
Statement

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Occupation Minister, Director

Date 10 July 2015

INTRODUCTION

1. This statement is given in response to a letter of 26 June 2015 (which is attached and called Annexure 1), in the matter of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. I address the matters set out in the letter in my statement below and have used (A) – (M) as my headings in an effort to follow the same structure as the questions.
2. I believe this statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
3. As a director of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia and member of the Branch Committee, I am qualified to answer the questions in the letter from the Commission from an administrative perspective. However, some of the questions concern technical details about the procedures in the Legal Department and Service Department. Whilst I can provide a general overview of those matters, I understand that the statements of Mr Toole for the Legal Department and Mr Spinks for the Service Department will provide specific responses. I do not work in either of those two departments. I should add that I am not the Branch Committee member who has direct responsibility for the Service Department.
4. Just a little about my background. I am 63 years old. I grew up on the Gold Coast in Queensland and am one of six children. My family were nominal Catholics but non-practicing. I became interested in the Bible and the understanding that Jehovah's Witnesses had of it at age 20. None of my family members are or have ever been Jehovah's Witnesses.

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Despite the difference in religious beliefs, I have a close relationship with my three sisters and their grown children. My parents and two brothers have passed away. I completed my year 10 high school education and left school to complete an apprenticeship as a baker-pastry cook, working for a time as a TAFE lecturer in Adelaide School of Food, before accepting an invitation to become a circuit overseer, visiting congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses with my wife.

A. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

5. The modern organization of Jehovah's Witnesses had their beginnings in the 1870's with small Bible groups in the United States, England and Europe, later establishing more groups in different countries. You can read much more about Jehovah's Witnesses by accessing the jw.org website, the official website provided by Jehovah's Witnesses.
6. *History of Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia:* Jehovah's Witnesses have been active here since 1896, with a Branch Office first established in 1904. At present there are 821 congregations in Australia with over 68,000 active members. We base our teachings on the Holy Bible using a variety of translations and Bible commentaries. The quotations in this submission are from the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, English language edition. The Bible book of Acts relates the history of the early structure of the Christian Congregation which received direction and teachings from a central body, the apostles and other elders in Jerusalem. (Acts Chapter 15) Today we follow that pattern and accept direction from a Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, based at our world headquarters in New York.
7. We believe that the structure of the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses and the individual congregations today is essentially the same as it was in the first century when it was established by Jesus Christ and his apostles.
8. Perhaps the most significant change in structure today is that the Governing Body assigns a large measure of responsibility to more than 90 Branch Offices, Australia being one of these. The Branch Office of Jehovah's Witnesses based in Sydney, has a Branch Committee which coordinates the activities of the 821 congregations in Australia. As you know, the laws of governments vary considerably from country to country, and this is true of laws regarding child sexual abuse. Despite this, the theocratic or Scriptural direction that the Governing Body provides, is the same in every branch and for all of Jehovah's Witnesses, worldwide.

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9. Each congregation is cared for by a body of elders. The majority of elders are themselves family men and maintain secular employment to support their families. Our congregation structure does not involve a salaried clergy and as such, our organisation has no employees. Therefore, we have no contractual arrangement that enables us to direct such persons to move from one congregation to another.
10. Governing Body members, Branch Committee members and elders have no special titles such as 'Reverend', 'Father' etc., but follow Jesus counsel that "all of you are brothers."—Matthew 23:8.
11. Regarding your question as to the relationship between the Governing Body and The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, the Governing Body is the theocratic body of elders located at our world headquarters in New York. They oversee the spiritual activities of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide.
12. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania is a legal corporation in the United States used by Jehovah's Witnesses. No member of the Governing Body serves as an officer, director or member of this legal entity or any other corporation.

B. OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CURRENT GOVERNING BODY – STRUCTURE, MEMBERSHIP AND SUB-COMMITTEES

13. The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses is made up of Christian elders, presently numbering seven members from various countries. The Governing Body publishes spiritually encouraging literature in many languages. This teaching is based on God's Word. So, what is taught is not from men but from Jehovah God.—Isa. 54:13. Matt. 24:14, 45-47.
14. The members of the Governing Body also serve on various committees. In caring for spiritual interests of the world wide faith of Jehovah's Witnesses, each committee has its own area of oversight. Here is a summary of their responsibilities.
15. **Coordinators' Committee:** The elders serving on this committee respond to disasters, outbreaks of persecution, and other emergencies affecting Jehovah's Witnesses anywhere in the world. They also oversee legal matters as well as the use of the media when it is necessary to convey an accurate picture of our beliefs.

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16. **Personnel Committee:** This committee is entrusted with the oversight of arrangements for the physical and spiritual welfare and assistance of members of Bethel families' earth wide. Bethel families are full time, unpaid volunteers who care for the various work assignments at branch offices. Each volunteer is a member of the Worldwide Order of Special Full-Time Servants of Jehovah's Witnesses.
17. **Publishing Committee:** Those serving on this committee supervise the printing and shipping of Bible literature worldwide. They oversee printeries and properties owned and operated by the various corporations used by Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as all construction worldwide, including the work of building meeting places of Jehovah's Witnesses known as Kingdom Halls.
18. **Service Committee:** The elders who make up this committee oversee all areas of the evangelizing work and matters affecting congregations and their members.
19. **Teaching Committee:** This committee oversees the instruction provided at assemblies, conventions, and congregation meetings. It also has oversight of various schools used for spiritual training, none of which isolate children from parents. In addition, this committee oversees the development of audio and video programs.
20. **Writing Committee:** The elders serving on this committee supervise the preparation of spiritual instruction in written and electronic form for fellow believers and the general public. Additionally, this committee responds to questions about the meaning of certain scriptures and points presented in the publications.

C. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WATCHTOWER AUSTRALIA AND OTHER PARTS OF THE ORGANISATION:

21. **The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania** is a corporation used by Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia is a company limited by guarantee that is used by Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia. They are two separate legal entities. Neither of these organisations formulates spiritual teachings.

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22. **The Governing Body** is entirely separate from any legal corporations; no members of the Governing Body are directors or members of the Australian corporation, as stated in paragraph 11.
23. **Legal connection between the congregations in Australia and Watchtower Australia.** Each congregation in Australia is a separately registered charity with the Australian Taxation Office ("ATO") and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission ("ACNC"). They each have an autonomous committee that administers the secular affairs and business of the congregation. Each congregation is an unincorporated association made up of members who collectively choose to follow the religious beliefs of the Jehovah's Witness faith as set out in the Scriptures.

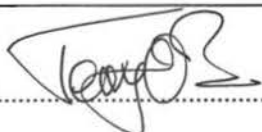
D. OVERVIEW OF SOME OF THE BELIEFS OF THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESS FAITH

24. I am happy to provide a brief overview of the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses on the subjects you have asked about. I have attempted to answer these questions as best I can, given their doctrinal complexity. I must admit I found it difficult to see the relevance of these doctrinal questions to the topic of child sexual abuse, nonetheless I have attempted to answer them as simply as I can. If you would like more information on our beliefs, our website, jw.org, has much more information. I have also attached as an annexure, a more detailed answer based on published information from Jehovah's Witnesses for your further consideration (Annexure 2).

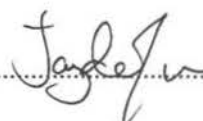
i. Separateness from the world (see pages 1 -5 in Annexure 2)

25. Being separate from the world does not mean Jehovah's Witnesses do not have any association with those who do not profess our faith. Most of us either work with non-witnesses, have relatives who are non-witnesses and our children go to school with other children of many religious and non-religious persuasions. And of course we share our message with everyone in our community.
26. However, we do avoid mixing with persons who would try and influence us to pursue a course that we believe is in violation of Bible standards. As an example, we would encourage our children and teenagers to avoid those who may promote a drug or alcohol

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culture, or sexually permissive lifestyle. I am sure many parents and grandparents who are not Jehovah's Witnesses feel the same as we do.

27. But what we principally understand separateness from the world to involve is to remain politically neutral, based on what the Bible teaches. This means we do not lobby, vote for political parties or candidates, run for government office, or participate in any action to change governments. We believe that the Bible gives solid reasons for following this course.

