

## Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Case Study 29

### Statement of Monica Applewhite, Ph.D. Expert Consultant in the Field of Prevention and Response to Child Sexual Abuse by Religious Organizations

#### INTRODUCTION

1. I have been asked by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia to provide my opinion in relation to matters raised by the Royal Commission's Terms of Reference dated January 25, 2013. In particular, I have been asked to consider issues 3 and 4 of Case Study 29 as set out in a letter of instruction dated July 7, 2015, from Milton Bray & Associates, solicitors for Watchtower and Bible Tract Society of Australia. A copy of the letter of instruction is attached and marked "MA 1".

#### Qualifications

2. My qualifications include my academic background and years of experience in the field of preventing and responding to sexual abuse in organizations. I have a Bachelor's degree in Social Work, a Master's of Science in Social Work, and a Ph.D. in Clinical Social Work. I have extensive experience working directly with sexual offenders who have perpetrated abuse in organizations, as well as 22 years of conducting root cause analysis of such cases for the purpose of determining the methods used by sexual offenders to access children within churches, schools and other organizations. I have worked directly with more than 300 organizations that serve children, youths and vulnerable adults in the United States, Canada, Italy, Ireland, Poland, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand.
3. Throughout my experience working with organizations, I have focused on sexual offending against children that occurs within and around religious organizations. My experience includes working directly with the Episcopal and Anglican Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the United Methodist Church, the American Rabbinical Society, the Salvation Army, and the Roman Catholic Church.
4. On three separate occasions in the United States, and on one occasion in the United Kingdom, I have been asked by Jehovah's Witnesses to review civil liability cases and subsequently to provide testimony regarding my opinions in those cases. In that capacity, it has been necessary for me to become knowledgeable about the beliefs and practices of Jehovah's Witnesses with respect to sexual abuse allegations and prevention, as well as to develop a broad understanding of the religious organization's structure and governance as they relate to sexual abuse. I have not worked with Jehovah's Witnesses or any corporation used by them to develop published materials, policy, or procedures to prevent or respond to child sexual abuse or exploitation.
5. My primary work focus continues to be education and consulting work with organizations to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse; a comprehensive listing of my consulting client relationships is appended to this document.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

## Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Case Study 29

### Duty to the Royal Commission (Commission)

6. I understand that my overriding duty is to assist the Commission impartially on matters relevant to my area of expertise. I also understand that this duty overrides any obligation to those who have retained or instructed me.
7. I confirm that I understand my duty to the Commission, that I have complied with this duty, and will continue to comply with it. I further confirm that I am not an advocate for any party.
8. I have been provided with "Practice Note CM 7, Expert Witnesses in proceedings in the Federal Court of Australia" which sets out Guidelines for expert witnesses in that court. I have considered all the matters contained in these guidelines when formulating the opinions set out in my statement and acknowledge that my opinions are based on my expertise as set out above.

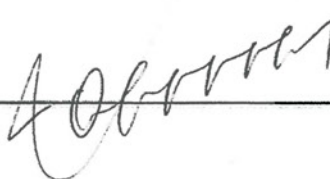
### Background Information regarding the Religious Structure and Practices of Jehovah's Witnesses

