

# Annexure in the matter of Watchtower Bible & Tract Society of Australia

## Annexure 1 to Statement of Terrence John O'Brien



**Royal Commission**  
into Institutional Responses  
to Child Sexual Abuse

26 June 2015

Mr Terrence O'Brien  
Director / Branch Overseer  
Watchtower Bible and Tract Society Australia Ltd  
12-14 Zouch Road  
Denham Court NSW 2565

By email: [InboxLGL.AU@jw.org](mailto:InboxLGL.AU@jw.org)

Dear Mr O'Brien,

### **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) Case Study 29 (Jehovah's Witnesses) – request for statements**

As you are aware, the Royal Commission is holding a public hearing in Sydney commencing on 27 July 2015 to inquire into the responses of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd (**Watchtower Australia**) to complaints of child sexual abuse within the Jehovah's Witnesses Church in Australia.

The scope and purpose of the public hearing is to inquire into:

1. The experience of survivors of child sexual abuse within the Jehovah's Witnesses Church in Australia.
2. The responses of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd to allegations, reports or complaints of child sexual abuse within the Church.
3. The systems, policies and procedures in place within the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd for raising and responding to allegations of or concerns about child sexual abuse within the Church.
4. The systems, policies and procedures in place in the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Ltd to prevent child sexual abuse within the Church.
5. Any related matters.

#### *Request for statement*

The Royal Commission requests that you prepare a statement which addresses the following matters:

- A. An historical overview of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church, including but not limited to:
  - i. the establishment of the Church and its practices;

- ii. the structure of the Church including any significant changes to that structure over time; and
  - iii. the history of the relationship between the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses (the **Governing Body**) and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania.
- B. An overview of the role and functions of the current Governing Body, including but not limited to, the structure and membership of the Governing Body and any sub-committees of that Governing Body.
- C. The relationship, including any legal relationship, between Watchtower Australia and:
  - i. the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania;
  - ii. the Governing Body;
  - iii. the various congregations of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church around Australia.
- D. An overview of the key beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses faith, including but not limited to:
  - i. the doctrine of separateness from the world;
  - ii. the role of evangelizing;
  - iii. the "End Times"; and
  - iv. the doctrine of "male headship".
- E. Your involvement with the Jehovah's Witnesses Church, including but not limited to:
  - i. the congregations of which you have been a member; and
  - ii. the roles you have held within the Church, including your current role; and
  - iii. the relationship between your current role and the Legal and Service Departments of Watchtower Australia.
- F. The systems, policies, and procedures in place within the Jehovah's Witnesses Church in Australia to:
  - i. respond to allegations or complaints of child sexual abuse made within the Church;
  - ii. prevent child sexual abuse within the Church; and
  - iii. record allegations or complaints of child sexual abuse; and
  - iv. identify child sexual abuse within the Church,

including any significant revisions to those systems, policies, or procedures, and the date(s) of and the reasons for those revisions.
- G. The mechanisms, if any, that the Jehovah's Witnesses Church has in place to ensure compliance with any of the systems, policies, or procedures referred to in paragraph F above.
- H. Any training offered by the Jehovah's Witnesses Church to its elders, ministerial servants, and/or any other member of the Church, in responding to allegations, prevention, and/or detection, of child sexual abuse, including the nature and frequency of that training.
- I. Any consultation undertaken by the Jehovah's Witnesses Church with independent experts specialising in responding to allegations of, and prevention, and/or detection of, child sexual abuse. Please include a list of any such experts engaged by the Church, together with a summary of their qualifications and the areas in relation to which they have provided or provide advice and/or consulting expertise.
- J. Your understanding of any obligations, legal or otherwise, that members of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church around Australia have in relation to:

- i. reporting child sexual abuse to State and/or Federal authorities;
  - ii. conducting police checks of persons within the Church whose roles involve contact with children; and
  - iii. sharing of information that might prevent future child sexual abuse.
- K. The role of Watchtower Australia and/or the Australian Branch Office in the following processes as they relate to or involve allegations, reports, or history of child sexual abuse:
- i. consideration of prospective members of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and their subsequent suitability for baptism;
  - ii. selection and appointment of elders, ministerial servants, pioneers, special pioneers, and/or any other position of status within the Church;
  - iii. the deletion or removal of elders, ministerial servants, pioneers, special pioneers, and/or any other position of status within the Church;
  - iv. the public or private reproof of members of the Church;
  - v. the awarding and removal of congregational privileges to members of the congregation, including the nature of those privileges;
  - vi. the disfellowshipping and/or disassociation of members of the Church; and/or
  - vii. the reinstatement of individuals as members of the Church.
- L. The role of Watchtower Australia and/or the Australian Branch Office in relation to to the case of child sexual abuse by BCH
- M. Any claim(s) for compensation or redress of any kind, whether in a court of law or otherwise, arising from an allegation or allegations of child sexual abuse within the Church, including the outcome of those claims.

The above matters are not intended to limit you in any way, and you should provide any other information that you consider to be relevant. We ask that you please provide copies of any documents not already produced to the Royal Commission which record the matters referred to above.

We ask that you prepare your statement by no later than **10 July 2015**. At such time, the Royal Commission will issue a notice for its production, and may summons you to give evidence in the public hearing.

Please do not hesitate to contact Joanna Blair on (02) 8284 2448 if you would like to discuss any aspect of this matter.

Yours sincerely,           



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