28. As an example, Jesus Christ refused to accept political office. (John 6:15) He taught his disciples to be "no part of the world" and made it clear that they should not take sides in political issues.—John 17:14, 16; 18:36; Mark 12:13-17.

29. Since we avoid political divisions, we are united as an international brotherhood. (Colossians 3:14; 1 Peter 2:17) It is for this reason, as well as other Scriptural commands, that Jehovah's Witnesses in every land do not join in armed conflicts, but are conscientious objectors. Nonetheless, we also respect the rights of others to make their own decisions in political matters. For example, we do not disrupt elections or interfere with those who choose to vote.

ii. Role of evangelizing (see pages 5 – 8 in Annexure 2)

30. Jehovah's Witnesses evangelize to glorify God and to make known his name. (Hebrews 13:15) This is in obedience to Christ Jesus' command to: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of people of all the nations, . . . teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you."—Matthew 28:19, 20.

31. Jehovah's Witnesses view evangelizing as a personal responsibility and the extent to which they engage in this activity is a personal decision that they make as an expression of their love for God and neighbour. (Matthew 22:39) Of course, we realize that most people have their own religious beliefs and that not everyone is interested in our message. Still, we feel that Bible teachings are lifesaving. That is why we continue "without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ," as did the first-century Christians.—Acts 5:41, 42.

32. Last year, well over 8.2 million individual Jehovah's Witnesses preached the "good news of the kingdom" in 239 lands. The vast majority of that 8.2 million were parents, grandparents,

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and young people. Almost 9.5 million people studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, many making major changes for the better in their lives. Last year alone, Jehovah's Witnesses collectively spent almost 2 billion hours in the evangelizing work. All of this activity was done on a voluntary basis.

iii. Purported belief of "End Times" (see pages 8 - 11 in Annexure 2)

33. I have not been able to locate any reference to a doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses termed "End Times." So my comments are based on the assumption that this is referring to our doctrinal understanding of Bible prophecies to do with the "conclusion of the system of things", which is also referred to as "the last days." (Matthew 24:3; 2 Timothy 3:1)
34. Much information has been published on the subject 'last days' that can be readily located on the official jw.org website. Whilst it is true that the Bible foretells the end of the present system of things, the message that forms part of the sign indicating the nearness of the end was the preaching work just described. Rather than focusing on the troubles of the last days, the message is one of "good news."
35. Immediately following the end of the present system, Jesus taught that God's Kingdom will cause God's will to "be done on earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10) This is the kingdom millions have prayed for over many centuries. This is the good news that Jehovah's Witnesses preach in fulfilment of one significant part of an overall sign Jesus gave.
36. Some of the noteworthy prophetic features mentioned in the Bible about the conclusion of this system of things can be found in the article in Annexure 2.

iv. Male headship (see pages 11- 13 in Annexure 2)

37. Today the idea of headship may seem to be an offensive notion. However, the Bible's view is quite the opposite. When properly understood, headship in the family and congregation is not an arbitrary, domineering or authoritarian rule by husbands over family or in the congregation by elders over the flock. On the contrary a husband is instructed to treat his wife and children "as the Christ does the congregation." (Ephesians 5:25-29) Likewise elders are to treat the congregation in a kind and loving way, "becoming examples to the flock" — 1 Peter 5:1-3

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38. First Corinthians 11:3 says simply that "... *the head of every man is the Christ, in turn the head of a woman is the man* ...". This applies in the marriage arrangement, where we accept this divine standard.
39. Today, Jehovah's Witnesses—male and female—have an active share in carrying out the evangelizing work as Jesus foretold: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come."—Matthew 24:14.
40. In the congregations, mature men are Scripturally appointed as elders with the God-given responsibility to care for the flock of God. This is clear from Scriptures such as Titus 1:5, 6 which says "*For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might ... make appointments of older men in city after city.*" It further says "*if there is any man free from accusation, a husband of one wife.*" Similar instructions are set out at 1 Timothy 3:1, 2: "*If any man is reaching out for an office of overseer, he is desirous of a fine work. The overseer should therefore be irreprehensible, a husband of one wife ...*"

