

**INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE MODERN SLAVERY
ACT 2018**

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Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (NSW)

SUBJECT: JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES



Larissa Kaput

27 November 2023

“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.”¹

As quoted by the Hon Tony Zappia MP for the anniversary of the National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse

¹ <https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hansard_Display?bid=chamber/hansardr/c4ab46e1-15d4-4e92-970f-0a08926f67b5/&sid=0210>

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Modern Slavery Committee Parliament of NSW

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I thank the Modern Slavery Committee for allowing me the opportunity to provide a submission in relation to the committee's current inquiry on the Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018.

This submission expands on my previous submission to the Inquiry into Modern Slavery Act 2018 and Associated Matters, and advises the government on concerns within the Jehovah's Witnesses community and builds on those raised in previous Royal Commission submissions, Joint Select Committee submissions and other inquiries. After the final reports are released, these submissions are generally available on the saysorry.org website with the topics they cover being 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, are allegations that the leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses actively commit modern slavery via coercion of up to 28,125 Australian children through five main types of labour:

- Construction and labouring,
- Cleaning,
- Food preparation,
- Selling literature, and
- Recruitment of new members

Yours sincerely,

Larissa Kaput

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Dedication

I dedicate this submission to my friends Steven Unthank and David Unthank, whose father died in March 2022.

Steven never got to show his father the apology (Direct Personal Response) he should have received from the Jehovah's Witnesses via the National Redress Scheme.

The Jehovah's Witness leader that abused Steven should say sorry for his child sexual abuse.

The Jehovah's Witnesses should say sorry for protecting the perpetrator of Steven's abuse.

Steven's father should have believed Steven when Steven told him he was abused.

Steven's father should have apologised to Steven for beating him for his protection of me as a child.

All Steven ever wanted was an apology.

Steven, for helping me when we were children, and for the support of all Jehovah's Witness children by virtue of your independent whistleblowing, and in your support of our whistleblowing together since 2016 - although it will never be enough - we say: "thank you".

- Larissa Kaput

Introduction

I have a culturally diverse background, being the daughter of immigrants who spoke no English when they arrived in Australia. My family had fled both the Communist regime and the Third Reich. My father's surviving maternal uncle was murdered by Nazis. I was saddened two days ago when we commemorated 90 years since the Holodomor². A decade after their brother and mother starved to death, my paternal grandmother and her sister were marched at gunpoint from their Ukrainian village to become **forced labourers** in Nazi Germany.

I allege that am one of an estimated **28,125 survivors of forced child labour** in an Australian cohort that hasn't been widely recognised or acknowledged. In this scenario, myself and all the children I knew were coerced to partake in at least five types of forced child labour. I call it child slave labour, because it's not that different to what my grandmother and great aunt had to do in war-torn Germany, 80 years ago. Additionally, we have **estimated that there are approximately 3.26 million survivors of such forced child labour globally**.

I am also a recently retired Procurement expert (20+ years) and understand the relationship between modern slavery and the supply chain. However, it should be noted that there is negligible relationship between the Australian supply chain and modern slavery within the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Jehovah's Witnesses head office in Australia is based in Zouch Road, Denham Court, New South Wales. NSW was the first state or territory to introduce legislation to address modern slavery with the first appointed Anti-slavery Commissioner. If there's any jurisdiction who can help, it's NSW parliament.

Jehovah's Witnesses use coercion to force labour: it's modern slavery

From my lived experience and observations of others, I allege that Jehovah's Witness boys and girls were subjected to forced child labour by coercion. If you didn't participate, you could be punished. If your parents didn't participate, they could be reprimanded ("marked" or "reproved"). If you didn't participate as a family, it was unusual and you faced being looked upon as being "spiritually weak".

I allege that even today the Jehovah's Witnesses are holding my family and friends emotionally and financially hostage. In fact, 8.7 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. Disfellowshipping results in shunning. "Unless they are reinstated, this punishment is for the remainder of their life, causing tremendous emotional suffering."³

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'⁴. This means we didn't have to tell the whole truth to authorities to protect Jehovah's people. The coercive threat of shunning underpins all forced labour within the Jehovah's Witnesses⁵. Coercion involving fear, obligation and guilt (FOG) via theocratic warfare keeps them and their parents silent.

² <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holodomor>>

³ <<https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/disfellowship-shunning.php>>

⁴ <<https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/quotes/theocratic-warfare-lying.php>>

⁵ <<https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/disfellowship-shunning.php>>

Estimates of 28,125 forced child labourers within the Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia and 3.3 million globally

How were these numbers estimated?

Australian estimate - children

The membership of Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia is currently ~75,000. We know from Pew Research that about two thirds leave⁶ so, it's likely that in our generation, 150,000 have already left. If we assume that, approximately 225,000 (75,000 + 150,000) current and former Jehovah's Witnesses are alive, of which ~25% of Australians are children at any one time. This makes the likely maximum children 56,250 (25% x 225,000). However, this only applies if all Jehovah's Witnesses were 'born in' children. There have been estimates that children only account for at most half the population⁷, bringing the number to **~28,125***.

Australian estimate - adults

If we assume that, approximately 225,000 (75,000 + 150,000) current and former Jehovah's Witnesses are alive, of which ~75% of which are adults, then the likely maximum adults are **168,750*** (75% x 225,000).

Global estimate - children

Within a global membership of 8.7 million⁸ people today, we can similarly assume that two thirds or 17.4 million have left. If 26.1 million (8.7 million + 17.5 million) current and former Jehovah's Witnesses remain alive, a maximum of 6.5 million are children. If half of these are born in, we can estimate the number of global forced child labourers as approximately **3.3 million***.

Global estimate – adults

If we assume that, approximately 26.1 million (8.7 million + 17.5 million) current and former Jehovah's Witnesses are alive, of which ~75% of which are adults, then the likely maximum adults are **19.6 million*** (75% x 26.1 million).

Although it may be argued that all Jehovah's Witnesses might be considered forced labourers^{9 10}, for the purposes of this submission, I have focussed on the forced child labour only.

* note: included are the maximum numbers. This requires further investigation and it depends on which of the five types of labour were are referring to and which legal entities were, or are, involved (e.g., corporate publishing and/or construction entities, or religious congregations).

⁶ <<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/04/26/a-closer-look-at-jehovahs-witnesses-living-in-the-u-s/>>

⁷ <<https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/statistics.php>>

⁸ <<https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/>> (accessed 23 November 2023)

⁹ <<https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/donations-money-solicitation.php#Donation%20of%20Labour>>

¹⁰ <<https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/donations-money-solicitation.php#L3>>

Five types of forced child labour within the Jehovah's Witnesses

My original submission to the *Inquiry into Modern Slavery Act 2018 and Associated Matters*¹¹ in 2018 described that we had to:

1. participate in general construction labour. For example, cleaning bricks on church property (Kingdom Halls) for 'quick build' building sites, or helping to build roads on church property sites (Assembly Halls);
2. clean properties (Assembly Halls, Convention sites and Kingdom Halls);
3. prepare food for sale at large meetings (Assemblies and Conventions);
4. go from door-to-door, selling church literature ("witnessing"); and
5. constantly proselytise to non-Jehovah's Witnesses to attract new members (also "witnessing").