9. The religion known as Jehovah's Witnesses is overseen by a "Governing Body" made up of elders who reside in Brooklyn, New York. Congregations are organized into "circuits". Circuits of certain geographical areas are organized into "Branches." A Branch is the largest territorial arrangement and each Branch is overseen by a separate "Branch Committee." Circuit Overseers are also called "Traveling Overseers." Traveling Overseers visit congregations to provide spiritual encouragement to congregations and to give spiritual help and support to congregation "Elders" who comprise a "Body of Elders" that is responsible for oversight of its respective local congregation. Potential elders are recommended by existing elders within the congregation and appointed by Circuit Overseers.
10. Jehovah's Witnesses do not require elders to make any particular pledge or promise of obedience or loyalty to others within the governing structure of the religious organization. Thus, there is no particular sustained relationship between an elder and a circuit overseer the way there is with a pastor to a bishop in other organizations. Jehovah's Witnesses teach that elders should avoid taking a superior position with reference to other congregation members. Elders are viewed as fellow workers by their fellow elders and by other congregation members.
11. Jehovah's Witnesses rely on scriptures (passages from the Bible) to form their religious beliefs and practices and internal religious governance. This distinguishes them from most other Christian denominations that use the Bible to shape thinking, guide behavior, and teach lessons, but not to directly set the religious beliefs and practices of the organization. Written documents describing the religious beliefs and practices of Jehovah's Witnesses often quote specific Biblical references.
12. Jehovah's Witnesses base their religious beliefs and practices on their understanding of Bible scriptures. Their understanding of various scriptures is laid out in publications produced by Jehovah's Witnesses which are made available to all members of each congregation and the public. These publications are distributed worldwide in many languages.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



Witness: \_\_\_\_\_





### Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Case Study 29

13. The religious beliefs and practices for operating individual congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses are provided in the publications *Shepherd the Flock of God* and *Organized to do Jehovah's Will* (WAT.0003.001.0001 – WAT.0003.001.0143 & WAT.0003.001.0296 – WAT.0003.001.05190). These publications set out the religious governance and procedures followed by elders and other congregation members in individual congregations. Additional information for all congregation members is provided in *Our Kingdom Ministry*, which is a newsletter, and in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines which are widely published and publically available, as well as in various brochures and online resources. Changes, clarifications and supplemental instructions to elders are provided in Letters to all Bodies of Elders and Letters to all Congregations which are distributed by their respective Branches. These letters, along with the regular publications provide the consistent spiritual direction and internal religious governance that Jehovah's Witnesses strive for throughout the worldwide community of Jehovah's Witnesses.
14. Like the majority of Christian denominations, such as Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, and others, the meetings for worship of Jehovah's Witnesses are open to the public. Also similar to other Christian organizations, current members, former members (including those who may have been disfellowshipped), and those who have no particular affiliation with the religion may attend meetings for worship.
15. Meetings for worship are generally held in a place of worship called a "Kingdom Hall." All of the meetings for worship are open to the public, there is no collection taken, and congregation members are not required to tithe. Children sit with their families during meetings for worship which are generally held in one big room.
16. Meetings for worship are held twice per week. Unlike many religions where only the spiritual leader speaks during services, ordinary congregation members, including women and children, have the opportunity to give comments during congregation meetings and can volunteer to be assigned a periodic speaking assignment, generally about 5 minutes in length, if they so wish. Thus, many congregation members have the opportunity to speak during congregation meetings for worship; this privilege is not limited to local spiritual leaders.
17. Jehovah's Witnesses may also refer to a congregation member who participates in some form of public ministry as a "publisher." The door to door ministry that is often associated with Jehovah's Witnesses is also called "field ministry" by Jehovah's Witnesses. This practice is patterned after the early Christians who went from "house to house" to share the "good news" of the Bible.
18. Elders are the local spiritual leaders of the congregations, and they offer spiritual guidance to congregation members on their own initiative or to those who ask for such help. They are the only members of the congregation authorized to provide pastoral care, which is meant to provide for the spiritual well-being of all congregation members.
19. Most congregations have multiple elders and they are not considered infallible. They work with one another consultatively and decisions are generally made by a group of elders in each congregation called a "body of elders," rather than by an individual elder.

Signature:  Witness:  3 | Page

### Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Case Study 29

20. Ministerial servants are members of the congregation who provide non-pastoral practical assistance and service to the elders and the congregation. Ministerial servants are not authorized to provide spiritual guidance, counseling or any other pastoral services to members of the congregation.
21. The duties of a ministerial servant may include the stocking and distribution of publications to congregation members, handling the microphones and other sound equipment for congregation meetings, keeping the Kingdom Hall clean and organized, or serving as attendants during congregation meetings. None of the responsibilities of a ministerial servant or elder allow or require that he be alone with children or otherwise separate a child from his or her family.

