.0002.001.0015 (Tab 119); WAT.0001.004.0066 (Tab 124);
Exhibit 29-0002, Statement of Max Horley, STAT.0601.001.0001_R at [3.1];
Exhibit 29-0007, Statement of Dino Ali, STAT.0598.001.0001_R at [3.2].

the *2015 Branch Organization Manual*.⁴⁹⁹ Mr O'Brien told the Royal Commission that 'the theocratic or Scriptural direction that the Governing Body provides, is the same in every branch and for all Jehovah's Witnesses, worldwide'.⁵⁰⁰

- 278 Mr O'Brien explained that the Branch Committee faithfully implements and follows the direction of the Governing Body.⁵⁰¹ Mr Toole said that Jehovah's Witness congregations in Australia take their direction and instructions from the Branch Office.⁵⁰²
- 279 Mr Jackson explained that although there is an expectation that branch committee members will follow the direction of the Governing Body, 'there are provisions for those branch committees to get back to us if they see that there is something that doesn't work, and we can adjust it accordingly'.⁵⁰³
- 280 In contrast to what is set out above, Mr Spinks' evidence was that as long as the Australia Branch Office doesn't stray from the Scriptures, it has the 'full authority to produce documents, to clearly set out for seminars, letters to elders, letters to publishers, what needs to be made clear locally'.⁵⁰⁴ Mr Spinks said that the Australia Branch has the authority to 'determine something different from what is set out in the [current documents] that have come down from New York'.⁵⁰⁵
- 281 There is no evidence to support Mr Spinks' version on the authority of the Australia Branch Office to publish things differently from, or without the approval of, the Governing Body. To the contrary, documents in evidence include an exchange of correspondence between the Australia Branch Office and the Governing Body's Service Committee where the former seeks from the latter agreement to the inclusion of an article on a particular subject in a newsletter.⁵⁰⁶ There is also correspondence demonstrating that the Governing Body's committees set policies and procedures and guidelines for dealing with issues arising in relation to child sexual abuse for the Australia Branch.⁵⁰⁷
- 282 In the circumstances, it is submitted that the Royal Commission should prefer the documentary evidence and the oral evidence of Messrs Jackson, Toole and O'Brien to

⁴⁹⁹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15931:39, T15932:32 (Day 155);

Exhibit 29-0028, EXH.029.028.0001 at 0005_R;

Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15822:15-23 (Day 153).

⁵⁰⁰ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15816:26-32 (Day 153).

⁵⁰¹ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15822:15-23 (Day 153).

⁵⁰² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001_R at 0075 [2] (Tab 109).

Transcript of V Toole, T15754:11-15 (Day 153).

⁵⁰³ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15939:39-45 (Day 155).

⁵⁰⁴ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15688:12-21 (Day 152).

⁵⁰⁵ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15692:27-35 (Day 152).

⁵⁰⁶ Exhibit 29-0003: WAT.0001.004.0014 (Tab 93), WAT.0012.001.0009 (Tab 94), WAT.0004.001.0026 (Tab 96), and WAT.0004.001.0027 (Tab 100).

⁵⁰⁷ Exhibit 29-0003: WAT.0004.001.0010 (Tab 86), WAT.0001.004.0007 (Tab 87), WAT.0012.001.0025 (Tab 90), WAT.0004.001.0014 (Tab 91), WAT.0012.001.0013 (Tab 91), WAT.0012.001.0014 (Tab 91), WAT.0012.001.0011 (Tab 92), WAT.0004.001.0021 (Tab 98), WAT.0001.004.0020 (Tab 99), WAT.0012.001.0023 (Tab 101), WAT.0012.001.0016 (Tab 103), WAT.0012.001.0022 (Tab 104), WAT.0001.004.0023 (Tab 110), WAT.0001.004.0025 (Tab 110), WAT.0004.001.0058 (Tab 113), WAT.0004.001.0060 (Tab 113), WAT.0012.001.0027 (Tab 113), WAT.0002.001.0011 (Tab 114), WAT.0002.001.0013 (Tab 115), and WAT.0001.004.0046 (Tab 116).

that of Mr Spinks regarding the extent of a branch office's authority to determine policies and procedures.

Available findings on the authority of the Governing Body

F39 Mr Spinks' evidence that the Australia Branch has full authority to produce documents, seminars, letters to elders and letters to publishers without the approval or agreement of the Governing Body is rejected.

F40 The Governing Body retains authority in respect of all publications in the name of the Jehovah's Witness organisation and any view or perspective contrary to that of the Governing Body is not tolerated.

6.4 Flexibility of Scriptural interpretation

283 Mr O'Brien gave evidence that although the Jehovah's Witness organisation is governed by first century Biblical principles, Jehovah's Witnesses believe that many of those principles 'are timeless, in any place, any time'.⁵⁰⁸

284 Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that if the learnings of science in relation to sexual abuse were in conflict with the Jehovah's Witnesses' understanding of the Bible, then '[a]bsolutely the Bible will prevail'.⁵⁰⁹ He also gave evidence that where there is 'clear Scriptural arrangement' or 'clear instructions in the Scriptures', the Jehovah's Witness organisation's approach to the application of the Bible will not change as society changes.⁵¹⁰

285 While Mr Jackson⁵¹¹ and Mr Spinks⁵¹² both accepted that the Governing Body may change its interpretation of the Scriptures from time to time, several witnesses, including Mr Jackson, told the Royal Commission that there was no scope for flexibility in the interpretation of the Scriptures in relation to:

- a) the two-witness rule⁵¹³
- b) the practice of shunning⁵¹⁴
- c) the practice of disfellowshipping unrepentant individuals and reproofing repentant individuals⁵¹⁵
- d) the reinstatement of repentant individuals,⁵¹⁶ and

⁵⁰⁸ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15826:18-34 (Day 153).

⁵⁰⁹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15700:13-19 (Day 152).

⁵¹⁰ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15699:19-22 (Day 152).

⁵¹¹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15945:25-28, T15946:12-15 (Day 155).

⁵¹² Transcript of R P Spinks, T15689:25-29; 31-38 (Day 152).

⁵¹³ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15705:38-40 (Day 152);

Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15833:21-28 (Day 153).

⁵¹⁴ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15984:4 (Day 155);

Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15851:44-T15852:3 (Day 153).

⁵¹⁵ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15707:5-12 (Day 152).

⁵¹⁶ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15707:5-12 (Day 152).

- e) there being no role for women as decision-makers in the judicial committee process.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁷ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15954:46-T15955:3 (Day 155);
Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15831:40-T15832:6 (Day 153) (contra).

Part 7 Current systems, policies and procedures for responding to allegations of child sexual abuse

7.1 Documents said to record current policy and procedure

286 Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that the current policies of the Jehovah's Witnesses organisation for dealing with an accusation of child sexual abuse are outlined in:⁵¹⁸

- a) the Bible (the English edition published by the Jehovah's Witness organisation is the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*)
- b) the current elders' Handbook entitled *Shepherd the Flock of God*⁵¹⁹
- c) Jehovah's Witness organisation publications available to all congregants approaching baptism,⁵²⁰ such as *Organized to Do Jehovah's Will*⁵²¹
- d) updated guidelines issued by the Governing Body to all branch offices in August 2013 regarding how service desks should field questions from elders regarding child abuse matters (the **2013 Service Desk Guidelines**),⁵²² and
- e) letters sent to all bodies of elders, in particular the letter of 1 October 2012,⁵²³ which consolidated into one letter the spiritual advice and guidance provided in various letters from preceding years as to how Jehovah's Witnesses handle allegations of child abuse.⁵²⁴

287 Mr Spinks and Mr O'Brien also told the Royal Commission that a pivotal *Watchtower* article entitled 'Let Us Abhor What is Wicked' published in January 1997 clarifies in Biblical terms the principles to which a congregation should have regard in considering how a 'child molester' should be viewed and treated.⁵²⁵

⁵¹⁸ Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [23]-[24].

⁵¹⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 (Tab 120).

⁵²⁰ Transcript of D J Jackson, T15263:30-32 (Day 148);
Transcript of R P Spinks, T15672:12-14 (Day 152);
Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15843:32-36 (Day 153).

⁵²¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 (Tab 109).

⁵²² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 (Tab 126).

⁵²³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 (Tab 124).

⁵²⁴ Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [18];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at [1] (Tab 124).

⁵²⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0306 (Tab 85);
Exhibit 29-0024, First statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [57];
Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [19].

7.2 Training

- 288 Elders within the Jehovah's Witness organisation are given periodic training on the implementation of its policies and procedures.⁵²⁶ The training takes the form of one-day programmes or seminars called *Kingdom Ministry Schools*.⁵²⁷
- 289 Messrs De Rooy, Ali, Bowditch and Doug Jackson each told the Royal Commission that from the 1990s they had received specific instruction in the form of discussions at elders' schools and training courses on responding to child sexual abuse.⁵²⁸
- 290 Mr O'Brien told the Royal Commission that aside from what is published in the Jehovah's Witness organisation's literature, congregational elders are not given specific training on identifying child sexual abuse.⁵²⁹

7.3 Initial response to an allegation of child sexual abuse

Congregation should report wrongdoing

- 291 *Organized to do Jehovah's Will* instructs members of the Jehovah's Witness organisation that 'gross sins' should be reported to the elders because they threaten the moral cleanness of the congregation.⁵³⁰ A person may approach the congregational elders 'either to confess their own sin or to report what they know regarding the wrongdoing of others'.⁵³¹
- 292 *Organized to do Jehovah's Will* also instructs members that once a matter has been reported to the elders, 'you will have taken the matter as far as you can', that the matter should be left in the hands of the elders, and that one should 'trust in Jehovah that it will be resolved'.⁵³²

⁵²⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0009 (Tab 133);
 Exhibit 29-0004, Statement of Doug Jackson, STAT.0600.001.0001_R at [3.1];
 Exhibit 29-0007, Statement of Dino Ali, STAT.0598.001.0001_R at [3.1];
 Exhibit 29-0016, Statement of Albert Ronald De Rooy, STAT.0597.001.0001_R at [3.1];
 Exhibit 29-0010, Statement of Kevin Bowditch, STAT.0602.001.0001_R at [3.1];
 Exhibit 29-0018, Statement of Allan Pencheff, STAT.0604.001.0001_R at [3.1];
 Exhibit 29-0005, Statement of Joseph Bello, STAT.0594.001.0001_R at [3.1].

⁵²⁷ Exhibit 29-0024, First statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [72]-[73];
 Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0053 - 0055 (Tab 109).

⁵²⁸ Exhibit 29-0004, Statement of Doug Jackson, STAT.0600.001.0001_R at [3.2];
 Exhibit 29-0007, Statement of Dino Ali, STAT.0598.001.0001_R at [3.3];
 Exhibit 29-0016, Statement of Albert Ronald De Rooy, STAT.0597.001.0001_R at [3.4];
 Exhibit 29-0010, Statement of Kevin Bowditch, STAT.0602.001.0001_R at [3.3].

⁵²⁹ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [64].

⁵³⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0085 (Tab 109).

⁵³¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0088 (Tab 109).

⁵³² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0086 (Tab 109).

Types of Scriptural wrongdoing that include child sexual abuse

293 The official position of the Jehovah's Witness organisation is that it abhors child sexual abuse and that it will not protect any perpetrator of such repugnant acts.⁵³³

294 Elders are instructed that child sexual abuse includes:

... sexual intercourse with a minor; oral or anal sex with a minor; fondling the genitals, breasts, or buttocks of a minor; voyeurism of a minor; indecent exposure to a minor; soliciting a minor for sexual conduct; or any kind of involvement with child pornography. Depending on the circumstances of the case, it may also include "sexting" with a minor. "Sexting" describes the sending of nude photos, seminude (sic) photos, or sexually explicit text messages electronically, such as by phone.⁵³⁴

295 The Jehovah's Witness organisation also instructs elders that child sexual abuse is captured by one or more of the following Scriptural offences:

- a) *porneia*, which includes sexual intercourse, oral or anal sex, 'immoral use of the genitals, whether in a natural or perverted way, with lewd intent'⁵³⁵
- b) *brazen or loose conduct*, which is conduct which reflects 'an attitude that betrays disrespect, disregard, or even contempt for divine standards, laws, and authority' and includes child sexual abuse,⁵³⁶ and
- c) *gross uncleanness*, which can include, to the extent that an adult involves a child in the viewing, 'an entrenched practice of viewing, perhaps over a considerable period of time, abhorrent forms of pornography that is sexually degrading', including child pornography.⁵³⁷

Elders to report immediately to the Branch Office / Legal Department

296 Upon receipt of an allegation or complaint of child sexual abuse, two elders from the congregation should immediately contact the Branch Office Legal Department for legal advice.⁵³⁸ Mr Toole said that this is a direction issued by the Governing Body to elders serving throughout the world.⁵³⁹ The direction to call the Legal Department applies

⁵³³ Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [21(a)] and [22]; Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [9] (Tab 124); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0015 (Tab 133).

⁵³⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0066 [3] (Tab 124).

⁵³⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0060 [5] (Tab 120); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0078 [16] (Tab 126).

⁵³⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0061-0062 [9]-[10] (Tab 120); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0078 [16] (Tab 126).

⁵³⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0064-0065 [13]-[14] (Tab 120); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0079 [19] (Tab 126).

⁵³⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0066 [4] (Tab 124); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0132 [18] (Tab 120); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0014.001.0009 at 0012 [14] (Tab 131A).

⁵³⁹ Exhibit 29-0023, Statement of Vincent Toole, STAT.0593.001.0001_R at [13]; Transcript of V J Toole, T15752:19-32 (Day 153).

‘even’ in circumstances where the abuse alleged is historical, and where the allegation is based on the testimony of only one witness.⁵⁴⁰

Branch Office Legal Department to advise on legal obligations

297 The Branch Office Legal Department will provide to the congregational elders ‘legal advice based on the facts and the applicable law’, including in relation to any mandatory reporting obligations applicable to the congregational elders.⁵⁴¹

Guidance provided by the Service Department / Desk

298 After calling the Legal Department, the elders may be directed to contact the Service Department for assistance with any questions regarding theocratic or judicial aspects of the case, how to protect children, and how to spiritually comfort and support the victim.⁵⁴² The Service Department also provides guidance on when and how elders should interview a young victim of child abuse.⁵⁴³

299 The *2013 Service Desk Guidelines* provide for the guidance that should be offered when an elder is calling in relation to reports from publishers of an awareness that a person in an appointed role has ‘molested a child in the past’.⁵⁴⁴ Those Guidelines say that the elders should be informed of any legal obligation to report to authorities that may apply, and that ‘individuals should not be discouraged from reporting matters to the authorities but should be reminded of the need for confidentiality when speaking with others, thus avoiding a charge of slander’.⁵⁴⁵

300 Mr Spinks gave evidence that in the first instance the advice given to congregational elders reporting an incident of child sexual abuse is generic advice ‘from the published material’, followed by a request that the elders provide the Service Desk with details in writing to enable the Service Desk to assist them.⁵⁴⁶ Mr Spinks said that the generic advice offered is set out on page 131 of the elders’ handbook, *Shepherd the Flock*, which reads as follows:⁵⁴⁷

Child abuse is a crime. Never suggest to anyone that they should not report an allegation of child abuse to the police or other authorities. If you are asked, make it clear that whether to report the matter to authorities or not is a personal decision for each individual to make and that there are no congregation sanctions for either decision. Elders will not criticize anyone who reports such an allegation to the authorities. If the victim wishes to make a report, it is his or her absolute right to do so. – Gal. 6:5.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0067 [4] (Tab 124).

⁵⁴¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0067 [4]-[5] (Tab 124).

⁵⁴² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0067 [5] (Tab 124);
Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [25]-[26] and [28]-[33].

⁵⁴³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0084 [46]-[47] (Tab 126).

⁵⁴⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0081 [31]-[33] (Tab 126).

⁵⁴⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0081 [33] (Tab 126).

⁵⁴⁶ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15661:2-18 (Day 152).

⁵⁴⁷ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15661:20-31, T15661:44-T15662:1-4 (Day 152).

⁵⁴⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0132-133 [19] (Tab 120).

- 301 Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that it was not the practice of the Service Desk to put or confirm in writing the advice given in the first instance to elders.⁵⁴⁹
- 302 Although the *Shepherd the Flock* handbook advises that '[t]he branch office will ... give direction based on the circumstances involved in each situation',⁵⁵⁰ Mr Spinks accepted that the position is that following provision of generic advice to elders by the Service Desk, 'then it is over to the elders as to what they do' and that the Service Desk does not offer 'specific advice in a particular situation'.⁵⁵¹
- 303 However, it was the evidence of Mr Horley in particular, but also of Messrs De Rooy, Bello and Doug Jackson, that they as congregational elders specifically rely upon the advice of the Branch Office in handling complaints of child sexual abuse.⁵⁵² Mr Horley told the Royal Commission that he would need to seek advice and take direction from the Branch Office on how to proceed in relation to matters involving reporting to police,⁵⁵³ application of the two-witness rule,⁵⁵⁴ interviewing of survivors,⁵⁵⁵ flexibility of Scriptural interpretation,⁵⁵⁶ fairness of the process,⁵⁵⁷ and how he might proceed if faced with BCB's situation again today.⁵⁵⁸
- 304 Mr Horley also said that there may have been changes to the process, but that those changes are not recorded in the elders' handbook, and that is where the Branch Office may offer further advice when elders contact it as directed.⁵⁵⁹
- 305 It is submitted that the present practice of the Service Desk of offering generic advice about how to handle a complaint of child sexual abuse is unlikely to provide sufficient guidance to congregational elders who are directed to contact the Branch Office for, and expect, specific guidance⁵⁶⁰ in handling such a complaint. It is further submitted that there is therefore a risk that congregational elders with little or no experience of handling complaints of child sexual abuse are left without proper guidance to deal with such complaints, thereby exposing victims of abuse to the risk of further trauma as a result of inexperienced handling of their complaints.

⁵⁴⁹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15661:2-6 (Day 152).

⁵⁵⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0132 [18] (Tab 120).

⁵⁵¹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15662:45-T15663:8 (Day 152).

⁵⁵² Transcript of M Horley, T15186:6-8, T15193:2-3, T15193:13-15, T15193:46-T15194:3, T15196:3-9, T15198:7-12, T15198:31-36, T15218:18-23, T15219:23-26, and T15220:39-42 (Day 147);

Transcript of D J Jackson, T15233:12-16, T15255:19-26 (Day 147);

Transcript of J Bello, T15268:47-T15269:2 (Day 148);

Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15579:29-34 (Day 151).

⁵⁵³ Transcript of M Horley, T15186:6-8 (Day 147).

⁵⁵⁴ Transcript of M Horley, T15193:2-3, T15193:13-15, T15193:46-T15194:3 (Day 147).

⁵⁵⁵ Transcript of M Horley, T15198:7-12, T15198:31-36, T15219:23-26 (Day 147).

⁵⁵⁶ Transcript of M Horley, T15196:3-9 (Day 147).

⁵⁵⁷ Transcript of M Horley, T15220:39-42 (Day 147).

⁵⁵⁸ Transcript of M Horley, T15218:18-23 (Day 147).

⁵⁵⁹ Transcript of M Horley, T15220:39-42 (Day 147).

⁵⁶⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0132 [18] (Tab 120).

7.4 Investigation of allegations of child sexual abuse

Two elders to investigate every allegation

306 Elders are instructed that, having carefully reviewed the letter to all bodies of elders of 1 October 2012⁵⁶¹ and paragraphs 18-21 of Chapter 12 of the *Shepherd the Flock* handbook,⁵⁶² two congregational elders should investigate every allegation of child sexual abuse.⁵⁶³

Victim to give testimony before the elders and the accused

307 As a part of their investigation, the elders are instructed that they should speak to the accused about the allegation.⁵⁶⁴ If the accused denies the allegation, then the elders 'should try to arrange a meeting with him and the accuser together'.⁵⁶⁵ In the case of an allegation of child sexual abuse, the elders are directed to contact the Branch Office before arranging a meeting with the child and the accused.⁵⁶⁶

308 Mr Spinks gave evidence that since the mid-1990s the Jehovah's Witness organisation has 'recognised that a victim or a survivor should not have to confront their abuser'.⁵⁶⁷ The only document which Mr Spinks was able to identify in which this policy was stated was a 'S-337' form dated 1998⁵⁶⁸ which had recently been located by an older member of the Service Department stuck inside his copy of the superseded *Pay Attention 1991* elders' handbook.⁵⁶⁹

309 Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that the S-337 form was an outline of what circuit overseers would go through in their meetings with bodies of elders in the applicable six month period and that the policy would not have been restated in subsequent S-337 forms.⁵⁷⁰

310 In the circumstances, the document cannot be said to be a current record of policy and is of very limited relevance. Be that as it may, it provides as follows:⁵⁷¹

BEFORE FORMING A JUDICIAL COMMITTEE (4 min.)

1. How can the person who is a witness to a serious sin aid both the wrongdoer and the congregation? (The witness should make sure the responsible elders become aware of it. Usually best to approach the person involved first, though it is not wrong to go directly to elders. He should

⁵⁶¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 (Tab 124).

⁵⁶² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0132 [18]-[19] (Tab 120).

⁵⁶³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [11] (Tab 124);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0088 (Tab 109);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT. 0003.001.0001 at 0073 [38] (Tab 120).

⁵⁶⁴ Exhibit 20-0003, WAT. 0003.001.0001 at 0073 at [38] (Tab 120).

⁵⁶⁵ Exhibit 20-0003, WAT. 0003.001.0001 at 0073 at [39] (Tab 120).

⁵⁶⁶ Exhibit 20-0003, WAT. 0003.001.0001 at 0073 at [39] (Tab 120).

⁵⁶⁷ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15686:36-39 (Day 152).

⁵⁶⁸ Exhibit 29-0020, EXH.029.020.0001.

⁵⁶⁹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15687:15-21 (Day 152).

⁵⁷⁰ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15702:5-38 (Day 152).

⁵⁷¹ Exhibit 29-0020, EXH.029.020.0001 at 0003.

encourage the wrongdoer to approach the elders, then after a reasonable period of time check with the elders to be sure they know)...

2. When is it not advisable for the witness to confront the accused alone? What should elders do? (When he is a party to the wrongdoing, is a victim, or is extremely timid. Children who are victims of molestation should not be required to confront the accused. In some cases two elders or an elder and the witness can confront the accused)

JUDICIAL COMMITTEE HEARING PROCEDURE (24 min.)

...

2. Explain what is to be done if the accused person does not admit guilt. (The alleged wrongdoer has right to face his accusers. In most cases, he will have opportunity to hear their testimony and reply. After presenting accusation and its source, the committee will give the accused opportunity to respond. However, if, perhaps due to distance, it is impractical for the witness to be present, this should not prevent the committee from proceeding.