I was one of the millions of Jehovah's Witness children allegedly used as forced child labourers globally, by religious leaders and Jehovah's Witness corporations. Parents and children are still coerced by church leaders to undertake these types of activities today. Due to time constraints, I have not focused on the subjection of Jehovah's Witness adults to modern slavery, though I allege that we can assume that virtually all adult Jehovah's Witnesses are forced labourers.

Membership for children of Jehovah's Witness congregation charities in Australia is cognisant upon the child engaging in property maintenance on buildings and property. These buildings and property are not owned by the congregation but owned by other legal entities acting under the control of the leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York, US.

Despite this, and that in 2018 I made the above submission, which was published, there was minimal in the NSW modern slavery framework that related to my scenario. Nor did any subsequent marketing of the new legislation allude to the possibility of this happening in a high control religion. Exploiting religious beliefs as a means of human trafficking has been exposed before¹², but not in a Jehovah's Witness context. Federal Attorney-General the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP stated at the *National Modern Slavery Conference 2023*: "To stop Modern Slavery, we need engagement and partnership"¹³. Yet, we have not, as yet, had a seat at the table.

1. General building construction labour

Many Kingdom Hall 'quick-builds' (churches) were done in the name of a local Jehovah's Witness builder or the congregation. After deceptive recruiting, families are coerced to donate cash, resources (including construction equipment, land, materials, and tools), and their time (labour). The child construction workers were originally told that they were the beneficiaries, but this proved to not be the case when the US-based governing body seized the assets in 2011-2013¹⁴. They had coerced congregants to transfer property asset ownership in a number of countries by forcing a public vote in unison where there was no choice but to comply. See Attachment 1 - NewsCorp article.

¹¹ <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/65890/0023%20Ms%20Larissa%20Kapat.pdf>>

¹² <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2050303216676520>>

¹³ <<https://minsters.ag.gov.au/media-centre/speeches/national-modern-slavery-conference-2023-29-06-2023>>

¹⁴ <<https://jwleaks.org/2013/10/02/watchtower-society-scandal-involving-menlo-park-congregation-of-jehovahs-witnesses/>>

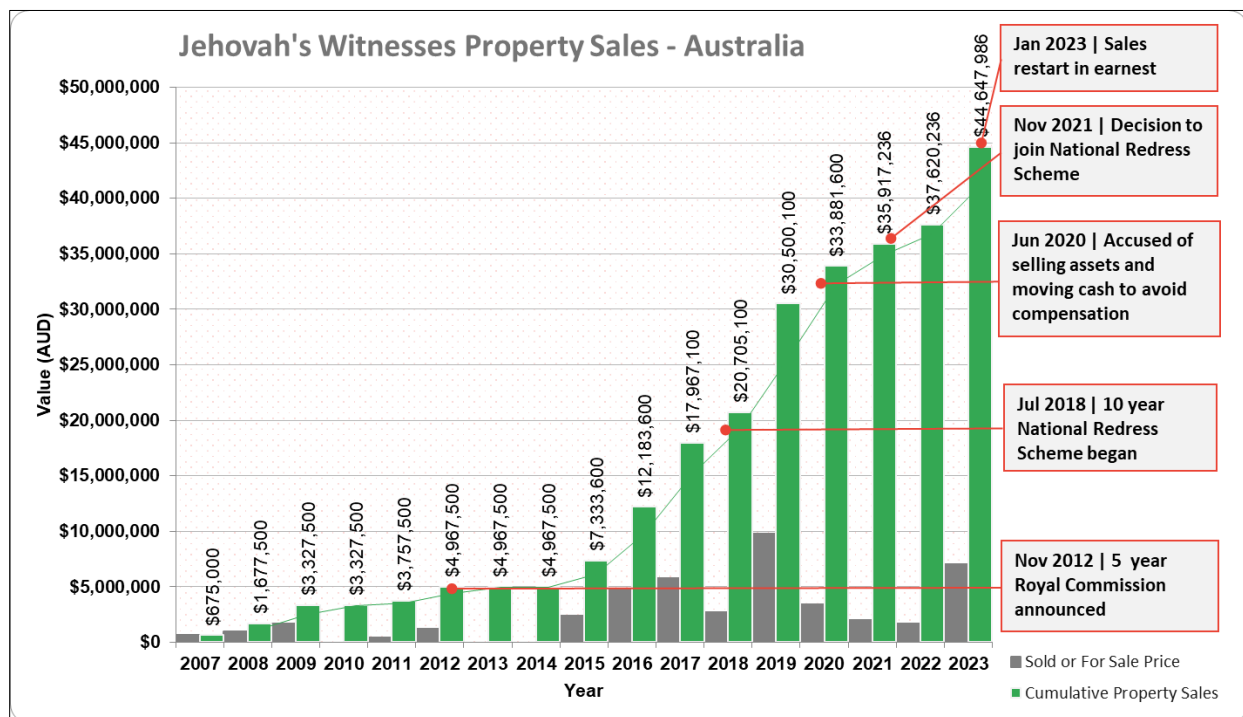


Figure 1: Jehovah's Witness Property Sales in Australia

Evidence of historic forced child labour – Melton Assembly Hall

We have extensive documented photographic and video evidence of children used as labourers on Kingdom Hall construction sites which can be supplied upon request.

Figure 2 shows my father and I, building a road in the red soil at Melton Assembly Hall in Melbourne. There are other photos with lots of children, including my childhood friends, cleaning bricks. We were working-class kids; it was hard work. My mother was a child-indoctrinated Jehovah's Witness and my father joined as a young, lost adult. He has (undiagnosed) Asperger's syndrome. Our parents believed we all needed to work to save ourselves and other people for a future 'Paradise on Earth' - made up exclusively from members of our religious group. I remember shovelling with Dad and stomping my feet in small grid patterns on the ground to flatten the earth under the road base. There's a look of pure determination and focus on his face and although I didn't enjoy the work, I just wanted to spend time with him.



Figure 2: Larissa Kaput (child in foreground) working on the construction at Melton Assembly Hall

Evidence of historic forced child labour - global

Australians are used as missionaries to ‘train’ children and young people in foreign countries to, for example, participate in construction work. Australian children, who grew up as forced child labourers, become young adults who then unwittingly exported slave-like behaviour by soliciting forced child labourers in third world countries, using Australia as a staging post. An interview with a former leader, describes how he was manipulated, became a leader, and travelled to places including Japan, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Samoa, Sri Lanka and Thailand and then was hunted down when he tried to leave the Jehovah’s Witnesses¹⁵.

2. Cleaning

My historic forced child labour – Plenty Kingdom Hall

When I was a child Jehovah’s Witness, there was an expectancy pathway to clean Jehovah’s Witness facilities. I remember cleaning the toilets at my local Kingdom Hall. I think there was a roster and I was invited to be part of it by my bible study mentor.

This Kingdom Hall (church) was built by congregants, some of whom were childhood friends of mine. The Kingdom Hall property deed was transferred from ownership by the congregants who built it to

¹⁵ <<https://open.spotify.com/episode/2Xzs9OYhjAQFvp2bey42eJ>>

another entity owned by the Jehovah's Witness leaders¹⁶. This meant that the work I did as a child in maintaining the facility was for profit.

Evidence of current forced child labour - global

In June 2023, I saw a video showing recent Jehovah's Witness propaganda that featured one of the new Jehovah's Witness Governing Body leaders, Jeffrey Winder. In the video, two children are cleaning the podium and a table in a Kingdom Hall (minute 18:02), then two more young girls are cleaning chairs in other Kingdom halls (minute 18:09 and 18:21), and then a boy is being indoctrinated to clean the floor (minute 18:23).¹⁷



Figure 3 Two children working as child slave labourers



Figure 4 A young girl working as a child slave labourer

¹⁶ <https://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/362187/sub266-philanthropy.pdf>

¹⁷ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMtq8CthL8s&pp=QAFIAQ%3D%3D>>



Figure 5 Another young girl cleaning as a child slave labourer



Figure 6 A young boy being indoctrinated to clean by a Jehovah's Witness adult

3. Food preparation

Evidence of historic forced child labour

When I was a child Jehovah's Witness, there was an expectancy pathway to prepare food for Jehovah's Witness events. I remember preparing food for an assembly. I was invited to be part of it by my bible study mentor.

Due to time constraints, I haven't detailed the evidence for food preparation by children however I am aware that evidence is available in survivor children's diaries, corporate and religious records and samples can be supplied upon request.

4. Literature sales (“witnessing”)

Evidence of historic forced child labour

Literature was sold by “witnessing” children going from door-to-door, and via other methods such as approaching people including school friends, both in private and public settings, until around the year 2000. We would attend the Theocratic Ministry school and became highly trained in literature sales, just like vacuum salespeople. On the weekends, we would get dressed up as a family, fill our bags with literature including the Watchtower and Awake! magazines, and go to try to sell them from door-to-door. We would meet with a congregation group with local maps and we would be sent out in different directions. Some of us kids would have to work alone with creepy adults from the congregation. We would often be out for about 4 hours on Saturdays and Sundays. We mostly hated it. Physical discipline would often be used to force children like my friends out in the sales ‘ministry’.

Children (unbaptised publishers) were coerced by the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Limited to sell their literature without remuneration. There is a lot of history in Watch Tower publications that provide evidence that selling of literature was for financial gain¹⁸. To avoid tax this practice was stopped¹⁹ and was instead replaced by ever-increasing requests for more cash²⁰.

I am aware that evidence is available in survivor children’s diaries, corporate and religious records and samples can be supplied upon request.

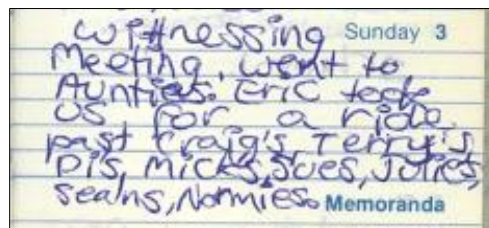


Figure 7: Diary entry from Larissa Kaput’s diary in 1995 “witnessing” to sell Jehovah’s Witness literature at age 13

5. Recruitment of new members (also “witnessing”)

Evidence of historic forced child labour

Recruitment of new members was also called “witnessing”. Fear, obligation and guilt plus physical discipline would often be used to neurotically enforce the recruitment by children in the ministry, at school and pressure was applied to witness at every opportunity.

Whenever we were at school, or at events, or just talking to friends or neighbours, we were neurotically required to “witness” to our peers, our teachers, and basically any non-Jehovah’s Witnesses members of the public. We wanted to have fun and enjoy birthday parties, after school sports and recreational time. But we were expected to bring new members into the congregation to start the process of becoming a

¹⁸ <<https://jwfacts.com/watchtower/donations-money-solicitation.php>>

¹⁹ <<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-03-10-ca-1891-story.html>>

²⁰ <<https://donate.jw.org/ui/E/donate-home.html>>

member by starting a bible study with them. There was an ever-present threat of Armageddon coming and we were coerced to rescue our friends and strangers from doomsday so that they could enjoy paradise on earth with us.

At the end of each month, we were expected to hand over our field service reports in the local congregation. When I was a child, we had to write how many pieces of literature we sold, how many hours we were out in 'field service' (witnessing), how many people we had committed to visit again, and how many bible studies we started. If we didn't do enough 'hours' we felt bad. Each month the hours quota was reset and we had to start from scratch.

I remember once that the compulsion to witness became so ingrained after a lifetime of indoctrination, that at my favourite Uncle's death bed, his siblings surrounded us and obsessively witnessed to the doctors and nurses even as his life support machine was switched off. As the colour slowly drained from his face, I held his warm hand in tears listening to them talk about Jehovah to the doctors and nurses. It was so de-humanising and I remembered in that moment being immensely embarrassed as a child at being forced to 'love bomb' strangers in all possible environments.

I am aware that evidence is available in survivor children's diaries, corporate and religious records, and samples can be supplied upon request.

FIELD SERVICE REPORT	
Name:
Month:
Placements (Printed and Electronic)	
Video Showings	
Hours	
Return Visits	
Number of <i>Different</i> Bible Studies Conducted	
Comments:	

S-4-E 10/15

Figure 8: S-4 2015 Field Service Report

CONGREGATION'S FIELD SERVICE AND MEETING ATTENDANCE REPORT

 (Congregation name) (City) (Province or state)

Report for _____ (Month/Year) Congregation number: _____

	Number Reporting	Hours	Return Visits	Bible Studies
Publishers				
Auxiliary Pioneers				
Regular Pioneers				

Active Publishers _____

Average Weekend Meeting Attendance _____

 (Secretary—Sign and print name)

S-1-E 8/19

Figure 9: S-1 2019 Congregation's Field Service and meeting attendance report

Barriers to recognising and reporting forced child labour within the Jehovah's Witnesses

"The lack of awareness around what modern slavery is is [sic] a major issue," Professor Burn said, mainly because when people think of slaves "they conjure up images of people in chains".²¹

Most Jehovah's Witnesses are not aware that they are forced labourers. They often think that they are donating cash, resources and time of their own free will. They felt helpful. They thought that they were saving the world by recruiting others, all building, cleaning, cooking and selling books and magazines together. It is not until they leave that it slowly dawns on them that they have been used. Some are so embarrassed that they could fall prey to this and/or so highly controlled, that they will argue strenuously that it was their own fault.

"More women and girls are victims and survivors than men and boys and that's reflected around the world," she said.

Many Jehovah's Witnesses men benefitted from the forced child labour. They felt empowered. They felt powerful. Some took such advantage of the vulnerable, and could be so worried that they could be liable if their part in the forced labour was exposed, that they would do or say anything to cover it up. But in truth, it was a pyramid scheme.

²¹ <<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/australias-modern-slaves-are-a-real-mix-and-they-are-suffering-in-silence/eymo369zv>>

Some barriers to this recognition and subsequent lack of reporting are:

1. **restricted democratic rights**²². Jehovah's Witnesses are not allowed to vote or take part in politics. This means that they're often very naïve to what is happening in government and parliament, so their awareness is low.
2. **low education rates**²³
3. **low income rates**²⁴
4. **high endogamy rates**²⁵. The population of Jehovah's Witnesses is very low as a percentage of the general population; it's less than 0.5% of the Australian population. As endogamy (marrying within your own faith) is a very strong doctrine, many Jehovah's Witnesses are related to forced child labourers in their own congregation or nearby congregations. Due to these circumstances, cognitive dissonance may block both the forced child labourers and the perpetrators of forced child labour from recognising the situation and, even if they do, it may influence them to not report against their family members. Similarly, parents and former leaders may be unable to recognise and accept their own role in being participants or complicit enforcers within their own congregations or families.
5. **legal entity swapping**. "As soon we attempt to resolve the issue, the Jehovah's Witnesses will restructure their corporations, update their internal policy manuals, produce a corporate video and publish an article saying, "We don't do that". All of this will be to deny or cover up what they're being questioned about to prove their case."²⁶
6. **emotions, thought, information and behavioural control**. Jehovah's Witness leaders haven't shared any information about their own coerced modern slavery on their official website: jw.org. They have not included anything in their Elder's manual, known as *Shepherd the Flock of God*. They have not shared any information on coerced modern slavery via their regular body of elders letter, nor in their weekly congregational meetings, or posted anything in their Kingdom Halls. They're controlling the information to such a degree that people will never see it through their official channel, which is the one they often choose to believe. However, I believe that they are aware of what they have done. Because after some whistleblowers started exposing concerns of modern slavery, a major doctrinal change resulted in the ceasing of collecting records on "witnessing" in the 'field service'²⁷.

²² <<https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/political-neutrality/>>

²³ <<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/05/12/chapter-3-demographic-profiles-of-religious-groups/#educational-attainment-and-income-of-religious-groups>>

²⁴ <<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/05/12/chapter-3-demographic-profiles-of-religious-groups/#educational-attainment-and-income-of-religious-groups>>

²⁵ <<https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/w20150315/marry-only-in-lord-realistic/>>

²⁶ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hansard_Display?bid=committees/commjnt/27453/&sid=0001 (Steven Unthank quote to Lara Kaput, prior to giving witness testimony appearing before the Joint Standing Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme on 20 October 2023)

²⁷ <<https://fortune.com/2023/11/22/jehovahs-witnesses-preaching-metrics-policy-change/>>

Inability of Australian government departments to support a solution

National Children's Commissioner

In March 2023, I contacted the Children's Commissioner, Anne Hollands. I advised that serious and valid complaints about the Jehovah's Witnesses had been made to ASIC, ACMA, the ATO, the ACNC, AUSTRAC, OAIC and other departments, to no avail. One of the issues raised directly to her was the issue of child slave labour. Commissioner Hollands responded by directing me to a progress report hosted on the website of the National Office of Child Safety (NOCS). The report was completely irrelevant and worse, it contained a defamatory reference to me²⁸. I contacted NOCS and they had the report removed. I don't believe that Commissioner Hollands is aware of this, but her initial response to me was inappropriate at the least, and possibly grossly negligent, given tens of thousands of children are potentially affected. I never followed up as I was so horrified.

Australian Human Rights Commission

In November 2016, along with a number of others, contacted the Australian Human Rights Commission with complaints regarding the Jehovah's Witnesses. It produced no effective result. A year and a half year later, I requested a meeting with the Commissioner at the time, Edward Santow, informing him on various human rights abuses regarding the Jehovah's Witnesses and asking for his support. In April 2019, we were referred to and met with his Victorian Advisor, Mr Daniel Nellor. This resulted in a meeting between the Human Rights Commission and the leaders of the Jehovah's Witnesses, but again, no favourable result.

In October 2023, I travelled to New Zealand to attend a High Court case involving the Jehovah's Witnesses. While I was there, I heard about alleged slavery in the New Zealand-based Gloriavale cult. Afterwards, I listened to an interview²⁹ with Mr Steven Patterson, a lawyer with a Masters in International Human Rights. They started by discussing how children are born into a life of servitude in cleaning, cooking, and proselytising for the corporation, for example. They discussed how shunning interferes in family life and how this engages Article 8 of the Human Rights Charter and Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Mr Patterson explained that courts will cite the Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC). Most importantly, he explained that governments have a positive obligation to stop it happening, and finally that some private businesses, like banks, don't want to be supporting what they see as breaches of human rights.

NSW Office of the Children's Guardian

I hold some reservations about the lack of a trauma-informed approach that I experienced from the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian if sharing of a reporting hotline with them is being considered. I attended a consultation session with the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian:

- the secretariat breached my privacy, sending my personal contact details to the perpetrating corporation,
- the consultation was held on religious premises, resulting in triggering, and
- I was seated at a table with few survivors, surrounded by religious leaders at other tables.

²⁸ <<https://jwleaks.org/2023/04/14/australia-jehovahs--witnesses-complaint-re-abc-four-corners-program-bearing-witness/>>

²⁹ <<https://youtu.be/8z5hY6SzoJg?si=FwRgaJQ1lIKyCw8>>

When it relates to high control religions, the government needs further training in a trauma-informed way of working. Otherwise, reporting to the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian may result in missed opportunities.

Wage Inspectorate Victoria

In April 2023, I submitted a formal complaint of child slave labour to the Wage Inspectorate Victoria³⁰. As my complaint was outside their statutory limit, they had no retrospective powers. They wanted me to give them the names of children currently in forced child labour. I explained that every born-in Jehovah's Witness child is potentially affected. As part of my survivor advocacy, I maintain limited records of current and former members, but the revealing of this private information is sensitive.

Failure of Australian law enforcement to support action on reported crime

Victoria Police

In 2016, I reported my allegation of child slave labour to Victoria Police. The police officer I met with was at the Box Hill child sexual abuse (SOCIT) office and she told me she wasn't in the right department to report it, and so I should report it elsewhere. I didn't know what that meant and I didn't feel she believed me, so I took no further action at that time.

Australian Federal Police (AFP)

In January 2023, I reported my allegation of child slave labour to the Australian Federal Police (AFP). The officer didn't advise me that they had a Human trafficking and exploitation specialist team. However, on the issue she did investigate, the officer said words to the effect: "This could get really big". On a related issue, the police station took six months to investigate and after this, decided to refer the issue to the New South Wales jurisdiction. What happened is that the issues remained at a relatively junior level.

NSW Police

The NSW police officer accepted the referral from the AFP. However, they took the word of the Jehovah's Witness leaders, and an investigation was halted. As the police officer was giggling on my last phone call, and they failed to take any law enforcement action, it caused me to give up at that time.

Failure of the United Nations to instigate a global investigation

International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UN Youth Envoy

In 2019, I contacted the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UN Youth Envoy to report my allegations and to warn them of a silent crisis. I continued to follow up with the ILO for four years with no result.

³⁰ <<https://www.vic.gov.au/wage-inspectorate-news>>

Between July and September 2023, my colleague Steven Unthank, and I met in person with other forced child labourers and whistleblowers in more than ten countries across Europe, Scandinavia, and the UK. I asked at least one representative from each of 10 countries if they would be willing to make a statement on their lived experience of forced child labour to submit to the ILO. They unanimously said yes; each of them committed to write their stories.

In August 2023, we visited the ILO office in Geneva, Switzerland and shared that we had many Jehovah's Witness survivors willing to submit statements. I asked how we could make our complaints effective. A member of the *Child Labour | Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch* team advised that an Australian NGO should represent us with a consolidated submission to the ILO.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) definition of Child Labour

According to the International Labor Organization, "child labour"³¹ is 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*
- 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."*

The worst forms of child labour, a subset of child labour, are:

- a) slavery, debt bondage, trafficking and similar practices*
- b) the use, procurement or offering of a child for commercial sexual exploitation, including the use of children in pornography*
- c) illicit activities such as drug trafficking, and*
- d) work which, by its nature (e.g., spraying pesticides) or the circumstances in which it is carried out (e.g., for long hours), puts their health, safety or morals at risk--known as "hazardous work".*

Forced labour³², is defined as

"work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily".

(a), b) and c), above, constitute forms of forced labour of children."

Failure of Australian-based NGOs to provide support for Australian children

Minderoo

In 2018, I contacted Minderoo for advocacy support relating to Jehovah's Witness children being used as child slave labourers. They were not interested. Afterwards I complained to a professional within the modern slavery industry, they commented, "Twiggy wouldn't want to be involved in anything controversial". I am concerned that NGOs like Minderoo may have a religious blind spot.

³¹ <<https://www.ilo.org/ipec/lang--en/index.htm>>

³² <<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang--en/index.htm>>

Amnesty International, Save the Children, World Vision, and UNICEF

In October 2023, I reached out to four child-focused NGOs (Amnesty International, Save the Children, World Vision, and UNICEF) to bring a complaint of forced child labour against the Jehovah's Witnesses to the ILO. Each of them declined to support me, as ours is not the type of advocacy they're involved in. They explained that their role in Australia is to collect our first world donations to support third world countries, as third world countries do not have the infrastructure to support themselves. I was left plainly devastated.

Attorney-General's National Principles to Address Coercive Control

We need to consider that there may be barriers to effectively deal with a religion being a perpetrator of modern slavery under the guise of religious belief. On 22nd September 2022, the Attorney-General of Australia, the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP, published the National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence³³. The National Principles in Depth addresses cultural, spiritual and religious abuse:

*"A perpetrator may use a person's culture, spirituality or religion to control them, or may exert their own culture, spirituality or religion upon them. This could include controlling how they practice their culture, spirituality or faith, or criticising, shaming or belittling their beliefs. A perpetrator may deny a victim-survivor access to contraception or medical intervention on the basis of their culture, spirituality or religion. A perpetrator may not allow a victim-survivor to speak in their language of choice or observe cultural practices or religious holidays, or may force them to convert to their religion."*³⁴

This presents a golden opportunity to facilitate a solution.

Legal Advice

This month, we met with a legal firm specialising in modern slavery, in which we were advised of further avenues to explore, including:

- a complaints mechanism with the Australian National Contact Point for Responsible Business Conduct, for multinational enterprises and business who engage in misconduct³⁵;
- the AFP's Human trafficking and exploitation team, who investigate the crime types set out in Division 270 and 271 of the criminal code³⁶, and that the AFP may represent survivors nationally³⁷;

³³ <<https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/publications/national-principles-address-coercive-control-family-and-domestic-violence>>

³⁴ <<https://www.ag.gov.au/system/files/2023-09/national-principles-to-address-coercive-control-family-and-domestic-violence.PDF>>

³⁵ <<https://ausncp.gov.au/>>

³⁶ <<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2023C00283>>

³⁷ <https://forms.afp.gov.au/online_forms/human_trafficking_form>

- that we could make civil claims for breach of duty of care, with an example of such a claim³⁸;
- that we could make a direct treaty complaint to the United Nations Committee Convention under the Convention on the Rights of the Child³⁹;
- approaching the Red Cross, as they have anti-slavery experience and are multi-national; and
- referral to the recent review into the modern slavery offences, led by the Australian Attorney-General's department⁴⁰.

We have commenced exploring these multiple suggestions with a path to protect children and achieve justice.

Noncompliance and Human Rights violations as indicators for modern slavery

In her witness testimony to the NSW Modern Slavery parliamentary review on 30 October 2023, the Hon Dr Sarah Kaine stated, "...noncompliance in one area is a very strong indicator of noncompliance in another area, particularly with labour standards."⁴¹ In the same vein, Dr Martijn Boersma submitted that "...governments are at substantial risk of being linked to labour exploitation and human rights violations."⁴²

Submissions on Jehovah's Witness noncompliance and human rights violations

Since 2016, I have advocated for fellow exploited and vulnerable Jehovah's Witnesses victims and survivors. I have 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 over 13 countries in relation to the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. For example, I've personally made written submissions to, at least the following Australian inquiries:

- the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into **Child Sexual Abuse***,
- the *Royal Commission into Victoria's **Mental Health** System*,
- the ***Disability** Royal Commission*,
- the *Productivity Commission's review of philanthropy* (primarily in relation to **charities**), and
- the *Inquiry into the extent and nature of **Poverty** in Australia*.

To confirm, these have all been about the alleged adverse behaviour of Jehovah's Witness leaders.

Government inquiries on Jehovah's Witness noncompliance and human rights violations

Since 2012, at least the following inquiries occurred globally:

³⁸ <<https://www.unswlawjournal.unsw.edu.au/article/tortious-remedies-for-deliberate-wrongdoing-to-victims-of-human-trafficking-and-slavery-in-australia>>

³⁹ <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc/individual-communications>>

⁴⁰ <<https://consultations.ag.gov.au/crime/modern-slavery-offences/>>

⁴¹ <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/3139/Transcript%20-%20Review%20Modern%20Slavery%20Act%20-%2030%20October%202023%20-%20UNCORRECTED.pdf>>

⁴² <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/82203/0007%20Dr%20Martijn%20Boersma.pdf>>

- 2019: the Pennsylvanian Attorney General approved a Grand Jury investigation into child sexual abuse within the Jehovah's Witnesses⁴³. To date, at least 14 Elders have been arrested⁴⁴.
- 2019: The Netherlands launched an investigation into child sexual abuse within the Jehovah's Witnesses. A 2019 report carried out by the University of Utrecht, as reported by Reuters, found that "about 80% of the 751 members who came forward to speak with researchers had reported abuse to leaders within the community".⁴⁵
- 2018: New Zealand's *Abuse in Care Royal Commission* formed an inquiry that included child sexual abuse. In April 2022, the Terms of Reference were extended to include religious institutions, including the Jehovah's Witnesses.⁴⁶
- 2018: A jury in Montana awarded \$35 million to child sex abuse victim Alexis Nunez, in a judgment against the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Supreme court then overturned the verdict as Jehovah's Witnesses were exempt from reporting.⁴⁷
- 2017: An almost \$50 million (CAN \$66 million) *class action* lawsuit was filed by Canadian victims of child sexual abuse, against the Jehovah's Witnesses.⁴⁸
- 2016: Germany announced an *Independent Commission for Processing Child Sexual Abuse* involving Jehovah's Witnesses among others.⁴⁹
- 2014: England and Wales announced an *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)* involving groups including the Jehovah's Witnesses.⁵⁰
- 2013: A San Francisco judge awarded Jose Lopez \$13.5 million against the Jehovah's Witnesses, which was appealed and settled for an undisclosed amount in 2018. Also, the Jehovah's Witnesses were sanctioned (paying USD\$ 4,000 per day) due to withholding documents.⁵¹
- 2012: The Australian Prime Minister announced a Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse implicating the Jehovah's Witnesses in alleged child sexual abuse cases. Findings of the final report included that "the allegations, reports or complaints that the organisation received relate to at least 1,800 alleged victims of child sexual abuse" and "there was no relevant legislated mandated reporting obligation in most of the jurisdictions in which the 1,006 alleged perpetrators were reported".⁵²

⁴³ <<https://www.fox43.com/article/news/local/pa-grand-jury-investigation-systemic-cover-up-child-sex-abuse-jehovahs-witnesses/521-3ebc3df5-6044-4982-ac96-fc473c8a865f>>

⁴⁴ <<https://fortune.com/2023/11/22/jehovahs-witnesses-preaching-metrics-policy-change/>>

⁴⁵ <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-netherlands-women-crime-trfn-idUSKBN25O2IV/>>

⁴⁶ <<https://www.abuseincare.org.nz/our-progress/news/treaty-of-waitangi-underpins-us/>>

⁴⁷ <<https://law.justia.com/cases/montana/supreme-court/2020/da-19-0077-0.html>>

⁴⁸ <<https://revealnews.org/blog/jehovahs-witnesses-sued-in-canda-for-history-of-sex-abuse-cover-up/>>

⁴⁹ <<https://www.aufarbeitungskommission.de/service-presse/service/meldungen/sexueller-kindesmissbrauch-bei-den-zeugen-jehovas-die-neunten-werkstattgespraeche-teil-1/>>

⁵⁰ <<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20221216171718/https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/26895/view/child-protection-religious-organisations-settings-investigation-report-september-2021-.pdf>>

⁵¹ <<https://revealnews.org/article/how-jehovahs-witnesses-leaders-hide-child-abuse-secrets-at-all-costs/>>

⁵² <<https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/Case%20Study%2029%20-%20Findings%20Report%20-%20Jehovahs%20Witnesses.pdf>>

Media reports on Jehovah's Witness noncompliance and human rights violations

Below are just some of the actions I've personally taken to increase public awareness, encourage more survivors to come forward, to seek justice, to facilitate the government to take action, and to hold the Jehovah's Witnesses accountable for their noncompliance and violations of human rights:

- 9 Mar 2017 The Sydney Morning Herald: Inside the Jehovah's Witnesses: A 'perfect storm' for abuse⁵³
- 12 Sep 2019 Crikey:
Compensation claims against Jehovah's Witnesses could be Jeopardised: Lawyer⁵⁴
- 24 Jan 2018 ABC: Abandoning religion⁵⁵
- 9 Mar 2017 NewsCorp: Inside the Jehovah's Witnesses: A 'perfect storm' for abuse⁵⁶
- 10 Sep 2019 Crikey: Leaders of the Jehovah's Witnesses ordered to destroy confidential records⁵⁷
- 16 Sep 2019 Crikey: Human rights watchdog met with Jehovah's Witnesses over child safety concerns⁵⁸
- 17 Sep 2019 SBS: How the Jehovah's Witnesses 'broke' my family⁵⁹
- 18 Sep 2019 Crikey:
Paradise Lost: how the Jehovah's Witnesses punish those who speak out against child sexual abuse⁶⁰
- 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 properties⁶¹
- 12 Jul 2020 BBC: Investigation into Jehovah's Witnesses' property sell-offs - JW.org⁶²
- 7 Feb 2021 The New Daily: Child abuse survivor slams government's 8-year extension of national redress scheme deadline⁶³

⁵³ <<https://www.smh.com.au/national/inside-the-jehovahs-witnesses-a-perfect-storm-for-abuse-20170309-guukur.html>>

⁵⁴ <<https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/09/12/compensation-claims-jehovahs-witnesses/>>

⁵⁵ <<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/religionandethicsreport/the-biggest-taboo/9354234>>

⁵⁶ <<https://www.smh.com.au/national/inside-the-jehovahs-witnesses-a-perfect-storm-for-abuse-20170309-guukur.html>>

⁵⁷ <<https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/09/10/leaders-of-the-jehovahs-witnesses-ordered-to-destroy-confidential-records/>>

⁵⁸ <<https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/09/16/jehovahs-witnesses-human-rights-commission/>>

⁵⁹ <<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/article/how-the-jehovahs-witnesses-broke-my-family/tioi56yxw>>

⁶⁰ <<https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/09/18/inq-jehovahs-witnesses/>>

⁶¹ <<https://10play.com.au/theproject/articles/statement-from-the-jehovahs-witnesses/tpa200621yclq>>

⁶² <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViHC7XigpN4&feature=youtu.be>>

⁶³ <<https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/national/2021/02/07/national-redress-child-abuse-extension/>>

- 3 March 2021 The New Daily: Jehovah's Witnesses to join redress scheme for child sexual abuse survivors⁶⁴
- 19 Apr 2021 NewsCorp: Jehovah's Witnesses resolve legal stoush with charity watchdog⁶⁵
- 19 Apr 2021 News Corp: Jehovah's Witnesses charity denies tax issues with watchdog⁶⁶
- 10 Sep 2021 The New Daily: Jehovah's Witnesses join redress scheme⁶⁷
- 10 Sep 2021 News Corp: Tax threat triggers Jehovah's Witnesses U-turn⁶⁸
- 13 Sep 2021 ABC (Four Corners): Inside the brutal world of the Jehovah's Witnesses⁶⁹
- 24 Aug 2023 ZDF: Gott, Geld, Gehorsam (German) | God, Gold and Obedience (English)⁷⁰
- 6 Nov 2023 The Sydney Morning Herald: Punishment and Control: the secret handbook that rules a religion⁷¹
- 23 Nov 2023 Fortune: The Jehovah's Witnesses turned preaching into a metrics game that broke up marriages and made careers, but they just changed their door-to-door strategy for the first time since 1920⁷²

New allegations of Jehovah's Witnesses noncompliance and human rights violations (coercive financial fraud)

From 1983, Jehovah's Witnesses were acting as unregistered as an institutional financial lender. To expedite the building of Kingdom Halls, Canadian and US Jehovah's Witnesses were encouraged to borrow money from them (via the Society Kingdom Hall Fund, which was funded by donations). From at least 1985, they provided loans (or mortgages) to congregations, with 6% interest. Since at least 1987, to build and renovate Kingdom Halls, the Watchtower encouraged British Jehovah's Witnesses to borrow money from them, which they called 'low cost financing'. In 1999, they reduced the interest rate to 3%. In approximately 2014, they gave the appearance of stopping this practice ("...will no longer be asked to repay a loan"), yet in the same communication, the Elders were asked to continue sending "...at least the same amount...", or more. Note the involvement of multiple legal entities.

⁶⁴ <<https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/2021/03/03/jehovahs-witnesses-redress-scheme/>>

⁶⁵ <<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/jehovahs-witnesses-facing-tax-turmoil/news-story/64acd93d531eb6b7301dda758e7ee2ff>>

⁶⁶ <<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/jehovahs-witnesses-resolve-legal-stoush-with-charity-watchdog/news-story/2627927c637ab39d03623b8ba76194aa>>

⁶⁷ <<https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/2021/09/10/jehovahs-witnesses-redress/>>

⁶⁸ <<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/tax-threat-triggers-jehovahs-witnesses-uturn-on-redress/news-story/f986066fc13c6450199209364a0fc560>>

⁶⁹ <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-13/jehovah-witnesses-child-abuse-four-corners-investigations/100444320>>

⁷⁰ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtVnZkeNo6k>>

⁷¹ <<https://www.smh.com.au/national/punishment-and-control-the-secret-handbook-that-rules-a-religion-20231026-p5ef9z.html>>

⁷² <<https://fortune.com/2023/11/22/jehovahs-witnesses-preaching-metrics-policy-change/>>

A New Program for Kingdom Hall Construction

Jehovah certainly is fulfilling his promise to teach his household and direct them in his ways. (Isa. 54:13) From earliest times he has made definite arrangements for united worship that includes the giving of vital instruction. (Deut. 31:12, 13; Neh. 8:1-8; Ps. 122:1) This has resulted in great benefit to his faithful people. By adhering strictly to his counsel, they have been able to remain separate from the world and in close association with fellow worshipers. (Ex. 34:11-16; 2 Cor. 6:14-18) Especially in these last days we are admonished to assemble regularly, in order that we may not only be instructed by Jehovah but also share encouragement and incite one another to love and fine works.—Rom. 1:11, 12; Heb. 10:23-25.

From the first century on down to this present day Christians have assembled for worship both in private homes and in public places. (Acts 2:42, 46; 12:12) But particularly since 1935, when it was announced that a new meeting place under construction in Hawaii would be called Kingdom Hall, congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses everywhere have endeavored to have their own distinctive place of worship and have identified it by this name. As a result, Kingdom Halls are now seen throughout the land, and each year more are being constructed or otherwise acquired as regular congregational meeting places.

To Jehovah's Witnesses the Kingdom Hall is the most important building in any community. It may of itself be attractive in design and construction, but even if comparatively modest in external appearance, it is greatly appreciated as a center of true worship and the hub of therapeutic activity in the community. It gives

an increase in the peak number of publishers in the last three years of more than 84,000. This outstanding increase has required the formation of hundreds of new congregations, and this means that hundreds of new Kingdom Halls are needed. But it has not been possible for the local congregations to keep pace with the growth in terms of Kingdom Hall construction. This need is being felt more keenly as time goes on and the ingathering work continues apace.

This information was brought to our attention on Friday afternoon at the recent "Kingdom Unity" District Convention in the discourse "How Jehovah Has Kept Us United." The speaker briefly reviewed a number of well-known events in the modern history of the Christian congregation and pointed to the striking fulfillment of Micah 2:12, where it is written: "In unity I shall set them, like a flock in the pen, like a drove in the midst of its pasture; they will be noisy with men." In that setting the speaker, representing the Governing Body, announced a new arrangement to speed up the construction of Kingdom Halls or otherwise acquire additional ones, throughout the United States and Canada, as well as to provide assistance to congregations needing to enlarge or improve their present Kingdom Halls.

The announcement, although stated briefly in the convention talk, was received by the conventioners with great enthusiasm. Here are some of the details that will enable all the brothers everywhere to understand more fully just how the new arrangement will operate and how each one may have a share in this expression of "Kingdom Unity" in the days ahead.

Figure 10: Kingdom Ministry September 1983, page 4

A special contribution box was also set up in Kingdom Halls worldwide so that Jehovah's Witnesses could make their own donations to the fund.

Of course, those congregations that are now paying for their own Kingdom Hall and have a contribution box for the construction fund may continue to use that box. If they also desire to help other congregations, they may set up a contribution box for the Society Kingdom Hall Fund.

Figure 11: Kingdom Ministry September 1983, page 5

Congregations were told that they will be paying interest on these loans.

the arrangement. At that time congregations in need of funds for building Kingdom Halls, purchasing buildings for remodeling or remodeling and enlarging their existing Kingdom Hall may request loans from the Society Kingdom Hall Fund. Such loans will be repaid by the congregation or congregations using the Kingdom Hall. We will continue to have the congregations pay interest on the funds loaned so as to cover expenses involved in handling these matters and also to augment this fund.

Figure 12: Kingdom Ministry September 1983, page 5

Since at least 2013, Jehovah's Witnesses in the UK were led to believe that their donations were being used to help disaster relief victims or building Kingdom Halls. In a 2013 letter, designed for Philippine's disaster relief, the Watchtower wrote at the bottom of the letter: "However, it would be appreciated if such donations are made without restrictions as to where and how the funds may be used." This allowed money to be potentially transferred cross-jurisdictionally for a different purpose.

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

The Ridgeway, London, NW7 1EN Telephone: 020 8906 2211



November 20, 2013

TO ALL CONGREGATIONS

Re: Philippines disaster relief

Dear Brothers:

Many publishers have inquired how to contribute to the disaster relief effort underway following the recent disasters in the Philippines. Never underestimate the good effect that your prayers can have on the brothers in an area that has been struck by a disaster. (2 Cor. 1:8-11) You may also feel motivated to express your concern through a donation. The November 2005 issue of *Our Kingdom Ministry*, page 3, stated: "It is recommended that donations for humanitarian and relief assistance be made to the worldwide work. This fund is used for relief efforts as well as for advancing the spiritual needs of the Christian brotherhood. If, for some reason, a person wishes to make a relief donation separate from contributions to the worldwide work, it will still be accepted and used wherever there is a need for relief assistance. However, it would be appreciated if such donations are made without restrictions as to where and how the funds may be used." Additionally, at this time, there is no need for donations of food, clothing, or other items. If such needs arise in the future, you will be notified accordingly.

We send our warm Christian love.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

cc: Traveling overseers

PS to the coordinator of the body of elders:

Please arrange for this letter to be read to the congregation at the first meeting after its receipt. Thereafter, it should be posted on the information board.

11/20/13-E

Figure 13 Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses UK letter November 30 2013

In 2014, congregations were required to send any money in excess of \$5,000 to head office to be pooled, even if that money was intended to pay for repairs at their existing congregation Kingdom Hall (church), or even a new Kingdom Hall⁷³. (Documented evidence available on request.)

Then in January 2021, instead of honouring contributions made to a 'Special Building Fund, for the purpose of a film studio in Australia'⁷⁴, money was offshored from Australia to the 'World Wide Work', allowing it to be transferred to the US for a different purpose.

Responding to the Inquiry on Objects and Terms of the Bill

Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I have not been able to reference specific sections of the Act, including whether the terms remain appropriate.

Objects of the Bill	Do the policy objects remain valid?
a) to combat modern slavery.	Yes.
b) to provide assistance and support for victims of slavery.	Yes.
c) to provide for an Anti-Slavery Commissioner.	Yes, however the review must build in the powers and resourcing relating to the cohort in this submission.
d) to provide for detection and exposure of modern slavery that may have occurred or be occurring or that is likely to occur.	Yes, but thus far it has been undetected, despite a previous submission to the Inquiry into Modern Slavery Act 2018.
e) to raise community awareness of, and provide for education and training about, modern slavery.	Yes, however neither the government, the public, nor most current or former Jehovah's Witnesses themselves appear to realise that Jehovah's Witnesses are victims. In particular there is a clear distinction between male and female Jehovah's Witness children. That is, the males are religiously trained to be in leadership roles, whereas the women are trained to be in submissive roles. Hence disparity exists in the mindset which appears to make it less likely for men to realise their role in perpetrating ongoing modern slavery.
f) to encourage collaborative action to combat modern slavery.	Yes, this must mean, at the very least, law enforcement. Our experience has been a reticence to act on crimes within a religious context, resulting in missed opportunities.
g) to provide for the assessment of the effectiveness and appropriateness of laws prohibiting modern slavery and to improve the modern slavery and to	Yes.

⁷³ <<https://jwvictims.org/conventions-kingdom-halls-relief-funds-and-other-financial-scams-and-schemes-of-jehovahs-witnesses/>>

⁷⁴ <<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/liverpool-leader/jehovahs-witnesses-australasia-proposes-film-studio-office-and-replica-biblical-site/news-story/7997a66dbe24ef1a24beea6805d97d68>>

improve the implementation and enforcement of such laws.	
h) to provide for mandatory reporting of risks of modern slavery occurring in the supply chains of certain corporate bodies.	This is not relevant unless corporate contracts are extended to the intangible 'hope' services that religion provides. The Jehovah's Witnesses are under the procurement radar. A Modern Slavery clause inserted into government contracts will not have any impact on this cohort. The only exception to this is the opportunity to use backlisting government contracts as a sanction. The Jehovah's Witnesses hold public hospital contracts at \$0 which allows them to provide chaplaincy services and gives them access to healthcare data. The Jehovah's Witnesses operate approximately 750 basic religious charities. They do not have any entities above the Attorney-General's reporting thresholds, as there is a maximum limit of \$5,000 held in each Kingdom Hall, hence reporting requirements are ineffective.
i) to make forced marriage of a child and certain slavery and slavery-like conduct offences in New South Wales.	Yes, Jehovah's Witnesses are coerced to marry other Jehovah's Witnesses (endogamy) whilst they are young.
j) to further penalise involvement in cybersex trafficking by making it an offence to administer a digital platform for the purpose of child abuse material.	Yes, unless it's to advocate against child abuse, which may mean that lived experiences are shared and published.

Recommendations for detection, exposure and enforcement

Recommendation 1: Government support, [in line with the Australian Attorney-General's National Principles in Depth which address cultural, spiritual and religious abuse] to provide advice to train psychologists in religious behaviours to create structured pathways to support persons who may be under coercive control that keeps them in modern slavery.

Recommendation 2: Government support, in line with the Australian Attorney-General's National Principles in Depth which address cultural, spiritual and religious abuse to provide advice to create multimedia education (via newspapers, radio, social media and television) for government, the general public and current and former Jehovah's Witnesses to recognise religious coercive control as a barrier to escaping modern slavery (akin to gambling warnings).

Recommendation 3: Government support, in line with the Australian Attorney-General's National Principles in Depth which address cultural, spiritual and religious abuse to provide advice to create awareness within relevant government departments that religion and religious beliefs may be holding a person in a modern slavery.

Recommendation 4: Government support, [in line with the Australian Attorney-General's National Principles in Depth which address cultural, spiritual and religious abuse, to provide advice to investigate corporate coercion / financial fraud and abuse by religious charities and entities.

Recommendation 5: Increased regulation of basic religious charities to prevent the use of religious coercive control, and ongoing educational awareness relating to modern slavery.

Recommendation 6: Engage and consult with qualified Jehovah's Witnesses stakeholders, for example, by inclusion into the *National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery*.

Recommendation 7: Commission a research study to confirm the numbers of child and adult forced labourers.

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 practice⁷⁵. 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 re will 'keep ther and take e open to us We will not ing' by imize and find hovah knows nization, and who are we ? If we really that if it is ut eventually, his organiza-fficulties than : where only us. ender 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 ppily 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			
<p>A WITNESS of Jehovah was going from house to house in Eastern Germany 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 <u>using theocratic war strategy, hiding the truth by action and word for the sake of the ministry.</u></p> <p>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.*</p> <p>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</p> <p>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 <u>betray his brothers or the interests of God's work.</u> 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.</p> <p>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. <u>But hiding the truth, which he is not entitled to know, from an enemy does not harm him,</u> especially when he would use such information to harm others who are innocent.</p> <p>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</p>			

⁷⁵ <<https://revealnews.org/article/jehovahs-witnesses-can-hide-the-truth-in-court-to-protect-religion/>>