E. MY INVOLVEMENT WITH JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

41. I have been one of Jehovah's Witnesses for 40 years. I began actively serving with Jehovah's Witnesses in 1975 and was baptized in January 1976. The congregations I have served with have been
- a. Southport, Qld (1975-77);
 - b. Townsville South Qld (1977-81);
 - c. Cabramatta NSW (1981-84);
 - d. Mount Druitt NSW (1984-1986);
 - e. Parafield Gardens SA (1986-1987);
 - f. Ingleburn NSW (2003);
 - g. Penshurst NSW (2004-8) and
 - h. Minto NSW (2008-present).
42. I served as a ministerial servant from 1977-1980 and since 1980 as an elder.

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43. During the years 1987-1997 I served as a circuit overseer visiting congregations in most states of Australia. A circuit overseer travels weekly to different congregations in a circuit, usually comprising about 20 congregations. This means a circuit overseer visits each congregation in his assigned circuit at least twice each year. During the week, he will work in the preaching activity with the congregation and have meetings with the congregation and with the elders.
44. From 1997 until 2003 I served in the India branch of Jehovah's Witnesses as a member of that Branch Committee.
45. Since 2003 I have served at the Australia Branch in Sydney. I presently serve as the coordinator of the Australia Branch Committee, having been a member of the Branch Committee since March 2, 2005. I have also been a member of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia since July 1, 2005 and a director since December 19, 2009.
46. As a Branch Committee member I care for a number of administrative responsibilities as I do also in my role as a director for Watchtower Australia. In addition to those responsibilities, part of my role is to deliver speaking assignments at conventions throughout the year and also to visit congregations in other states from time to time. As I have time, I also have the role of Branch Committee contact with a number of Branch Office departments. This primarily involves bringing matters from those departments that require Branch Committee decisions to the Branch Committee meetings. The departments that I am contact for include our Correspondence, Computer, Legal and Writing Departments. However, I do not play an active day-to-day role in those departments.

F. SYSTEMS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN PLACE WITHIN JEHOVAH'S WITNESS IN AUSTRALIA

47. Jehovah's Witnesses regard child abuse of any kind as a violation of every standard of righteousness that the Bible upholds for Christians.
48. Having said that, you ask for my comments on four aspects of our procedures in dealing with allegations or complaints of child sexual abuse. I can say that the following established procedures have been provided to every congregation elder in this country, but think Mr Spinks can provide a more comprehensive and specific statement, since this falls more into

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his area of responsibility at the Branch Office's Service Desk. So as an elder, I am able to comment as follows.

i. Response to allegations

49. In my 35 years as an elder I have not been involved in a case of child abuse of any kind. However, I know that the procedure in handling cases of child abuse has been consistently the same for many years. If an allegation had been reported to an elder it would have been investigated by two elders. If a person was proven to have sexually abused a child, a judicial committee would have been formed and the person either disfellowshipped or reprovved if judged as being repentant. If the person had held any position of service in the congregations, such as an elder, he would have been removed from that immediately. While direction to contact the assistance of the Branch Office's Legal and Service Departments may not have been so clear in the 1980's, the action by the elders was basically the same as it is today.

50. As far as published direction on how to handle child abuse, many of the letters that were sent to bodies of elders were mailed after I moved to India (1997-2003). However, the previous handbook for elders which I received after being appointed as an elder in 1980, entitled *Pay Attention to the Flock*. On page 93 [WAT.0003.001.0232] it provided the following explanation as to sins for which a judicial committee should be formed: "*Also included are sexual abuse of children, including practices that involving a catamite (a boy kept for purposes of sexual perversion.)*"

51. The same reference page included the following in caring for the victim. "*Victims of sexual abuse need to be treated with extreme thoughtfulness and kindness. Elders should always do what they reasonably can to protect children from further abuse; follow the Society's directives on such matters (g85 1/22 p.8)*" [WAT.0003.001.0232] This reference, g85 1/22 p.8, refers to the comments in the *Awake!* of January 1, 1985 issue on page 8 where the two paragraphs in a feature box on that page gave the following comments [WAT.0001.004.0210]:

*"First, the child—and other children too—must be protected from any further abuse.
This must be done, whatever the cost. In many cases the accused molester will have*

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to be confronted. But whatever it takes, it is important that the child should feel confident that the molester will never be able to get at her (or him) again. Second, the child must be given a lot of love and emotional support. Parents must make it very clear that the little victim is not to blame. The crime and anything that happens as a result of it—even if a close relative goes to prison—is not her (or his) fault. But that reassurance will have to be given many times, so that the victim comes to believe it—and to believe that the parents believe it too!"