- 311 The paragraphs extracted from the S-377 form above appear to mirror very closely the instruction offered to elders in *Pay Attention 1991*.⁵⁷² The paragraphs, however, expand upon *Pay Attention 1991* in two respects. First, in the context of the requirement that a witness should confront the accused before approaching elders, the S-377 form specifies that child victims of molestation should not be required to confront the accused. It is submitted that on its face the S-377 form exemption for children who are victims of sexual abuse applies only to children (i.e. not when child victims are adults) and it does not apply beyond the requirement that a person in the first instance confront the person who has wronged them, let alone to the stage at which elders are investigating a complaint. Secondly, the form provides for an exemption from presentation of an allegation before the accused and the committee if such presentation is impractical. This latter provision was later incorporated into the *Shepherd the Flock* elders' handbook,⁵⁷³ and as with the provision in *Shepherd the Flock*, it is submitted, appears only to provide for exemption in circumstances of practical difficulty (such as distance) rather than when the witness is a victim of child sexual abuse.
- 312 Mr Spinks gave further evidence that a statement written by the victim and given to the investigating elders would be sufficient at the investigative stage of a matter.⁵⁷⁴ He agreed that insofar as the S-337 form supported that policy, it only did so in respect of the investigative stage as opposed to the judicial hearing stage of a matter.⁵⁷⁵
- 313 Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that an accuser facing their abuser via written statement 'conforms perfectly with the Scriptural requirement'.⁵⁷⁶ The Scriptural requirement referred to is presumably that recorded in *Pay Attention 1991* as

⁵⁷² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0050-51 (Tab 80).

⁵⁷³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0090-91 [2] (Tab 120).

⁵⁷⁴ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15704:11-14 (Day 152)

⁵⁷⁵ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15704:47-T15705:20 (Day 152)

⁵⁷⁶ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15706:39-45 (Day 152).

'[a]ccusers should be willing to assume their responsibility, as was required in Israel (Deut. 17:6, 7; 19: 16-21)'.⁵⁷⁷ The first of those references provides that 'the hand of the witnesses should be the first to come against him to put him to death' and the second provides that those who make false allegations must be 'removed' from the congregation.

If the accuser or accused refuses to meet with the elders

314 The *Shepherd the Flock* handbook provides that if the accused denies an allegation of wrongdoing and he or his accuser refuses to speak to the elders, 'the elders will leave matters in Jehovah's hands (Deut.19:15-17; 1 Tim. 5:19, 24, 25 ...)'.⁵⁷⁸

315 Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that if someone accused of a crime refused to answer an allegation, he would be disfellowshipped on a charge of brazen loose conduct, which is 'an absolute disregard for the authority and standards'.⁵⁷⁹

Interviewing children

316 The 2013 Service Desk Guidelines address when elders should interview a young child victim of sexual abuse. Specifically, the Guidelines set out the advice that should be offered to elders who call the Service Desk for advice about interviewing a child.⁵⁸⁰ The Guidelines provide, for instance, that if there is 'more than one accuser and thereby already sufficient evidence to handle the matter judicially ... there is likely no need to interview the young child'.⁵⁸¹

317 Mr Spinks accepted that on the evidence before the Royal Commission, in circumstances where elders are unable to interview a child because it would be too traumatizing or the child's parents do not consent, and there was no confession or other evidence,⁵⁸² then the elders are unable to take judicial action.⁵⁸³

318 Mr Spinks also agreed that it was quite probable that elders involved in interviewing a child victim of sexual abuse would not have any specialised training in dealing with child victims of trauma.⁵⁸⁴

Establishing the veracity of an allegation

319 As was the position in 1991, elders are not authorized to form a judicial committee in order to take congregational action unless the child sexual abuse is proven according to Biblical standards which are satisfied by evidence of:⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁷⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.002.0001 at 0051 (Tab 80).

⁵⁷⁸ Exhibit 20-0003, WAT. 0003.001.0001 at 0073-74 at [39] (Tab 120).

⁵⁷⁹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15740:26-32 (Day 152).

⁵⁸⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0075 at 0084 [46]-[51] (Tab 126).

⁵⁸¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0075 at 0084 [46] (Tab 126).

⁵⁸² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0075 at 0084 [46] (Tab 126).

⁵⁸³ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15708:32-39 (Day 152).

⁵⁸⁴ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15710:2-5 (Day 152).

⁵⁸⁵ Exhibit 29-0019, Annexure 2, STAT.0591.001.0018 at [2.2];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [11] (Tab 124).

- a) a confession from the accused, which ‘may be accepted as conclusive proof without other corroborating evidence. (Josh 7:19)’⁵⁸⁶
- b) the two-witness rule, which appears to have been modified slightly by the 1 October 2012 letter to require that the witnesses are ‘credible’⁵⁸⁷
- c) the testimony of two or three witnesses to separate incidents of the same kind of wrongdoing,⁵⁸⁸ or
- d) strong circumstantial evidence testified to by at least two witnesses.⁵⁸⁹

320 Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that in some cases a combination of the four Scriptural criteria for establishing the truth of an allegation ‘may be used as a basis for taking congregational action’.⁵⁹⁰ Mr Spinks did not specify the type of circumstances in which such an approach might be taken.

321 Elders are instructed that the testimony of youths may be considered by the investigating elders, who must ‘determine whether the testimony has the ring of truth’.⁵⁹¹ The 2013 Service Desk Guidelines advise elders to have regard to certain criteria as set out in the *Shepherd the Flock* handbook in assessing the veracity of a child’s allegation.⁵⁹² Those criteria include the level of maturity of the child or youth, the consistency of the child’s memory, and the reputation of the child’s parents.⁵⁹³

322 The testimony of ‘unbelievers and disfellowshipped or disassociated ones’ may also be considered, but the elders are advised to weigh any such testimony carefully.⁵⁹⁴ Mr Jackson told the Royal Commission that the reason for this direction to elders is because ‘someone who is not a [Jehovah’s] Witness may have no difficulties at all about telling a lie’.⁵⁹⁵

Oral and further evidence about the flexibility of the two-witness rule

323 It was Mr O’Brien’s evidence that simply because the two-witness rule applies does not mean that a victim is not believed or that the elders don’t take precautions.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁸⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0072 [37] (Tab 120);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 (Tab 124).

⁵⁸⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0072 [37] (Tab 120);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [11] (Tab 124);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0084 (Tab 109).

⁵⁸⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0072-0073 [37] (Tab 120);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [11] (Tab 124).

⁵⁸⁹ Exhibit 29-0019, Annexure 2, STAT.0591.001.0018 at [2.2];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0062 [11] (Tab 120).

⁵⁹⁰ Exhibit 29-0019, Annexure 2, STAT.0591.001.0023 at [2.2].

⁵⁹¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0073 [37] (Tab 120).

⁵⁹² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0084 [47] (Tab 126).

⁵⁹³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0134 [21] (Tab 120).

⁵⁹⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0073 [37] (Tab 120).

⁵⁹⁵ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15997:4-20 (Day 155).

⁵⁹⁶ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15833:21-33 (Day 153).

- 324 Messrs Horley, De Rooy, Ali and Bowditch each said that notwithstanding that they believed BCB's and BCG's allegations of abuse, they were bound by the two-witness rule in handling the respective complaints.⁵⁹⁷
- 325 Mr Spinks and Mr O'Brien both said that the two-witness rule is a Scriptural direction that the Jehovah's Witnesses do not have the authority to change.⁵⁹⁸
- 326 Mr Spinks accepted that more often than not, there will only be one witness to an incident of sexual abuse.⁵⁹⁹ Mr Spinks also told the Royal Commission that he had no reason to question the proposition as published in the Jehovah's Witness organisation's own publications that allegations of sexual abuse are almost always justified.⁶⁰⁰
- 327 Mr Jackson's evidence was that there is a Scriptural basis to the two-witness rule. He referred specifically to Matthew 18:16, Deuteronomy 19:15, 2 Corinthians 13:1 and 1 Timothy 5:19.⁶⁰¹
- 328 Mr Jackson was asked about the extent to which Deuteronomy 22:23-27 should inform the Scriptural foundation of the two-witness rule.⁶⁰² Deuteronomy 22:23-27 offers the example of a man raping a woman in a field in circumstances where there are no witnesses to the rape and where in spite of the absence of a second witness, the man is to be put to death. It was put to Mr Jackson, and he accepted, that that Scripture contemplates a case where there are no witnesses to the rape other than the woman herself.⁶⁰³ It was also put to Mr Jackson, and he agreed, that only one witness was sufficient, in those circumstances, for the man to be put to death.⁶⁰⁴ Mr Jackson told the Royal Commission that added to the single witness in the situation contemplated by Deuteronomy 22:23-27 was the 'circumstance' of the rape.⁶⁰⁵ Mr Jackson said that the Jehovah's Witnesses had 'already acknowledged that circumstances can also be one of the witnesses'.⁶⁰⁶ The principal 'circumstance' of the rape was that there was no third-person witness, as is usually the case with instances of child sexual abuse.
- 329 It was suggested to Mr Jackson that this Scripture provided the basis for the Governing Body not to apply the two-witness rule in the case of sexual abuse, or that it called into

⁵⁹⁷ Transcript of M Horley, T15202:19-24 and T15203:1-4 (Day 147);
 Transcript of K D Bowditch, T15404:5-9 and T15405:45-T15406:1 (Day 149);
 Transcript of D Ali, T15331:1-29 (Day 148), T15353:6-13 and T15361:10-17 (Day 149);
 Transcript of A R De Rooy, T15547:1-40 (Day 151);
 Exhibit 29-0007, Statement of Dino Ali, STAT.0598.001.0001_R at [5.6];
 Exhibit 29-0016, Statement of Albert Ronald De Rooy, STAT.0597.001.0001_R at [6.1].

⁵⁹⁸ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15705:31-40 (Day 152);

Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15833:21-28 (Day 153).

⁵⁹⁹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15710:40-43 (Day 152).

⁶⁰⁰ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15710:45-T15711:7 and T15716:25-39 (Day 152);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0205 at 0210 (Tab 78);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0238 at 0241 (Tab 82).

⁶⁰¹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15967:33-T15969:46 (Day 155).

⁶⁰² Transcript of G W Jackson, T15970:-T15971:47 (Day 155).

⁶⁰³ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15971:16-20 (Day 155).

⁶⁰⁴ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15971:26-29 (Day 155).

⁶⁰⁵ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15971:19-24 (Day 155).

⁶⁰⁶ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15972:1-3 (Day 155).

question the proper foundation to the two-witness rule in the case of sexual abuse. Mr Jackson's answer was to say that the Jehovah's Witnesses believe that there is a proper foundation to the rule because of the number of times that it is emphasised in the Scriptures.⁶⁰⁷ Mr Jackson did not say that there is no prospect of modifying the application of the two-witness rule within Scriptural requirements so as to make it inapplicable to cases of sexual abuse.

- 330 In a statement provided to the Royal Commission after the close of the public hearing, Mr Jackson offered an alternative explanation of Deuteronomy 22:23-27 to that which he had accepted in oral evidence.⁶⁰⁸ In his statement Mr Jackson explained that the man's guilt had been judged at an earlier stage in Deuteronomy, and that the referenced verses dealt only with establishing guilt (or absence thereof) on the part of the woman.⁶⁰⁹ In his statement, Mr Jackson did not seek to explain the reason for the difference between his oral and written evidence as to context of Deuteronomy 22:23-27.
- 331 It is submitted that there is little utility in attempting to resolve the conflict between Mr Jackson's oral and his subsequent written evidence on the subject of the relevance of Deuteronomy 22:23-27 to the flexibility of the two-witness rule. However, it is open to the Royal Commission to note the difficulty experienced by even a member of the Governing Body in arriving at an interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:23-27 which renders it irrelevant to the application of the two-witness rule.
- 332 Mr Jackson was asked to what extent the Jehovah's Witness organisation was bound by the Scriptures to maintain and apply the two-witness rule.⁶¹⁰ He did not respond to the question, instead telling the Royal Commission that he 'thought that that had already been established in the hearings, but, if not, certainly that is something that we need to follow up'.⁶¹¹
- 333 Following his oral evidence on the subject of Deuteronomy 22:23-27, Mr Jackson was taken to the *Shepherd the Flock* handbook and to the example regarding witnesses to adultery.⁶¹² It was put to Mr Jackson, and he agreed, that the example in the handbook that two witnesses observing the opportunity for adultery, as opposed to two witnesses directly observing the adultery itself, demonstrates circumstances where the two witnesses to the opportunity will be sufficient to establish the case of adultery.⁶¹³
- 334 It was then put to Mr Jackson that the same principles should apply in the case of child sexual abuse.⁶¹⁴ Mr Jackson did not respond directly to the proposition and instead told

⁶⁰⁷ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15971:43-T15972:10 (Day 155).

⁶⁰⁸ Exhibit 29-0035, Statement of Geoffrey William Jackson, STAT.0670.001.0001 at [15]-[20].

⁶⁰⁹ Exhibit 29-0035, Statement of Geoffrey William Jackson, STAT.0670.001.0001 at [18]-[19].

⁶¹⁰ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15974:4-7 (Day 155).

⁶¹¹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15974:14-16 (Day 155).

⁶¹² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0062 [11] (Tab 120).

⁶¹³ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15972:23-T15973:20 (Day 155).

⁶¹⁴ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15973:22-25 (Day 155).

the Royal Commission that it was ‘a very large question and ... something that we would need to consider carefully’.⁶¹⁵

- 335 Mr Jackson nevertheless agreed that circumstantial or corroborating evidence such as the evident trauma of a victim of child sexual abuse ‘would need to be taken into account’ as corroborating evidence in the determination of the veracity of an allegation.⁶¹⁶ It was not clear however if it was Mr Jackson’s evidence that the witness of the evident trauma experienced by a victim of child sexual abuse could therefore constitute the required second witness.⁶¹⁷ Mr Jackson said that the Jehovah’s Witness organisation is interested in following up such matters after the Royal Commission.⁶¹⁸
- 336 It is submitted that Mr Jackson was evasive and unhelpful in assisting the Royal Commission to understand whether there is scope for interpretation of the two-witness rule such that would allow for action to be taken in circumstances where there is only one direct witness to an incident of child sexual abuse.
- 337 It is further submitted that the current position is that where the victim is the only witness to an incident of child sexual abuse and the abuser does not confess, the Jehovah’s Witness organisation will not take action until such time as a second child is abused in similar circumstances by the same accused person. It is submitted that this position is untenable and is completely at odds with the organisation’s expression of abhorrence of child sexual abuse.
- 338 Accordingly, the Jehovah’s Witness organisation should be encouraged to explore the possibility adverted to by Mr Jackson of considering a more flexible interpretation of the two-witness rule such that would allow for the acceptance of circumstantial and corroborating evidence, such as the evident trauma of a victim of child sexual abuse.

Oral evidence that wrongdoing must ultimately be established by elders

- 339 Mr Jackson gave evidence that the ultimate decision to establish the nature and the occurrence of wrongdoing in the investigation of an allegation of child sexual abuse, must be made by the investigating elders.⁶¹⁹ Mr Jackson told the Royal Commission that the scriptural basis for this requirement is the headship principle in 1 Corinthians 11:3.⁶²⁰
- 340 Mr Jackson told the Royal Commission that there is ‘no leeway whatsoever’ in the Jehovah’s Witnesses system of beliefs for allowing women to be elders.⁶²¹ Mr O’Brien’s evidence was to like effect,⁶²² as was that of Mr Spinks.⁶²³ Mr Jackson went on to tell the

⁶¹⁵ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15973:22-35 (Day 155).

⁶¹⁶ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15973:37-47 (Day 155).

⁶¹⁷ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15973:37-44 (Day 155).

⁶¹⁸ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15973:45-47 (Day 155).

⁶¹⁹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15961:16-45 (Day 155).

⁶²⁰ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15962:3-7 (Day 155).

⁶²¹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15951:1826 (Day 155).

⁶²² Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15831:40-T15832:6; T15863:23-38; T15866:21-26 (Day 153).

⁶²³ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15706:20-27 (Day 152).

Royal Commission that the Bible teaches that a judge must be a man but was, at the time, unable to provide a specific scriptural reference in support of his understanding.⁶²⁴

- 341 In his written statement provided to the Royal Commission following the close of the public hearing, Mr Jackson offered the relevant scriptural references to which he adverted but was unable to provide during the hearing. Specifically, he referred to various books of the Old Testament which, he said, describe judges and priests as being all male.⁶²⁵ Mr Jackson said that although the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament ended '[o]n Pentecost 33 C.E.', its principles 'guided the first century Christian congregation and served as the context for future practices'.⁶²⁶ Mr Jackson explained that it is on this basis that the apostle Paul 'identifies only male members of the congregation as potential elders' in 1 Timothy 3:1.⁶²⁷
- 342 It should be noted by the Royal Commission that, in his statement, Mr Jackson referred only to those books of the Old Testament in which men are described as judges, and did not refer to Judges 4:4-5 which tells of the female judge, Deborah. Specifically, the verses report that Deborah, 'a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time' and that the 'Israelites would go up to her for judgment'. Since a woman judge was apparently accepted in the Old Testament, it is not apparent why women should not be judges of 'Christian' guilt or innocence in the Jehovah's Witness organisation.
- 343 Mr Jackson accepted that it would be possible for the Jehovah's Witness organisation to consider, through research and checking the Scriptures, whether the process could be modified to allow women to be involved in the decision as to whether an allegation was true or false.⁶²⁸
- 344 It is submitted that the current position is that the ultimate decision to establish the veracity of an allegation of child sexual abuse must be made by investigating elders and that an elder must be a man. The Jehovah's Witness organisation should however be encouraged to explore the possibility adverted to by Mr Jackson of developing the process to allow women to be involved in deciding the truth or otherwise of a sexual abuse allegation, and that there is real and identified scope for the organisation to do so in accordance with the Scriptures.

The role of women in the investigation of an allegation of child sexual abuse

- 345 Mr O'Brien accepted that women bring a different perspective and understanding to that of men to an issue such as whether or not a young girl or woman was sexually assaulted.⁶²⁹
- 346 Mr O'Brien said that at the investigative stage of a matter there is no Biblical requirement that a victim of child sexual abuse present his or her allegation in person

⁶²⁴ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15955:8-36 (Day 155).

⁶²⁵ Exhibit 29-0035, Statement of Geoffrey William Jackson, STAT.0670.001.0001 at [4]-[5].

⁶²⁶ Exhibit 29-0035, Statement of Geoffrey William Jackson, STAT.0670.001.0001 at [6].

⁶²⁷ Exhibit 29-0035, Statement of Geoffrey William Jackson, STAT.0670.001.0001 at [6].

⁶²⁸ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15959:46-T15960:11 (Day 155).

⁶²⁹ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15830:28-33 (Day 153).

to three elders.⁶³⁰ He told the Royal Commission that the question of whether women could be involved in the investigation process requires further consideration. Specifically, he advised that ‘if it’s based upon the Bible standards, then [the Branch Committee] would present that as one of the recommendations from the Commission’ and that he didn’t ‘see why a woman couldn’t be involved in the process, particularly in establishing the victim’s statement, so she doesn’t have to face three men’.⁶³¹

- 347 Mr Jackson agreed that an elder may find it difficult to appreciate exactly how a young woman making an allegation of child sexual abuse might feel in making that allegation.⁶³²
- 348 Mr Jackson said that there is no Biblical impediment to women being involved in the investigation of alleged sexual abuse.⁶³³ He told the Royal Commission that in circumstances where elders cannot talk to a victim because perhaps to do so would traumatise the victim too much, two women close to the victim may take the victim’s testimony and convey it to the investigating elders.⁶³⁴ Mr Jackson agreed, however, that one of the tasks of elders who hear allegations of child sexual abuse is to measure the credibility of the person alleging the abuse.⁶³⁵
- 349 It is submitted that Mr Jackson’s evidence is not entirely consistent with the position clearly set out in *Shepherd the Flock* (and referred to above) that should an accuser refuse to meet with elders, then the matter can proceed no further and is ‘left in Jehovah’s hands’.⁶³⁶
- 350 It is submitted that the current process of investigation doesn’t provide for, or even allow, the involvement of women as investigators or even to receive a complainant’s statement and pass it on to the investigating elders. Further, in the light of Mr Jackson’s evidence that an elder, and therefore not a woman in the congregation, must determine the credibility of a witness, there is limited scope for the involvement of women in the investigation.
- 351 It is nevertheless submitted that the Jehovah’s Witness organisation should be encouraged to explore ways in which women can be involved in the investigation of allegations of child sexual abuse, in particular to avoid the need for a complainant to have to make a statement directly to or in the presence of elders. Mr Jackson’s evidence that there is no Biblical impediment to women being involved in the investigation and that two women close to the victim may take the victim’s testimony and convey it to the investigating elders, is a positive indication that the Jehovah’s Witness organisation may be able to improve this aspect of the existing procedure even within what they perceive to be their Scriptural strictures.

⁶³⁰ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15827:35-47 (Day 153).

⁶³¹ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15828:10-20, T15831:20-28 (Day 153).

⁶³² Transcript of G W Jackson, T15957:41-T15958:2 (Day 155).

⁶³³ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15954:11-27 (Day 155).

⁶³⁴ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15961:26-35 (Day 155).

⁶³⁵ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15957:25-29 (Day 155).

⁶³⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0073 [39] (Tab 120).

Where there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the allegation

352 Where according to the Scriptural rules there is insufficient evidence to substantiate an allegation of child sexual abuse, the matter is held in abeyance and elders are directed to 'remain vigilant with regard to the conduct and activity of the accused'.⁶³⁷ In this event, no further action is taken in relation to the complaint and the matter is 'left in Jehovah's hands'.⁶³⁸

Where there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegation

353 If sufficient evidence is discovered, the body of elders will assign a judicial committee to administer Scriptural discipline to the wrongdoer.⁶³⁹ Child sexual abuse is recognised as an offence for which a judicial committee should be formed.⁶⁴⁰

Available findings on the investigation process

F41 There are no circumstances in which the survivor of a sexual assault should have to make her allegation in the presence of the person whom she accuses of having assaulted her, and, contrary to the present position, the documents, manuals and instructions produced by the Jehovah's Witness organisation should make this clear.

F42 The requirement that two or more eyewitnesses to the same incident are required in the absence of a confession from the accused, the testimony of two or three witnesses to separate incidents of the same kind of wrongdoing, or strong circumstantial evidence testified to by at least two witnesses (i.e. the two witness rule):

- a) means that in respect of child sexual abuse which almost invariably occurs in private, very often no finding of guilt will be made in respect of a guilty accused
- b) causes victims of child sexual abuse to feel unheard and unsupported when it results in allegations of child sexual abuse not being upheld
- c) is a danger to children in the Jehovah's Witness organisation because its consequence is that very often nothing is done about an abuser in the organisation
- d) does not seem to be applied by the Jehovah's Witness organisation in the case of an accusation of adultery, which suggests that adultery is taken more seriously by the organisation than child sexual abuse, and
- e) needs to be revisited by the Jehovah's Witness organisation with a view to abandoning it or at least reformulating it to ensure that safe decisions as to someone being guilty of child sexual abuse can be made more easily.

F43 The requirement that only elders (i.e. men) can participate in the making of decisions in the investigation process on whether or not someone has committed child sexual abuse:

- a) is a fundamental flaw in that process which weakens the decisions by excluding women, and

⁶³⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [11] (Tab 124); Exhibit 29-0019, Annexure 2, STAT.0591.001.0018 at [3.1].

⁶³⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT. 0003.001.0001 at 0073 at [39] (Tab 120); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0310 at 0314 (Tab 84).

⁶³⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0088 (Tab 109); Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [38].

⁶⁴⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0062 [10] (Tab 120).

- b) needs to be revisited by the Jehovah’s Witness organisation to ensure a meaningful role for women.

7.5 Establishment of a judicial committee

Formation of a judicial committee

- 354 If wrongdoing is serious enough and it has been established by investigating elders that there is sufficient evidence of the wrongdoing having been committed, at least three elders will form a judicial committee to determine if the accused is genuinely repentant.⁶⁴¹
- 355 Mr O’Brien told the Royal Commission that ultimately the adjudication process will require three men because the elders must be men and it is the elders who are shepherds and who make the judicial decisions.⁶⁴²
- 356 When deciding if a judicial committee is necessary in the case of historical wrongdoing, the elders are to consider, among other things, whether the person confessed voluntarily, whether the matter is widely known, and if the lives of others are affected.⁶⁴³ In relation to the latter consideration, a life might be affected if, for example, child sexual abuse or adultery is involved.⁶⁴⁴
- 357 In cases involving allegations of child sexual abuse, elders are directed to contact their circuit overseer who will designate an experienced elder from a congregation in the circuit to sit on the judicial committee.⁶⁴⁵

Purpose of a judicial committee

- 358 The purpose of a judicial committee is for the elders to establish if the accused person is genuinely repentant and to determine the appropriate penalty having regard to that person’s degree of repentance. Elders on a judicial committee are charged with safeguarding the congregation and provide assistance to the wrongdoer.⁶⁴⁶

Confidentiality of a judicial committee

- 359 Elders are instructed that the fact of a judicial committee should not be disclosed to persons not entitled to know and ‘[s]trict confidentiality must be maintained to avoid

⁶⁴¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0088 (Tab 109);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0059 [1] (Tab 120);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0082 [1] (Tab 120).

⁶⁴² Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15828:2-4; T15830:1-4 (Day 153).

⁶⁴³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0075 [44] (Tab 120).

⁶⁴⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0075 [44] (Tab 120).

⁶⁴⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [11] (Tab 124);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0072 (Tab 125).

⁶⁴⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0059 [1] (Tab 120).

unnecessary entanglement with secular authorities who may be conducting a criminal investigation of the matter'.⁶⁴⁷

360 Mr Toole agreed that passing information or making a report to secular authorities would not produce an entanglement with those authorities.⁶⁴⁸

7.6 Judicial committee hearing procedure

Process explained to the accused

361 An accused person is invited to attend a meeting with the judicial committee and the elders are instructed to make clear to the accused that the meeting is a judicial hearing.⁶⁴⁹ Elders are directed to try and put the accused at ease and invite him to make a personal statement.⁶⁵⁰

362 There is no specific provision in the Jehovah's Witness organisation's documents that directs the elders to ensure that the accuser, when appearing before the judicial committee, is also at ease.

Accuser to present allegation in presence of the accused

363 If the accused maintains that he or she is innocent, then 'the witnesses to the wrongdoing should be presented and their testimony should be given in the presence of the accused'.⁶⁵¹ The *Shepherd the Flock* handbook provides that:

It is best that the witnesses give their testimony in person. However, it may be that the witnesses live a great distance away or for some reason are not able to be physically present. If so, their testimony may be presented in the hearing of the accused by a secure phone call or perhaps submitted in writing and read to the accused. The accused should be given the opportunity to respond to the testimony.⁶⁵²

364 On its face, the reference to 'witnesses' in this provision includes the person who complains of having been abused (save perhaps in the rare case where there are sufficient other witnesses to not require the victim to be a witness). The result is that as the provision stands, it is only in the case of the victim living a great distance away or there being some other reason of practicality that prevents a witness from being physically present that her evidence can be taken by telephone or submitted in writing. This raises the question of requiring the victim to give evidence in the presence of the three (male) members of the judicial committee and her abuser.

⁶⁴⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0014.001.0009 at 0011 (Tab 131A).

⁶⁴⁸ Transcript of V J Toole, T15766:14-19 (Day 153).

⁶⁴⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0084 [6] (Tab 120).

⁶⁵⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0089 [1]-[2] (Tab 120).

⁶⁵¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0090-91 [2] (Tab 120); Exhibit 29-0020, EXH.029.020.0001 at 0003.

⁶⁵² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0091 [2] (Tab 120).

- 365 Mr Toole accepted that the judicial committee process does not lend itself to a young abused person being full and frank about the details of her abuse.⁶⁵³ That stands to reason given the obvious difficulty that a young woman, for example, would have in recounting to three elders intimate details of a sexual nature.
- 366 Despite what is stated in *Shepherd the Flock* as quoted above, each of Messrs Spinks, Toole and O'Brien gave evidence that a victim of child sexual abuse does not these days need to face her abuser in a judicial committee unless she wants to.⁶⁵⁴ Mr O'Brien told the Royal Commission that a victim need not be involved after she has provided a statement to the elders detailing her abuse.⁶⁵⁵ Mr Jackson agreed that there are no circumstances in which the survivor of a sexual assault should have to make her allegation in the presence of the person whom she accuses of having assaulted her.⁶⁵⁶
- 367 It is submitted that the evidence of Messrs, Spinks, Toole and O'Brien is not supported by the available documentary evidence. That is to say, there is nothing in the documents which sets out the judicial committee process that provides for a complainant to give evidence only by way of statement other than what is recorded above. The Jehovah's Witness organisation is meticulous in setting out its processes in writing in various manuals and letters, and in ensuring that uniform processes are used throughout the world. Accordingly, to the extent that it suggests deviation from what is provided for or allowed under the documented processes, the evidence of the witnesses cannot be accepted.

Presence of support person

- 368 The *Shepherd the Flock* handbook instructs that those wishing to attend to provide moral support should not be allowed to do so. It relevantly provides that the judicial committee will:
- [H]ear only those witnesses who have relevant testimony regarding the alleged wrongdoing. Those who intend to testify only about the character of the accused should not be allowed to do so. The witnesses should not hear details and testimony of other witnesses. Observers should not be present for moral support.⁶⁵⁷
- 369 Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that the Jehovah's Witness organisation does allow a person complaining of child sexual abuse to have a support person present.⁶⁵⁸
- 370 Mr Spinks said that the passage in the *Shepherd the Flock* handbook disallowing support persons applied to the accused and did not apply to child sexual abuse matters.⁶⁵⁹ He

⁶⁵³ Transcript of V J Toole, T15802:16-22 (Day 153).

⁶⁵⁴ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15833:43-T15834:26 (Day 153);
Transcript of V J Toole, T15802:16-22 (Day 153);
Transcript of R P Spinks, T15704:21-29 (Day 152).

⁶⁵⁵ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15828:4-8 (Day 153).

⁶⁵⁶ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15952:16-20 (Day 155).

⁶⁵⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0091 [3] (Tab 120).

⁶⁵⁸ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15693:29-33 (Day 152).

⁶⁵⁹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15693:42-44 and T15694:4-6 (Day 152).

agreed in evidence that the passage was confusing and told the Royal Commission that it could be better written to make clear that the prohibition on moral support applied only to the accused.⁶⁶⁰

- 371 It is submitted that the present documented position is that a victim is not allowed to be accompanied by a support person when appearing before a judicial committee. To the extent that this is not the case, the documents should be revised to reflect the true procedure and allowances in respect of support for a victim of child sexual abuse.

Available findings on the judicial committee process

F44 Under the current documented judicial committee process, if the evidence of the complainant is to be taken into account then she must give evidence in person unless she lives a great distance away or for some other reason is not able to be physically present.

F45 The stated willingness of the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia to have the evidence of a complainant of child sexual abuse give evidence remotely or by way of a written statement should be formalised and documented so that those running judicial committee processes and those affected by them are properly advised of the position.

F46 Under the current documented judicial committee process, a complainant of child sexual abuse is prohibited from having someone present with her in the judicial committee process to offer support.

F47 The stated willingness of the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia to allow a complainant of child sexual abuse to be accompanied by a support person of her choosing should be formalised and documented so that those running judicial committee processes and those affected by them are properly advised of the position.

F48 The current documented process for responding to allegations of child sexual abuse within the Jehovah's Witness organisation is focussed largely on the rights and comfort of the accused, with little regard to the requirements of a victim of abuse.

7.7 Assessment of repentance

- 372 Having heard the testimony of the witnesses to the wrongdoing and/or the confession and personal statement of the accused, the judicial committee elders are instructed to convene alone to consider the degree of repentance of the accused.⁶⁶¹
- 373 The primary task of the elders on a judicial committee in circumstances where guilt has been established and where the wrongdoer is genuinely repentant, is to rehabilitate and restore the wrongdoer irrespective of the gravity of the wrongdoing or sin.⁶⁶²
- 374 The Jehovah's Witnesses consider that 'repentance involves a deep regret over a damaged relationship with Jehovah, remorse over the reproach brought upon Jehovah's

⁶⁶⁰ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15695:2-18 (Day 152).

⁶⁶¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0091-92 [5] (Tab 120).

⁶⁶² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0089 (Tab 109);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0004.001.0027 (Tab 100).

name and people, and a sincere longing to come back into God's favour'.⁶⁶³ The *Shepherd the Flock* handbook provides that the judicial committee's decision as to degree of repentance of a wrongdoer should not 'be determined by the notoriety of the wrong'.⁶⁶⁴ The judicial committee should look for clear works of repentance commensurate with his wrongdoing. (2 Cor.7:10, 11)'.⁶⁶⁵

- 375 The *Shepherd the Flock* handbook provides elders with a non-exhaustive list of indicators of genuine repentance to which they might have regard when assessing the repentance of a wrongdoer.⁶⁶⁶
- 376 Mr Spinks gave evidence that the risk of re-offending is not part of any assessment of repentance and acknowledged that in a court-setting there would likely be expert evidence before the decision-makers as to that risk.⁶⁶⁷

Available findings on the management of risk

F49 The failure of the Jehovah's Witness organisation to take into account the risk of re-offending when considering whether an offender is repentant, and consequently in deciding whether to merely reprove rather than to disfellowship, or whether to re-admit someone who has previously been disfellowshipped, does not adequately take account of considerations of child safety and should be revisited.

7.8 Sanctions for wrongdoing – deletion

- 377 The *Shepherd the Flock* handbook provides that if it comes to light that a serving elder or ministerial servant has committed a disfellowshipping offence such as child sexual abuse, he would likely be disqualified from serving 'for many years'.⁶⁶⁸ Deletion of an elder is announced to the congregation and the circuit overseer is required to report deletion to the Branch Office.⁶⁶⁹
- 378 In his first written statement, Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that an elder or ministerial servant is immediately removed if he is found to have engaged in child sexual abuse.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0092 [6] (Tab 120).

⁶⁶⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0092 [7] (Tab 120).

⁶⁶⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0092 [7] (Tab 120).

⁶⁶⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0093-94[10] (Tab 120).

⁶⁶⁷ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15713:44-T15714:10 (Day 152).

⁶⁶⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0039 [20] (Tab 120).

⁶⁶⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0034 at 0035 (Tab 128);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0039 at 0043 (Tab 129);

Transcript of D J Jackson, T15247:10-17 (Day 148).

⁶⁷⁰ Exhibit 29-0019, Statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [72] and [74];

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0034 at [10]-[12] (Tab 128).

7.9 Sanctions for wrongdoing - reproof

379 If a judicial committee determines that a wrongdoer is genuinely repentant, including in cases of child sexual abuse, then it reproves the wrongdoer.⁶⁷¹

Announcement of reproof - public or private

380 Reproof is a form of discipline that allows the wrongdoer to remain a member of the congregation⁶⁷² and which involves telling the accused that he is reproofed either entirely in private or before those aware of the wrongdoing.⁶⁷³ It is a sanction intended to discipline the wrongdoer and warn the onlookers that wrongdoing has been committed.⁶⁷⁴

381 The judicial committee determines whether to make the announcement of reproof publicly or privately.⁶⁷⁵ If the wrongdoing is widely known or is likely to become widely known in the congregation, the elders are instructed that a public announcement will 'safeguard the reputation of the congregation'.⁶⁷⁶ Alternatively, if the elders consider that the 'congregation needs to be on guard concerning the repentant wrongdoer', for example, in cases involving child sexual abuse, then announcing the reproof publicly will 'serve as a protection for the congregation'.⁶⁷⁷

382 While the fact of reproof may be announced, the grounds of the reproof are not.⁶⁷⁸

Application of restrictions

383 A person who is judicially reproofed is disqualified from special privileges, such as serving in a position of authority.⁶⁷⁹ Judicial restrictions are also imposed on those who are reproofed, which restrictions might include being counselled by the elders about appropriate behaviour with children.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 (Tab 124);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0097-0098 [18], (Tab 120);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0089 (Tab 109);
Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [43];
Exhibit 29-0019, Annexure 2, STAT.0591.001.0023 at [4.9];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0007 and 0016 (Tab 133).

⁶⁷² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 (Tab 124);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0097-0098, (Tab 120);
Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [43];
Exhibit 29-0019, Annexure 2, STAT.0591.001.0023 at [4.9];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0007 and 0016 (Tab 133).

⁶⁷³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0097-0101 (Tab 120).

⁶⁷⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0089 (Tab 109);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [11] (Tab 124);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0097-0098 [20] (Tab 120).

⁶⁷⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0098 [20] (Tab 120).

⁶⁷⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0098-99 [20] (Tab 120).

⁶⁷⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0099 [20] (Tab 120).

⁶⁷⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0099 [21] (Tab 120);
Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [62].

⁶⁷⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0098 [19] (Tab 120).

⁶⁸⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0098 [19] (Tab 120);

384 The *Organized to do Jehovah's Will* handbook provides that restrictions are removed in time 'as the individual's spiritual recovery becomes manifest'.⁶⁸¹ However, more recent directives advise elders not to extend privileges 'hastily' and that a person who has been found to have committed child sexual abuse may never be recommended to receive privileges.⁶⁸²

Practical effect of reproof as a sanction

385 Mr O'Brien agreed with the proposition that the practical effect of reproof is that a known offender is left 'in the congregation and in the family, if the offender is in a family'.⁶⁸³

Available findings on sanctions - reproof

F50 Since it is the policy or practice of the Jehovah's Witness organisation not to report allegations of child sexual abuse to the police (other than if required by law to do so), if a known abuser is found to be repentant and for that reason merely reproofed rather than disfellowshipped he remains in the congregation and a risk to children in the congregation.

F51 The system of not announcing the reasons for reproof means that members of the congregation are not warned about the risk that such a wrongdoer poses to children in the congregation.

F52 The sanction of reproof therefore does nothing to protect children in the congregation and in the broader community.

7.10 Sanctions for wrongdoing - disfellowshipping

386 If the wrongdoer is unrepentant for committing a 'gross sin', he is to be disfellowshipped from the congregation.⁶⁸⁴ To be disfellowshipped means to be excommunicated from, or cast out of, the Jehovah's Witness organisation.⁶⁸⁵ Congregation members are directed not to associate with disfellowshipped persons.⁶⁸⁶

Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [45]-[46];

Exhibit 29-0019, Annexure 2, STAT.0591.001.0023 at [4.16];

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0089 (Tab 109);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [12] (Tab 124).

⁶⁸¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0089 (Tab 109).

⁶⁸² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0069-71 [15],[23] (Tab 124);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0080-81 [28] (Tab 126).

⁶⁸³ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15834:28-32 (Day 153).

⁶⁸⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [11] (Tab 124);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0101 [26] (Tab 120);

Exhibit 29-0019, Annexure 2, STAT.0591.001.0023 at [4.7]-[4.8];

Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [89].

⁶⁸⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.001.0001 at 0007 and 0016 (Tab 133).

⁶⁸⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0087 and 0090 (Tab 109);

Exhibit 29-0007, Statement of Dino Ali, STAT.0598.001.0001_R at [2.3].

387 The purpose of disfellowshipping is to ‘protect the flock and safeguard the cleanness of the congregation’.⁶⁸⁷ When a person is disfellowshipped, the branch office is to be notified.⁶⁸⁸

388 Unless the disfellowshipped person appeals the judicial committee’s decision to disfellowship, the judicial committee explains to the person the need for genuine repentance and advises as to the steps the person ought to take in order to be reinstated as a Jehovah’s Witness.⁶⁸⁹

Announcement of disfellowshipping

389 When a person is disfellowshipped for child sexual abuse, an announcement is made to the congregation to the effect that the person is ‘no longer one of Jehovah’s Witnesses’.⁶⁹⁰ The announcement is made to the congregation so that it knows not to associate with the disfellowshipped person.⁶⁹¹

390 While the fact of disfellowshipping is announced, the grounds are not.⁶⁹²

Practical effect of disfellowshipping

391 Mr O’Brien agreed with the proposition that ‘disfellowshipping leaves a known offender in the family and/or at large in the community’.⁶⁹³

Available findings on sanctions - disfellowshipping

F53 Since it is the policy or practice of the Jehovah’s Witness organisation not to report allegations of child sexual abuse to the police (other than if required by law to do so), if a known abuser is disfellowshipped he remains in the community and a risk to children in the community.

F54 The sanction of disfellowshipping does nothing to protect children in the community.

7.11 Appealing a disfellowshipping decision

392 Disfellowshipping decisions may be appealed within seven days.⁶⁹⁴ Appeal committees are formed ‘even if there seems to be no valid basis for it’⁶⁹⁵ comprising, to the extent

⁶⁸⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0086 and 0090 (Tab 109).

⁶⁸⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0102 [33] (Tab 120).

⁶⁸⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0091 (Tab 109).

⁶⁹⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0102 [32] (Tab 120).

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0091 (Tab 109).

⁶⁹¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0091 (Tab 109).

⁶⁹² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0102 [32] (Tab 120);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0091 (Tab 109);

Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O’Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [62];

Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R at [41].

⁶⁹³ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15834:34-36 (Day 153).

⁶⁹⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0105 (Tab 120).

⁶⁹⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0105 (Tab 120).

possible, impartial elders from a different congregation and selected by the circuit overseer, who hear the case *ab initio*.⁶⁹⁶

7.12 Reinstatement as a Jehovah's Witness

393 A disfellowshipped person may be reinstated into the congregation after the passage of 'sufficient' time if the judicial committee determines that the individual is truly repentant and the reason(s) for their removal from the congregation have been abandoned.⁶⁹⁷

394 The decision to reinstate is always made by the judicial committee that decided to disfellowship the person.⁶⁹⁸ Where the disfellowshipped person applies for reinstatement in a new congregation, the bodies of elders in both the new and old congregation are expected to communicate and exchange relevant information.⁶⁹⁹

395 The *Shepherd the Flock* handbook instructs elders to apply restrictions in all cases of reinstatement.⁷⁰⁰

7.13 Support for survivors of child sexual abuse

Role of elders

396 Congregational elders are instructed to be kind, tender, empathetic, compassionate and patient when dealing with survivors of child sexual abuse.⁷⁰¹

397 The Jehovah's Witness organisation recognises that elders are not mental health professionals or therapists and counsels against elders taking on such a role.⁷⁰² Elders are instead described as 'spiritual shepherds', whose role is to ensure that a survivor's worth is not 'diminished by the shameful way they were treated' and to convey that 'the important thing is how Jehovah views them'.⁷⁰³

398 Mr O'Brien told the Royal Commission that '[a]lmost every elder would use on their shepherding calls visiting a victim of any kind' Jehovah's Witness articles and Scriptures

⁶⁹⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0105 (Tab 120);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0090-91 (Tab 109).

⁶⁹⁷ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [94];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0120 (Tab 120);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0093 (Tab 109).

⁶⁹⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0119 (Tab 120);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0093 (Tab 109).

⁶⁹⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0093 (Tab 109).

⁷⁰⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0122 [12] (Tab 120).

⁷⁰¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0070 [21] (Tab 124);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0054 [21] (Tab 120).

⁷⁰² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0055 [22] (Tab 120);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0001 at 0003 (Tab 81).

⁷⁰³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0001 at 0003 (Tab 81);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0004 (Tab 81).

that are specific to the needs of the victim.⁷⁰⁴ He suggested that the Jehovah's Witness organisation could write and ask circuit overseers to make specific enquiries in their circuit congregations about victims of child sexual abuse, and make sure that the proper Scriptures are being used to console those victims.⁷⁰⁵

- 399 Elders are cautioned against meeting alone with 'a sister who is a victim of abuse, suffers from depression, or for any other reason is in a delicate emotional state' as a woman in such a state 'may be more vulnerable and may be prone to develop improper feelings toward an elder meeting with her'.⁷⁰⁶

Role of women in survivor support

- 400 While noting that 'a sister would not get involved in matters that need the attention of the elders', the *Shepherd the Flock* handbook advises elders that on occasion, a female survivor of child sexual abuse may approach an older woman in the congregation for help and emotional support.⁷⁰⁷

Access to professional counselling / medical services

- 401 The Jehovah's Witness organisation recognises that some survivors of child sexual abuse require professional medical attention and condones the seeking of such assistance to the extent that it does not conflict with Bible principles.⁷⁰⁸
- 402 Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that the types of therapies that might conflict with Bible principles do not include '[m]ainstream therapy, normal psychiatric, psychological therapy', but might include 'some of the more extreme and radical therapies'.⁷⁰⁹
- 403 Mr Toole told the Royal Commission that he is not aware of any policy that positively states that elders should advise survivors of child sexual abuse of their right to seek professional psychological assistance.⁷¹⁰
- 404 It is submitted that the present position of the Jehovah's Witness organisation is that elders should not discourage survivors of child sexual abuse from seeking professional support from outside of the organisation, nor should they encourage it or actively advise as to a person's right to do so.

⁷⁰⁴ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15857:34-40 (Day 153);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0325 (Tab 77);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0205 (Tab 78).

⁷⁰⁵ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15857:42-T15858:13 (Day 153).

⁷⁰⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0057 [28] (Tab 120).

⁷⁰⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0055 [24] (Tab 120).

⁷⁰⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0056 [25] (Tab 120).

⁷⁰⁹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15675:32-46 (Day 152).

⁷¹⁰ Transcript of V J Toole, T15801:1-6 (Day 153).

7.14 Reporting to authorities

Brief overview of relevant reporting regimes

- 405 Each state and territory in Australia has now enacted ‘mandatory reporting laws’. These laws require designated persons outside of a child’s family to report known and suspected child sexual abuse to child welfare agencies.⁷¹¹ The mandatory reporting regime has developed throughout Australia over a 40 year period since 1969.⁷¹² Currently, the laws share many features across jurisdictions: the duty is obligatory, must be immediately complied with, and applies to suspected past and present abuse; and the report destination is usually the jurisdiction’s department of child protection.⁷¹³
- 406 The approach to mandatory reporting is not currently uniform across Australia and the relevant laws were created in different jurisdictions at different times.⁷¹⁴ Consequently, several significant differences remain across jurisdictions,⁷¹⁵ including the categories of persons who are obliged to make reports.⁷¹⁶ The reporting duty is normally applied to professions which typically deal with children in the course of their work (such as teachers, police, doctors and nurses).⁷¹⁷ In the Northern Territory, however, the duty applies to every adult.⁷¹⁸ In South Australia the duty has been specifically extended to apply to ministers of religion,⁷¹⁹ ‘although the duty does not extend to information communicated in the course of a religious confession’.⁷²⁰
- 407 Mandatory reporting laws are distinct from provisions making it a crime not to report criminal conduct to the authorities. These crimes are referred to as concealment offences. It used to be that the common law crime of misprision of a felony made it an

⁷¹¹ *Children and Young People Act 2008* (ACT) s 356; *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW) ss 23, 27; *Care and Protection of Children Act* (NT) ss 15, 16, 26; *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld) s 13E-I; *Children’s Protection Act 1993* (SA) ss 6, 10, 11; *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* (Tas) ss 3, 14; *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic) ss 162, 182, 184; *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (WA) ss 124A-H; *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) s 67ZA.

⁷¹² Associate Professor Ben Mathews, *Mandatory reporting laws for child sexual abuse in Australia: A legislative history*, *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*, Sydney, August 2014 (the **RC Mandatory Reporting Report**) at 1.2.1.4.

⁷¹³ RC Mandatory Reporting Report at 1.2.1.6; *Children and Young People Act 2008* (ACT) s 356; *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW) ss 23, 27; *Care and Protection of Children Act* (NT) ss 15, 16, 26; *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld) s 13E-I; *Children’s Protection Act 1993* (SA) ss 6, 10, 11; *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* (Tas) ss 3, 14; *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic) ss 162, 182, 184; *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (WA) ss 124A-H; *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) s 67ZA.

⁷¹⁴ RC Mandatory Reporting Report at 1.2.1.2-3.

⁷¹⁵ RC Mandatory Reporting Report at 1.2.1.7 and 1.2.1.7(b).

⁷¹⁶ RC Mandatory Reporting Report at 1.2.1.7 and 1.2.1.7(a).

⁷¹⁷ *Children and Young People Act 2008* (ACT) s 356; *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* (Tas) s 14; *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic) s 182; *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (WA) ss 124B; *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld) s 13E; *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW) s 27.

⁷¹⁸ *Care and Protection Act 2007* (NT), s 26.

⁷¹⁹ *Children’s Protection Act 1993* (SA) s 11(2)(ga), as amended by the *Children’s Protection (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2005* (SA).

⁷²⁰ RC Mandatory Reporting Report at 1.2.1.7(a); *Children’s Protection Act 1993* (SA), s 11(4).

offence for anyone to conceal his or her knowledge of the commission of a felony, but that offence has been abolished in most Australian jurisdictions.⁷²¹ In New South Wales, s 316 of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW) makes it a criminal offence for a person with knowledge or belief that a serious indictable offence has been committed to not report to authorities information that may materially assist in securing the apprehension or prosecution or conviction of the offender. Similarly in Victoria, s 327 of the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) makes it a criminal offence for a person to not disclose to a police officer information that leads the person for form to a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed. Both jurisdictions provide a defence of reasonable excuse for withholding information⁷²² and exempt clergy members who obtain the information in the course of their profession⁷²³ or a religious confession.⁷²⁴

Mandatory reporting and the Jehovah's Witness organisation

- 408 Since at least 1995, congregational elders have been instructed to contact the Branch Office Legal Department to ascertain if any reporting obligations apply in respect of an allegation of child sexual abuse.⁷²⁵ Mr Toole told the Royal Commission that the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia considers itself bound by mandatory reporting legislation in Victoria, South Australia and the Northern Territory.⁷²⁶
- 409 Mr Toole told the Royal Commission that in 1999 the world headquarters of the Jehovah's Witness organisation clarified that '[w]here the law does not obligate elders to report cases that come to their attention, there is no need for them to do so ...'.⁷²⁷ Mr Spinks gave evidence that it is not the practice of the Jehovah's Witness organisation to report child sexual abuse to police,⁷²⁸ nor has the organisation ever claimed 'to have instructed the elders to go to the authorities'.⁷²⁹
- 410 In August of 2002, members of all congregations in Australia were advised by the Branch Office that congregational elders have long been instructed to report allegations of child sexual abuse 'where required to by law to do so, even when there is only one witness'.⁷³⁰ In October of 2002, the Australia Branch Office Legal Department issued a letter to all bodies of elders clarifying that '[w]hether or not they are "required by law to [report]"', can only be determined at the time when the elders contact the Society after receiving a report of child abuse'.⁷³¹

⁷²¹ RC Mandatory Reporting Report at 2.6.3 (footnote 94);
See also, for example, *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW), s 341; Schedule 11 to the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* (SA); and *Crimes (Classification of Offences) Act 1981* (Vic), ss 2 and 4.

⁷²² *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic), s 327(2); *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW), s 316(1).

⁷²³ *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW), s 316(4) and (5); *Crimes Regulation 2010* (NSW), r 4(f).

⁷²⁴ *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic), s 327(7); *Evidence Act 2008* (Vic), ss 127(1) and (4).

⁷²⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0005 at 0005 (Tab 83).

⁷²⁶ Exhibit 29-0023, Statement of Vincent Toole, STAT.0593.001.0001_R at [29]-[30].

⁷²⁷ Exhibit 29-0023, Statement of Vincent Toole, STAT.0593.001.0001_R at [16];

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0020 at 0020 (Tab 99).

⁷²⁸ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15665:10-15 (Day 152).

⁷²⁹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15671:45-T15672:1 (Day 152).

⁷³⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0004.001.0001 at 0002 (Tab 105).

⁷³¹ Exhibit 29-0034, CORR.0182.001.0005 at 0005.

- 411 It is submitted that in the light of the letter of October 2002 and other directives issued only to elders, the letter of August 2002 to all Jehovah's Witnesses is misleading as to the true position of the organisation in relation to reporting child sexual abuse to authorities, that true position being that elders do not report to authorities unless directed to do so by the Branch Office.
- 412 Mr Toole told the Royal Commission that he has been taking calls from elders to the Legal Department for at least the last two years. He said that he discusses with the elders calling for advice what mandatory reporting obligations might apply.⁷³²
- 413 In a letter dated 10 January 2012, all bodies of elders in South Australia were advised by the Branch Office Legal Department of new mandatory reporting obligations and of the need to immediately contact the Branch Office upon receipt of any allegations of child abuse.⁷³³

Concealment offences and the Jehovah's Witness organisation

- 414 Mr Spinks gave evidence that in recent weeks it has been explained to him that some states impose criminal sanctions on those who do not report knowledge of a criminal offence, i.e. concealment offences as distinct from mandatory reporting obligations.⁷³⁴ Mr Spinks said that he understood that in resolving the truth of an allegation of child sexual abuse, through the Jehovah's Witness investigative and judicial process, an elder's state of knowledge changes from being knowledge of an accusation of a criminal offence to knowledge of the commission of a criminal offence.⁷³⁵ That is to say, it is clear that in circumstances where elders have found a sexual offence to have been committed where concealment offences exist they are prima facie obliged to report to the police.
- 415 Mr Toole gave evidence that before being called before the Royal Commission, it had been his understanding that the 'prevailing' legislation governing reporting of child sexual abuse was the state and territory mandatory reporting legislative schemes.⁷³⁶ He said that it had been a 'wake-up call' to learn that the concealment offences applied independently of the mandatory reporting provisions.⁷³⁷ He told the Royal Commission that once the public hearing was concluded the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia would be engaging senior counsel to advise on any reporting obligations, including those arising under the criminal law.⁷³⁸
- 416 Mr Toole told the Royal Commission that if the law required it, then the Jehovah's Witness organisation would be happy to report child sexual abuse to authorities.⁷³⁹ It was put to him that in NSW at least, the legislation had required reporting of such crimes since 1990, and before that the common law had imposed a similar obligation.⁷⁴⁰ Mr

⁷³² Transcript of V J Toole, T15759:41-T15760:2 (Day 153).

⁷³³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0065 (Tab 123).

⁷³⁴ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15666:14-22 (Day 152).

⁷³⁵ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15666:7-12, 34-38 (Day 152).

⁷³⁶ Transcript of V J Toole, T15789:8-21 (Day 153).

⁷³⁷ Transcript of V J Toole, T15789:16-27 (Day 153).

⁷³⁸ Transcript of V J Toole, T15789:16-42 (Day 153).

⁷³⁹ Transcript of V J Toole, T15790:13-20 (Day 153).

⁷⁴⁰ Transcript of V J Toole, T15790:22-29 (Day 153).

Toole said that although he understood what was put to him, the Jehovah's Witness organisation has not reported child sexual abuse on the understanding that only the mandatory reporting laws applied.⁷⁴¹ Mr Toole confirmed that the organisation's understanding was also his understanding.⁷⁴²

- 417 It is implicit in Mr Toole's confession to a 'wake-up call' that prior to being called to give evidence before the Royal Commission he did not advise elders from New South Wales of their obligations under the concealment laws. It follows that where elders in NSW formed the view that child sexual abuse had occurred they were obliged under sanction of the criminal law to report those cases to the police.
- 418 Mr Toole should accordingly be referred to the Law Society of New South Wales for possible investigation.

Available findings on reporting

F55 Prior to this case study, the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia did not advise congregational elders of their obligations to report the commission of criminal offences to the police under s 316 of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW).

F56 This report is referred to the Law Society of New South Wales in relation to the conduct of Mr Toole in having failed to advise congregational elders of their obligations to report their knowledge of the commission of certain criminal offences to the police.

Reporting to secular authorities more generally

- 419 Elders are instructed that, in the absence of mandatory reporting obligations, it is the right of the individual to decide whether to report child sexual abuse to the police or other secular authorities.⁷⁴³ The *Shepherd the Flock* handbook instructs elders that:

... If you are asked, make it clear that whether to report the matter to the authorities or not is a personal decision for each individual to make and that there are no congregational sanctions for either decision...⁷⁴⁴

[emphasis added]

- 420 The 2013 Service Desk Guidelines direct the Service Desk to advise elders not to discourage individuals from reporting matters to the authorities, but that they should remind individuals of the 'need for confidentiality when speaking with others, thus avoiding any charge of slander'.⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴¹ Transcript of V J Toole, T15791:3-33 (Day 153).

⁷⁴² Transcript of V J Toole, T15791:12-17 (Day 153).

⁷⁴³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0132-133 [19] (Tab 120); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0004.001.0001 at 0002 (Tab 105).

⁷⁴⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0132 [19] (Tab 120).

⁷⁴⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0081 [33] (Tab 126).

- 421 Mr Spinks said that the Service Desk does not instruct elders to report to the authorities.⁷⁴⁶
- 422 Messrs Spinks, Toole and O'Brien each gave evidence that Jehovah's Witness elders do not have the right Scripturally to usurp a victim's 'right' to report an allegation of child sexual abuse to the authorities, and as such, elders do not themselves report allegations of child sexual abuse to authorities.⁷⁴⁷
- 423 Mr Spinks said that the Scriptures that support the Jehovah's Witness organisation's position in relation to reporting to authorities are 2 Corinthians 1:24 and Galatians 6:5.⁷⁴⁸
- 424 2 Corinthians 1:24 provides, 'Not that we are the masters over your faith, but we are fellow workers for your joy, for it is by your faith that you are standing'. In and of itself, it is not at all apparent how this passage prohibits elders from reporting child sexual abuse to secular authorities. Furthermore, it is submitted that application of the passage as Mr Spinks suggests appears inconsistent with the organisation's own teachings about the role of elders, which is as a 'shepherd' to the 'flock' with an obligation to care for the flock's safety.⁷⁴⁹
- 425 Galatians 6:5 provides that '[f]or each one will carry his own load'. Again, it is not at all apparent how this passage prohibits elders from reporting child sexual abuse to authorities. In fact, it is submitted that the preceding verses⁷⁵⁰ suggest that the 'one' being told to 'carry his own load' is not a victim of a serious crime; rather the preceding verses suggest that the counsel is intended to apply to a wrongdoer bearing responsibility for his wrongs.
- 426 It is accordingly submitted that the Royal Commission should not accept Mr Spinks' evidence regarding the Scriptural basis for the position of the Jehovah's Witness organisation regarding not reporting crimes to the authorities.

Further evidence of Mr Spinks

- 427 Mr Spinks gave evidence that when a child is in a situation where the threat of harm remains, the Service Desk instructs elders to speak to the parent or guardian of that child and assist that person to 'do all they can, including going to the authorities, if that's what ... the guardian/parent is willing to do ... and remind them that they ... will have the full support of the elders in doing that'.⁷⁵¹
- 428 Mr Spinks said that if the elders are not in a position of being able to take judicial action, for example if there is only one witness to the alleged abuse or if it is too traumatising

⁷⁴⁶ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15663:10-12 (Day 152).

⁷⁴⁷ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15720:36-T15721:12 (Day 152);
Transcript of V J Toole, T15763:6-15 (Day 153);
Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15835:33-41 (Day 153).

⁷⁴⁸ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15721:3-8 (Day 152).

⁷⁴⁹ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15847:13-18 (Day 153).

⁷⁵⁰ See Galatians 6:1-4.

⁷⁵¹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15662:5-19 (Day 152).

for the victim witness to speak to elders, then '[t]he parents would be reminded that it's their absolute right to take this to the authorities, and the elders will support them in it'.⁷⁵²

- 429 It is submitted that Mr Spinks' evidence that elders are told to make sure that survivors of child sexual abuse and their families have the absolute right to report to the authorities should not be accepted. Mr Spinks' evidence in this regard is not credible in the light of his earlier evidence that the advice given to elders by the Service Desk is generic advice as read out from page 131 of the *Shepherd the Flock* handbook.⁷⁵³ The relevant paragraph provides that survivors and their families should be advised of the right to report to authorities if they ask.⁷⁵⁴
- 430 Insofar as elders reporting to authorities themselves is concerned, Mr Spinks said that if there were uniform mandatory reporting requirements across Australia, then the Jehovah's Witnesses 'will willingly and happily comply'.⁷⁵⁵

Further evidence of Mr Toole

- 431 In his written statement, Mr Toole told the Royal Commission that the Branch Committee instructs the Legal Department to direct elders to clearly explain to a victim of child sexual abuse and/or to the victim's family, that they have an absolute right to report the matter to authorities.⁷⁵⁶ Mr Toole gave evidence that it was his understanding that this instruction was given by the Branch Committee in harmony with the direction given in the letter to all bodies of elders of 1 October 2012, although he was unable to identify that direction in the letter.⁷⁵⁷ Instead, Mr Toole told the Royal Commission that the instruction from the Branch Committee was 'in the spirit of what's being discussed' in the letter of 1 October 2012.⁷⁵⁸
- 432 Mr Toole accepted that the Legal Department does not have any written instruction from the Branch Committee to direct elders to explain to a victim or her family, their right to report abuse to authorities.⁷⁵⁹
- 433 Mr Toole gave evidence that in at least the last two and a half years he has taken three to four calls regarding allegations of child sexual abuse every month.⁷⁶⁰ He told the Royal Commission that in each case where he provides advice to elders and where there is no mandatory reporting obligation, it is his practice to instruct elders to:

... go back to the victim or their family and explain to them very clearly that they have the absolute right to be able to go and report this matter to the

⁷⁵² Transcript of R P Spinks, T15708:33-T15709:4 (Day 152).

⁷⁵³ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15661:26-T15662:3 (Day 152).

⁷⁵⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0132 [19] (Tab 120).

⁷⁵⁵ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15665:38-42 (Day 152).

⁷⁵⁶ Exhibit 29-0023, Statement of Vincent Toole, STAT.0593.001.0001_R [15].

⁷⁵⁷ Transcript of V J Toole, T15759:9-27 (Day 153).

⁷⁵⁸ Transcript of V J Toole, T15759:25-27 (Day 153).

⁷⁵⁹ Transcript of V J Toole, T15759:34-39 (Day 153).

⁷⁶⁰ Transcript of V J Toole, T15760:18-30 (Day 153).

authorities. That's their privilege and they need to understand that, and that you will support them in whatever decision they make.⁷⁶¹

434 Although Mr Toole gave evidence that elders in the Jehovah's Witnesses do not have the right, Scripturally, to take away an individual's right to decide whether to report a child sexual abuse complaint to the police,⁷⁶² he later agreed that 'in some circumstances, there would be a need for elders to report to the authorities'.⁷⁶³ Mr Toole said further that the Legal Department will do 'whatever needs to be done to protect a child', and that '[i]f it means going to the police, we would have no hesitation in going to the police'.⁷⁶⁴

Further evidence of Mr O'Brien

435 Mr O'Brien agreed in evidence that the fact that the Jehovah's Witness organisation's disciplinary procedures can leave a perpetrator of child sexual abuse at large in the community 'can only be resolved with systematic reporting to the authorities'.⁷⁶⁵

436 Mr O'Brien gave evidence that elders in the Jehovah's Witness organisation do not see that they have the right, Scripturally, to take away the right of a victim or parent of a victim to report child sexual abuse to police, by themselves reporting child sexual abuse to the police.⁷⁶⁶ However he later told the Royal Commission that the organisation would report a complaint of child sexual abuse to the police 'if the child remains at risk and there is no responsible adult within the family to remove [the child] from further risk of abuse'.⁷⁶⁷ Mr O'Brien said that he did not personally have any experience or knowledge of a matter being reported to police by the organisation.⁷⁶⁸

437 Mr O'Brien accepted in evidence that, unlike child protection authorities, the Jehovah's Witness organisation does not have the power to intervene in a family situation to ensure protection of the child.⁷⁶⁹

Evidence of Mr Jackson

438 It was Mr Jackson's evidence that where a child remains at risk of abuse, 'the elders should encourage the guardian of the child, or whoever is in that family arrangement who is not the perpetrator, to notify the authorities'.⁷⁷⁰ It was put to Mr Jackson that there is a Jehovah's Witness practice of not reporting child sexual abuse allegations to the authorities unless required by law to do so.⁷⁷¹ Rather than responding to the

⁷⁶¹ Transcript of V J Toole, T15759:41-T15760:16 (Day 153).

⁷⁶² Transcript of V J Toole, T15763:6-15 (Day 153).

⁷⁶³ Transcript of V J Toole, T15763:42-45 (Day 153).

⁷⁶⁴ Transcript of V J Toole, T15794:23-26 (Day 153).

⁷⁶⁵ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15834:34-44 (Day 153).

⁷⁶⁶ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15835:33-41 (Day 153).

⁷⁶⁷ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15860:34-37 (Day 153).

⁷⁶⁸ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15860:39-T15861:17 (Day 153).

⁷⁶⁹ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15835:22-31 (Day 153).

⁷⁷⁰ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15966:30-T15967:4 (Day 155).

⁷⁷¹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15965:2-5 (Day 155).

proposition, Mr Jackson said that he was 'not familiar with the statistics or the general practice ...'.⁷⁷²

- 439 Mr Jackson was asked if there was a Scriptural basis to the practice or policy of the Jehovah's Witness organisation of not reporting child sexual abuse to authorities unless required to do so by law.⁷⁷³ He explained in response that there 'is a spiritual dilemma' arising out of the question of reporting to authorities.⁷⁷⁴ Mr Jackson said that one aspect of that dilemma arises when an elder learns of an allegation of child sexual abuse and must consider his obligation of confidence in accordance with the Scriptural guidance in Proverbs 25:8-10.⁷⁷⁵ Another aspect of the dilemma, he explained, was the Scriptural requirement in 1 Peter 5:2-3 that an elder 'does not have the authority to lord it over or take over control of a family arrangement' where a survivor or her guardian has the right to decide if they want to report to authorities.⁷⁷⁶
- 440 Mr Jackson said that the spiritual dilemma to which he referred arises out of the conflict between the elders' adherence to those Scriptural principles and the desire to 'make sure that children are cared for'.⁷⁷⁷
- 441 Mr Jackson did however accept that it would be possible for the Jehovah's Witness organisation to consider adopting a policy which says that in cases where there are others at risk, a report must be made to the authorities.⁷⁷⁸
- 442 Mr Jackson nonetheless qualified his evidence in relation to the capacity for the Jehovah's Witness organisation to require elders to report to authorities and said that there were 'Scriptural factors that maybe make that a little complicated, and it would certainly be a lot easier if we had mandatory laws on that'.⁷⁷⁹

Documentary evidence

- 443 As dealt with in Part 2 above, the Royal Commission received evidence that of 1,006 alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse identified by the Jehovah's Witness organisation since 1950, not one was reported by the organisation to secular authorities.⁷⁸⁰

Submissions in relation to reporting to authorities

- 444 It is not possible, on the available evidence, to conclude that it is the practice of the Jehovah's Witness organisation to:
- a) positively advise victims and/or their families of their right to report allegations of child sexual abuse to the authorities, and/or

⁷⁷² Transcript of G W Jackson, T15965:6-7 (Day 155).

⁷⁷³ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15965:11-14 (Day 155).

⁷⁷⁴ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15965:6-8 (Day 155).

⁷⁷⁵ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15965:19-39 (Day 155).

⁷⁷⁶ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15965:41-T15966:21 (Day 155).

⁷⁷⁷ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15966:21-23 (Day 155).

⁷⁷⁸ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15967:10-14 (Day 155).

⁷⁷⁹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15967:19-22 (Day 155).

⁷⁸⁰ Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.999.013.0012.

- b) encourage victims and/or their families to report allegations of child sexual abuse to the authorities.

Available findings on the Jehovah's Witness organisation's policy on reporting

F57 It is the policy and practice of the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia to not report allegations of child sexual abuse to the police or other authorities unless required by law to do so.

F58 The basis for this policy is said to be respect for the 'right' of the victim to herself decide whether to make a complaint to the authorities.

F59 That basis has no justification where the victim is still a minor at the time that the abuse comes to the attention of the organisation, or where there are others who may still be at risk at the hands of the alleged abuser.

F60 Since the organisation cannot remove an alleged abuser from the family or take other positive steps to safeguard children in the family from continuing risk, the organisation should have a policy to report all allegations of child sexual abuse to the authorities unless an adult victim specifically requests that a report not be made and there is no appreciable risk of children being abused.

7.15 The evidence of Mr Davies, formerly of the Queensland DPP

445 Mr Davies, formerly of the Queensland DPP,⁷⁸¹ gave evidence that his experience of the internal processes of the Jehovah's Witness organisation with respect to allegations of child sexual abuse gave him cause for concern from a prosecutorial perspective for the following reasons:

- a) the delay in allegations coming to police attention caused by the internal handling of child sexual abuse complaints and the acceptance by the organisation that there is no need to refer such allegations to secular authorities⁷⁸²
- b) the questionable admissibility of inculpatory statements made by the accused during the disfellowshipping process owing to the incentive of a reduced penalty if an admission as to the alleged conduct is made⁷⁸³
- c) the impact on the survivor of the internal handling of their complaint, in particular in relation to the number of people to whom the survivor is required to disclose the details of their complaint,⁷⁸⁴ and
- d) as a consequence of the number of people involved in handling a complaint, the potential for contamination of the survivor's evidence before it reaches the police.⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸¹ Exhibit 29-0011, First statement of Jason Davies, STAT.0595.001.0001_R at [3]-[9].

⁷⁸² Exhibit 29-0012, Supplementary statement of Jason Davies, STAT.0595.002.0001_R at [8]; Transcript of J Davies, T15422:41-T15423:6, 42-46 (Day 149).

⁷⁸³ Transcript of J Davies, T15424:4-6 (Day 149); Exhibit 29-0011, First statement of Jason Davies, STAT.0595.001.0001_R at [16]-[18]; Exhibit 29-0012, Supplementary statement of Jason Davies, STAT.0595.002.0001_R at [6]-[7];

⁷⁸⁴ Transcript of J Davies, T15424:9-25 (Day 149).

⁷⁸⁵ Transcript of J Davies, T15424:27-39 (Day 149).

Available findings on the impact of the Jehovah’s Witness organisation’s processes on criminal processes

- F61 The internal processes of the Jehovah’s Witness organisation for handling allegations of child sexual abuse cause significant delay in a complaint coming, if ever, before authorities.
- F62 Admissions made by an accused during the investigative and/or judicial committee process administered by the Jehovah’s Witness organisation may not be admissible in criminal proceedings because of the circumstances in which they are made, including that incentives such as reduction in penalty are offered if an admission is made.
- F63 The number of people to whom a survivor of child sexual abuse is required to divulge the detail of her complaint exacerbates the trauma already suffered by a survivor of such abuse.
- F64 There is significant risk of contamination of a survivor’s evidence as a result of the number of times and circumstances in which a survivor is required to divulge the detail of her complaint before her abuse is, if ever, reported to the authorities.

7.16 Redress and acknowledgment

- 446 Mr O’Brien told the Royal Commission the Jehovah’s Witness organisation in Australia does not have a redress scheme for responding to and potentially compensating victims of child sexual abuse in Australia because, to date, it has never received a claim.⁷⁸⁶
- 447 Mr O’Brien gave evidence that the involvement of the Jehovah’s Witness organisation in a collective redress scheme would require the approval of the 26 members of Watchtower Australia and the Governing Body.⁷⁸⁷ Mr O’Brien said that he would recommend that the Jehovah’s Witness organisation establish a redress scheme of its own to care for victims of child sexual abuse.⁷⁸⁸
- 448 In the context of humanitarian relief, Mr Jackson told the Royal Commission that ‘the Governing Body is happy for our organisation to spend money helping persons ... who [have] been traumatised or affected in a bad way’.⁷⁸⁹ Mr Jackson said in evidence that, subject to the Scriptures, participation of the Jehovah’s Witness organisation with other institutions in a coordinated redress scheme is ‘not something that is totally out of the option pool’.⁷⁹⁰
- 449 Mr Jackson told the Royal Commission that although Jehovah’s Witnesses try to ‘keep a high moral standard’ and ‘treat victims in a loving way’, he had not personally been involved in Governing Body discussions regarding consideration of the issue of an

⁷⁸⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.9999.004.0003 (Tab 135);
Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15835:46-T15836:5 (Day 153).

⁷⁸⁷ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15836:24-T15837:3, T15838:10-T15839:9 (Day 153)

⁷⁸⁸ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15837:5-T15838:8 (Day 153)

⁷⁸⁹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15985:38-44 (Day 153)

⁷⁹⁰ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15986:16-32 (Day 153)

apology to survivors of child sexual abuse.⁷⁹¹ He said in evidence that he was unable to speak ‘collectively for everybody’ but the Governing Body has ‘apologised on other matters in the past’ and so an apology to survivors of child sexual abuse ‘is perceivable’.⁷⁹²

- 450 Mr Jackson agreed with the proposition put to him that ‘it is very important for people in such senior positions as [his] to really have a good understanding of the perspective of a survivor of abuse’.⁷⁹³ He also said that empathised with BCG. However, he had neither read the statements nor heard the evidence of BCG, nor did he seem to be aware of the fact that BCG was a woman,⁷⁹⁴ purportedly on account of being too busy. However he had clearly taken considerable time to follow the evidence of Jehovah’s Witness witnesses.⁷⁹⁵ Mr Jackson accordingly failed to live by the principle that he said he regarded as important, namely that he should have a good understanding of the perspective of a survivor of abuse, and his stated empathy with BCG was hollow.

Available findings on Mr Jackson’s stated empathy for survivors

F65 Mr Jackson’s failure to have read or be familiar with the testimony of the survivor witnesses yet to have read or otherwise familiarised himself with the testimony of Jehovah’s Witness witnesses belies his stated empathy for the survivors and his stated recognition of the importance of their perspectives.

⁷⁹¹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15985:16-25 (Day 153).

⁷⁹² Transcript of G W Jackson, T15985:29-32 (Day 153).

⁷⁹³ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15990:32-42 and T15991:35-44 (Day 155).

⁷⁹⁴ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15990:24-30 (Day 155).

⁷⁹⁵ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15951: 26-42, T15952:27-32, T15954:16-27, T15965:16-19 (Day 155).

Part 8 Current systems, policies, and procedures for preventing child sexual abuse

8.1 Parental responsibility

451 The Jehovah's Witness organisation considers that the primary responsibility for the protection of children lies with parents.⁷⁹⁶ In his written statement, Mr O'Brien said that this is particularly so as the organisation does not have programmes or facilities that separate children from their parents.⁷⁹⁷

452 In his written statement, Mr O'Brien also told the Royal Commission that the Jehovah's Witness organisation believes that loving and protective parents are the best deterrent to child abuse.⁷⁹⁸

Education through publications

453 Mr O'Brien described the position of the Jehovah's Witness organisation as being that parental education of children about sex and the dangers of child sexual abuse can be a major factor in its prevention.⁷⁹⁹ He said that the Jehovah's Witness organisation educates parents via study groups and publications to help protect their children from child sexual abuse.⁸⁰⁰ The 2013 Service Desk Guidelines instruct the branch service desks to advise elders to 'periodically remind parents of the need to review with their children articles in the organization's publications'.⁸⁰¹

454 A number of *Awake!* and *Watchtower* publications dating back to 1970 and produced by the Jehovah's Witness organisation address child sexual abuse.⁸⁰²

8.2 Information sharing

Sharing between congregations and the branch office

455 The Jehovah's Witness organisation offers theocratic guidance on the sharing of information between relevant bodies of elders through 'letters of introduction' when a member moves from one congregation to another.

⁷⁹⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [10] (Tab 124).

⁷⁹⁷ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [67].

⁷⁹⁸ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [67].

⁷⁹⁹ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [55].

⁸⁰⁰ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [65]; Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15842: 37-42 (Day 153).

⁸⁰¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0081 [34].

⁸⁰² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0225 (Tab 75); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0223 (Tab 76), Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0205 (Tab 78), Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0238 (Tab 82), Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0007 (Tab 87), Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0128 (Tab 106); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0253 (Tab 112); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [10] (Tab 124).

- 456 When a ‘known child molester’ moves to another congregation, elders are instructed to send a letter of introduction (copied to the Branch Office) with full and complete information about the person’s background and current situation to the elders of the new congregation.⁸⁰³ The Branch Office, and not the congregational elders, determines whether or not a person is a ‘known child molester’.⁸⁰⁴ Whether or not a person is a ‘known child molester’ depends upon whether he is known by the congregation to be such and is therefore ‘not “free from accusation” or “irreprehensible”, nor does he have “a fine testimony from people on the outside”’. (1 Tim. 3:1-7, 10; 5:22; Titus 1:7).⁸⁰⁵
- 457 The Branch Office determines what information regarding the accusation may be shared with the new congregation.⁸⁰⁶ For example, if 20 years have passed since a person sexually abused a child and the Branch Office has determined that the person can be appointed to a position of trust, then there is no need for information regarding the person’s history of offending to be passed to a new congregation.⁸⁰⁷

Information requests from secular authorities

- 458 All elders are directed to immediately contact the Branch Office if approached by secular authorities requesting access to congregational records or seeking testimony from elders.⁸⁰⁸ In November 2014, all bodies of elders were instructed never to ‘reveal confidential information to anyone unless theocratic procedure requires it or the branch office has instructed you to do so’, and were given examples of people who may seek such information as including police, government officials, school personnel, and family members.⁸⁰⁹
- 459 Elders are instructed that the reason for resisting production of confidential records to authorities, even when those records are sought under subpoena, prior to consultation with the Branch Office Legal Department is that the records may be protected by ‘minister-communicant privilege’ or legal professional privilege.⁸¹⁰

Confessional privilege

- 460 In 1997 and 1999, the Australia Branch Office communicated with the headquarters of the Jehovah’s Witness organisation in relation to the availability of confessional privilege when information or documents are sought by secular authorities from the Jehovah’s Witness organisation.⁸¹¹ The ultimate position of the organisation appears, at least in

⁸⁰³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0133 [20] (Tab 120);

Exhibit 29-0019, Annexure 2, STAT.0591.001.0018 at [4.21];

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0069 (Tab 124);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0083 [41] (Tab 126).

⁸⁰⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0069 [15] (Tab 124).

⁸⁰⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0069 [15] (Tab 124).

⁸⁰⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0133 [21] (Tab 120);

Exhibit 29-0019, Annexure 2, STAT.0591.001.0018 at [3.2]-[3.4].

⁸⁰⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0083 [42] (Tab 126).

⁸⁰⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0088 [19] (Tab 120).

⁸⁰⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0014.001.0009 at 0005 [10] (Tab 131A).

⁸¹⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0014.001.0009 at 0006 [12] (Tab 131A).

⁸¹¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0004.001.0010 (Tab 86); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0007 (Tab 87); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0012.001.0025 (Tab 90); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0004.001.0014 (Tab 91); Exhibit 29-0003,

1997, to have been that it would be appropriate to try to claim confessional privilege where a confession is obtained by a judicial committee and that any actions associated with that judicial committee, such as reporting to the body of elders and to the branch office, would form part of the confessional ritual for the purposes of any such claim.⁸¹²

- 461 In oral evidence, Mr Toole agreed that it is possible that ‘the confidentiality of the confession in the case of the Jehovah’s Witnesses is very qualified’ and that ‘a lot of different people ... end up having access to that information’.⁸¹³
- 462 Mr Toole said that although for the past 15 years the Jehovah’s Witnesses have taken the position of waiving confessional privilege when approached by authorities, there may be circumstances in which that position could change.⁸¹⁴

8.3 Appointments to positions of authority in the organisation

Qualification

- 463 Elders and ministerial servants hold positions of trust within the congregation.⁸¹⁵ The Jehovah’s Witness organisation offers theocratic guidance on the qualification of a known child molester for such positions of responsibility.⁸¹⁶ For instance, an elder must be a man who is ‘irreprehensible, be free from accusation, and [has] a fine testimony from people on the outside’.⁸¹⁷ An elder should have a wife and children in subjection⁸¹⁸ and he should not have been recently reprovved for wrongdoing.⁸¹⁹

Inquiry as to candidate’s history

- 464 Circuit overseers are responsible for the appointment of elders and ministerial servants following recommendation of candidates for appointment by congregational bodies of elders.⁸²⁰

WAT.0012.001.0011 (Tab 92); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0014 (Tab 93); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0020 (Tab 99).

⁸¹² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0004.001.0014 at 0017 (Tab 91); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0012.001.0014 at 0015 (Tab 91); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0012.001.0011 (Tab 92).

⁸¹³ Transcript of V J Toole, T15774:36-46 (Day 153).

⁸¹⁴ Transcript of V J Toole, T15775:1-3 (Day 153); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0014.001.0009 at 0010 [6].

⁸¹⁵ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O’Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [82]-[83]; Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0034 at 0034-0035 (Tab 128); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0016-0023 (Tab 109); Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [78]; Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [15]; Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0001 at 0001 (Tab 97).

⁸¹⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068-0071 (Tab 124); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0031-0042 (Tab 120).

⁸¹⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0018 (Tab 109).

⁸¹⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0015-17 (Tab 109); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0032 [5] (Tab 120).

⁸¹⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0033 [7] (Tab 120); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0018 (Tab 109).

⁸²⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0080 [25] (Tab 126); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0034 at [1]-[2] (Tab 128);

- 465 If a man is nominated by his congregation's body of elders, the circuit overseer is instructed to inquire as to whether the man has a history of child sexual molestation'.⁸²¹ Prior to announcement of appointment as an elder in Australian states and territories where it is required, the candidate must obtain a working with children check (a **WWCC**).⁸²²
- 466 Mr O'Brien told the Royal Commission that the Jehovah's Witness organisation complies fully with legislative requirements to ensure all relevant persons have the necessary clearances for working with children.⁸²³ Mr Toole said that there are approximately 7,000 elders and ministerial servants currently serving in Jehovah's Witnesses congregations in Australia who have obtained child related police checks.⁸²⁴
- 467 Mr Toole accepted, and it is submitted, that to some degree the efficacy of the WWCC is undermined by the practice of Jehovah's Witnesses not to systematically report those in their midst accused of child sexual abuse.⁸²⁵ That is because the system depends on reports being made to authorities in order to maintain the WWCC database. There is therefore an element of hypocrisy in the Jehovah's Witness organisation claiming credit for having obtained clearances for working with children for its elders and ministerial servants, but at the same time not reporting the offences of its elders and ministerial servants which would prevent them from being able to obtain working with children clearance.

Available findings on the system of prevention of child sexual abuse - WWCC

F66 The documented practice of the Jehovah's Witness organisation of not reporting child sexual abuse to the authorities undermines the efficacy of the working with children check system, a system to which the organisation says it subscribes and with which it says it complies.

- 468 If a man has 'a history of child molestation' he is not automatically disqualified from appointment as an elder or ministerial servant. For instance, the 2013 Service Desk Guidelines provide that if a man molested a child in the 'distant past' and 'if there is no apparent outcry', he may be recommended for appointment as a ministerial servant.⁸²⁶ Similarly, if a man is known to have sexually abused a child before he was baptised as a Jehovah's Witness, he is not necessarily disqualified from holding a position of responsibility in the congregation.⁸²⁷
- 469 Since at least 1998, elders have been instructed that it is 'best to wait at least 20 years since the last incident of child abuse was committed before retaining or appointing a

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0039 at [1] (Tab 129).

⁸²¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0034 at [4] (Tab 128);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0039 at 0040 [6] (Tab 129).

⁸²² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0034 at 0035 (Tab 128).

⁸²³ Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [78].

⁸²⁴ Exhibit 29-0023, Statement of Vincent Toole, STAT.0593.001.0001_R at [31].

⁸²⁵ Transcript of V J Toole, T15775:35-47 (Day 153).

⁸²⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0078 [14] (Tab 126).

⁸²⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0076 [3]-[4] (Tab 126).

former child abuser’, although there may be exceptions to this, including if the abuse was committed prior to baptism.⁸²⁸

Reappointment of elders and ministerial servants

470 If 20 years have passed since the child sexual abuse and the man has served faithfully, there is no outcry from the congregation, and ‘everything else points to his currently enjoying Jehovah’s blessing’, then the branch office may decide disqualification from service is not necessary. However, the 2013 Service Desk Guidelines warn that:

if a former child molester continues in a position of responsibility, whether the sin occurred before or after baptism – there may be serious problems if he later molests a child. This could bring reproach on Jehovah’s name ...⁸²⁹

471 Since 1950, 28 alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse were appointed to a position of authority after having been the subject of an allegation of child sexual abuse. Further, of 127 alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse deleted as elders or ministerial servants as a result of allegations of child sexual abuse, 16 were later reappointed.⁸³⁰

8.4 Congregational risk management of known offenders

Counselling and monitoring of persons accused of child sexual abuse

472 Elders are instructed to counsel a person found to have committed child sexual abuse to:

... refrain from displaying affection for children, to avoid hugging or holding children on their lap, never to be alone with a child (other than their own), not to allow children to spend the night in their home ...⁸³¹

473 Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that soon after a reproof for child sexual abuse is imposed and an announcement made to the congregation, the elders may deliver a ‘warning lecture’ to the congregation about the type of sin and how to prevent it.⁸³² Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that, in this way, ‘congregation members are aided in their ability to protect children from child sexual abuse’.⁸³³

474 Elders are instructed that a “‘known child molester” should be told not to work alone with children in the field ministry ... This serves to protect any minor who answers the door, the former abuser, and the reputation of the congregation’.⁸³⁴

⁸²⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0004.001.0021 at [1]-[2] (Tab 98).

⁸²⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0077 [11] (Tab 126).

⁸³⁰ Exhibit 29-0021, WAT.9999.013.0012.

⁸³¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068-0069 (Tab 124);
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0082 [35] (Tab 126).

⁸³² Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT0591.001.0001_R at [44];
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0100 [23] (Tab 120).

⁸³³ Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT0591.001.0001_R at [44].

⁸³⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0082 [36] (Tab 126).

- 475 If a person has been assessed by the judicial committee as displaying genuine repentance and is reproved, the judicial committee is to ‘monitor the spiritual progress of the repentant wrongdoer’.⁸³⁵
- 476 If the Branch Office considers a person to be a ‘predator’, the Service Desk will advise congregational elders to meet with parents of ‘minor children’ in the congregation and issue a warning about the person.⁸³⁶
- 477 In circumstances where a person has been accused of child sexual abuse and the elders are not authorised to take judicial action, for example, because the person did not confess and there was only one witness to the conduct, the elders are instructed to ‘remain vigilant with regard to the conduct and activity of the accused’.⁸³⁷
- 478 Mr O’Brien told the Royal Commission that the elders would meet with a person against whom an allegation of child sexual abuse had been made but not proven and ‘give very clear direction on what restrictions would apply to their association with children, with others in the congregation, and [the elders] would monitor that’.⁸³⁸
- 479 Mr O’Brien said that others in the congregation would not be aware of the restrictions placed upon a person against whom an allegation of child sexual abuse had been made.⁸³⁹ He accepted that in those circumstances supervision of that person is therefore confined to when the elders or an elder is present to observe the person.⁸⁴⁰
- 480 Mr O’Brien gave evidence that the extent to which elders are able to discharge their obligation to care for the congregation is restricted by application of two-witness rule and that ‘unless there is a second witness to a similar type of event, or the same event, then ‘the elders’ hands are tied with warning the person’.⁸⁴¹

Evaluation of risk and treatment of offenders

- 481 Mr Spinks accepted that the processes used by secular society to evaluate the risk of re-offending were not used by the Jehovah’s Witnesses.⁸⁴²
- 482 Mr Spinks also gave evidence that the Jehovah’s Witnesses did not offer any kind of programmes for the professional treatment of offenders.⁸⁴³
- 483 Dr Monica Applewhite, who was engaged by the Jehovah’s Witness organisation to provide expert evidence about its practices and procedures, told the Royal Commission that ‘once somebody abuses, once their internal mechanisms of control have allowed

⁸³⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0099 [22] (Tab 120).

⁸³⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0069 [13] (Tab 124); Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0083 [40] (Tab 126).

⁸³⁷ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [11] (Tab 124).

⁸³⁸ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15847:34-41 (Day 153).

⁸³⁹ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15847:43-45 (Day 153).

⁸⁴⁰ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15847:47-T15848:16 (Day 153).

⁸⁴¹ Transcript of T J O’Brien, T15848:18-28 (Day 153).

⁸⁴² Transcript of R P Spinks, T15715:45-T15716:1 (Day 152).

⁸⁴³ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15716:14-20 (Day 152).

them to cross that line once, I don't have confidence in those internal mechanisms of control for the future'.⁸⁴⁴

Available findings on the system of prevention of child sexual abuse – risk of reoffending

F67 The practices and procedures of the Jehovah's Witness organisation for the prevention of child sexual abuse, and in particular for the management of the risk of an abuser reoffending, do not take account of the actual risk of an offender reoffending and accordingly place children in the organisation at significant risk of sexual abuse.

8.5 Records management

484 The Jehovah's Witness organisation's current document retention policy provides that records concerning an individual accused of child molestation are to be indefinitely retained in the congregational confidential file.⁸⁴⁵ Since 2009 the Australia Branch Office has required that all congregational documents relating to a matter of established child abuse be sent to the Branch Office.⁸⁴⁶

485 Mr Toole stated that indefinite retention of records relating to child abuse has been a long-standing practice of the Jehovah's Witness organisation.⁸⁴⁷

486 Elders are also directed that records relating to the appointment and deletion of elders and ministerial servants should be kept indefinitely.⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴⁴ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15498:9-13 (Day 150).

⁸⁴⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0068 [11] (Tab 124);

Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0076 at 0083 [41] (Tab 126).

Exhibit 29-0023, Statement of Vincent Toole, STAT.0593.001.0001_R at [44];

Exhibit 29-0019, Annexure 2, STAT.0591.001.0018 at [4.12];

Exhibit 29-0024, Statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R at [63].

⁸⁴⁶ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0015 (Tab 119).

⁸⁴⁷ Exhibit 29-0023, Statement of Vincent Toole, STAT.0593.001.0001_R at [33]-[34].

⁸⁴⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0034 at 0037 [15] (Tab 128).

Part 9 Additional issues

9.1 Accessibility and clarity of information regarding systems policies and procedures

Identification of body of documents recording current policy

- 487 Messrs Toole, Spinks and O'Brien told the Royal Commission that the letter to all bodies of elders dated 1 October 2012 is the document which offers current spiritual advice and guidance to elders on how to handle matters involving child sexual abuse.⁸⁴⁹
- 488 That letter to all bodies of elders instructs elders to destroy earlier letters regarding institutional handling of child sexual abuse.⁸⁵⁰ The letter instructs elders to first have regard to the *Shepherd the Flock* handbook and to relevant Scriptural principles involved, and to consult the 1 October 2012 letter each time a matter of child abuse arises.⁸⁵¹
- 489 Mr Spinks told the Royal Commission that current child sexual abuse policy is recorded in the 1 October 2012 letter, the *Shepherd the Flock* handbook, the 2013 Service Desk Guidelines, the *Organized to do Jehovah's Will* handbook, and the Bible.⁸⁵² However, Mr Spinks also said that these documents do not represent the complete direction given to elders in relation to responding to allegations of child sexual abuse, but rather they are the relevant documents dealing with 'key issues'.⁸⁵³ Mr Spinks acknowledged that it would be hard in those circumstances for anyone to know what the position is in relation to current policy and procedure.⁸⁵⁴
- 490 Mr Spinks agreed in evidence that it would be difficult for an elder to ascertain the current policy and on what material to rely in handling a matter, but he said that this is the reason elders are instructed to immediately contact the Branch Office when they receive an allegation of child sexual abuse.⁸⁵⁵

Clarity and accessibility to elders of current policy

- 491 The Royal Commission heard evidence that it is the practice of the Jehovah's Witness organisation to encourage survivors of child sexual abuse and their families to report the abuse to authorities. Mr Spinks did not accept that the true practice is in fact, as specified in the *Shepherd the Flock* handbook, that elders are instructed only to discuss reporting to authorities if asked.⁸⁵⁶ Mr Spinks agreed that the *Shepherd the Flock*

⁸⁴⁹ Exhibit 29-0023, Statement of Vincent Toole, STAT.0593.001.0001_R [13]; Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R [18], [24]; Exhibit 29-0024, First statement of Terrence O'Brien, STAT.0592.001.0001_R [54].

⁸⁵⁰ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0066 [1] (Tab 124).

⁸⁵¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0001.004.0066 at 0066 [1]-[2] (Tab 124).

⁸⁵² Exhibit 29-0019, First statement of Rodney Spinks, STAT.0591.001.0001_R [24].

⁸⁵³ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15683:15-43 (Day 152).

⁸⁵⁴ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15687:34-T15688:3 (Day 152).

⁸⁵⁵ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15684:17-24 (Day 152).

⁸⁵⁶ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15747:10-29 (Day 152).

handbook is one document that needs to change to reflect the actual policy of the Jehovah's Witness organisation.⁸⁵⁷

- 492 Mr Spinks also accepted that the *Shepherd the Flock* handbook was 'confusing ... to say the least' as to the policy on whether a survivor may be accompanied by a support person in a judicial committee proceeding.⁸⁵⁸
- 493 Mr Spinks was unable to identify where in the suite of documents said to record current policy, the Jehovah's Witness organisation's policy that an accuser need not face the accused in the investigative and judicial committee process was recorded.⁸⁵⁹
- 494 Mr Jackson agreed that the documents, manuals and instructions of the Jehovah's Witness organisation should make clear that a survivor of sexual assault should not have to make her allegation in the face of her abuser.⁸⁶⁰
- 495 Mr O'Brien told the Royal Commission that one matter to which the Jehovah's Witness organisation could give greater consideration is the provision to elders of clearly and more specific and tailored information and documentation as to the process for the handling of investigations and judicial committees involving child sexual abuse.⁸⁶¹

Clarity and accessibility to survivors and their families of information regarding systems, policies and procedures

- 496 Mr O'Brien gave evidence that a copy of *Organized to do Jehovah's [Will]* is issued to each member of the congregation prior to baptism.⁸⁶² He also told the Royal Commission that every member of the congregation is provided with a copy of the Watchtower library on CD, which is updated annually, includes publications going back many years, and is searchable.⁸⁶³ Mr O'Brien also described the publicly available Jehovah's Witness organisation website as a mean of providing information to congregants.⁸⁶⁴
- 497 It would appear that only the letter to all congregations of 28 August 2002⁸⁶⁵ has specifically addressed to all members of the Jehovah's Witness organisation the organisation's process for handling of complaints of child sexual abuse. The 1 October 2012 letter and the elders' *Shepherd the Flock* handbook are not available to publishers, and the 2013 Service Desk Guidelines are not even available to circuit overseers, elders and ministerial servants.

⁸⁵⁷ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15747:31-33 (Day 152).

⁸⁵⁸ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15695:16-18 (Day 152).

⁸⁵⁹ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15686:36-T15687:28 (Day 152) and see paragraphs 308 to 312 of these submissions.

⁸⁶⁰ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15952:34-40 (Day 155).

⁸⁶¹ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15832:24-33 (Day 153).

⁸⁶² Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15843:27-43 (Day 153).

⁸⁶³ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15858:32-45 (Day 153).

⁸⁶⁴ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15858:47-T15859:4 (Day 153).

⁸⁶⁵ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0004.001.0001 (Tab 105).

- 498 Mr Spinks accepted that a victim of child sexual abuse should have access to a clear policy and procedure about how to raise their allegation and how the Jehovah's Witness organisation will respond.⁸⁶⁶ He also accepted that there was currently no document to which a victim of child sexual abuse could turn that would explain the process.⁸⁶⁷
- 499 Mr O'Brien told the Royal Commission that the Jehovah's Witness organisation could give greater consideration to provision of clear information about the processes to victims and their parents.⁸⁶⁸

Submissions in relation to clarity of information

- 500 It is submitted that the Jehovah's Witness organisation's current policies and procedures for responding to allegations of child sexual abuse are insufficiently documented and accessible to those responsible for their implementation.
- 501 It is submitted that the Jehovah's Witness organisation's current policies and procedures for responding to allegations of child sexual abuse are not sufficiently clear and accessible to those who might wish to make a complaint of child sexual abuse.

Available findings on the accessibility of procedures and policies

F68 The Jehovah's Witness organisation's documented procedures for reporting on and responding to allegations of child sexual abuse are deficient in that they are not documented in such a way as to be easily accessible in one document and available to all interested or affected parties and some matters that are stated to be the policies or practices of the organisation are not recorded at all.

9.2 Leaving the Jehovah's Witness organisation

- 502 The relevance of the question of leaving the organisation arises from the not improbable scenario of a survivor of abuse in the organisation wanting to leave the organisation – particularly if she feels that her complaint of abuse was not dealt with adequately or if her abuser remains in the organisation.
- 503 The *Organized to do Jehovah's Will* publisher's handbook provides explicitly that a person who no longer wishes to be known as a Jehovah's Witness, will by the action of stating as much, disassociate himself from the Jehovah's Witness organisation:

The term "disassociation" applies to the action taken by a person who, although a baptised member of the congregation, deliberately repudiates his Christian standing, rejecting the congregation by his actions or by stating that he no longer wants to be recognised as or known as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Because he is disassociated, his situation before Jehovah is far different from that of an inactive Christian, one who no longer shares in the field ministry. An inactive person may have failed to study God's Word

⁸⁶⁶ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15684:35-43 (Day 152).

⁸⁶⁷ Transcript of R P Spinks, T15684:45-T15685:2 (Day 152).

⁸⁶⁸ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15833:1-11 (Day 153).

regularly, or...he may have lost his zeal for serving Jehovah. The elders as well as other concerned members of the congregation will continue rendering appropriate spiritual assistance to an inactive brother. (Rom. 15:1; 1 Thess. 5:14; Heb. 12:12) However, the person who disassociates himself by repudiating the faith and deliberately abandoning Jehovah's worship is viewed in the same way as one who is disfellowshipped. A brief announcement is made to inform the congregation, stating: "[Name of person] is no longer one of Jehovah's Witnesses".⁸⁶⁹

[emphasis added.]

- 504 Jehovah's Witnesses are counselled against associating, fraternising or conversing with a person who has been disfellowshipped or who has disassociated.⁸⁷⁰ This practice is known as shunning.⁸⁷¹
- 505 Even family members are instructed not to associate with a disfellowshipped or disassociated relative, unless the association is unavoidable such as if they share a house with the person.⁸⁷²
- 506 Violation by a Jehovah's Witness of the decree against associating with a disfellowshipped or disassociated person may itself, in certain circumstances, be a disfellowshipping offence.⁸⁷³
- 507 Mr Jackson gave evidence that a person who no longer wants to be known as a Jehovah's Witness has the 'total freedom' of taking the action of disassociating.⁸⁷⁴ He told the Royal Commission that '[i]f they don't want to apply to officially be removed as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, they can tell anyone they want that they are no longer a Jehovah's Witness'.⁸⁷⁵
- 508 Mr O'Brien said that an inactive Jehovah's Witness is not prohibited from free association with other Jehovah's Witnesses.⁸⁷⁶
- 509 Mr Jackson told the Royal Commission that disassociation as described in the *Organized to do Jehovah's Will* handbook simply gives a person 'the right to officially have an announcement made'.⁸⁷⁷ He reiterated his earlier evidence that if they decide not to

⁸⁶⁹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0092 (Tab 109);
See also Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0117 (Tab 120).

⁸⁷⁰ Exhibit 29-0027, EXH.029.027.0001 at 0006;
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0117 (Tab 120);
Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15848:30-T15849:16 (Day 153).

⁸⁷¹ Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [18], [21], [66].

⁸⁷² Exhibit 29-0027, EXH.029.027.0001 at 0006;
Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0117 (Tab 120);
Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15849:27-41 (Day 153);
Transcript of G W Jackson, T15980:13-22 (Day 155).

⁸⁷³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0117 (Tab 120).

⁸⁷⁴ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15975:18-22 (Day 155).

⁸⁷⁵ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15975:22-25 (Day 155).

⁸⁷⁶ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15846:2-6 (Day 153).

⁸⁷⁷ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15976:1-21 (Day 155).

exercise the right to an announcement of disassociation, then they won't automatically be disassociated.⁸⁷⁸

- 510 Mr Jackson ultimately agreed that if a person 'definitely' no longer wants to be subject to the Jehovah's Witness organisation's discipline and rules, then they must actively leave the organisation by disassociating.⁸⁷⁹ A person who merely becomes inactive, or 'fades', is still regarded to be a Jehovah's Witness by the organisation and is therefore still subject to its rules and disciplinary procedures. Such a person is therefore still susceptible to being disfellowshipped for some or other 'offence' under the rules of the organisation.
- 511 It is submitted that Mr Jackson's oral evidence is inconsistent with the position regarding disassociation published to Jehovah's Witnesses internationally in the form of the *Organized to do Jehovah's Will* handbook. It is further submitted that the true position in relation to a person who no longer wants to be known as a Jehovah's Witness and who no longer wishes to be subject to the organisation's rules and regulations, is that as recorded in the *Organized to do Jehovah's Will* handbook.

Freedom of choice

- 512 Mr O'Brien agreed that Jehovah's Witnesses tend to know and associate closely with one another.⁸⁸⁰ He told the Royal Commission that there is a strong sense of community within the organisation in Australia, members refer to each other as 'brother' and 'sister' and congregation members spend a lot of time together each week.⁸⁸¹ Mr O'Brien accepted that for a Jehovah's Witness, his or her social network is generally comprised of other Jehovah's Witnesses.⁸⁸²
- 513 Mr Jackson told the Royal Commission that the Jehovah's Witness organisation recognises an individual's freedom to make religious choices.⁸⁸³
- 514 It was put to Mr O'Brien that as a Jehovah's Witness, a survivor of child sexual abuse may be faced with the impossible choice of staying in an organisation which is protective of their abuser, or of leaving the organisation and consequently losing their entire family and social network.⁸⁸⁴ He told the Royal Commission that the decision to disassociate is a personal one and that a survivor of child sexual abuse could instead choose to become inactive and therefore retain their 'spiritual and familial association'.⁸⁸⁵
- 515 Mr O'Brien said in evidence, that in circumstances where the survivor wished to disassociate as a consequence of the intensity of her feelings from her experience, she would understand the implications of disassociation.⁸⁸⁶ Mr O'Brien disagreed that 'it is

⁸⁷⁸ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15976:15-21 (Day 155).

⁸⁷⁹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15981:19-23 (Day 155).

⁸⁸⁰ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15844:23-31 (Day 153).

⁸⁸¹ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15844:23-39 (Day 153).

⁸⁸² Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15845:16-18 (Day 153).

⁸⁸³ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15974:45-47 (Day 155).

⁸⁸⁴ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15851:22-31 (Day 153).

⁸⁸⁵ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15852:28-31 (Day 153).

⁸⁸⁶ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15851:33-37 (Day 153).

incredibly hard for someone to leave [the Jehovah's Witness organisation] because of the huge pain, suffering, cruelty that she must face if she does leave'.⁸⁸⁷

- 516 Ultimately, Mr O'Brien told the Royal Commission that he could 'only be guided by what the Scriptures say'.⁸⁸⁸
- 517 Mr Jackson did not accept that putting people in the position of having to choose between their faith and their family and social network was contrary to that freedom of religious choice.⁸⁸⁹ It was Mr Jackson's evidence that people are not forced to remain within the organisation.⁸⁹⁰
- 518 Mr Jackson agreed that in the case of a person baptized at a young age who wants to leave the Jehovah's Witness organisation, that person is faced with a stark choice, one consequence of which is that the person must leave everyone they know behind them.⁸⁹¹
- 519 Mr Jackson accepted that the decision to disassociate and leave the Jehovah's Witnesses was a 'difficult' one that can be 'personally devastating because [a person] can lose their whole social network and their families'.⁸⁹²
- 520 However, both Mr Jackson and Mr O'Brien disagreed that the practice of shunning makes the Jehovah's Witness a 'captive organisation'.⁸⁹³
- 521 It is submitted that the Jehovah's Witness organisation's policy of requiring its adherents to actively shun those who leave the organisation makes it a 'captive organisation' whose rules regarding association with those who have chosen to leave the organisation impact the capacity of a survivor of child sexual abuse within the organisation to exercise their right to freedom of religion.

Scriptural basis for the practice of shunning

- 522 Mr Jackson told the Royal Commission that the Scriptural basis for shunning can be found in the passage starting at 1 Corinthians 5:1.⁸⁹⁴ However, this passage deals explicitly with circumstances of sexual immorality existing in the congregation and Paul says that the man who committed the deed must be handed over to Satan 'so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord' (verse 5). Paul also says that the congregation must 'stop keeping company with sexually immoral people' (verse 9).
- 523 The passage would therefore appear to provide some Scriptural basis to the practice of shunning those who have been found guilty of some or other gross sexual sin (within

⁸⁸⁷ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15852:19-22 (Day 153).

⁸⁸⁸ Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15851:44-T15852:3 (Day 153).

⁸⁸⁹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15982:6-13 (Day 155).

⁸⁹⁰ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15982:25-26(Day 155).

⁸⁹¹ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15983:8-13(Day 155).

⁸⁹² Transcript of G W Jackson, T15981:38-T15982:4 (Day 155).

⁸⁹³ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15983:31-32(Day 155);

Transcript of T J O'Brien, T15852:15-22 (Day 153).

⁸⁹⁴ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15983:35-44 (Day 155).

the rules of the organisation), but provides no basis at all for the practice of shunning those who merely seek to exercise their right to leave the organisation.

- 524 The Jehovah's Witness organisation's practice of shunning those who leave the organisation is also in conflict with Mr Jackson's evidence that Jehovah God is a compassionate God⁸⁹⁵ and that Jehovah God recognises the worth and dignity of all human beings.⁸⁹⁶

Available findings on shunning

F69 Members of the Jehovah's Witness organisation who no longer want to be subject to the organisation's rules and discipline have no alternative than to leave the organisation which requires that they disassociate from it.

F70 The Jehovah's Witness organisation's policy of requiring its adherents to actively shun those who leave the organisation:

- a) makes it extremely difficult for someone to leave the organisation
- b) is cruel on those who leave and on their friends and family who remain behind
- c) is particularly cruel on those who have suffered child sexual abuse in the organisation and who wish to leave because they feel that their complaints about it have not been adequately dealt with
- d) is not apparently justified by the Scriptures which are cited in support of it
- e) is adopted and enforced in order to prevent people from leaving the organisation and thereby to maintain its membership, and
- f) is in conflict with the organisation's professed support for freedom of religious choice and the belief that Jehovah God is a compassionate God who recognises the worth and dignity of all human beings.

⁸⁹⁵ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15974:30-31 (Day 155).

⁸⁹⁶ Transcript of G W Jackson, T15974:33-35 (Day 155).

Part 10 Dr Monica Applewhite

525 At the request of the Jehovah’s Witness organisation, the Royal Commission heard evidence from Dr Monica Applewhite who was engaged by the Jehovah’s Witness organisation to provide an expert report on the response of the organisation to allegations of child sexual abuse.

10.1 Dr Applewhite’s qualifications

526 Dr Applewhite holds a Bachelor of Science in Social Work from Texas Christian University and a Master of Science in Social Work and a PhD in Clinical Social Work from the University of Texas at Arlington.⁸⁹⁷ Dr Applewhite’s PhD is not specifically relevant to child sexual abuse.⁸⁹⁸

Published work

527 In oral evidence, Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that she has not authored any peer-reviewed articles or publications.⁸⁹⁹

528 The Royal Commission heard that Dr Applewhite has, over the course of her career, consulted with numerous organisations to identify and analyse the best practices of organisations in relation to preventing and responding to incidents of abuse.⁹⁰⁰ Dr Applewhite told the Commission that she had never published the results of this analysis as the research methodology involved in the analysis was not up to the rigours of empirical research.⁹⁰¹

10.2 Dr Applewhite’s experience

529 In her report, Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that she has ‘extensive experience working directly with sexual offenders who have perpetrated abuse in organisations, as well as 22 years of conducting root cause analysis of such cases for the purpose of determining the methods used by sexual offenders to access children within churches, schools and other organisations’.⁹⁰²

530 Dr Applewhite accepted that, since 2007, her work has primarily involved running educational programmes for independent and private schools in relation to the prevention of child sexual abuse and current standards of best practice.⁹⁰³ Dr

⁸⁹⁷ Exhibit 29-0013, Annexure 2, STAT.0606.001.0017;
Exhibit 29-0013, Statement of Dr Monica Applewhite, STAT.0606.001.0001 at [2].

⁸⁹⁸ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15434:32-39 (Day 150).

⁸⁹⁹ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15434: 43-47 (Day 150).

⁹⁰⁰ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15437: 35-T15438:21 (Day 150).

⁹⁰¹ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15438:31-46 (Day 150).

⁹⁰² Exhibit 29-0013, Statement of Dr Monica Applewhite, STAT.0606.001.0001 at [2].

⁹⁰³ Exhibit 29-0013, Annexure 2, STAT.0606.001.0017;
Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15442: 38-42 (Day 150).

Applewhite also accepted that her work in Australia has, for the most part, involved conducting educational programmes for Catholic education organisations.⁹⁰⁴

Previous experience as an expert witness for the Jehovah’s Witness organisation

531 Dr Applewhite has previously been engaged by the Jehovah’s Witness organisation to provide expert evidence in four separate civil liability cases – three in the United States and one in the United Kingdom.⁹⁰⁵ Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that each of the civil cases related to claims for damages arising out of allegations of child sexual abuse and that, in each case, the Jehovah’s Witness organisation was cited as a defendant.⁹⁰⁶ Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that, in those cases, she had not been hired to give evidence critical of the organisation and could not recall ever having given evidence that was critical of the organisation.⁹⁰⁷

10.3 Dr Applewhite’s expert report

532 Dr Applewhite agreed that her report constituted a documentary review of the Jehovah’s Witness organisation’s policies and procedures and that her report did not consider the practical implementation of those policies or procedures.⁹⁰⁸

533 Dr Applewhite’s report was based on her review of documents provided to her by Watchtower Australia, publications that are available on the Jehovah’s Witness organisation website (which date from 2000), and the witness statements of Mr O’Brien and Mr Toole.⁹⁰⁹

534 In preparing her report Dr Applewhite did not consider the statements of the survivor witnesses.⁹¹⁰ Dr Applewhite also said that she had not considered any independent studies or research about the Jehovah’s Witness organisation.⁹¹¹

10.4 Dr Applewhite’s written opinions

535 Dr Applewhite expressed three opinions in her report.

536 First, in paragraph 36 of her report, Dr Applewhite stated that:

In my opinion, the current messages to those who have experienced abuse and the guidelines that have been provided to elders in congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses are consistent with, and in some respects better than, the current practices of religious organizations throughout the world.⁹¹²

⁹⁰⁴ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15446: 39-42 (Day 150);

Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15444:10-T15447:9 (Day 150).

⁹⁰⁵ Exhibit 29-0013, Statement of Dr Monica Applewhite, STAT.0606.001.0001 at [4].

⁹⁰⁶ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15452:21-47 (Day 150).

⁹⁰⁷ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15453:20-38 (Day 150).

⁹⁰⁸ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15462:37-T15463: 5 (Day 150).

⁹⁰⁹ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15460:6-T15461:29 (Day 150).

⁹¹⁰ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15461:31-33 (Day 150).

⁹¹¹ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15461:35-37 (Day 150).

⁹¹² Exhibit 29-0013, Statement of Dr Monica Applewhite, STAT.0606.001.0001 at [36].

537 Secondly, in paragraph 45 of her report, Dr Applewhite stated that:

In my opinion, Jehovah's Witnesses were well in advance of other religious organizations in providing educational materials to parents and families. The quality of the materials they provided during the 1980's [sic] and 1990's [sic] exceeded the standards of care for the time and continue to be more substantial than what many religious organizations offer parents and guardians today.⁹¹³

538 Thirdly, in paragraph 46 of her report, Dr Applewhite stated that:

In my own experience, I have not found examples in Australia of religious organizations that have provided parents, guardians, and the general public with the quality or consistency of information about prevention and response to sexual abuse or about how to support for [sic] those who have been abused that Jehovah's Witnesses have provided in their publications.⁹¹⁴

539 Dr Applewhite acknowledged that her report did not identify the basis on which she had formed her opinions.⁹¹⁵ She accepted that her report failed to identify the 'current standards' of other religious organisations,⁹¹⁶ or to which 'religious organisations' she had had reference in writing her report.⁹¹⁷ Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that her understanding of material provided to parents and families about sexual development in children by other faith-based organisations was 'anecdotal'.⁹¹⁸

540 Dr Applewhite accepted that it would be difficult for the Royal Commission to accept the opinions expressed in paragraphs 36, 45, and 46 of her report, because her report does not identify the basis on which the opinions were formed.⁹¹⁹

541 At the request of senior counsel for Watchtower Australia, the Royal Commission granted Dr Applewhite permission to submit a supplementary report setting out the reasons for the opinions in her expert report.⁹²⁰

542 On 16 August 2015, Dr Applewhite wrote to the legal representative of Watchtower Australia and advised that she was unable to prepare a supplementary statement due to other commitments. She conveyed in her letter her belief that 'between the research that has already been undertaken by the Commission and the evidence provided by others who testified after [her], the questions [Watchtower Australia has] presented to [her] have been or shortly will be answered'.⁹²¹

⁹¹³ Exhibit 29-0013, Statement of Dr Monica Applewhite, STAT.0606.001.0001 at [45].

⁹¹⁴ Exhibit 29-0013, Statement of Dr Monica Applewhite, STAT.0606.001.0001 at [46].

⁹¹⁵ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15459:20-T15460:4 and T15463:35-44 (Day 150).

⁹¹⁶ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15504:22-32 (Day 150).

⁹¹⁷ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15504:22-T15505:14 (Day 150).

⁹¹⁸ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15459:13-23 (Day 150).

⁹¹⁹ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15463:35-47 (Day 150);

Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15459:20-46 (Day 150).

⁹²⁰ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15520:1-15521:3 (Day 150).

⁹²¹ Letter from Dr Monica Applewhite to Mr Bray, 16 August 2015, received by the Royal Commission on 25 August 2015.

10.5 Dr Applewhite's errors on factual issues

543 In her report, Dr Applewhite addressed several factual matters in relation to which she was asked questions in oral evidence.

Factual issue: elders as 'fellow workers'

544 In her report, Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that:

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that elders should avoid taking a superior position with reference to other congregation members. Elders are viewed as fellow workers by their fellow elders and by other congregation members.⁹²²

545 Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that her understanding of how congregation members view elders is based solely on materials and literature published by the Jehovah's Witness organisation and not on any empirical study of how the elders are actually viewed by members.⁹²³

546 Dr Applewhite accepted, as evidenced in the organisation's own documents, that Jehovah's Witnesses consider that elders are appointed by the Holy Spirit;⁹²⁴ that elders have a leadership role within the congregation;⁹²⁵ that congregation members entrust their spiritual life to the elders as shepherds of the flock;⁹²⁶ and that elders are responsible for investigating reports of wrongdoing within the congregation, establishing judicial committees, making a determination as to wrongdoing and imposing sanctions on wrongdoers.⁹²⁷ Despite the documentary evidence in relation to the role of elders, Dr Applewhite did not accept that elders are viewed as anything other than fellow workers by congregation members.⁹²⁸ Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that the literature of the Jehovah's Witness organisation does not set elders apart as 'distinctive or in some ways [sic] superior' to other congregation members.⁹²⁹

547 It is submitted that, contrary to the evidence of Dr Applewhite, the literature and materials published by the Jehovah's Witness organisation sets elders apart from the rest of the congregation, and that it would be incorrect to conclude that elders are viewed as 'fellow workers' by ordinary congregation members. It is further submitted that in fact elders enjoy positions of great responsibility, power and influence and are probably regarded in that way by ordinary congregation members. Certainly, the experiences of both BCB and BCG support the view that elders are held up as having authority and power and certainly not as being 'fellow workers'.⁹³⁰

⁹²² Exhibit 29-0013, Statement of Dr Monica Applewhite, STAT.0606.001.0001 at [10].

⁹²³ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15465:34-T15466:12 (Day 150).

⁹²⁴ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15467:42-45 (Day 150).

⁹²⁵ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15468:16-20 (Day 150).

⁹²⁶ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15468:16-43 (Day 150).

⁹²⁷ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15469:8-35 (Day 150).

⁹²⁸ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15470:3-T15471:31 (Day 150).

⁹²⁹ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15471:15-41 (Day 150).

⁹³⁰ Exhibit 29-0001, Statement of BCB, STAT.0603.001.0001_R at [14], [15], [79];

Factual issue: role of ministerial servants in providing pastoral care

548 In her report, Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that:

Ministerial servants are members of the congregation who provide non-pastoral practical assistance and service to the elders and the congregation. Ministerial servants are not authorized to provide spiritual guidance, counselling or any other pastoral services to members of the congregation.⁹³¹

549 However, documents in evidence suggest otherwise. Specifically, *Organised to Do Jehovah's Will* provides for circumstances where a ministerial servant might 'care for' a congregation book study group until such time as an elder is available to take over.⁹³² *Shepherd the Flock* also provides for circumstances where a ministerial servant will accompany an elder in visiting members of the congregation to provide spiritual guidance and counsel, particularly where a ministerial servant might be training to become an elder.⁹³³

550 Dr Applewhite did not accept the proposition that *Organised to Do Jehovah's Will* authorises ministerial servants to undertake pastoral care in certain circumstances,⁹³⁴ but agreed that *Shepherd the Flock* does not exclude a ministerial servant from participating in pastoral care with an elder.⁹³⁵ Nonetheless, Dr Applewhite ultimately did not accept that the evidence given in her report was incorrect.⁹³⁶

551 It is submitted that, contrary to Dr Applewhite's evidence, the literature and materials published by the Jehovah's Witness organisation envisage circumstances in which a ministerial servant might be authorised to provide pastoral care to members of the congregation.

Factual issue: role of elders and ministerial servants in relation to children

552 In her report, Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that:

None of the responsibilities of a ministerial servant or elder allow or require that he be alone with children or otherwise separate from his or her family.⁹³⁷

553 From at least December 1998 the Jehovah's Witness organisation has instructed all bodies of elders that:

Those who are appointed to privileges of service, such as elders and ministerial servants, are put in a position of trust. One who is extended

Exhibit 29-0006, Statement of BCG, STAT.0590.001.0001_R at [9], [10], [13], and [77].

⁹³¹ Exhibit 29-0013, Statement of Dr Monica Applewhite, STAT.0606.001.0001 at [20].

⁹³² Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0029 (Tab 109).

⁹³³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0024-25 [23] (Tab 120); see also Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0044 (Tab 109).

⁹³⁴ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0013.001.0001 at 0043 (Tab 109); Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15475:27-T15476:28 (Day 150).

⁹³⁵ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15478:13-15 (Day 150).

⁹³⁶ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15478:17-23 (Day 150).

⁹³⁷ Exhibit 29-0013, Statement of Dr Monica Applewhite, STAT.0606.001.0001 at [21].

privileges in the congregation is judged by others as being worthy of trust. This includes being more liberal in leaving children in their care and oversight.⁹³⁸

- 554 Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that the above direction was meant as ‘a warning to let elders know that families might be more trusting of a person and allow their children to be alone with someone who was a ministerial servant or an elder’, and that it was her understanding that elders and ministerial servants were not meant to meet alone with women or children.⁹³⁹ Dr Applewhite was unable to provide any reference in the Jehovah’s Witness organisation’s policies for this understanding and did not otherwise identify the source of her understanding.⁹⁴⁰
- 555 While there is a documented prohibition on an elder meeting alone with a woman who is a victim of abuse for fear that she might ‘develop improper feelings’ towards him,⁹⁴¹ there is no such documented prohibition, at least in evidence, against an elder or ministerial servant being alone with a child. Senior Counsel for Watchtower Australia undertook to locate the relevant reference and provide it to the Royal Commission.⁹⁴² As at the date of these submissions, no such reference has been provided.
- 556 It is accordingly submitted that, contrary to Dr Applewhite’s evidence, there is no specific prohibition on elders and ministerial servants meeting alone with children.

Factual issue: the two-witness rule

- 557 Dr Applewhite agreed that child sexual abuse most often occurs in private, and that as a result, a survivor would have ‘real difficulties’ establishing that child sexual abuse had occurred according to a standard of proof that required two witnesses to the abuse.⁹⁴³ Dr Applewhite further agreed that elders are not able to take any action where there is only one witness and the accused denies the allegation.⁹⁴⁴ She acknowledged that in such circumstances, the effect of the application of the two-witness rule is that an alleged perpetrator remains, with his rights intact, in the congregation and able to interact with the survivor.⁹⁴⁵ She agreed that that result is ‘not a very good place to end up’.⁹⁴⁶
- 558 Dr Applewhite also accepted that the role of the two-witness rule in preventing allegations of child sexual abuse from being established has the potential to further traumatise survivors of child sexual abuse and to place the survivor’s psychological well-being at a ‘by no means ... ideal place’.⁹⁴⁷

⁹³⁸ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0002.001.0001 at 0001 (Tab 97).

⁹³⁹ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15479:13-24 (Day 150).

⁹⁴⁰ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15479:26-29 (Day 150).

⁹⁴¹ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0057 [28] (Tab 120).

⁹⁴² Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15479:26-34 (Day 150).

⁹⁴³ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15495:2-T15496:29 (Day 150).

⁹⁴⁴ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15516:35-T15517:9 (Day 150).

⁹⁴⁵ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15516:35-T15517:6 (Day 150).

⁹⁴⁶ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15517:8-9 (Day 150).

⁹⁴⁷ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15503:7-28 (Day 150).

Factual issue: accused facing accuser and absence of support person

- 559 Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that it was the current practice of the Jehovah's Witness organisation to allow a survivor to write a letter rather than requiring her to present her allegation directly and in person to elders and the accused in a judicial committee hearing.⁹⁴⁸
- 560 Dr Applewhite said that her understanding of the current practice was based on the letter of 1 October 2012 to all bodies of elders and on the witness statement of Mr Toole.⁹⁴⁹ She agreed that the direction in *Shepherd the Flock* was that a survivor would have to present her evidence before a three-man judicial committee and the accused, but she told the Royal Commission that it was her understanding that the direction had been modified by the letter of 1 October 2012 to the effect that testimony in person was not necessary.⁹⁵⁰ It was put to Dr Applewhite, and she agreed, that the letter of 1 October 2012 did not in fact modify the direction in *Shepherd the Flock* in the way that she had understood.⁹⁵¹
- 561 Dr Applewhite accepted that the Jehovah's Witness organisation's documented policies require a survivor to give their testimony before a judicial committee in the presence of the accused, unless the survivor lives 'a great distance away or for some reason [is] not able to be physically present'.⁹⁵²
- 562 In relation to the direction in *Shepherd the Flock* that 'observers should not be present for moral support', Dr Applewhite agreed that such a direction excludes a survivor from having someone with her during a judicial committee hearing to provide moral support.⁹⁵³
- 563 Dr Applewhite ultimately said that 'if it turns out that the practice that they have today does not allow someone to write a letter and they have to confront their offender and they have to sit in the room with no support it is not going to meet the standard of care'.⁹⁵⁴ It submitted that Dr Applewhite's evidence that such a requirement of a survivor would not meet the standard of care, should be accepted.

Factual issue: reporting to authorities

- 564 In her report, Dr Applewhite told the Royal Commission that:

Child sexual abuse is regarded as a crime by Jehovah's Witnesses. Elders are instructed to report crimes according to the law and never to discourage anyone from reporting abuse to law enforcement.⁹⁵⁵

⁹⁴⁸ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15485:34-41, T15493:20-21 (Day 150).

⁹⁴⁹ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15489:19-21 (Day 150).

⁹⁵⁰ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15488:34-T15489:9, T15489:25-35 (Day 150).

⁹⁵¹ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15491:21-T15492:28, (Day 150).

⁹⁵² Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15493:26-47 (Day 150).

⁹⁵³ Exhibit 29-0003, WAT.0003.001.0001 at 0091 [3] (Tab 120);

Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15491:2-19 (Day 150).

⁹⁵⁴ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15494:2-15 (Day 150).

⁹⁵⁵ Exhibit 29-0013, Statement of Dr Monica Applewhite, STAT.0606.001.0001 at [26].

- 565 Dr Applewhite agreed that she did not mean to imply in her report that elders are instructed to report crimes generally, but that it is the case that elders are instructed to report to authorities only after the Branch Office has advised if a mandatory reporting obligation applies in the particular case.⁹⁵⁶
- 566 Dr Applewhite later expressed her view that a mandatory reporting requirement should be introduced so that elders would not have the option to not report allegations of child sexual abuse to police.⁹⁵⁷
- 567 Dr Applewhite also told the Royal Commission that in her opinion, criminal sanctions are necessary in respect of perpetrators of child sexual abuse so that there are ‘clear consequences’ that will ‘act as a deterrent’.⁹⁵⁸

10.6 Submissions in relation to the opinions proffered in Dr Applewhite’s report

- 568 It is submitted that the Royal Commission cannot accept the opinions expressed by Dr Applewhite in paragraphs 36, 45 or 46 of her report, because:
- a) those opinions are not supported by the reasons set out in her report, and
 - b) the facts and assumptions upon which Dr Applewhite’s opinions are based are not identified in her report or in her oral evidence.

Available findings on Dr Applewhite’s expert opinions

F71 The opinions expressed by Dr Applewhite in paragraphs 36, 45 and 46 of her report are rejected because they are not substantiated by identifiable facts and assumptions or by reasons.

F72 Dr Applewhite’s report contains a number of factual errors with regard to her documenting of the relevant practices and procedures of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

F73 Dr Applewhite’s report is therefore rejected.

10.7 Dr Applewhite’s oral evidence: Finkelhor’s Model

- 569 In her report, Dr Applewhite referenced articles in *Awake!*, which in turn referred to research conducted by Dr David Finkelhor,⁹⁵⁹ who, Dr Applewhite agreed, is a ‘credible’ and ‘leading researcher and academic writer in the field’ of prevention of child sexual

⁹⁵⁶ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15482:16-43 (Day 150).

⁹⁵⁷ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15495:43-T15496:-9 (Day 150).

⁹⁵⁸ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15513:42-T15514:1 (Day 150).

⁹⁵⁹ Exhibit 29-0013, Statement of Dr Monica Applewhite, STAT.0606.001.0001 at [43(a)].

abuse.⁹⁶⁰ Dr Applewhite explained that by including such references she had wanted to illustrate that, ‘solid researchers [...] are cited in the articles’.⁹⁶¹

- 570 Dr Applewhite was shown a report published by the Australian Institute for Family Studies in June 2015 entitled ‘Conceptualising the prevention of child sexual abuse’ (the **AIFS Report**).⁹⁶² The AIFS Report identifies Dr Finkelhor’s Four Preconditions Model (**Finkelhor’s Model**), which was first published in 1984 and which has been used to understand the behaviour of child sexual abuse offenders.⁹⁶³
- 571 Dr Applewhite was familiar with Finkelhor’s Model.⁹⁶⁴ Dr Applewhite agreed that the following social/cultural factors that support three of the four preconditions for an individual to engage in child sexual abuse identified in Finkelhor’s Model, exist within the Jehovah’s Witness organisation. They are:
- a) repressive norms about masturbation and extra marital sex⁹⁶⁵
 - b) weak criminal sanctions (in circumstances where mandatory reporting obligations do not apply and the Jehovah’s Witnesses do not report to authorities)⁹⁶⁶
 - c) ideology of patriarchal prerogatives for fathers, at least in the sense of it being a patriarchal organisation⁹⁶⁷
 - d) barriers to women’s equality,⁹⁶⁸ and
 - e) strong ideology of family sanctity.⁹⁶⁹
- 572 In respect of Finkelhor’s fourth precondition⁹⁷⁰ and its relevant social/cultural factors, Dr Applewhite said that she ‘is not sure about’ whether the Jehovah’s Witness organisation or community can be characterised as exhibiting ‘social powerlessness of children’.⁹⁷¹
- 573 Dr Applewhite said that she would have to look at the matter more carefully before accepting that the identified social/cultural factors ‘raised some flashing lights’ or came together in a ‘perfect storm’ with regard to the risk of child sexual abuse occurring in the Jehovah’s Witness organisation.⁹⁷²

⁹⁶⁰ Transcript of M L Applewhite, T15511:8-10 (Day 150); Exhibit 29-0013, Statement of Dr Monica Applewhite, STAT.0606.001.0001 at [43(a)].

⁹⁶¹ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15511:16-17 (Day 150).

⁹⁶² Exhibit 29-0015, WEB.0061.001.0001.

⁹⁶³ Exhibit 29-0015, WEB.0061.001.0001 at 0041.

⁹⁶⁴ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15512:1-6 (Day 150).

⁹⁶⁵ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15513:18-30 (Day 150).

⁹⁶⁶ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15513:32-T15514:1 (Day 150).

⁹⁶⁷ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15515:3-5 (Day 150).

⁹⁶⁸ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15515:9-11 (Day 150).

⁹⁶⁹ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15515:34-40 (Day 150).

⁹⁷⁰ Exhibit 29-0015, WEB.0061.001.0001 at 0042.

⁹⁷¹ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T-15515:47-T15516:8 (Day 150).

⁹⁷² Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15516:16-21 (Day 150).

10.8 Dr Applewhite's oral evidence: Standards of Best Practice

- 574 Dr Applewhite accepted a number of components to current standards of best practice in relation to raising and responding to allegations of child sexual abuse within religious organisations. She accepted that religious organisations should have:
- a) a process for reporting allegations of child sexual abuse which is survivor focussed and designed to ensure that the child or adult survivor feels able to come forward and be comfortable in reporting the allegation⁹⁷³
 - b) a process for reporting allegations of child sexual abuse that does not require a survivor to confront the alleged perpetrator of their abuse or be in the same room as the alleged perpetrator without support⁹⁷⁴
 - c) a system for preventing perpetrators of child sexual abuse from being put back in a position of trust with children⁹⁷⁵
 - d) an ability to take child-safe action in order to remove children from imminent danger, or a relationship with other authorities that have that ability,⁹⁷⁶ and
 - e) strong and cooperative relationships with child protection authorities and with criminal justice authorities.⁹⁷⁷
- 575 Dr Applewhite accepted, and it is submitted, that the Jehovah's Witness organisation's current policies and procedures for raising and responding to child sexual abuse do not meet all the current standards of best practice.⁹⁷⁸ She also accepted that 'there are better ways' for handling complaints than having a survivor tell her story to two and then three men without moral support with the accused being present,⁹⁷⁹ and that the two-witness rule is 'problematic'.⁹⁸⁰

Available findings on Dr Applewhite's oral evidence

- F74 Dr Applewhite accepted the following components to current standards of best practice in relation to raising and responding to allegations of child sexual abuse within religious organisations, namely that religious organisations should have:
- a) a process for reporting allegations of child sexual abuse which is survivor focussed and designed to ensure that the child or adult survivor feels able to come forward and be comfortable in reporting the allegation
 - b) a process for reporting allegations of child sexual abuse that does not require a survivor to confront the alleged perpetrator of their abuse or be in the same room as the alleged perpetrator without support
 - c) a system for preventing perpetrators of child sexual abuse from being put back in a position of trust with children

⁹⁷³ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15448:35-T15449:10 (Day 150).

⁹⁷⁴ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15494:2-15 (Day 150).

⁹⁷⁵ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15452:8-19 (Day 150).

⁹⁷⁶ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15450:14-18 (Day 150).

⁹⁷⁷ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15451:38-46 (Day 150).

⁹⁷⁸ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15500:21-44 (Day 150).

⁹⁷⁹ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15501:36-41 (Day 150).

⁹⁸⁰ Transcript of ML Applewhite, T15503:10 (Day 150).

- d) an ability to take child-safe action in order to remove children from imminent danger, or a relationship with other authorities that have that ability, and
- e) strong and cooperative relationships with child protection authorities and with criminal justice authorities.

F75 The opinion expressed by Dr Applewhite in oral evidence that requiring a survivor of child sexual abuse to present her testimony before elders and her abuser would not meet the relevant standard is accepted.

F76 The opinion expressed by Dr Applewhite that requiring a survivor of child sexual abuse to present her allegation and testimony to three men without the presence of a support person would not meet the relevant standard is accepted.

F77 The Jehovah's Witness organisation's current policies and procedures for raising and responding to complaints or allegations of child sexual abuse do not meet all current standards of best practice.

Part 11 Summary of available findings

Available findings on the Jehovah's Witnesses relationship with secular authorities

F1 The Jehovah's Witness organisation presents its members with conflicting and ambiguous teachings regarding their relationship with secular authorities, thereby fostering a distrust of such authorities.

Available findings on historical child sexual abuse data

F2 Since 1950, the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia has received allegations of child sexual abuse against 1,006 of its members relating to at least 1,800 victims, and has in that period not reported a single allegation to the police or other authorities, even though 579 of those against whom an allegation was made confessed to having committed child sexual abuse.

F3 The Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia receives approximately three to four reports of allegations of child sexual abuse each month.

Available findings on BCB's first disclosure

F4 The elders bringing the man whom BCB accused of abusing her to her home was unjustified and traumatising for BCB and should not have occurred.

F5 Although the elders may have been following the documented procedure at the time and they may have believed that Scriptural principle required that the accuser face the accused with her allegations, it was distressing to and unsupportive of BCB to require that of her.

F6 It was distressing for BCB to be required by the elders to tell of what had happened to her to a group of men, including the man whom she accused of abusing her, and it was not likely to, nor did it, result in BCB disclosing the full extent of her abuse.

F7 It was inconsistent with the elders' professed sympathy for BCB for them not to have offered her the opportunity of the support and involvement of women in the process of investigating her allegations of abuse.

F8 The elders did not explain to BCB the purpose of their investigation and the meetings with her such as to ensure that she had an understanding of that purpose, which left her confused and disempowered.

F9 The application of the two-witness rule meant that there was insufficient evidence for the elders to act against BCB's abuser even though they believed her, which left her feeling disbelieved and unsupported, and it left the abuser in the congregation where he may have been a risk to other children.

F10 Mr Horley telling BCB that she should not discuss her abuse with anyone left her feeling silenced and unsupported.

F11 BCB was not told by the elders that she could, let alone should, report her abuse to the authorities.

F12 In circumstances where both investigating elders agreed that there was substance to BCB's allegations, they should have taken steps against Bill Neill, at least by imposing some restrictions on his activities involving children and thereby addressing the potential risk that he posed to other children.

F13 It was traumatic for BCB and inappropriate of Mr Horley for him to have required BCB to attend Bible study at Bill Neill's home when he knew that BCB accused Bill Neill of abusing her.

F14 The recommendation of the elders to the Branch Office that Bill Neill be reinstated as an elder 'once this has died down' and their expressed concern 'that there may also be worldly people who also know' demonstrates that they were more concerned about the reputation of Bill Neill and the congregation than about the risk that he posed to children.

Available findings on BCB's second disclosure

F15 It was wrong of Joe Bello, and contrary to the Jehovah's Witness organisation's own direction in that regard, to discourage BCB from reporting to the Royal Commission by asking whether she 'really wants to drag Jehovah's name through the mud'.

F16 The elders in BCB's present congregation should have supported BCB in her reporting to the Royal Commission if that is what she wanted to do.

Available findings on the investigation and judicial committee processes following BCG's disclosure

F17 The elders did not explain to BCG the purpose of their investigation and their meetings with BCG such as to ensure that she had an understanding of that purpose, which left her confused and disempowered.

F18 It was traumatising for BCG to be required by the elders to tell what had happened to her to a group of men, including the man whom she accused of sexually abusing her, and it was not likely to, nor did it, result in BCG disclosing the full extent her abuse.

F19 It would have been supportive of the elders to offer BCG the opportunity of the support and involvement of other women in the process of investigating her allegations of abuse.

F20 During their judicial committee investigation or proceedings the elders received evidence that BCH had abused BCG's elder sister and her two younger sisters, but they took no action in relation to that evidence.

F21 The evidence presented to the judicial committee of BCH having abused his other daughters satisfied the Jehovah's Witness organisation's own rules with regard to sufficiency of evidence to establish that BCH had abused BCG, but the elders wrongly ignored that evidence and accordingly failed to uphold BCG's complaint against BCH.

F22 In the course of the judicial committee process, and before the elders reached a conclusion on BCH's guilt in relation to his extra-marital conduct, BCH confessed to having abused BCG.

F23 The elders inexplicably and wrongly ignored BCH's confession to having abused BCG and thereby, within the precepts of the Jehovah's Witness organisation's own rules and procedures, failed to uphold BCG's complaint against BCH.

F24 BCG was not told by the elders that she could, let alone should, report her abuse to the authorities.

F25 The appeal committee's requirement that BCG give evidence of her sexual abuse by her father to a group of seven men including her named abuser was unjustified and traumatising to BCG and should never have happened.

F26 The failure by the elders to report BCH's sexual abuse of BCG to the police had the result that BCH remained at large in the community and a risk to children, and reflects that the elders were not concerned with child safety but rather with keeping their organisation 'clean'.

F27 The judicial committee's failure to uphold BCG's complaint of abuse by BCH conveyed to BCG that the organisation tolerated child sexual abuse within its ranks.

F28 The advice given by the elders to BCG that she not speak about her abuse to anyone had the effect of silencing her.

F29 The elders' treatment of BCG was unsympathetic and unsupportive and left her feeling worthless and helpless.

Available findings on the reinstatement of BCH

F30 BCH was reinstated as a Jehovah's Witness little more than three years after he had been disfellowshipped for, amongst other things, five or six counts of sexual abuse of his daughter.

F31 The decision to reinstate BCH took no account of the risk that BCH posed to children, paid little regard to the fact that he had been disfellowshipped because of child sexual abuse, and was focussed principally on his extra-marital relationship.

F32 The decision to reinstate BCH took no account of BCH's failure to apologise to BCG, a factor relevant to consideration of sincere repentance, or of what BCG might have had to say about BCH being reinstated.

F33 The decision to reinstate BCH was disrespectful and unsupportive of BCG.

F34 The Branch Office's response to BCG on 26 February 1996 caused BCG to feel angry, upset and let down, and did not convey support and concern to BCG on the part of the Jehovah's Witness organisation.

Available findings on the impact of the judicial committee process on criminal proceedings against BCH

F35 The judicial committee and appeal committee processes that preceded BCG reporting her abuse by her father to the police complicated the criminal proceedings because of the numbers of people involved in those processes and the telling and retelling of the experience.

Available findings on the risk management and second disfellowshipping of BCH

F36 When BCH was reinstated no restrictions were placed on him which were relevant to his risk to children despite his established history of child sexual abuse.

F37 BCH was disfellowshipped a second time for lying in relation to child sexual abuse rather than for child sexual abuse itself.

F38 The reasons canvassed and then given for the second disfellowshipping of BCH show that those from the Jehovah's Witness organisation who were involved were more concerned about a charge of lying than they were about BCH's sexual abuse of his daughters.

Available findings on the authority of the Governing Body

F39 Mr Spinks' evidence that the Australia Branch has full authority to produce documents, seminars, letters to elders and letters to publishers without the approval or agreement of the Governing Body is rejected.

F40 The Governing Body retains authority in respect of all publications in the name of the Jehovah's Witness organisation and any view or perspective contrary to that of the Governing Body is not tolerated.

Available findings on the investigation process

F41 There are no circumstances in which the survivor of a sexual assault should have to make her allegation in the presence of the person whom she accuses of having assaulted her, and, contrary to the present position, the documents, manuals and instructions produced by the Jehovah's Witness organisation should make this clear.

F42 The requirement that two or more eyewitnesses to the same incident are required in the absence of a confession from the accused, the testimony of two or three witnesses to separate incidents of the same kind of wrongdoing, or strong circumstantial evidence testified to by at least two witnesses (i.e. the two witness rule):

- a) means that in respect of child sexual abuse which almost invariably occurs in private, very often no finding of guilt will be made in respect of a guilty accused
- b) causes victims of child sexual abuse to feel unheard and unsupported when it results in allegations of child sexual abuse not being upheld
- c) is a danger to children in the Jehovah's Witness organisation because its consequence is that very often nothing is done about an abuser in the organisation
- d) does not seem to be applied by the Jehovah's Witness organisation in the case of an accusation of adultery, which suggests that adultery is taken more seriously by the organisation than child sexual abuse, and
- e) needs to be revisited by the Jehovah's Witness organisation with a view to abandoning it or at least reformulating it to ensure that safe decisions as to someone being guilty of child sexual abuse can be made more easily.

F43 The requirement that only elders (i.e. men) can participate in the making of decisions in the investigation process on whether or not someone has committed child sexual abuse:

- a) is a fundamental flaw in that process which weakens the decisions by excluding women, and
- b) needs to be revisited by the Jehovah's Witness organisation to ensure a meaningful role for women.

Available findings on the judicial committee process

F44 Under the current documented judicial committee process, if the evidence of the complainant is to be taken into account then she must give evidence in person unless she lives a great distance away or for some other reason is not able to be physically present.

F45 The stated willingness of the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia to have the evidence of a complainant of child sexual abuse give evidence remotely or by way of a written statement should be formalised and documented so that those running judicial committee processes and those affected by them are properly advised of the position.

F46 Under the current documented judicial committee process, a complainant of child sexual abuse is prohibited from having someone present with her in the judicial committee process to offer support.

F47 The stated willingness of the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia to allow a complainant of child sexual abuse to be accompanied by a support person of her choosing should be formalised and documented so that those running judicial committee processes and those affected by them are properly advised of the position.

F48 The current documented process for responding to allegations of child sexual abuse within the Jehovah's Witness organisation is focussed largely on the rights and comfort of the accused, with little regard to the requirements of a victim of abuse.

Available findings on the management of risk

F49 The failure of the Jehovah's Witness organisation to take into account the risk of re-offending when considering whether an offender is repentant, and consequently in deciding whether to merely reprove rather than to disfellowship, or whether to re-admit someone who has previously been disfellowshipped, does not adequately take account of considerations of child safety and should be revisited.

Available findings on sanctions – reproof

F50 Since it is the policy or practice of the Jehovah's Witness organisation not to report allegations of child sexual abuse to the police (other than if required by law to do so), if a known abuser is found to be repentant and for that reason merely reprovved rather than disfellowshipped he remains in the congregation and a risk to children in the congregation.

F51 The system of not announcing the reasons for reproof means that members of the congregation are not warned about the risk that such a wrongdoer poses to children in the congregation.

F52 The sanction of reproof therefore does nothing to protect children in the congregation and in the broader community.

Available findings on sanctions – disfellowshipping

F53 Since it is the policy or practice of the Jehovah's Witness organisation not to report allegations of child sexual abuse to the police (other than if required by law to do so), if a known abuser is disfellowshipped he remains in the community and a risk to children in the community.

F54 The sanction of disfellowshipping does nothing to protect children in the community.

Available findings on reporting

F55 Prior to this case study, the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia did not advise congregational elders of their obligations to report the commission of criminal offences to the police under s 316 of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW).

F56 This report is referred to the Law Society of New South Wales in relation to the conduct of Mr Toole in having failed to advise congregational elders of their obligations to report their knowledge of the commission of certain criminal offences to the police.

Available findings on the Jehovah's Witness organisation's policy on reporting

F57 It is the policy and practice of the Jehovah's Witness organisation in Australia to not report allegations of child sexual abuse to the police or other authorities unless required by law to do so.

F58 The basis for this policy is said to be respect for the 'right' of the victim to herself decide whether to make a complaint to the authorities.

F59 That basis has no justification where the victim is still a minor at the time that the abuse comes to the attention of the organisation, or where there are others who may still be at risk at the hands of the alleged abuser.

F60 Since the organisation cannot remove an alleged abuser from the family or take other positive steps to safeguard children in the family from continuing risk, the organisation should have a policy to report all allegations of child sexual abuse to the authorities unless an

adult victim specifically requests that a report not be made and there is no appreciable risk of children being abused.

Available findings on the impact of the Jehovah's Witness organisation's processes on criminal processes

F61 The internal processes of the Jehovah's Witness organisation for handling allegations of child sexual abuse cause significant delay in a complaint coming, if ever, before authorities.

F62 Admissions made by an accused during the investigative and/or judicial committee process administered by the Jehovah's Witness organisation may not be admissible in criminal proceedings because of the circumstances in which they are made, including that incentives such as reduction in penalty are offered if an admission is made.

F63 The number of people to whom a survivor of child sexual abuse is required to divulge the detail of her complaint exacerbates the trauma already suffered by a survivor of such abuse.

F64 There is significant risk of contamination of a survivor's evidence as a result of the number of times and circumstances in which a survivor is required to divulge the detail of her complaint before her abuse is, if ever, reported to the authorities.

Available findings on Mr Jackson's stated empathy for survivors

F65 Mr Jackson's failure to have read or be familiar with the testimony of the survivor witnesses yet to have read or otherwise familiarised himself with the testimony of Jehovah's Witness witnesses belies his stated empathy for the survivors and his stated recognition of the importance of their perspectives.

Available findings on the system of prevention of child sexual abuse – WWCC

F66 The documented practice of the Jehovah's Witness organisation of not reporting child sexual abuse to the authorities undermines the efficacy of the working with children check system, a system to which the organisation says it subscribes and with which it says it complies.

Available findings on the system of prevention of child sexual abuse – risk of reoffending

F67 The practices and procedures of the Jehovah's Witness organisation for the prevention of child sexual abuse, and in particular for the management of the risk of an abuser reoffending, do not take account of the actual risk of an offender reoffending and accordingly place children in the organisation at significant risk of sexual abuse.

Available findings on the accessibility of procedures and policies

F68 The Jehovah's Witness organisation's documented procedures for reporting on and responding to allegations of child sexual abuse are deficient in that they are not documented in such a way as to be easily accessible in one document and available to all interested or affected parties and some matters that are stated to be the policies or practices of the organisation are not recorded at all.

Available findings on shunning

F69 Members of the Jehovah's Witness organisation who no longer want to be subject to the organisation's rules and discipline have no alternative than to leave the organisation which requires that they disassociate from it.

F70 The Jehovah's Witness organisation's policy of requiring its adherents to actively shun those who leave the organisation:

- a) makes it extremely difficult for someone to leave the organisation
- b) is cruel on those who leave and on their friends and family who remain behind
- c) is particularly cruel on those who have suffered child sexual abuse in the organisation and who wish to leave because they feel that their complaints about it have not been adequately dealt with
- d) is not apparently justified by the Scriptures which are cited in support of it
- e) is adopted and enforced in order to prevent people from leaving the organisation and thereby to maintain its membership, and
- f) is in conflict with the organisation's professed support for freedom of religious choice and the belief that Jehovah God is a compassionate God who recognises the worth and dignity of all human beings.

Available findings on Dr Applewhite's expert opinions

F71 The opinions expressed by Dr Applewhite in paragraphs 36, 45 and 46 of her report are rejected because they are not substantiated by identifiable facts and assumptions or by reasons.

F72 Dr Applewhite's report contains a number of factual errors with regard to her documenting of the relevant practices and procedures of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

F73 Dr Applewhite's report is therefore rejected.

Available findings on Dr Applewhite's oral evidence

F74 Dr Applewhite accepted the following components to current standards of best practice in relation to raising and responding to allegations of child sexual abuse within religious organisations, namely that religious organisations should have:

- a) a process for reporting allegations of child sexual abuse which is survivor focussed and designed to ensure that the child or adult survivor feels able to come forward and be comfortable in reporting the allegation
- b) a process for reporting allegations of child sexual abuse that does not require a survivor to confront the alleged perpetrator of their abuse or be in the same room as the alleged perpetrator without support
- c) a system for preventing perpetrators of child sexual abuse from being put back in a position of trust with children
- d) an ability to take child-safe action in order to remove children from imminent danger, or a relationship with other authorities that have that ability, and
- e) strong and cooperative relationships with child protection authorities and with criminal justice authorities.

F75 The opinion expressed by Dr Applewhite in oral evidence that requiring a survivor of child sexual abuse to present her testimony before elders and her abuser would not meet the relevant standard is accepted.

F76 The opinion expressed by Dr Applewhite that requiring a survivor of child sexual abuse to present her allegation and testimony to three men without the presence of a support person would not meet the relevant standard is accepted.

F77 The Jehovah's Witness organisation's current policies and procedures for raising and responding to complaints or allegations of child sexual abuse do not meet all current standards of best practice.

Angus Stewart SC

25 September 2015

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



2821 Route 22, Patterson, NY 12563-2237 Phone: (845) 306-1100

October 1, 2012

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Child abuse

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Dear Brothers:

1. This letter updates the letters to all bodies of elders regarding child abuse dated March 23, 1992; February 3, 1993; August 1, 1995; March 14, 1997; July 20, 1998; May 24, 2002; April 1, 2004; June 5, 2006; and May 24, 2010. Those letters should be removed from the congregation permanent file of policy letters and be destroyed. *No one should keep originals or copies of any of those letters.*

2. Additionally, much fine direction has been included in the *Shepherding* textbook. Thus, elders should first consult the *Shepherding* textbook and review the Scriptural principles involved. They should thereafter study the additional points outlined in this letter. As you review this letter, please note that paragraphs 3-7 set forth **legal** concerns regarding accusations of child abuse. Paragraphs 8-20 set forth **congregational** concerns. This letter should be carefully consulted anytime a matter involving child abuse arises.

LEGAL CONCERNS REGARDING ACCUSATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

3. **What is child abuse from a legal standpoint?** Child abuse includes the sexual or physical abuse of a minor (a person less than 18 years of age). It would also include the extreme neglect of a minor by his parent or guardian. Child *sexual* abuse generally includes sexual intercourse with a minor; oral or anal sex with a minor; fondling the genitals, breasts, or buttocks of a minor; voyeurism of a minor; indecent exposure to a minor; soliciting a minor for sexual conduct; or any kind of involvement with child pornography. Depending on the circumstances of the case, it may also include “sexting” with a minor. “Sexting” describes the sending of nude photos, seminude photos, or sexually explicit text messages electronically, such as by phone.

4. Most states have child-abuse reporting laws that, depending on the facts, mandate elders to report an accusation to the authorities. Thus, when elders learn of an accusation of child abuse, two elders from their congregation should *immediately* call the Legal Department for legal advice. If the individuals involved are in different congregations, each body of elders should arrange for two of their elders to call the Legal Department. A call should be made even when both persons involved in sexual misconduct are minors. The elders should *not* ask an alleged victim, the accused person, or relatives of the victim or accused to call the Legal Department. The elders should call the Legal Department even in the following situations:

- The alleged abuse occurred many years ago.
- The alleged abuse is based on the testimony of only one witness.
- The alleged abuse is believed to be a repressed memory.
- The alleged abuse involved perpetrators or victims who are deceased.
- The alleged abuse is believed to have already been reported to the authorities by someone.
- The alleged perpetrator or victim is no longer a member of the congregation.
- The alleged abuse occurred before the alleged perpetrator or victim was baptized.
- The alleged victim is now an adult.
- The alleged abuse occurred in the past, and you are not certain whether the elders involved at the time called the Legal Department for direction.

5. The Legal Department will provide you with legal advice based on the facts and the applicable law. If the individual who is accused of the child abuse is associated with a congregation, please provide the Legal Department with his date of birth and, if applicable, his date of baptism. After a report has been made to the Legal Department, depending on the need, the elders may be directed to contact the Service Department for assistance with questions regarding theocratic or judicial aspects of the case or regarding how to protect children.

6. Two elders should also call the Legal Department regarding any prison inmate who has been accused of child abuse in the past and who is now associating with a congregation, such as by attending congregation meetings held in the prison. This would apply whether he is baptized or not. In some cases, elders may not be authorized to inquire of the offense that an inmate may have committed. But if the elders learn that the alleged offense has to do with child abuse, they should call the Legal Department immediately.

7. If the elders become aware of minors associated with a congregation “sexting” with other minors or of adults “sexting” with minors, the Legal Department should be called *immediately*. The Legal Department does not need to be called when the elders receive reports of adults (that is, cases in which all parties involved are at least 18 years old) “sexting” one another.

CONGREGATIONAL CONCERNS REGARDING ACCUSATIONS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

8. **What is child molestation from a congregational standpoint?** *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines “pedophilia” as “sexual perversion in which children are the preferred sexual object.” (See “Questions From Readers” in *The Watchtower* of February 1, 1997, page 29.) Deuteronomy 23:17, 18 condemns such practices as “detestable.” (See the footnotes to verses 17 and 18 in the *Reference Bible*. Also, see the footnote on page 10 of the October 8, 1993, issue of *Awake!*) In harmony with these references, we are herein discussing sexual perversion in which children are the object of sexual abuse, including fondling, by an adult. We are not discussing a situation wherein a minor who is a willing participant and who is approaching adulthood has sexual relations with an adult who is a few years older than the minor nor, generally speaking, are we discussing situations in which only minors are involved. Rather, we are referring to situations in which it is established that an adult brother or sister has been guilty of sexually abusing a young child or has been sexually involved with a minor who is approaching adulthood and who was not a willing participant.

9. As spiritual shepherds, elders should continue to make every effort to protect all in the congregation, especially children, from the unwholesome practices of the world. (Isa. 32:1, 2) One of these is child sexual abuse. We abhor the sexual abuse of children and will not protect any perpetrator of such repugnant acts from the consequences of his gross sin. (Rom. 12:9) Elders should take seriously their responsibility in this matter so that the congregations will be safeguarded from any valid accusation of neglect in protecting children from sexual abuse.

10. Regardless of whether the law requires the elders to report an accusation to the authorities, steps need to be taken to protect children. Elders should help the parents of the children involved to understand that they have the primary responsibility for protecting their children. Obviously, such parents will be keenly interested in taking precautions in this regard. Our publications contain helpful information on how parents can protect their children.—*w10* 11/1 p. 13; *w08* 10/1 p. 21; *g* 10/07 pp. 3-11; *lr* pp. 170-171; *g03* 2/8 p. 9; *g99* 4/8 pp. 9, 11; *g97* 4/8 p. 14; *w96* 12/1 pp. 13-14; *fy* pp. 61-62; *g93* 10/8 pp. 5-13.

11. In addition, the elders should investigate *every* allegation of child sexual abuse. When elders learn of an accusation, in addition to this letter, they should carefully review the direction outlined in the *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 12, paragraphs 18-21. However, in evaluating the evidence for internal congregational purposes, they must bear in mind the Bible's clear direction: "No single witness should rise up against a man respecting any error or any sin . . . At the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses the matter should stand good." (Deut. 19:15) This requirement to consider testimony of two or three witnesses was confirmed by Jesus. (Matt. 18:16) Thus, although they investigate every allegation, the elders are not authorized by the Scriptures to take congregational action unless there is a confession or there are two credible witnesses. However, even though the elders are not authorized to take congregation action when there is only one witness, the elders should remain vigilant with regard to the conduct and activity of the accused. (See paragraph 12 of this letter.) If two persons are witnesses to separate incidents of the same kind of wrongdoing, their testimony can be deemed sufficient to take judicial action. (1 Tim. 5:19, 24, 25) If the person is not repentant over the gross sin, disfellowshipping action would be warranted. If the decision is to reprove, the reproof should be announced. (*ks10* chap. 7 par. 20, second bullet) This will serve as a protection for the congregation. Information concerning an individual accused of child molestation, proved or otherwise, should be placed in the congregation confidential file and marked "Do Not Destroy" and kept indefinitely. This includes *Notification of Disfellowshipping or Disassociation* (S-77) forms on individuals who have been disfellowshipped for child sexual abuse and then later reinstated. **Because of the delicate nature of handling a judicial case where an adult sexually abuses a child, please contact your circuit overseer.** He will designate an experienced elder from your circuit to serve as chairman of the judicial committee.

12. Loving elders should take steps to protect children, especially when a judicial committee determines that the one who has sexually abused a child is repentant and will be allowed to remain a member of the Christian congregation. The same concern would be shown when one who has sexually abused a child is disfellowshipped, later cleans up his life, and is reinstated. The elders should be especially mindful of the activity of any who are known to have sexually abused a child in the past. They should also ensure that newly-appointed elders are made aware of this caution. It would be appropriate for elders to talk kindly but very frankly to individuals who have manifested a weakness in this regard, strongly cautioning them to refrain from displaying affection for children, to avoid hugging or holding children on their lap, never to be alone with a child (other than their

own), not to allow children to spend the night in their home, not to work alone in field service (hence, they should always be accompanied by another adult), and not to cultivate friendships with children. This not only serves to protect children but will help to prevent those who have sexually abused a child from putting themselves in the way of temptation, being subjected to an unfounded accusation, or doing things that may cause concern to others in the congregation. (1 Cor. 10:12, 32) If the individual does not follow this direction from the elders, the elders should *immediately* call the Service Department for assistance.

13. **If the individual does not follow the above direction from the elders, or if the elders believe he may be a “predator,” the elders should immediately call the Service Department for assistance.** A “predator” is one who clearly lacks self-control and by his actions provides reason to believe he will continue to prey on children. Not every individual who has sexually abused a child in the past is considered a “predator.” **The branch office, not the local body of elders, determines whether an individual who has sexually abused children in the past will be considered a “predator.”** If the branch office determines that an individual will be considered a “predator,” parents with minor children will need to be warned of the danger that exists so that they can protect their children. In such a case, and **only after receiving direction and instructions from the Service Department**, two elders should be assigned to meet with the parents of minor children in order to provide a warning. At the same time that parents are warned about an individual, it would be appropriate for the elders to inform the individual that parents in the congregation will be discreetly informed.

14. What step should be taken when you learn of an adult who has been viewing **child pornography**? As stated in paragraph 4 of this letter, two elders should call the Legal Department. After receiving legal direction, the elders will be directed to contact the Service Department for theocratic direction.

15. **Who is considered a known child molester?** The January 1, 1997, *Watchtower* article “Let Us Abhor What Is Wicked” mentions on page 29 that a man “known to have been a child molester” does not qualify for privileges in the congregation. The expression “known to have been a child molester” has reference to how such a man is considered in the community and in the Christian congregation. In the eyes of the congregation, an adult “known” to be a former child molester is not “free from accusation” or “irreprehensible,” nor does he have “a fine testimony from people on the outside.” (1 Tim. 3:1-7, 10; 5:22; Titus 1:7) In view of his past, those in the community would not respect him and congregation members might be stumbled over his appointment. **Keep in mind that the branch office, not the local body of elders, determines whether one who has sexually abused a child is considered a known child molester.**

16. **When a known child molester moves to another congregation**, the elders should follow the procedure set forth in the *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 12, paragraph 20. If a known child molester is in prison and is transferred to another facility or is released, it is important to inform the appropriate congregation of his situation in writing, if it is possible to do so. This direction also applies when one considered a “predator,” as outlined in paragraph 13 of this letter, moves to another congregation.

17. From time to time, **local authorities may inform you** that a sex offender is living in your area. The notice usually provides the address of the individual and may state the nature of his

criminal activity. In such a case, the elders should list that address on the appropriate territory card as a “Do Not Call.” Thereafter, two elders can periodically make calls on that address. Following this direction will assist you in protecting the flock.

18. **Sexual misconduct involving only minors:** What steps should elders take when minors (persons less than 18 years of age) engage in sexual misconduct with one another? As stated in paragraph 4 of this letter, two elders should call the Legal Department even when both persons are minors. Minors who have sexual contact with one another are generally not considered as child molesters by the congregation. However, regardless of the ages of those involved, such misconduct is serious. Elders should be alert to render assistance and to protect children. The body of elders should also arrange for the minor(s) to receive assistance in the presence of their believing parent(s), in harmony with the principles and guidelines found in the Scriptures and in our publications.

19. When baptized minors become involved in “sexting,” the elders must use good judgment in determining whether the wrongdoing has escalated to a point warranting judicial action. Helpful information can be found in “Questions From Readers” in the July 15, 2006, issue of *The Watchtower*. Please review this material carefully before concluding that a baptized minor is guilty of gross uncleanness or “brazen conduct, loose conduct.” (*ks10* chap. 5 par. 9) However, if the baptized minor has been previously counseled and persists in the wrong course, in most cases, judicial action is taken. Each case must be evaluated on its own merit. If elders have questions regarding a specific case they should contact the Service Department. Also, keep in mind that Christian parents should be included in any discussions the elders have with a minor who may be involved in “sexting.”

20. The potential serious consequences associated with “sexting” underscore the importance of Christian parents supervising their children’s use of cellular telephones and other means of electronic communication. Excellent suggestions can be found on pages 6-7 of the November 2009 issue of *Awake!* (Matt. 24:45) When a minor has been involved in “sexting,” elders can use such excellent material to offer Scriptural counsel and encouragement to both the parents and the child.—1 Pet. 5:2, 3.

HELPING VICTIMS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

21. Some Christians may become troubled with memories and feelings associated with past child sexual abuse. When an elder is approached by someone concerned or distraught about such memories, he should “speak consolingly.” (1 Thess. 5:14) Elders should manifest an empathetic, compassionate, patient, and supportive response to those approaching them about such memories. An elder must never be alone with or become the sole confidant of a sister to whom he is not closely related. Helpful suggestions and guidelines can be found in the *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 4, paragraphs 21-28. **The elders should carefully review this material when helping victims of child sexual abuse.**

RESTRICTIONS AND PRIVILEGES

22. It cannot be said in every case that one who has sexually abused a child could never qualify for privileges of service in the congregation. However, the elders will certainly want to be very cautious, especially when dealing with one who had repeatedly engaged in this kind of wrongdoing or who had been disfellowshipped for such an offense. Before privileges can be extended, such a man must meet the Scriptural qualifications of being “self-controlled” and “irreprehensible.” He must “also have a fine testimony” from individuals inside and outside the congregation. (Titus 1:6-8;

1 Tim. 3:2, 7) Elders should keep in mind what is stated in the January 1, 1997, *Watchtower* article "Let Us Abhor What Is Wicked," page 29, paragraph 2: "Child sexual abuse reveals an unnatural fleshly weakness. Experience has shown that such an adult may well molest other children. True, not every child molester repeats the sin, but many do. And the congregation cannot read hearts to tell who is and who is not liable to molest children again. (Jeremiah 17:9) Hence, Paul's counsel to Timothy applies with special force in the case of baptized adults who have molested children: 'Never lay your hands hastily upon any man; neither be a sharer in the sins of others.' (1 Timothy 5:22)."

23. Hence, privileges of service should never be extended hastily. Considerable time should always pass before one who has sexually abused a child is recommended, if ever. It would be up to the local body of elders to determine whether such a recommendation should be made to the branch office, taking into account all factors in each individual case. Please note that unless specifically approved by the branch office, one who has sexually abused a child should not be used to conduct any meetings held in the congregation or in a prison, and he does not qualify to work on any Kingdom Hall project other than one involving the congregation where he serves as a publisher.

24. If the elders as a body conclude that one who has sexually abused a child in the distant past may now qualify for privileges, they should assign two elders to call the Service Department.

25. In view of the foregoing, each elder should make the following notation next to chapter 3, paragraph 20; chapter 5, paragraph 10, second bullet; chapter 7, paragraph 20, second bullet; and chapter 12, paragraph 18, of the *Shepherding* textbook: "See letter dated October 1, 2012, to all bodies of elders."

26. It is hoped that the direction provided in this letter will help you brothers in handling matters in the congregation so as to protect children from sexual abuse and, at the same time, balance Bible-based justice and mercy. We also hope this direction will assist you to lovingly help victims of child sexual abuse. May Jehovah's rich blessing continue to be with you in carrying out your many responsibilities as shepherds of the flock. With this letter we send our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,
*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

cc: Traveling overseers

PS to secretary:

This letter should be retained in the congregation permanent file of policy letters. You may wish to update the congregation copy of *Index to Letters for Bodies of Elders (S-22)* at this time as well.