**Issue 3 Case Study 29 Information regarding the systems, policies and procedures in place within the Jehovah's Witnesses Church for raising and responding to allegations of or concerns about child sexual abuse within the Church.**

In this section, I have been asked to provide information regarding Jehovah's Witnesses' policies and procedures with respect to receiving and responding to allegations of child sexual abuse.

22. Jehovah's Witnesses are taught the beliefs, practices, and values of their faith through Bible-based publications, including *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* and online articles and videos. These publications and the website contain information about family life, religious practices, current events, Bible prophecy and Biblical accounts. It is the normal practice of the Jehovah's Witnesses to use these Bible-based publications and Online articles and videos to provide congregation members, and the general public, with Scriptural principles that provide practical guidance for managing and coping with the various situations that arise in life generally, and that specifically confront Jehovah's Witnesses because of their personal religious beliefs or the practice of their faith. It is within these Bible-based publications, online articles and videos, and letters to congregations that Branch offices communicate with individual and families about how to protect children from sexual abuse and what to do if abuse happens. These same Bible-based publications are also used to provide spiritual comfort and encouragement to those who have been abused and to encourage those who have perpetrated abuse to come forward and receive spiritual help from the elders.
23. Beginning in the early 1980's, *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* published articles that describe the experiences of survivors of sexual abuse and encouraged individuals who have experienced abuse to disclose to others. As described in the Brief Review of Contemporary Sexual Offence and Child Sexual Abuse Legislation in Australia, this was the same period of time that society at large began studying and publishing information about sexual abuse. One example of the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses that reaches out to victims and survivors can be found in *The Watchtower* October 1, 1983. An article entitled "Help for Victims of Incest" (WAT.0001.004.0325 – WAT.0001.004.0329) articulates the experiences of victims and the damage that can be done by sexual abuse. The article tells the story of an elder who erred by telling a woman to just forget about the abuse and urges readers to listen and show compassion. After telling elders to be thoughtful, the article also points out that some victims of abuse may need to talk with an experienced professional counselor.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_



## Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Case Study 29

24. Jehovah's Witnesses strive to live by a strict code of moral conduct based on Bible principles. The conduct that is expected of Jehovah's Witnesses is taught at their meetings for worship and described in their Bible-based publications (*The Watchtower* and *Awake!* and Online articles). In addition to describing the Christian standards of conduct that all of Jehovah's Witnesses should strive to maintain, these Bible-based publications provide the Scriptural principles on which such standards of conduct are based and reasons why adherence to such standards of conduct benefits individuals and society. For example, current articles published by Jehovah's Witnesses that can be found online teach teens how rules about abstaining from sexual contact are similar to traffic laws in that these may interfere with individual choices, but are designed to keep people safe.
25. Along with other "sins" and transgressions of themselves and others, Jehovah's Witnesses are expected to report known sexual abuse to the body of elders within the congregation. Elders, in turn, are instructed to treat victims with kindness and to follow the established internal ecclesiastical procedures for allegations of child sexual abuse (*Shepherd the Flock of God*: WAT.0003.001.0001 – WAT.0003.001.0143).
26. Child sexual abuse is regarded as a crime by Jehovah's Witnesses. Elders are instructed to report crimes according to the law and never to discourage anyone from reporting abuse to law enforcement. The following passage is included in *Shepherd the Flock of God*: (WAT.0003.001.0132 - WAT.0003.001.0133)

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

27. Bodies of elders have been instructed to follow the mandatory reporting laws of their state or country and to call the Branch Legal Department for legal advice regarding reporting requirements if anyone reports an allegation of sexual abuse to them. The Branch Service Department is also available to provide congregation elders with spiritual advice regarding how to provide spiritual comfort to victims, and internal ecclesiastical procedures that elders should follow to protect children from further abuse by the alleged offender.
- a. The August 28, 2002 letter (WAT.0004.001.0002) to all congregations in Australia stated, "We have long instructed elders to report allegations of child abuse to the authorities where required by law to do so, even where there is only one witness."
- b. The October 1, 2012 "Letter to all bodies of elders, Re: Child abuse" contains the current procedures for elders to follow in cases of child abuse (WAT.0001.004.0066 – WAT.0001.004.0071). This resource contains the following instructions:

"Some states have child-abuse reporting laws that, depending on the facts, mandate elders to report an accusation to the authorities. Thus, when elders learn of an

Signature: M. A.

Witness: A. Brown

## Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Case Study 29

accusation of child abuse, two elders from their congregation should *immediately* call the Legal Department for legal advice" and "Regardless of whether the law requires the elders to report an accusation to the authorities, steps need to be taken to protect children. Elders should help the parents of the children involved to understand that they have the primary responsibility for protecting their children. Obviously, such parents will be keenly interested in taking precautions in this regard. Our publications contain helpful information on how parents can protect their children."

28. In addition to following state-mandated reporting, congregation elders have received internal ecclesiastical procedures to follow if a congregation member is accused of committing a serious sin, including child sexual abuse. These procedures require the body of elders to assign two elders to conduct a spiritual investigation of all allegations of child sexual abuse against a congregation member. Based on Jehovah's Witnesses' understanding of the scriptures, elders are only authorized to take congregational action if there is sufficient scriptural evidence of either two credible witnesses to the same incident of abuse by the alleged offender (or two different persons who witnessed similar incidents of abuse by the alleged offender), or a confession by the alleged offender. If congregational action proceeds, the Circuit Overseer appoints an experienced elder from the circuit to serve as the chairman of the judicial committee. If the elders on the judicial committee find that the individual is repentant for his sin, they will provide the individual with spiritual counsel and reproof to help him avoid the sinful behavior in the future and protect children.
29. If an individual who committed child sexual abuse is found to be repentant, the reproof would also involve an announcement to the congregation that the individual has been reproofed by a judicial committee, but the sin for which the individual was reproofed would not be mentioned. In the case of other serious sins, depending on the facts and circumstances, the reproof may involve a similar announcement to let the congregation that the individual has been reproofed by a judicial committee. Announcements to let the congregation know that the individual has been reproofed are made during a regularly scheduled congregation meeting.
30. If the individual who was reproofed by a congregation judicial committee was in an appointed congregation position such as an elder or ministerial servant, he would automatically be removed (deleted) from that position because he would no longer meet the Scriptural qualifications. When a ministerial servant or elder is deleted from his appointed position, an announcement is made during regularly scheduled congregation meetings to inform them of his deletion, but the reason for his deletion would not be mentioned.
31. If the judicial committee finds that the individual is not repentant for the sinful conduct, he or she may be disfellowshipped (excommunicated) from the congregation. In that case, an announcement would be made to the congregation that the individual is no longer one of Jehovah's Witnesses, but the nature of the sin for which he was disfellowshipped would not be mentioned.
32. When a judicial committee finds that a congregation member has sinned but is genuinely repentant. The individual is not disfellowshipped. However, such a repentant individual would be reproofed and restricted from full participation in meetings for worship. For Jehovah's Witnesses, genuine

Signature:



Witness:





### Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Case Study 29

repentance involves a sincere change in attitude and a heartfelt regret for the wrongs committed. Repeated incidents of sinful conduct may be taken as evidence of a lack of repentance even if the individual professes to be sorry and repentant for his sinful conduct. In the case of multiple instances of sinful conduct, the individual may be disfellowshipped because the repetition of the behavior may be viewed as evidence of a lack of genuine repentance and remorse.

33. Regardless of the outcome, the deliberations of a judicial committee and the information they consider are kept confidential. Like most Christian denominations, Jehovah's Witnesses strive to create a spiritual environment that allows the opportunity for sinners to make an honest disclosure of sinful conduct with the knowledge that he or she can trust that the information divulged to an elder or group of elders will be kept confidential and will not be shared with others.
34. Although "it cannot be said that in every case one who has sexually abused a child can never qualify for privileges of service in the congregation," (Letter to All Bodies of Elders, October 1, 2012) both the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses and letters to All Bodies of Elders have verified on multiple occasions since 1997, that a "known child molester" does not qualify for a responsible positions or "privileges" within the congregation such as being an elder or ministerial servant because he does not have the Scriptural qualifications to serve in those positions. The article, "Let us abhor what is wicked" in *The Watchtower*, January 1, 1997 (WAT.0001.004.0306 - WAT.0001.004.0309) publically clarified that a former child molester would not qualify for congregational privileges and instructions to bodies of elders in 1997, 2001, and 2002 affirmed that a child molester should not be recommended for an appointed congregation position.
35. Congregation elders keep records of congregation members who have been accused of child sexual abuse, proven or unproven, such records are kept in a confidential congregation file, marked, "Do Not Destroy." Such records are kept indefinitely.
36. In my opinion, the current messages to those who have experienced abuse and the guidelines that have been provided to elders in congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses are consistent with, and in some respects better than, the current practices of religious organizations throughout the world. However, because I have not reviewed any specific cases, I am not able to offer opinions regarding whether the implementation of these guidelines have ultimately resulted in law-abiding responses, good practice of child protection, or compassionate care of those who have experienced abuse.

#### Issue 4 Case Study 29: Information regarding the systems, policies and procedures in place within Jehovah's Witnesses Church and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd to prevent child sexual abuse within the Church

In this section I have been asked to provide a summary of the systems in place within Jehovah's Witnesses to prevent sexual abuse within the faith.

37. Jehovah's Witnesses are unique in that they do not offer or sponsor programs that separate children or youths from their families. They have no Sunday school for children, and no non-state schools, camps, or youth ministry programs. Jehovah's Witnesses do not authorize or sponsor programs for children in out-of-home care or programs that involve parents turning the care and custody of their

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

## Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Case Study 29

children over to authority figures within the congregation. The pattern and practice of not separating parents and children is distinctive to Jehovah's Witnesses, as children's and youths' programming is quite common in other religious organizations.

38. Central to the rationale for not offering or sponsoring programs that separate children or youths from their families, is the over-riding religious belief and practice of Jehovah's Witnesses that parents have the Scriptural responsibility to teach their own children and that it is not appropriate to "outsource" this responsibility to others. Fathers are expected to be involved in the teaching of the Bible to their own children and, if the father is unavailable to teach the children, the responsibility to teach the children falls to the mother.
39. Because of Jehovah's Witnesses' distinct approach to teaching children, they have not, as an organization, created the child-related volunteer or paid positions that are so common in other religious organizations. There are no rules that require an individual to be involved with children who are outside of the direct care and control of their parents or guardians.
40. Elders and ministerial servants are assigned positions within the organization; they are volunteer positions without pay. Neither elders nor ministerial servants are assigned to work with groups of children by the congregations. There is no such position as children's bible study instructor or youth minister. As such, the responsibilities of elders and ministerial servants within the congregations do not provide a greater level of access to children beyond the natural contact with children that would occur in any religious environment. Neither an elder nor a ministerial servant is a position of special access or trust with children.
41. During the 1960's and 1970's, the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses began to address child physical abuse and violence in the home, with articles such as "Parents can be Cruel," published in 1963 and "Child Abuse – Things you can do about it (*Awake!* July 22, 1976: WAT.0001.004.0216 – WAT.0001.004.0218). This latter article explains the damage that can be done to children through physical abuse, shaking a young child, screaming at a child or "vocally assaulting" youngsters. It also addresses the concern that over-disciplining can turn into physical abuse and provides scriptural and practical steps to take to overcome a temper. The article suggests that parents recall what it was like to be a child in order to increase empathy and nurturing as well as suggesting "Parents Anonymous" and pro-actively addressing the loneliness and isolation abusive parents often experience.
42. Beginning in the early 1980's, *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* also provided families with information to raise awareness of sexual abuse. Articles such as "Incest—the hidden crime," and "Rape at Home" were published in 1981 and 1982. "The New Morality – How will it affect them?" *Awake!* June 22, 1982 (WAT.0001.004.0223 – WAT.0001.004.0224) described prostitution of children and the distribution of images of child sexual abuse. Contemporary perspectives from psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists who opposed the new morality were set against the "pro-sexual abuse" propaganda of that era that sought to allow children "their sexual rights" and increase acceptance of sexual activities between adults and children. Suzanne Sgroi, a seminal contributor to understanding effects of sexual abuse, was quoted describing negative outcomes for children

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_



## Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Case Study 29

who experience sexual abuse. Parents were encouraged to maintain open communication with children as well as setting a good example for them with their own behavior.

43. On January 22, 1985, *Awake!* magazine (WAT.0001.004.0205 – WAT.0001.004.0212) published an issue of the magazine that focused on teaching parents about child sexual abuse and how to prevent and detect potential abuse. Five articles were included with the following:

a. **Child Molesting – Every Mother’s Nightmare.** (WAT.0001.004.205 – WAT.0001.004.0206)  
The publication began by describing the prevalence of child sexual abuse: One in 4 girls and 20 to 25 percent of sexual abuse victims are boys. It explained that sexual abuse is more likely to be perpetrated by a known adult or older child, and not by a stranger. It gave examples of sexual offenders who appear to be nice people and uses the example of a minister. David Finkelhor and Gail Sheehy, both of whom are experts in the field, were quoted.

b. **Child Molesting – Who Would do a Thing like That?** (WAT.0001.004.206 – WAT.0001.004.0207) This article confronted the myth that abuse is only perpetrated by strangers. It gave examples of abuse by a church leader, an aunt, a physician and a father and addressed the fact that sexual abuse is often not violent, and may be perpetrated by someone the child genuinely cares for and trusts.

c. **Child Molesting – You Can Protect Your Child** (WAT.0001.004.0208 – WAT.0001.004.0210). This document read much like an abuse prevention program aimed at parents. The article described the dynamics of sexual abuse and included cautions about creating overly obedient children who do not question what adults ask of them. It urged parents to be active protectors of their children, to keep their children out of dangerous situations such as having a child share a room with an adult or leaving their children in the care of older children during parties or large gathering. Communication between parents and children was emphasized and multiple concrete examples were given to clarify the information. Specific methods for how parents should talk with their children were also provided.

d. **If the Worst Should Happen** (WAT.0001.004.0210 – WAT.0001.004.0212). In this article, parents were taught things to watch for that could be warning signs of sexual abuse. They were also taught how to respond if their child were to disclose abuse. The article states that particularly if a close family member has to go to prison, the child needs to be assured that the abuse was not his or her fault.

e. **Response on Child Molesting.** This section includes Letters from Readers, including those from readers who experienced sexual abuse and had children who experienced abuse.

44. Throughout the 1990’s and 2000’s publications of Jehovah’s Witnesses have continued to address sexual abuse and give advice to congregation members and the public who have experienced abuse. For example:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

## Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Case Study 29

- a. The *Awake!* magazine's article, "A Time to Heal" (October 8, 1991) (WAT.0001.004.0229 – WAT.0001.004.0233), includes the following section:

**Getting Support.** *If you are a victim of childhood sexual abuse, do not ride out the storm of returning memories by yourself. It helps to talk out your feelings. (Compare Job 10:1; 32:20.) Some who are extremely distressed may decide to seek the help of a qualified physician, counselor, or mental-health professional. In any case, a trusted friend, a marriage mate, family members, or Christian overseers who will listen with empathy and respect can also be valuable allies.*

- b. The October 8, 1993 edition of *Awake!* (WAT.0001.004.0238 – WAT.0001.004.0247) includes an article entitled, "If Your Child Is Abused" that states:

*Parents must therefore make every reasonable effort to protect their children! Many responsible parents choose to seek out professional help for an abused child. Just as you would with a medical doctor, make sure that any such professional will respect your religious views. Help your child rebuild his or her shattered self-esteem through a steady outpouring of parental love.*

45. In my opinion, Jehovah's Witnesses were well in advance of other religious organizations in providing educational materials to parents and families. The quality of the materials they provided during the 1980's and 1990's exceeded the standards of care for the time and continue to be more substantial than what many religious organizations offer parents and guardians today.
46. Since 2002, extensive programs of sexual abuse prevention have been initiated by other religious organizations and the standards of care in this respect have developed significantly over the past decade. However, most of the efforts of these religious organizations have naturally focused on prevention within their own programming for children and youths. In my own experience, I have not found examples in Australia of religious organizations that have provided parents, guardians, and the general public with the quality or consistency of information about prevention and response to sexual abuse or about how to support for those who have been abused that Jehovah's Witnesses have provided in their publications.

### Other Specific Opinions

47. Regarding the instructions given to bodies of elders to contact the Branch office if there is a report of abuse (October 1, 2012), I offer the following opinion based on my experience. Over the past twenty years, I have observed many instances in which local religious leaders lack the experience and confidence to contact authorities in cases of child sexual abuse. Reporting to police or protective agencies falls so far outside of their ordinary practice of working with people, that they hesitate and often fail to fulfill their reporting duties, at times without even realizing they are mandated reporters. In my experience, I have found that when they are able to contact an objective authority it dramatically increases the likelihood of following established practice and legal requirements instead of judging the individual circumstances and "personalizing" the situation.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_



### Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Case Study 29

48. On the whole, I have found that the ability to access professionals in the field who are part of the religious organization to be a valuable resource for local religious leaders who are dealing with disclosures of abuse, as well as dealing with the more nuanced situations in which suspicions are raised, but no disclosure has occurred. It is particularly useful in providing advice to local religious leaders concerning reporting obligations, given the substantial differences among state laws on the subject and the range of circumstances that may be involved. In my experience, many of the mistakes that have been made by religious leaders dealing with an offender who is well-known to the leader could have been avoided if the leader had been advised and encouraged by a more experienced and neutral third party.
49. In my opinion, the best methods to prevent abuse in environments where children are separated from parents are different from those that are effective in an environment where parents maintain control and custody of their children. In the former type of environment, the organization is responsible for selection of personnel, monitoring and supervision, training and decisions to retain staff if problems arise. In the latter type of environment, parents are making decisions about access to their children, supervising the access and determining whether a specific adult should or should not continue to have contact with their child. From my perspective, the best method for preventing sexual abuse in an environment where parents maintain control and custody of their children is to provide quality educational materials directly to parents and family members to help them make educated decisions about allowing access to their children. Jehovah's Witnesses excel in providing such educational materials to parents and family members, and the substance of their materials concerning child abuse is exceptionally clear and helpful.

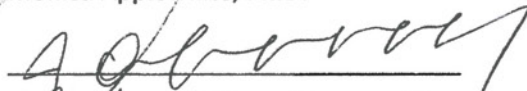
**Monica Applewhite, Ph.D.**

608 Patterson Avenue  
Austin, Texas USA 78703

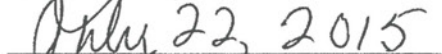
Signature

  
Monica Applewhite, Ph.D.

Witness



Name



Date

22 July 2015

Signature:



Witness:

