

**Submission
No 23**

**INQUIRY INTO MODERN SLAVERY ACT 2018 AND
ASSOCIATED MATTERS**

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Date Received: 2 October 2019

I was one of thousands of Jehovah's Witness children defined as child slave labourers. We were used by religious leaders of the Jehovah's Witnesses (aka Watchtower Bible and Tract Society) globally. Both children and parents are still coerced by church leaders to undertake these types of activities.

Examples of what children have had to do:

- clean bricks on church property (called Kingdom Halls) for 'quick build' building sites;
- help to build roads on church property sites (called Assembly Halls);
- prepare food for sale at large meetings (called Conventions);
- go from door-to-door, selling church literature; and
- constantly proselytise to non-Jehovah's Witnesses to attract new members.

The church encouraged physical punishment if a family doesn't participate, and there is an ever-present threat of shunning by one's entire social structure (i.e. Jehovah's Witness family, friends and work mates). In addition, some children are actually sexually abused at these work places, including by the leaders themselves.

The coercive church leadership behaviour which enforced this was highlighted in the recent Australian Royal Commission (Case study 29 in particular is helpful to understand the behavioural dynamics: <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/case-studies/case-study-29-jehovahs-witnesses>). Interestingly, just prior to this Royal Commission, the Watchtower changed their entire corporate financial structure, transferring property deeds from local congregations to their legal entity, then selling properties and off-shoring the money from property sales. Money is currently flowing out from multiple countries to the Watchtower from property portfolios that we built as children.

Thousands of Jehovah's Witness children are currently modern child slave labourers for the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in Australia.

Please facilitate consultation with former and current Jehovah's Witness children to stop this happening to the current and future generations of children.

Yours sincerely,
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