

Inquiry into the extent and nature of poverty in Australia

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

A silent emergency



Larissa Kaput

28 April 2023

“WE HEAR a lot about loud emergencies of global warming and ozone layers and ocean pollution,” said United Nations adviser Dr. Mahbub Ul-Haq, but he added: “Global warming and many other loud emergencies have yet to kill anybody [while] the silent emergencies are wasting many lives in the developing countries every day.” Dr. Ul-Haq commented on one of those silent emergencies. “**Poverty,**” he said, “is really the greatest killer.”¹

As quoted in the magazine, Awake!, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses

¹ <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101997091?q=really+the+greatest+killer&p=par>

Senator Janet Rice, Chair

Senator Marielle Smith, Deputy Chair

and Committee Members

RE: Inquiry into the extent and nature of poverty in Australia

I thank the Senate Community Affairs References Committee for allowing me the opportunity to provide a submission in relation to the committee's current inquiry on the extent and nature of poverty in Australia.

This submission advises the government on poverty concerns within the Jehovah's Witnesses community and builds on concerns raised in previous Royal Commission submissions, Joint Select Committee submissions and other inquiries. These submissions are generally available on the saysorry.org website with the topics they cover having been regularly highlighted within the media, in relation to the religion of Jehovah's Witness Church, its administrative management corporation, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Limited, their controlling parent organisation Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, Inc., and the governing body of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The primary concern for this Committee, is that the leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses actively:

- Discourage higher education,
- Discourage secular career planning,
- Coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to donate cash, resources (including child labour) and time,
- Coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to transfer their assets,
- Coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to nominate Jehovah's Witness corporate entities in Wills,
- Coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to exclude non-Jehovah's Witness family members from Wills,
- Perpetrate child labour, and
- Target and victimise whistleblowers.

It is my belief that in undertaking these actions, corporate financial abuse is committed towards Jehovah's Witnesses and their families, and by extension, former members.

Yours sincerely,

Larissa Kaput

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Introduction

I am a survivor of the Jehovah's Witnesses religion, who now uses my time and resources to advocate for fellow exploited and vulnerable victims and survivors from within the religion. Since 2016 I have, either individually or as part of a team, provided up-to-date factual and unique information to local and international law enforcement agencies, government bodies, politicians, inquiries, royal commissions, law firms, and the media in relation to Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watch Tower Society. In doing this, I have made written submissions to, or appeared before, the Disability Royal Commission, the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme, the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, the NSW Inquiry into Modern Slavery Act 2018 and Associated Matters, and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Being a Jehovah's Witness is a driver of poverty in Australia.

From my experience, Jehovah's Witness girls were raised to be housewives and the boys were raised to be construction workers or to be window-washers, both of which fitted into the patriarchal ideology of gender specific roles. I saw that when I was young. I observed this from a young age, I saw through many things and I didn't want to be there. So, I left. But it didn't make me immune from their silent emergency - poverty.

It is my concern, that even today the Jehovah's Witnesses are holding my family and friends emotionally and financially hostage. In fact, 8 million of them are holding each other's family, and friends, hostage. The threat of disfellowshipping (excommunication) is ever-present once you're baptised into the Jehovah's Witnesses, as I was when I was only a child. If you get disfellowshipped you are shunned. If your friend or family member gets disfellowshipped then you have to shun them. "Unless they are reinstated, this punishment is for the remainder of their life, causing tremendous emotional suffering."²

When I was little, we learned about how you can and should lie to protect Jehovah and the Watch Tower Society. As an adult I learned that this is a formal doctrinal teaching and policy called 'theocratic warfare'³. This means we didn't have to tell the whole truth to authorities to protect Jehovah's people. The threat of shunning underpins financial abuse and poverty in this religion. Coercion involving fear, obligation and guilt (FOG) via theocratic warfare keeps them silent.

This is a silent emergency.

² <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/disfellowship-shunning.php>

³ <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/quotes/theocratic-warfare-lying.php>

Being a Jehovah's Witness (or former Jehovah's Witness) is a driver of poverty in Australia

Jehovah's Witnesses have the highest rate of poverty of any religion

The Jehovah's Witnesses had the lowest income of all religions in the Pew Research studies. "[The] Jehovah's Witnesses (48%) ... report household incomes of under \$30,000 a year."⁴

Household income of U.S. religious groups				
% of each religious group with total family income of _____ per year				
	<\$30,000	\$30,000-49,999	\$50,000-99,999	\$100,000+
Jewish	16%	15%	24%	44%
Hindu	17	13	34	36
Episcopal Church	19	13	34	35
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	24	15	29	32
Atheist	24	18	28	30
Agnostic	22	18	30	29
Orthodox Christian	18	17	36	29
United Church of Christ	31	16	23	29
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	19	22	32	26
United Methodist Church	23	20	31	26
Presbyterian Church in America	27	17	31	25
Unitarian Universalist	30	17	30	23
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod	22	21	34	22
Mormon	27	20	33	20
Muslim	34	17	29	20
All U.S. adults	35	20	26	19
Catholic	36	19	26	19
"Nothing in particular"	38	21	24	17
Churches of Christ	37	23	24	16
Southern Baptist Convention	32	22	31	16
Seventh-day Adventist	37	24	24	15
Buddhist	36	18	32	13
Assemblies of God	43	23	24	10
American Baptist Churches USA	53	18	21	9
Church of God in Christ	46	26	19	9
National Baptist Convention	49	21	21	9
Jehovah's Witness	48	25	22	4

Note: Results recalculated to exclude nonresponse. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.
Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

⁴ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/05/12/chapter-3-demographic-profiles-of-religious-groups/#educational-attainment-and-income-of-religious-groups>

On 16th September 2022, the Attorney-General of Australia, the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP, announced the commencement of a public consultation on a draft of the National Principles to Address Coercive Control. Out of that consultation became the recommendation to address religious coercive control.

Recommendation 1: Train psychologists in religious behaviours to create structured pathways to support persons who may be under coercive control that keeps them in a poverty cycle.

Leaders actively discourage higher education

The official Jehovah's Witnesses website (JW.org) shows that Jehovah's Witnesses are actually discouraged by their leaders to obtain higher education:

Spiritual education has greater value than secular education. Unlike secular education, Bible-based spiritual education provides the lifesaving knowledge of God.

And

*Jehovah's Witnesses feel that the environment in some universities or similar centers of higher learning can pose moral and spiritual dangers. For that reason, many Witnesses choose not to immerse themselves or their children in such an environment.*⁵

Some printed Jehovah's Witness literature has been removed from circulation, but copies of which can be found on JWfacts.com:

*"Higher education: Jesus warned against 'seeking your own glory.'" Watchtower 2011 Jun 15 p.32*⁶

And

*"That is why parents who base their lives on God's prophetic Word find it much more practical to direct their young ones into trades that do not require such long periods of additional schooling." Awake! 1969 May 22 p.15*⁷

And

*"Rather than looking to the advanced educational systems of this world for security, a Christian trusts in Jehovah." Watchtower 2008 Apr 15 p.4*⁸

And

*"Are we encouraging young ones, who are often steered by schoolteachers and others to pursue the world's higher education, to set spiritual goals instead and pursue the highest education—divine education?" Kingdom Ministry 2011 Oct p.3*⁹

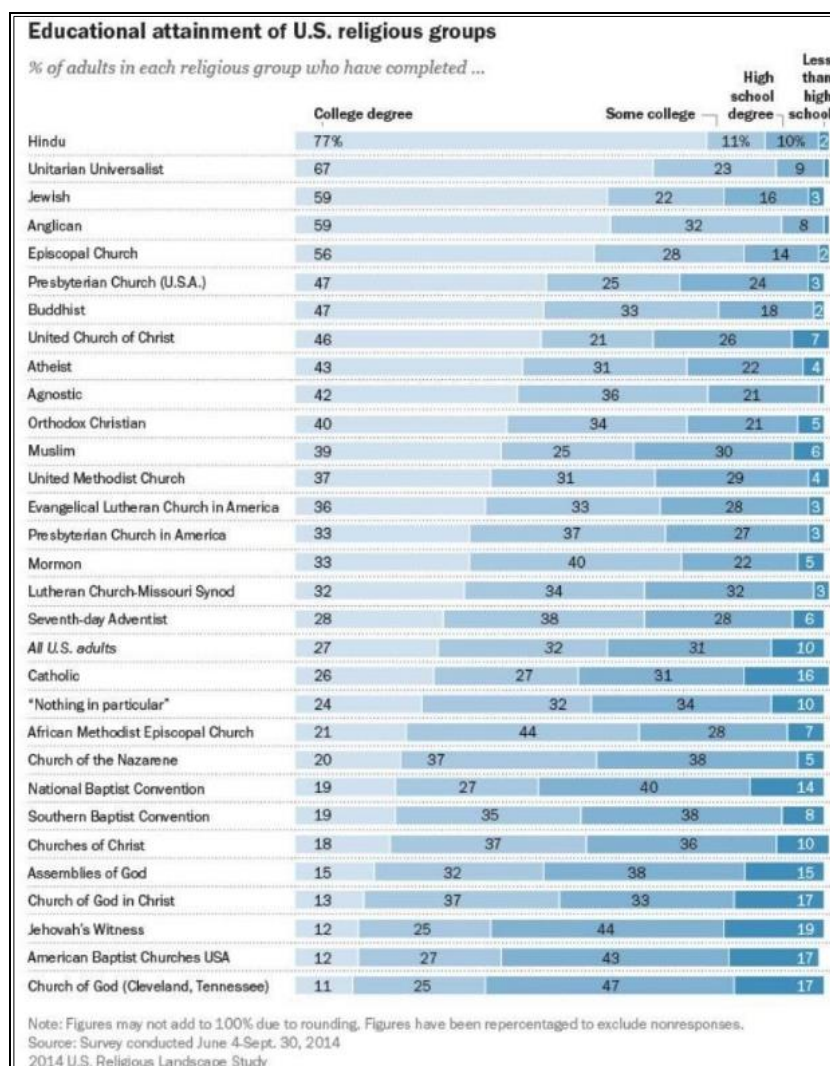
⁵ <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/jw-education-school/>

⁶ <https://www.jwfacts.com/images/watchtower-2011-jun-15-p32.jpg>

⁷ <https://www.jwfacts.com/images/awake-1969-may-22-p14-15.jpg>

⁸ <https://www.jwfacts.com/images/watchtower-2008-apr-15-p4.jpg>

⁹ <https://www.jwfacts.com/images/kingdom-ministry-2011-oct-p3.jpg>



According to a Pew Research Center report in 2007, just seven percent (7%) of Jehovah’s Witnesses in the US had obtained a college (university) degree. In 2014, that number had only increased to twelve percent (12%). The report found that Jehovah’s Witnesses had the second lowest education rate of all religions in the Pew Research studies.¹⁰

Recommendation 2: Create multimedia education (via newspapers, radio, social media and television) for the general public to recognise religious coercive control as a barrier to escaping poverty (akin to gambling warnings).

¹⁰ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/05/12/chapter-3-demographic-profiles-of-religious-groups/#educational-attainment-and-income-of-religious-groups>

Leaders actively discourage career planning

The official Jehovah's Witness website (JW.org) demonstrates that leaders discourage Jehovah's Witnesses from following a career path:

“A Christian's view of the future should also affect his choice of **career**. With 'the world passing away,' a **career** based upon worldly ambitions is most unrealistic.”¹¹

It is anecdotally known by those who grow up in the Jehovah's Witnesses that men are best suited to construction work (note: the Jehovah's Witnesses have a billion-dollar property portfolio acquired from their members). For women, their role is generally to be an old-fashioned house-keeper and mother.

“As a youth, Jesus was taught carpentry. Although it was not to be his career, he learned the trade so well that he became known as “the carpenter.” ... Today, not enough people place value on the trades.”¹²

If being in a construction trade is not an option, such as because the Jehovah's Witnesses want to proselytise more extensively, then many are encouraged to take menial jobs that will allow them to preach door-to-door¹³. A window-washing career is an unfortunate 'in' joke amongst former Jehovah's Witnesses¹⁴. I have seen on social media that many Jehovah's Witnesses obtain extensive government benefits alongside their window washing and that it is encouraged by the religion to be able to spend more time proselytising.



Even if you are a former Jehovah's Witness, it was likely your desire for higher education was heavily discouraged and looked down upon. For many who leave (approximately 66% of children raised as Jehovah's Witnesses later leave the religion as adults¹⁵), some go on to complete higher education as mature students. However, learning late impacts early earning ability.

Recommendation 3: Create awareness within relevant government departments that religion and religious beliefs may be holding a person in a poverty cycle.

¹¹ <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101985206>

¹² <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101985206>

¹³ https://www.reddit.com/r/exjw/comments/kf77si/how_many_here_actually_did_window_washing_or_were/

¹⁴ <https://www.jehovahs-witness.com/topic/202506/most-jws-window-washers>

¹⁵ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/04/26/a-closer-look-at-jehovahs-witnesses-living-in-the-u-s/>

Leaders actively coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to donate cash, resources and time

All Jehovah's Witnesses are expected to donate their money, especially to buy land and building materials for the Church. In recent years, via cartoon propaganda called "Be Generous", young Jehovah's Witnesses have been encouraged to donate even their 'ice-cream money' to the Church¹⁶¹⁷.

Additionally, all members of a Jehovah's Witness family are expected to donate their spare time to participate in constructing and maintaining Kingdom Halls (churches). This was exposed in the attached national newspaper article, 'Jehovah's Witnesses accused of selling off assets, moving cash to avoid sex abuse compensation' (refer to Attachment 1).

In fact, some Jehovah's Witness appointments and assignments require a vow of poverty to be taken to fulfill the fulltime volunteer roles. No superannuation is contributed by the church in these fulltime positions. "Currently, there are some 67,000 members of the Worldwide Order of Special Full-Time Servants of Jehovah's Witnesses ... They are all bound by a "Vow of Obedience and Poverty," with which they agree to do whatever is assigned to them in the advancement of Kingdom interests, to live a simple lifestyle, and to abstain from secular employment without permission."¹⁸

Recommendation 4: Investigate corporate coercion / financial abuse by religious charities and entities.

Leaders actively coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to transfer their assets

- **when the Jehovah's Witnesses claimed Armageddon was to be in 1975, they subtly coerced couples to sell their homes and become missionaries and/or donate their money,**

This happened to my former Jehovah's Witnesses friend Natalie and her husband. Other stories are here:

https://www.reddit.com/r/exjw/comments/9z7887/people_here_that_were_witnesses_through_1975_can/

- **by holding votes in which congregation members unanimously vote for the transfer of their congregational savings to the Jehovah's Witness corporate entities, and**

All the congregants that had given their cash, resources and time to their local congregation were forced to hand over the Kingdom Hall deeds to head office, and any amounts of congregational savings above the immediate operating expenses. Please see the attached article entitled, 'Jehovah's Witnesses accused of selling off assets, moving cash to avoid sex abuse compensation'.

- **by pressuring aging Jehovah's Witnesses to reverse mortgage their houses.**

Several years ago, I attended a protest against the Jehovah's Witnesses in London. Whilst I was there, I spoke about the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse at Speaker's Corner, Hyde Park. A man in the audience come up to me and asked, "Did you say Jehovah's Witnesses?" He wanted me to talk to his mum and tell her what was reported by the Australian Royal Commission. I spoke on the phone for about 20 minutes whilst I walked to the protest. In the phone call,

¹⁶ https://youtu.be/i-xtb_cd6lk

¹⁷ https://www.reddit.com/r/exjw/comments/36rv3p/cough_up_kids_watchtower_needs_your_ice_cream/

¹⁸ <https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-april-2017/what-you-vow-pay/>

she described to me that she was being pressured by the local Elders who were trying to get her to reverse mortgage her house.

I later learned that there was a special department within the Jehovah's Witnesses branch office in England, that was specifically set up to review Wills from congregants that stipulated the Church as a beneficiary. In the event of a substantial financial amount, pressure was put on the Testator to donate the money while they were still alive. Apart from any privacy breach, such an act could potentially leave the testator in poverty.

It should be noted that the Jehovah's Witnesses are global organisation with a 'cookie cutter' approach to the way they do business. Therefore, this is likely to have occurred in Australia.

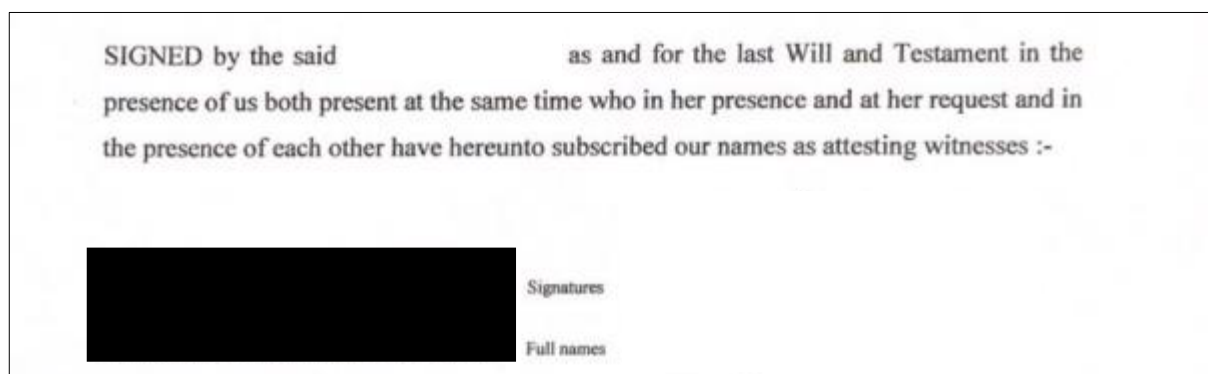
Recommendation 5: Create greater financial accountability and transparency for basic religious charities registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC).

Leaders actively coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to nominate Jehovah's Witness corporate entities in their Wills

When my Great Aunt died, she had left \$5,000 in her Will (dated 22nd day of February 2009) for the Jehovah's Witnesses. I didn't know of the Jehovah's Witnesses being included until she asked me to help her distribute her money to some of our family in Ukraine. The relevant part stated:

"(h) The sum of \$5,000.00 to the MONTEMORENCY CONGREGATION OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES located at Montmorency, Victoria, to be used for general purposes and the receipt of the Treasurer of the said congregation shall be a full and sufficient discharge to my Executors."

The Elders had clearly showed her how to include the correct entity in her Will, and the specific wording allowing the money to be donated by the congregation to another Jehovah's Witness entity. The Will was witnessed by an Elder of the congregation, Mr



The Montmorency Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses no longer exists as a legal entity. The Australian Business Number (ABN) of the Montmorency Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses was cancelled on the 1st of September, 2018 and the Australian Charity and Not-for Profit (ACNC) status was voluntarily

direction about disfellowshipping? Do you see here an opportunity for you to make your relationship with Jehovah stronger by forming a closer bond with him?”²¹

When my Jehovah’s Witnesses Uncle died, I observed that my former Jehovah’s Witness mother was excluded from his Will. My Uncle had had written in his Will words to the effect that that my mother was being provided for by her (non-Jehovah’s Witness) husband, my uncle had not left anything in his Will for her. At that time, I believe that my mother was supporting herself financially. But my (current Jehovah’s Witness) Aunt was not excluded from my Uncle’s Will, although she was likely being provided for by her Jehovah’s Witness husband. If I remember correctly, my mother was also left out of one or both of her parents’ Will, and in a similar manner. It was particularly cruel and insulting. And, it meant my mother got less than all of her Jehovah’s Witness siblings, despite her diligently being loyal to her parents. I have read similar stories on social media about being left out of funeral services and Wills of family members primarily because of religious affiliation. This can create intergenerational poverty, especially when the monies are left to the church instead.



“The cycle of poverty begins when a child is born into a poor family. These families often have limited or no resources to create opportunities to advance themselves, which leaves them stuck in the poverty trap.”²²

The threat of shunning underpins poverty within the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Related matters

Child Labour

According to the International Labor Organization,

*the term “**child labour**” is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to **work that:***

- ***is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or***

²¹ <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2015286>

²² <https://www.worldvision.ca/stories/child-sponsorship/what-is-the-cycle-of-poverty>

- ***interferes with their schooling*** by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.²³

I was one of thousands of Jehovah's Witness children used as forced or coerced child labourers by the religious leaders, and corporations, of the Jehovah's Witnesses globally. I made a submission to the *Inquiry into Modern Slavery Act 2018 and Associated Matters*²⁴ in which I described that we had to:

- 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.

Parents and children are still coerced by church leaders to undertake these types of activities.

In fact, the Hon Tony Zappia MP made a speech for the anniversary of the National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse in which he stated:

"The Jehovah's Witnesses are a very wealthy organisation. All assets belong to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and not the local congregants. They call their churches Kingdom Halls, and they are built using congregants' labour and donations. The labour is unpaid and, I understand, at times includes the labour of children.

*They derive money from deceased estates bequeathed to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society by convening district conventions and circuit assemblies, and through the sale of real estate, which appears to have escalated since the royal commission in Australia and inquiries into their organisations in other countries. Their wealth is estimated in billions, not millions, of dollars."*²⁵

Financial cost of whistleblowing

In order to facilitate action, I have financed submissions, travel, websites, etc. for myself and others to the value of over \$120,000, plus lost earnings, to expose the Jehovah's Witnesses abuses. The Jehovah's Witness corporation has targeted and victimised whistleblowers like myself to stop us from speaking out.²⁶ In many cases, they have issued erroneous takedown notices.²⁷

Below are some of the actions taken to increase public awareness, encourage more survivors to come forward, to seek justice and redress, to facilitate the government to take action, and to hold the Jehovah's Witnesses accountable:

²³ <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

²⁴ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/65890/0023%20Ms%20Larissa%20Kaput.pdf>

²⁵ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hansard_Display?bid=chamber/hansardr/c4ab46e1-15d4-4e92-970f-0a08926f67b5/&sid=0210

²⁶ <https://jwleaks.org/2023/04/14/australia-jehovahs-witnesses-complaint-re-abc-four-corners-program-bearing-witness/>

²⁷ https://www.reddit.com/r/exmormon/comments/gdyp2/the_jehovahs_witness_are_using_dmca_takedown/

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- 12 Sep 2019 Crikey:
Compensation claims against Jehovah's Witnesses could be Jeopardised: Lawyer²⁸
- 24 Jan 2018 ABC: Abandoning religion²⁹
- 9 Mar 2017 NewsCorp: Inside the Jehovah's Witnesses: A 'perfect storm' for abuse³⁰
- 10 Sep 2019 Crikey: Leaders of the Jehovah's Witnesses ordered to destroy confidential records³¹
- 16 Sep 2019 Crikey: Human rights watchdog met with Jehovah's Witnesses over child safety concerns³²
- 17 Sep 2019 SBS: How the Jehovah's Witnesses 'broke' my family³³
- 18 Sep 2019 Crikey:
Paradise Lost: how the Jehovah's Witnesses punish those who speak out against child sexual abuse³⁴
- 14 Jun 2020 NewsCorp:
Jehovah's Witnesses accused of selling off assets, moving cash to avoid sex abuse compensation (Refer to Attachment 1)
- 1 Jul 2020 10 Play (The Project) Statement to The Project regarding the National Redress Scheme and the sales of Kingdom Halls and properties³⁵
- 12 Jul 2020 BBC: Investigation into Jehovah's Witnesses' property sell-offs - JW.org³⁶
- 7 Feb 2021 The New Daily: Child abuse survivor slams government's 8-year extension of national redress scheme deadline³⁷
- 3 March 2021 The New Daily:
Jehovah's Witnesses to join redress scheme for child sexual abuse survivors³⁸
- 19 Apr 2021 NewsCorp: Jehovah's Witnesses resolve legal stoush with charity watchdog³⁹
- 19 Apr 2021 News Corp: Jehovah's Witnesses charity denies tax issues with watchdog⁴⁰

²⁸ <https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/09/12/compensation-claims-jehovahs-witnesses/>

²⁹ <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/religionandethicsreport/the-biggest-taboo/9354234>

³⁰ <https://www.smh.com.au/national/inside-the-jehovahs-witnesses-a-perfect-storm-for-abuse-20170309-guukur.html>

³¹ <https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/09/10/leaders-of-the-jehovahs-witnesses-ordered-to-destroy-confidential-records/>

³² <https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/09/16/jehovahs-witnesses-human-rights-commission/>

³³ <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/article/how-the-jehovahs-witnesses-broke-my-family/tioi56yxw>

³⁴ <https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/09/18/inq-jehovahs-witnesses/>

³⁵ <https://10play.com.au/theproject/articles/statement-from-the-jehovahs-witnesses/tpa200621ycelg>

³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViHC7XigpN4&feature=youtu.be>

³⁷ <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/national/2021/02/07/national-redress-child-abuse-extension/>

³⁸ <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/2021/03/03/jehovahs-witnesses-redress-scheme/>

³⁹ <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/jehovahs-witnesses-facing-tax-turmoil/news-story/64acd93d531eb6b7301dda758e7ee2ff>

⁴⁰ <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/jehovahs-witnesses-resolve-legal-stoush-with-charity-watchdog/news-story/2627927c637ab39d03623b8ba76194aa>

- 10 Sep 2021 The New Daily: Jehovah's Witnesses join redress scheme⁴¹
- 10 Sep 2021 News Corp: Tax threat triggers Jehovah's Witnesses U-turn⁴²
- 13 Sep 2021 ABC (Four Corners): Inside the brutal world of the Jehovah's Witnesses⁴³

The impact of poverty on individuals

I made a submission to the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System*⁴⁴. In it I described the impact of my family who are suffering from religious harm. I said:

"Including myself, thirteen of my family members suffered from poor mental health:

- *All were socially isolated (including myself);*
- *Three had depression (including myself);*
- *Three had suicide ideation;*
- *Two were neurotic;*
- *Two had Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (including myself);*
- *Two were teenage alcoholics (including myself);*
- *One was a child sexual abuse perpetrator;*
- *One was manic;*
- *One was morbidly obese;*
- *One has Narcissistic Personality Disorder;*
- *One has schizophrenia; and*
- *One had generalised anxiety (including myself)."*

Financial abuse and poverty forms part of this.

Mechanisms to address and reduce poverty

I have explained how the threat of shunning underpins poverty within the Jehovah's Witnesses. It was then described that using theocratic warfare can keep anything in the Jehovah's Witnesses covered up.

Here is the summary of recommended mechanisms that may help:

Recommendation 1: Train psychologists in religious behaviours to create structured pathways to support persons who may be under coercive control that keeps them in a poverty like cycle.

⁴¹ <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/2021/09/10/jehovahs-witnesses-redress/>

⁴² <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/tax-threat-triggers-jehovahs-witnesses-uturn-on-redress/news-story/f986066fc13c6450199209364a0fc560>

⁴³ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-13/jehovah-witnesses-child-abuse-four-corners-investigations/100444320>

⁴⁴ http://rcvmhs.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Anonymous_334.pdf

Recommendation 2: Create multimedia education (via newspapers, radio, social media and television) for the general public to recognise religious coercive control as a barrier to escaping poverty (akin to gambling warnings).

Recommendation 3: Create awareness within relevant government departments that religion and religious beliefs may be holding a person in a poverty cycle.

Recommendation 4: Investigate corporate coercion / financial abuse by religious charities and entities.

Recommendation 5: Create greater financial accountability and transparency for basic religious charities registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC).

Recommendation 6: Increased regulation of basic religious charities to prevent the use of religious coercive control, and ongoing educational awareness relating to elder (financial) abuse.

Attachment 1 – NewsCorp Article

The Advertiser

NATIONAL

Jehovah's Witnesses accused of selling off assets and moving cash to avoid sex abuse compensation

Natalie O'Brien, Senior reporter, News Corp Australia Network

June 14, 2020 5:30am

Subscriber only

Exclusive: Secretive Christian sect Jehovah's Witnesses has been accused of selling off assets and pushing cash offshore to avoid paying Australian child sex abuse victims.

For the first time, News Corp can expose the complex web of legal entities obscuring the true wealth and financial activities of the group — and that its charity status may be revoked if it does not sign up to the National Redress Scheme.

The special investigation also reveals the failure of authorities to look into allegations by whistleblowers that JW may be hiding its money before the June 30 deadline to join the scheme.

It has been named in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse as having 1800 potential victims and more than 1000 alleged paedophiles, 537 of them self-confessed. But there is no evidence the sect referred any cases to police.




📍 Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Halls are all over Australia and across the world. Picture: Rob Leeson.



The sheer numbers of potential victims and perpetrators to the number of members outstrips those of the Catholic Church – and exposes it to financial compensation under the redress scheme of possibly \$132 million.


But JW, which has almost 68,000 members, has not indicated whether it will sign up for the scheme. Instead it has begun rearranging its finances and legal entities.

Where Jehovah's Witnesses properties are



Australia	Germany	Poland
Austria	Greece	Puerto Rico
Bahamas	Hong Kong	South Africa
Belgium	Ireland	Spain
Canada	Italy	Sweden
Chile	Jamaica	Switzerland
Colombia	Netherlands	United Kingdom
Costa Rica	New Zealand	United States
Denmark	Norway	
Finland	Paraguay	

In Australia



Source: WatchTower Exposed

News Corp can reveal since the announcement of the Royal Commission on November 12, 2012 JW has:

- Restructured its legal charities and entities;
- Grown from a handful of charities to 836 separate small basic religious charities (766 active now) listed as registered on December 3, 2012 on the Australian Charities and Not for profits Commission (ACNC) site. Small basic religious charities are not required to provide financial information.
- Appears to have had only one charity (the Watchtower and Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd) supplying financial reports to ACNC;
- Reported to the ACNC \$150 million in income for Watchtower since 2014;
- Submitted financial reports to the ACNC for Watchtower showing almost \$100 million from 2014-2019 allocated to "Donations and Overseas Aid".
- Made a loan of about \$6 million (with no short term repayment plans) to the UK International Bible Students Association IBSA (listed in UK IBSA 2015 accounts)
- Submitted Watchtower financial reports to the ACNC stating it is operating at a loss; \$1.9 million deficit in 2019; and \$1.2 million 2018, after making surpluses for previous three years.
- Been reported to the redress scheme, by whistleblowers, as allegedly selling off more than \$24 million in related properties since 2012;
- Not declared in the past six years of Watchtower financial reports to the ACNC any potential financial implications

from the Redress Scheme.



The International Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in 2014 attracted big crowds. Picture: Hamish Blair

When contacted Jehovah's Witnesses said: "We have considered your request, however, as your questions appear to be based on factual inaccuracies and incorrect assumptions, we respectfully decline to participate."

News Corp asked for JW to state the inaccuracies and incorrect assumptions, but JW did not respond.



The official position of the Jehovah's Witness organisation as given to the Royal Commission is that it abhors child sexual abuse and that it will not protect any perpetrator. and the key submissions made on behalf of the Watchtower & Ors was familial child sexual abuse is not institutional sexual abuse.

JW child sex abuse survivors, Lara Kaput and Steven Unthank, who founded website, SaySorry.org, have tried unsuccessfully to alert authorities, including the financial watchdog AUSTRAC and the Australian Federal Police amid growing fears it is attempting to dodge its obligations to victims. A spokesperson for Austrac and the AFP said they do not confirm or deny specific activity the agencies may be undertaking.



Former Jehovah's Witness Larissa Kaput. Picture: Rob Leeson.

Ms Kaput, recently supplied property sales data to the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme, which she says shows more than \$24 million in sales by JW linked entities since the Royal Commission was announced and that sales were accelerating in recent years. But the Committee have advised they have no power to investigate or refer the information for investigation.

"Not only have they (JW) not joined the Redress Scheme, but they appear to be ensuring they can say they don't have enough money for any redress," said Ms Kaput.



Kingdom Hall in Springvale South Victoria, where Lara Kaput was once a member, sold for \$1.4 million after she gave evidence at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse.



A JW-linked property in Warners Bay in NSW

that was sold recently.

"The authorities have really let us down. We need to focus on what is happening here in Australia."

Ms Kaput told the Committee in March, previous attempts to find "the front door" of the Jehovah's Witnesses has proved difficult.

"... the Department of Social Security has attempted to negotiate with the Jehovah's Witnesses and ... the honourable Paul Fletcher MP was unable to 'find their front door'. We can support you, because we know how they mask their legal entities. The governing body, which are really in charge, endorse a strategy they call 'theocratic warfare'. We can help you by giving some examples of how this works and how they will be avoiding you."

The Minister for Families and Social Services Senator Anne Ruston said from July 1, the Government will "name and shame institutions and consider financial sanctions such as revoking charitable status" if they do not join the redress scheme.



A former Kingdom Hall at Camp Hill in Queensland sold for \$1.5 million last year.

Ms Kaput believes it is unlikely any JW-linked organisations will voluntarily join the scheme and victims may be forced to take civil action or class action, but there may be no assets left.

Lawyer Peter Kelso, whose firm specialises in acting for victims of abuse, fears there is only one way for an outcome and that is to sue JW.

"It is unlikely that the JW's will offer a settlement and the people will be forced to go to the courts and it may be something they can't afford to do," said Mr Kelso.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS ABUSE SURVIVORS WANT JUSTICE

Child sexual abuse survivors Steven Unthank and Lara Kaput founded the SaySorry.org website in the hope of holding Jehovah's Witnesses organisations accountable.

The Victorians have spent years providing information to police, government, inquiries, law firms, and the media about the JWs.

Former New South Wales member Bill Hahn and others around the world including Kim and Mike Brooks in the United States, who run the website Watch Tower Exposed, have worked with them.



Former Jehovah's Witness Larissa Kaput. Picture: Rob Leeson.

Six years ago, Mr and Ms Brooks noticed global property sales for the JW had reached more than \$US2.5 billion (\$A3.65 billion), with sudden spikes in jurisdictions where allegations of child sex abuse had arisen or inquiries were underway.



The Watch Tower Exposed property sales tracking records, compiled in Australia and the US have been sent to the National Redress Scheme and also the US Grand Jury investigation, which is inquiring into whether the Jehovah's Witnesses repeatedly failed to report child sexual abuse allegations to authorities.



Former JW member Bill Hahn has been compiling financials records about the organisation.



Former JW member Steven Unthank is a co-founder of the Saysorry.org website.

The SaySorry.org group told the Redress Scheme that JW had:

- remained silent in relation to the Redress Scheme,
- refused to join the Redress Scheme,
- refused to meet with survivors,
- shunned child abuse victims within their own religion,
- refused to say sorry for holding the statistical record for having the most child abuse victims per membership number of all institutions within Australia,
- refuse to adopt any Royal Commission recommendations;

They have called for a raft of recommendations including:

- the tax concessions be revoked for all charitable status of all the JW related charities;
- a compliance audit for all JW members and entities working with children;
- implement a redress scheme to pay abuse claimants and then pursue institutions for payment;
- the JW organisations be subject to scrutiny, audit and investigation by ASIC, the ACNC, the AFP, and other federal or state law enforcement agencies.

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Originally published as [Jehovah's Witnesses accused of cash stash to avoid compo](#)

Note: For full disclosure, this article was removed from the NewsCorp website.

Attachment 2 – Theocratic Warfare

The excerpt below was republished within an article by Reveal News, and shows an original *The Watchtower* magazine, with some descriptions of how theocratic warfare works in practice⁴⁵. It should be noted that this Theocratic War Strategy has never been revoked:

“Rather, she was using theocratic war strategy, hiding the truth by action and word for the sake of the ministry.”

And

“At times he may prefer to refuse to speak and suffer the consequences rather than betray his brothers or the interests of God’s work.”

And

“But hiding the truth, which he is not entitled to know, from an enemy does not harm him...”

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shall not be happens. If e do not untly until it is s. If we feel ve will 'keep ther and take e open to us We will not ning' by im- cize and find hovah knows nization, and , who are we ? If we really that if it is ut eventually, his organiza- ficulties than ; where only us.

nder care of ested through tion, how can and warmed lation? When uous food he areful atten- r mother has anything but ts? And when rly organiza- the heavenly ness, walking ht, with per- ghtening and pply we can spouse of the written, "God y position she s royal heav- ege to be her the beautiful in us for praising

name she bears, "Jehovah our righteous- ness"! (Jer. 33:16, AS) And what a joy is ours in reflecting on high the divine light beaming down upon us from her royal person as we welcome all lowly-hearted ones from the dark corners of the world to come out into the brightness of Jeho-

vah's pleasure and bask in the warmth of his smiling approval!

³⁶ With thankful hearts we acknowledge God's mercy and gratefully and willingly show our respect for Jehovah's organiza- tion, for she is our mother and the beloved wife of our heavenly Father, Jehovah God.

Use Theocratic War Strategy

A WITNESS of Jehovah was going from house to house in Eastern Ger- many when she met a violent opposer. Knowing at once what to expect she changed her red blouse for a green one in the very next hallway. No sooner had she appeared on the street than a Communist officer asked her if she had seen a woman with a red blouse. No, she replied, and went on her way. Did she tell a lie? No, she did not. She was not a liar. Rather, she was using theocratic war strategy, hiding the truth by action and word for the sake of the ministry.

In this she had good Scriptural precedent. Did not Rahab hide the Israelite spies by both action and word? Did not Abraham, Isaac, David and others likewise hide the truth at times when faced with a hostile enemy? They certainly did, and never do we read a word of censure for their doing so. Rather, we read of their being termed exemplary servants of Jehovah. Their actions were in line with Jesus' wise counsel: "Look! I am sending you forth as sheep amidst wolves; therefore prove yourselves cautious as serpents and yet innocent as doves."—Matt. 10:16, NW.*

Perhaps some will wonder as to where the line is to be drawn between use of theocratic war strategy in hiding the truth and the telling of lies. First of all, let it be noted that whenever one takes an oath to tell the truth he is obligated to

do so. By dedicating himself to do God's will each Christian has taken a vow or made an oath to do God's will and to be faithful to him. To this oath he certainly must be true. Likewise, when a Christian is placed on a witness stand he is obligated to speak the truth if he speaks at all. At times he may prefer to refuse to speak and suffer the consequences rather than betray his brothers or the interests of God's work. And, of course, there is no occasion for use of war strategy when dealing with our Christian brothers. In dealing with them we tell the truth or tactfully remind them that what they seek to know does not concern them.

Lies are untruths told for selfish reasons and which work injury to others. Satan told a lie to Eve that worked great harm to her and all the human race. Ananias and Sapphira told lies for selfish reasons. But hiding the truth, which he is not entitled to know, from an enemy does not harm him, especially when he would use such information to harm others who are innocent.

A great work is being done by the witnesses even in lands where their activity is banned. The only way they can fulfill the command to preach the good news of God's kingdom is by use of theocratic war strategy. By underground methods the literature is brought into the country and distributed. Would it make sense to hide

* For details see *The Watchtower*, February 1, 1956.

⁴⁵ <https://revealnews.org/article/jehovahs-witnesses-can-hide-the-truth-in-court-to-protect-religion/>