52. I make specific mention of these references to show that the procedure in elders and parents being helped to be aware of what they needed to do in caring for the prevention and handling of child abuse was made clear. As with society in general though, as the issue of child abuse achieved a greater awareness, our organization gave more attention to helping parents and elders to try and meet the challenges child abuse presents.

53. I can also recall one letter that was sent to all Bodies of Elders dated August 1, 1995 [WAT.0001.004.0005-0006] which gave direction that when an accusation of child abuse was made to an elder, the elders were to contact the Branch Office immediately. The letter also directed elders in providing care for any victims and how a former child abuser should be cautioned and how restoring privileges of any kind should be handled. I recall that letter very well as I used it in discussions with bodies of elders when I visited a number of congregations as a circuit overseer.

54. The most recent direction on the subject was in a letter to the Bodies of Elders dated October 1, 2012, paragraph 11 [WAT.0001.004.0068], which states ". . . the elders should investigate every allegation of child sexual abuse." Upon receiving a complaint, elders are directed to have two elders contact the Branch Office's Legal Department immediately they learn of an allegation of child abuse. This is done to ensure that elders understand and will fully comply with any legal requirements that may be applicable in the State in which they reside. They then will speak to the Service Department as well to ensure that the matter is fully dealt with according to theocratic procedures.

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ii. Prevention

55. For decades, *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* journals and other Bible-based publications have featured articles designed to educate both Jehovah's Witnesses and the general public on how to protect children from sexual abuse and to be alert to any inappropriate behaviour. In recent years, our jw.org website has also made such resources accessible to a wider audience. These resources include advice for parents on how to initiate an age-appropriate conversation with each child concerning what to do if confronted by any inappropriate behaviour. We believe that parental education of children about sex and the dangers of child sexual abuse in this way can be a major factor in helping to prevent child sexual abuse.
56. Concerning reporting of child abuse to the authorities, we believe that a victim or parent/guardian has the absolute right to do so. As far back as January 1985, *The Awake!* [WAT.0001.004.0210] magazine informed elders that in any circumstances, where they learn that the victim remains in danger of further abuse, the direction is *"First, the child—and other children too—must be protected from any further abuse. This must be done, whatever the cost."*
57. In 1997, a pivotal article *"Abhor What Is Wicked"* [WAT.0001.004.0306-0309] was published, clarifying the long-term implications for an individual who has been involved in child sexual abuse with a view to further protecting the congregation.
58. A letter dated August 28, 2002, was sent to every congregation in Australia, outlining various issues everyone should take notice of in the matter of preventing child abuse. This was because we were then, and still are, concerned that congregation members were aware of their right to report child abuse to the authorities. For example, a letter was sent to all congregations and read at a congregation meeting. In part it said *"We have long instructed elders to report allegations of child abuse to authorities where required by law to do so, even where there is only one witness. (Romans 13:1) In any case, the elders know that if the victim wishes to make a report, it is his or her absolute right to do so."* [WAT.0004.001.0002]
59. Later *The Watchtower*, August 1, 2005, page 14 (Please refer to Annexure 2), stated: *"In our time, rape is also a major crime with severe penalties. The victim has every right to report the*

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matter to the police. In this way the proper authorities can punish the offender. And if the victim is a minor, the parents may want to initiate these actions."

60. Then in 2010, elders have been given clear instruction in this regard in chapter 12 of the Shepherding Book ("Elders' Handbook"), page 131, paragraph 19 [WAT.0003.001.0132-0133], which states:

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.

61. More recently, in 2012, a very detailed letter was sent to all elders which detailed how reports, investigations and handling of child abuse should be handled according to the Scriptures. Also, how help should be extended to victims of abuse was discussed.

62. Elders have been directed that any Jehovah's Witness who sexually abuses a child is either to be disfellowshipped from the congregation or is to receive severe discipline, part of which will always include a public announcement for the protection of the congregation. In the case of being reprovved the announcement will read "[Name of the person] has been reprovved." If disfellowshipped the announcement will read "[Name of the person] is no longer one of Jehovah's Witnesses." (1 Corinthians 5:13) However, if the guilty individual serves in any appointed capacity in the congregation, such as an elder, even prior to any decision being made as to whether or not he is to be disfellowshipped, he will immediately be removed from any appointed position and an announcement will be made to the congregation confirming his removal. —1 Timothy 3:1-7, 10; Titus 1:7.

iii. Record allegations of child sexual abuse

63. The letter to All Elders, October 1, 2012 par 11 [WAT.0001.004.0068] states the following:
"Information concerning an individual accused of child molestation, proved or otherwise, should be placed in the congregation confidential file and marked "Do Not Destroy" and kept

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indefinitely. This includes Notification of Disfellowshipping or Disassociation (S-77) forms on individuals who have been disfellowshipped for child sexual abuse and then later reinstated."

iv. Identifying child sexual abuse:

64. This is a difficult question for me to answer. Congregation elders are not given training in this specific area, other than in what has been published in our literature. However, as most elders are themselves family men, they have read our publications and would be observant to any suspicious signs. Of course, parents who are not elders, both mothers and fathers along with any congregation member who felt a need to report suspicions to elders would have their reports taken seriously.
65. As far back as the 1970s, in harmony with growing community awareness, our publications increasingly drew attention to behavioural aspects of perpetrators, dispelled misconceptions about who could be an offender, created awareness and highlighted the shocking impact that child sexual abuse inflicts on victims. Over the decades our publications have continued to focus on the need to take strong measures to educate parents and to identify, prevent and respond appropriately to child sexual abuse.
66. Our approach has been refined over time, resulting in our current way of dealing with the matter as outlined in the Elders' Handbook [WAT.0003.001.0001-0143] and the letter to All Bodies of Elders, October 1, 2012 [WAT.0001.004.0066-0071].
67. I believe our congregation structure and meetings for worship arrangements further minimise the potential for child abusers. We do not have any programs in which we take custody of children from their parents. We do not have Sunday Schools, youth groups, camps or social activities that separate children from parents. All of our congregation meetings involve entire family groups. Children, even teenagers, are not separated into groups from parents. Nor do we have secular educational schools, orphanages, hospitals, day care centres and the like. We believe that loving and protective parents are the best deterrent to child abuse. We continue to educate parents and provide them with valuable tools to help them educate and protect their children.—Deuteronomy 6:6, 7.

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G. MECHANISMS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH SYSTEMS, POLICIES OR PROCEDURES

68. As a Branch Committee, we ensure the clear instructions set forth in correspondence to elders are followed up with meetings with circuit overseers when they meet with all bodies of elders in their circuit, at seminars with elders and through correspondence.
69. As noted in paragraph 53, elders are directed that on hearing any allegation of child sexual abuse, they are to immediately contact the Branch Office. Firstly, they speak to the Legal Department to determine what their reporting obligations are and then they are transferred to the Service Department to review the published procedures in relation to handling child abuse allegations.
70. Also, when an individual who is found guilty of child abuse moves congregations, a copy of the letter of introduction is forwarded to the Service Department for review, to ensure the new congregation body of elders is fully apprised of the persons background and any counsel, warnings and restrictions that he has received from his previous congregation.
71. In addition, prior to extending any congregation privilege, the elders are instructed to contact the Service Department to review the case. The Branch Office takes an active role in ensuring that local elders comply with the current procedures.

H. TRAINING IN RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS, PREVENTION AND/OR DETECTION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

72. The training that we can provide is that with which we are qualified to give and that is the Scriptural principles that relate to this problem of response, protection and help for victims and their families.
73. To that end, regular classes are conducted for elders, and at times ministerial servants. These are known as Kingdom Ministry Schools. Following the distribution of our October 1, 2012 letter to all Bodies of Elders (WAT.0001.004.0066-0071), we conducted seminars with over 5,500 elders throughout Australia to ensure that they were thoroughly familiar with the spiritual directions provided therein. Since then, we have conducted additional classes with elders, again reviewing some of these points including training on our procedures.

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74. Thousands of congregation elders in this country are parents or grandparents. Even for those who are not, as Christians, we want to do whatever we can to protect children from all forms of abuse. Personally, if I felt the protection of a child necessitated reporting a matter to the authorities, I would do so, regardless of whether or not there was a mandatory reporting requirement.

I. INDEPENDENT EXPERTS

75. Although I understand that secular research has been undertaken and is incorporated into our published information on child abuse as with many other matters, greater regard is given to Scriptural principles and guidance.

J. MY UNDERSTANDING OF OBLIGATIONS THAT JEHOVAH'S WITNESS HAVE IN RELATION TO:

76. Since much of this section pertains to Legal aspects of our procedures, I will give a brief outline of what I understand and leave a more detailed explanation to Mr. Toole.

i. Reporting

77. My understanding is that there are different requirements in various states. This is one of the reasons we ask elders to contact the Branch Office's Legal Department as soon as they hear an accusation of child sexual abuse. As an organisation, our approach has been that where mandatory reporting laws apply to congregation elders, they are instructed to comply with the law.

ii. Working With Children Checks

78. We comply fully with the legislative requirements to ensure all relevant persons have the necessary Working With Children Checks in those States and Territory where we are required to do so. If those States that do not presently require elders to obtain a WWCC, were to change the law requiring them to do so, then we will fully comply as we currently do in other states.

iii. Sharing Information

79. Importantly, the direction is given to elders regarding what information should be shared with congregations and/or parents in order to prevent future child sexual abuse. The

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October 1, 2012 letter to All Bodies of Elders, paragraphs 13 and 16 (WAT.0001.004.0069) sets out the direction for elders to follow.

K. ROLE OF WATCHTOWER AUSTRALIA AND/OR THE AUSTRALIAN BRANCH OFFICE IN SPECIFIED PROCESSES

80. As a congregation elder, I am able to provide an overview on these points. However, since Mr. Spinks cares for these matters in his function as the senior Service Desk elder, he will be able to provide a more detailed response in his statement.

i. Baptism (*Organized to Do Jehovah's Will* book, pages 180-218 - WAT.0003.001.0475-0513)

81. This is not a matter for either Watchtower Australia or the Australian Branch Office. Every candidate for baptism undergoes a course of Bible study where they are taught the moral standards of anyone who wants to have a dedicated relationship with God. These Bible studies are conducted under the oversight of a local congregation body of elders. If the person of their own volition requests baptism as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, they undergo a series of questions with the elders to ensure they clearly understand God's requirements regarding what is moral and acceptable, along with other doctrinal matters. It is the responsibility of the congregation's body of elders to approve persons for baptism, since they know them personally.

ii. Elders and Ministerial Servants (*Organized to Do Jehovah's Will* book, pages 29-37 - WAT.0003.001.0324-0332)

82. Firstly, the individual must meet the Scriptural requirements for an elder (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9) or ministerial servant (1 Timothy 3:8-10, 12-13). If the local body of elders and the circuit overseer all agree that he qualifies, before an individual can be appointed as an elder or ministerial servant he must answer the following three questions (WAT.0002.001.0034-0035):

- "Is there anything from your past, even before baptism, or in your personal or family life that disqualifies you or that would prevent you from accepting this appointment?"

Signature:.....

Witness:.....

- *Is there any reason why your appointment should not be announced to the congregation?*
- *Have you ever been involved at any time in the past with child sexual molestation?"*

83. If the answers are acceptable and the individual is appointed, the Branch Office is notified.

84. In those States and Territory where an appointed minister must have a Working With Children Check, his appointment is neither confirmed nor announced to the congregation until the process involved with such a check is completed.

Regarding other congregation assignments

85. The Branch office checks the background of any who apply to serve as pioneers, special pioneers and/or any other position of status in the congregations.

iii. & iv. Deletions and public or private reproof (Elders' Handbook page 96 paragraphs 18-25 - WAT.0003.001.0097-0101)

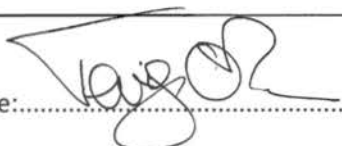
86. This is a decision for the local body of elders in line with the Scriptural guidelines to this effect. However, if it involves an elder, ministerial servant, pioneer, special pioneer and/or any other position of status in the congregations, the Branch Office is notified since a person who is reproofed by a judicial committee of elders automatically ceases to qualify for such assignments.

v. Congregation privileges

87. Congregation privileges (such as handling of microphones during meetings, serving as an attendant, caring for congregation accounts) are decisions for the local body of elders to make. For the body of elders it would also include determining which teaching parts an elder may handle, which duty of service each would perform on behalf of the congregation.

88. However, if it concerned anyone who had been guilty of child sexual abuse, it would be many, many years, if ever, before he would be given any small privilege and this would be done only after consultation with the Branch Office (October 1, 2012, paragraphs 22-24 - WAT.0001.004.0070).

Signature:.....



Witness:.....



**vi. Disfellowshipping and/or disassociation (Elders' Handbook Pages 58-72
WAT.0003.001.0059-0073; Pages 89-96 - WAT.0003.001.0090-0097)**

89. The Scriptural process known as disfellowshipping is a matter that is handled by congregation elders. A person may be disfellowshipped if they commit what the Bible has determined are serious sins such as those outlined in the 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and is judged as being unrepentant.
90. If a person is disfellowshipped a simple announcement is made to the congregation as I mentioned in paragraph 62.
91. The Elders handbook, Chapter 5, paragraphs 5 [WAT.0003.001.0060] and 10 [WAT.0003.001.0061] explains that child sexual abuse would include "fondling of breasts, an explicitly immoral proposal, showing pornography to a child, voyeurism, indecent exposure, and so forth." Paragraph 5 [WAT.0003.001.0060] discusses more serious types of sexual abuse that would also be considered as disfellowshipping offences.
92. In the case of child sexual abuse, both the Legal Department and the Service Department are involved in accordance with the instructions set out in our Guideline letter. A record is maintained in the congregation and also sent to the Branch Office.
93. Disassociation is an action taken by an individual for whatever reason they choose. This is handled by a local body of elders who appoint a committee of three. If the person is adamant that they no longer want to be known as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, the same simple announcement is made and the Branch Office is notified in the same way as one who is disfellowshipped.
94. A disfellowshipped or disassociated person may apply to be reinstated into the congregation. If so, it will be decided by a judicial committee of the original congregation that handled the case. The judicial committee will meet with the individual and determine if they have abandoned the reason(s) for which they were removed from the congregation. If they have done so and are truly repentant the individual may be reinstated. If they still need to make necessary changes to qualify to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses again, the elders will help them see what they need to do in this regard.

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vii. Reinstatement (Elders' Handbook Page 118-122 paragraphs 1-15 - WAT.0003.001.0119-0123)

95. If a formerly disfellowshipped or disassociated person is reinstated the Branch office is notified of that.

L. ROLE OF WATCHTOWER AUSTRALIA AND/OR THE AUSTRALIAN BRANCH OFFICE IN THE CASE OF

BCH

96. As I understand, the Branch Office was not involved in the 1989 disfellowshipping case of BCH. I have not personally been involved in anything to do with this case. I understand that both Mr Spinks and Mr Toole will explain their dealings with BCH in their statements.

M. CLAIM(S) FOR COMPENSATION OR REDRESS

97. I am not aware of any claims for redress or compensation having been made in relation to child sexual abuse concerning Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia.

SUMMARY

98. Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe we have all the answers to the prevention of child sexual abuse. As with a number of other organisations, we have undergone a system of revision on our procedures for some decades. We will continue to do so in making every effort to protect children. We are repulsed by this crime against conceivably the most defenceless members of society. We share with you the hope that this Royal Commission will be able to provide answers to some of the most disturbing and complex questions confronting every community, in how to prevent this from happening.

Signed:

Date: 10 JULY 2015

Witness:

Date: 10 JULY 2015

Signature:

Witness: