

Statement

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Occupation Service Desk at Branch Office of Jehovah's Witnesses

Date 10 July 2015

INTRODUCTION

1. This statement is in response to a letter dated 26 June 2015 addressed to me from the Commission, as attached (marked "Annexure 1").
2. My statement sets out the evidence that I wish to give to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
3. I am pleased to answer the questions raised in connection with my role in the Service Department and matters that I am personally aware of. In my statement, I have followed the format of the questions in the letter, using the headings set out in (A) - (H) below.

A. MY BACKGROUND

4. I have associated with Jehovah's Witnesses since 1965 and been a baptised member for over 40 years. (Public baptism indicates an individual's personal decision to dedicate their life to God as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.)
5. I was born in Tasmania in 1959 and have five siblings. After my parents moved to Victoria, they both studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. They were baptised as Jehovah's Witnesses when I was 6 years old.
6. I went to primary school and high school in country Victoria. After high school, I completed a 4 year trade apprenticeship in the transport industry.
7. Following my marriage, I moved to Queensland where I was trained for various management roles in the transport industry. During this time, our son was born.

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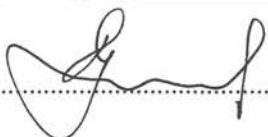
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8. I became the National Operations Manager for a large interstate transport company during the 1980s. In my role I was responsible for the human resource issues of several hundred employees.
9. Commencing in 1989, I operated my own family business in the transport industry for a number of years. This enabled me to divide my time equally between operating our business and becoming more fully involved with my volunteer responsibilities with Jehovah's Witnesses.
10. As part of my greater participation in the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses, I have now spent many years teaching others the value of a balanced Christian life. Together with my wife, I have found that Scriptural principles are still very relevant in assisting others to deal with modern family challenges.
11. As a result of our increased involvement, since January 2007, my wife and I have been based at the Branch Office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Sydney, where we are able to devote our full time and energy to our faith-based activities.
12. In more recent years, I have become a grandparent to two grandchildren and enjoy being a part of their lives.
13. As a parent and grandparent, I am genuinely concerned with the prevention of and appropriate response to the sin and crime of child sexual abuse. As an elder in the faith of Jehovah's Witnesses, I have personally assisted a number of individuals suffering from past sexual abuse. I have also worked closely with fellow elders to ensure allegations of sexual abuse are promptly addressed and that victims of sexual abuse are given support and care.

i. Congregations

14. I have been a member of the following congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses:
 - a. 1965–1978 Bairnsdale Congregation in Victoria;
 - b. 1978–1990 Beenleigh (later Beenleigh East) Congregation, Queensland;
 - c. 1990–1995 Rockhampton West Congregation, Queensland;
 - d. 1995–2000 Rockhampton South Congregation, Queensland;
 - e. 2000–2004 Blaxland Congregation, New South Wales;
 - f. 2004–2007 Western New South Wales as a circuit overseer (ie. an experienced elder who serves full-time with his wife as a travelling overseer visiting approximately 20 congregations twice a year for a week at a time);
 - g. 2007–2011 Campbelltown Congregation, New South Wales;
 - h. 2011–2013 Green Valley Australian Sign Language Congregation, New South Wales;
 - i. 2013–2015 Auburn Congregation, New South Wales;
 - j. 2015–present Illawong Congregation, New South Wales.

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ii. My Roles

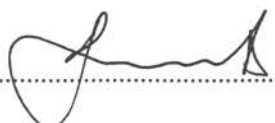
15. I served as a ministerial servant from the early 1980's and as a congregation elder since 1987. In 1999, I was trained to visit congregations as a travelling overseer on a part-time basis. Then from September 2004 until January 2007, I was a full-time travelling overseer.
16. From January 2007, I have worked in the Service Department at the Branch Office. I respond to telephone and written inquiries from travelling overseers, congregation elders, congregation members, the general public and the media on all aspects of our preaching work and organisational arrangements.

B. MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE SYSTEMS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN THE PREVENTION OF AND RESPONSE TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Overview

17. I understand that Mr O'Brien will address the organisation's overall structure and approach in relation to the prevention and handling of child sexual abuse and Mr Toole will address the role of the Legal Department in advising elders as to their mandatory reporting obligations.
18. From when I was appointed as an elder in 1987 until 2007, I was provided with access to all letters from the Branch Office to local bodies of elders. This included all letters that provided spiritual advice and guidance on how to handle child abuse matters over that period that have now been replaced with the letter of October 1, 2012 (WAT.0001.004.0066 – WAT.0001.004.0071).
19. An important article "Abhor What Is Wicked" (WAT.0001.004.0306 – WAT.0001.004.0309) was published in 1997. It concerned the congregation implications for a former child abuser. As a result of this article and in harmony with our long standing policy based on the Scriptures, it was emphasized that a former child abuser would not be irreprehensible and therefore not qualified for a congregation appointed position. (See also paragraph 81 below.)
20. In my Service Department role since 2007, I have been responsible for assisting congregation elders to implement the Branch Office's spiritual advice and the guidelines for handling child abuse allegations and in providing victim support. In this way, I am able to answer the questions set out in the letter dated 26 June 2015.
21. In particular, I provide support and guidance to elders:
 - a. in actively promoting the long-held Scriptural view that Jehovah's Witnesses abhor child sexual abuse;
 - b. ensuring that congregation elders provide spiritual support and comfort to victims of abuse; and
 - c. in taking reasonable measures to safeguard children from abuse.

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22. This is in harmony with what is stated in the letter dated October 1, 2012, para. 9 – (WAT.0001.004.0068) as follows:

We abhor the sexual abuse of children and will not protect any perpetrator of such repugnant acts from the consequences of his gross sin. (Rom. 12:9) Elders should take seriously their responsibility in this matter so that the congregations will be safeguarded from any valid accusation of neglect in protecting children from sexual abuse.

23. I am responsible for advising congregation elders in their support of victims of abuse and in ensuring that Scriptural procedure is followed when dealing with any accusation of child sexual abuse involving a congregation member or meeting attender.

24. These procedures are set out in

- a. the Bible (in this statement I refer to the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*);
- b. the Elders' Handbook, entitled *Shepherd the Flock of God*, and referred to in letters by the mnemonic *ks10* (WAT.0003.001.0001 – WAT.0003.001.0143);
- c. Watch Tower Society publications, such as the *Organized to Do Jehovah's Will* book (WAT.0003.001.0296 – WAT.0003.001.0519); and
- d. in letters sent to all bodies of elders, in particular the letter of October 1, 2012 (WAT.0001.004.0066 – WAT.0001.004.0071), which consolidated into one letter the spiritual advice and guidance provided in various letters from preceding years as to how Jehovah's Witnesses handled allegations of child abuse.

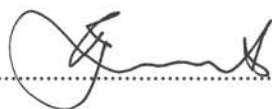
25. The Service Department assists congregation elders in identifying offences that constitute child sexual abuse, as outlined in paragraph 3 of the October 1, 2012 letter (WAT.0001.004.0066):

Child sexual abuse generally includes sexual intercourse with a minor; oral or anal sex with a minor; fondling the genitals, breasts, or buttocks of a minor; voyeurism of a minor; indecent exposure to a minor; soliciting a minor for sexual conduct; or any kind of involvement with child pornography. Depending on the circumstances of the case, it may also include "sexting" with a minor. "Sexting" describes the sending of nude photos, seminude photos, or sexually explicit text messages electronically, such as by phone.

26. If congregation elders become aware of a child abuse allegation, they are instructed to contact the Legal Department in relation to reporting requirements and then the call is transferred to the Service Department [October 1, 2012 para. 4 & 5 (WAT.0001.004.0066 – WAT.0001.004.0067)].

27. I have prepared and attached to my statement (marked Annexure 2) a document called *Summation of Branch Office Handling of Child Abuse Matters* which summarises our response to allegations of child sexual abuse, together with the references from our publications and

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letters. A number of the significant procedures are highlighted between paragraphs 28 and 47 of my statement.

Branch Office response: Victim Safety and Support

28. The first thing I ask the elders is the current age and circumstances of the victim. If there is a possibility that a victim may remain in danger of further abuse, I advise the elders to immediately go back to the parent/guardian to ensure that the child is physically protected, as they would for their own child.
29. This is in harmony with paragraph 10 of the October 1, 2012 letter (WAT.0001.004.0068), which states:

Regardless of whether the law requires the elders to report an accusation to the authorities, steps need to be taken to protect children.

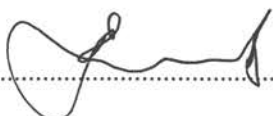
30. I explain that, as a father and grandfather, if this was my child or grandchild, I would do everything necessary to ensure that the child is safe. For the elders, that may involve supporting the parent/guardian in contacting the authorities or personally contacting the authorities. The August 28, 2002 letter (WAT.0004.001.0001 – WAT.0004.001.002) that was read to all congregations 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. 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.

31. In relation to supporting a victim of child sexual abuse, my role involves advising congregation elders as to how they may provide spiritual refreshment and encouragement, as it states in the Bible that they “*speak consolingly to those who are depressed, [and] support the weak.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:14) I encourage the elders to review the Bible-based resources we have provided to assist them in supporting the parent/guardian and the victim. These references, which have been provided to the Commission, are quoted in the Elders’ Handbook (WAT.0003.001.0001 – WAT.0003.001.0143) and are updated and indexed in WT Library, which is available both online and in CD-ROM format.
32. Spiritual comfort provided by elders to a victim is not viewed as a substitute for professional therapy. As stated in the Elders’ Handbook page 54, paragraph 22 (WAT.0003.001.0055), “*It must be recognized that elders as such are not mental-health professionals or therapists but are spiritual shepherds. (1 Pet. 5:2)*” Elders are encouraged to support the parent/guardian in reassuring the victim that he or she is in no way to blame, that they are loved by God, and that they have the care and full support of the elders and the congregation.
33. I often quote the *Awake!*, January 22, 1985, page 8 (WAT.0001.004.0210), which states:

[T]he 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

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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!

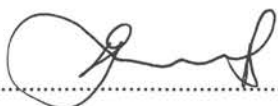
Responding to Reports and Allegations

34. When an allegation is made against any congregation member of a gross violation of God's law, especially child sexual abuse, the body of elders is instructed to investigate according to Bible guidelines. To do so, they select two elders to look into the allegation. [Elders' Handbook pg. 72, para. 38 (WAT.0003.001.0073)]
35. The two elders, with the consent of the parent/guardian, would talk to the victim with the parent/guardian present. If the victim is a very young minor, the two elders would talk just with the parent/guardian alone to ascertain the exact nature of the allegation. The elders would also privately talk to the alleged offender, without the victim being present. The elders would ask the accused questions about the allegations, and if necessary, seek information from any other witnesses.
36. The two elders investigate whether a sin has been committed and report to the body of elders. In line with Bible principles, the evidence may be in the form of an admission, the testimony of witnesses, compelling circumstantial evidence, or a combination of these factors.
37. If there is insufficient evidence to proceed in accordance with Bible principles and the matter has to be held in abeyance at the time, then a record is kept in the event that further evidence becomes available in the future. In any case, our October 1, 2012 letter, Para. 11 (WAT.0001.004.0068) directs that *"the elders should remain vigilant with regard to the conduct and activity of the accused."*


Congregation Judicial Committee

38. If sufficient evidence is discovered, the body of elders arranges what Jehovah's Witnesses refer to as a 'judicial committee'. [Organized to Do Jehovah's Will book pg. 151, para. 2 (WAT.0003.001.0446)]
39. A judicial committee is a special congregation arrangement for handling matters where an individual is allegedly involved in a serious violation of God's law. The Bible-based procedure for a congregation judicial committee is outlined in chapters five, six and seven of the Elders' Handbook (WAT.0003.001.0059 - WAT.0003.001.0103).
40. As directed in our letter of October 1, 2012, paragraph 11 (WAT.0001.004.0068), the elders contact the travelling overseer to designate an experienced elder from the circuit to serve as chairman of any judicial committee involving child sexual abuse. Two or more elders from the congregation are also appointed to serve on this committee. I comment below on the possible outcomes.

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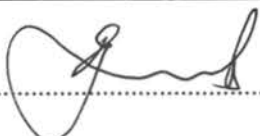
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41. *Unrepentant individual disfellowshipped*: Where the judicial committee determines that the offender is unrepentant, he is disfellowshipped from the congregation in accordance with the Scriptural principle at 1 Corinthians 5:13, which states to *"Remove the wicked person from among yourselves."* Following a disfellowshipping, an announcement of the decision is made to the congregation informing them that the perpetrator is no longer one of Jehovah's Witnesses. A disfellowshipped person will be treated by all Jehovah's Witnesses in harmony with the Bible's admonition: *"... do not receive him into your homes or say a greeting to him."* (2 John 10) So, in the case of child sexual abuse, disfellowshipping is clearly a strong measure toward protecting the congregation [Elders' Handbook pg. 100-101, para. 26-34 (WAT.0003.001.0101 - WAT.0003.001.0103)].
42. *Reinstatement after disfellowshipping*: If the individual eventually qualifies for reinstatement as a member of the congregation, the final decision is made by a judicial committee in the congregation that took the disfellowshipping action. This applies regardless of the congregation to which the individual submits his request for reinstatement. If he has moved congregations, a unanimous decision of two committees is required: a judicial committee in the present congregation and a judicial committee in the congregation that took the disfellowshipping action [Elders' Handbook pg. 120-121, para. 7-10 (WAT.0003.001.0121 - WAT.0003.001.0122)].
43. *Individual repentant and publicly reproofed*: Even if the offender is determined by the judicial committee to be genuinely repentant of past offences, the committee will follow the Scriptural procedure to *"Reprove before all onlookers those who practice sin, as a warning to the rest."* (1 Timothy 5:20) This includes an announcement made to the congregation that the wrongdoer *"(Name of person) has been reproofed."* [(Elders' Handbook pg. 96-98, para. 18-21 - WAT.0003.001.0097 - WAT.0003.001.0099)]
44. *Warning lecture*: Soon after an announcement of reproof is made, a warning lecture about the type of sin and how to prevent it will generally be presented to the entire congregation. [(Elders' Handbook pg. 99, para. 23 - WAT.0003.001.0100)] In cases of child sexual abuse, this will serve as a warning to help parents protect their children from any potential danger. Therefore, whether the judicial committee disfellowships or reproofs the wrongdoer, congregation members are aided in their ability to protect children from child sexual abuse.

Congregation Judicial Restrictions

45. In every instance, an individual who is judicially reproofed or who is disfellowshipped and later reinstated does not qualify for privileges and is subject to congregation restrictions. Initially, these restrictions include commenting at congregation meetings and sharing in any congregation assignments. [(Elders' Handbook pg. 97, para. 19 - WAT.0003.001.0098)]
46. Also, whenever discussing restrictions with the elders, I remind them of the direction provided in our letter of October 1, 2012, para. 12 (WAT.0001.004.0068- WAT.0001.004.0069), that the individual must be instructed to:

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... refrain from displaying affection for children, to avoid hugging or holding children on their lap, never to be alone with a child (other than their own), not to allow children to spend the night in their home, not to work alone in field service (hence, they should always be accompanied by another adult), and not to cultivate friendships with children.

47. Elders are instructed to contact the Service Department if a former child abuser does not follow the restrictions from the elders or is considered to be acting in a predatory manner. If this is the case, the Service Department directs the elders to immediately meet with the parent/s of minor children in the congregation to provide a warning. [October 1, 2012, letter, para. 13 (WAT.0001.004.0069)] In addition, depending on the circumstances, instructions are then provided to the elders to either strongly counsel the individual or take congregation judicial action to determine whether the individual should be disfellowshipped on the Scriptural basis of "brazen conduct." (Galatians 5:19; Elders' Handbook pg. 60-61, para. 9-10 (WAT.0003.001.0061 – WAT.0003.001.0062))

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse


48. I have read and distributed articles published by Jehovah's Witnesses for the general public, from as far back as the 1970s, which have addressed the issue of preventing child abuse. Recently, the jw.org website has also provided worldwide coverage to educate parents and young people in the prevention of child abuse. From my position as an elder, my work in the Service Department, and as a parent and grandparent, I have come to appreciate that loving and well-informed parents are in the best position to prevent child abuse, as explained in many of our publications.
49. The Branch Office and Service Department continue to ensure that all meetings and conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses are designed for families. Children are not separated from their parents for any activities of Jehovah's Witnesses. The ongoing efforts by Jehovah's Witnesses to educate parents and children about child abuse, and the fact that Jehovah's Witnesses do not sponsor programs that separate children from their parents, are pivotal aspects of Jehovah's Witnesses' beliefs and practices for the prevention of child abuse.

C. FUNCTIONS OF THE SERVICE DEPARTMENT

50. Please see my explanation under section B.

D. SERVICE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL

51. Eleven out of the 13 current members of the Service Department are elders with many years of practical experience in the application of Scriptural principles and there are administrative assistants who are responsible for administrative support.
52. The Service Department cares for all aspects of our spiritual activities in Australia as follows:
- Kingdom Hall and congregation details - one elder and his assistant;
 - arrangements for regular conventions – two elders;

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- processing of general correspondence – two elders;
- training seminars for travelling overseers and elders - one elder;
- data entry – one assistant;
- Service Desks – three Service Desk elders and two assistant elders.

53. I serve as the senior Service Desk elder and, amongst other duties, am specifically responsible for inquiries related to child sexual abuse. Over many decades, this Service Desk role has been cared for by spiritually experienced elders who have volunteered to work at the Branch Office for varying periods of time.

54. In addition, I am assisted in my role in responding to child abuse allegations by an experienced elder, Joel Hurley, who has been associated with Jehovah's Witnesses for 40 years.

55. Mr Hurley has a Diploma in Education (Teaching), Bachelor's Degree in Arts (majoring in Linguistics) and a Master's Degree in Education (Honours). Prior to joining the Service Department in August 2011, Mr Hurley worked as a teacher in government schools in New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. He was also a university lecturer in Education at Macquarie University.

56. During Mr Hurley's career as a teacher and lecturer, he was trained in child protection awareness, which included training in relation to reporting requirements and supporting children and young people, as well as monitoring and evaluation. Specifically, he was trained to be aware of the indicators of abuse and neglect and to assist in complying with mandatory reporting requirements.

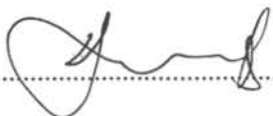
E. TRAINING

57. While I have no formal qualifications, my approach to dealing with child sexual abuse allegations is based on my extensive experience as an elder and as a travelling overseer in providing spiritual counsel to families, using Scriptural principles and publications based on the Bible.

58. Over the past 30 years, I have also attended regular Bible-based seminars known as Kingdom Ministry Schools for elders, including a two-month intensive course for travelling overseers in 2005. I have also been involved in presenting various training seminars for congregation elders and travelling overseers over a number of years.

59. During those years, local congregation elders' meetings, meetings conducted by travelling overseers with elders, and the various schools and seminars scheduled by the Branch Office, have included sessions addressing the issue of child sexual abuse and victim support.

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F. ROLE OF SERVICE DEPARTMENT IN PROCESSES THAT RELATE TO OR INVOLVE CHILD ABUSE

i. Baptism

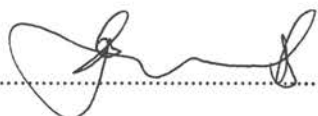
60. The Service Department is not involved in the consideration of individual prospective members of a congregation for baptism. Rather, this is the responsibility of the body of elders in each congregation who have observed and assisted the spiritual progress of the candidate over many months or years.
61. However, as an elder I am fully aware of the processes involved in baptism. In addition to meeting with the individual in the course of his or her extensive Bible study program and after receiving a request for baptism, the local body of elders reviews with him or her the detailed *Questions For Those Desiring To be Baptized* as set out in the Appendix of the publication entitled *Organized To Do God's Will*. (WAT.0003.001.0477 – WAT.0003.001.0510)
62. These questions and Scripture references gauge the candidate's understanding of: 1. *Elementary Bible Teachings*; 2. *Jehovah's Righteous Requirements*, which deals with the Bible's high moral standards; and 3. *Jehovah's Arrangement of Things*, which considers family life and congregation organisation. (WAT.0003.001.0477 - WAT.0003.001.0510)
63. This screening process, to determine whether an individual is qualified for baptism, is conducted by three different elders in harmony with the '*Instructions For Congregation Elders*' located in the Appendix of *Organized To Do God's Will* (WAT.0003.001.0512 - WAT.0003.001.0513).
64. One year after baptism, two elders again meet with the person to review their progress and provide appropriate encouragement and suggestions. [Elders Handbook p. 17, para. 12 (WAT.0003.001.0018).
65. If a former child abuser, after studying the Bible and harmonising his life with Bible principles, eventually qualifies for baptism, the same restrictions and warnings set out in paragraphs 46 and 47 would also apply [letter of October 1, 2012, para. 12 (WAT.0001.004.0068-WAT.0001.004.0069)].

ii., iii., vi., vii. Congregation Appointments and Deletions

66. *Regular Pioneer*: Refers to an exemplary congregation member who has volunteered to spend a certain amount of time in the public preaching activity each month. An *Application for Regular Pioneer Service* form, which is annexed to my statement (marked "Annexure 3"), must first be completed by an individual which includes two questions as follows:

- "Have you ever engaged in child sexual molestation?"
- "If yes, when? (w97 1/1 pp.26-29; w97 2/1 p.29)"

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67. This application form is reviewed by three congregation elders and an assessment is made of an individual's qualifications. The elders then submit a request for the Service Department to check whether anything might affect the application, in particular any record of child abuse. If there is nothing on record, the local body of elders is then responsible for approving regular pioneers.
68. Any regular pioneer involved in child abuse would be immediately deleted by the local body of elders. An announcement would be made to the congregation and the Branch Office informed. Any perpetrator would also be subject to congregation judicial action, as previously outlined in my statement.
69. *Special Pioneer*: Serves full-time in the preaching work. The Service Department selects special pioneers from among experienced long-serving regular pioneers.
70. Any special pioneer involved in child abuse would be immediately deleted and an announcement would be made to the congregation. Any perpetrator would also be subject to congregation judicial action, as previously outlined in my statement.
71. *Ministerial servants*: are appointed by the local body of elders and the travelling overseer in consultation with the Service Department, to care for administrative support tasks in the congregation, such as Kingdom Hall cleaning, literature supplies and accounting. They do not have a shepherding role in the congregation. They must meet the Scriptural requirement to be "free from accusation" and have a "fine standing". (1 Timothy 3:10, 13)
72. Any ministerial servant involved in child abuse would be immediately deleted by the local body of elders and the travelling overseer and an announcement would be made to the congregation that "Brother [name of person] is no longer serving as a ministerial servant." The travelling overseer would advise the Branch Office in writing of the deletion. [Elders' Handbook pg. 42, para. 26, 27 (WAT.0003.001.0043)] Any perpetrator would also be subject to congregation judicial action, as previously outlined in my statement.
73. *Elders*: are appointed by the local body of elders and the travelling overseer in consultation with the Service Department. Elders must be experienced men who have displayed a pattern of integrity in their lives over a period of time as ministerial servants. Some of the requirements to serve as an elder are listed in the Bible, in Scriptures such as 1 Timothy 3:2-13 and Titus 1:5-9:
- irreprehensible
 - moderate in habits
 - qualified to teach
 - not a drunkard
 - not violent
 - presiding over his own household in a fine manner
 - not a newly converted man
 - fine testimony from outsiders
 - lover of goodness
 - self-controlled
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74. Any elder involved in child abuse would be immediately deleted by the local body of elders and the travelling overseer, and an announcement would be made to the congregation that "Brother [name of person] is no longer serving as an elder." The travelling overseer would advise the Branch Office in writing of the deletion [Elders' Handbook pg. 42, para. 26, 27 – (WAT.0003.001.0043)]. Any perpetrator would also be subject to congregation judicial action, as previously outlined in my statement.

Service Department Involvement

75. In relation to the appointment of elders and ministerial servants, for many decades, *after* receiving a unanimous recommendation from a body of elders and the travelling overseer (during one of his six-monthly visits to each congregation), the Service Department reviewed the recommendation. After checking available records and, more recently, subject to the individual receiving a Working With Children Check ("WWCC") where required to do so under relevant State or Territory legislation, the Service Department would confirm the appointment and an announcement would be made in the congregation if the individual was considered qualified.
76. As a further refinement, since September 2014, *prior* to any recommendation being considered by the body of elders with the travelling overseer, a written request is submitted to the Branch office where a check is made to determine if there is anything that may disqualify an individual from being considered as an elder or ministerial servant, including any record of child abuse.
77. The Service Department then provides written confirmation to the travelling overseer as to whether there is any reason within our records that prevents the travelling overseer from considering the recommendation of the individual with the local body of elders. [Letter July 14, 2014 para. 3 – (WAT.0002.001.0039 – WAT.0002.001.0040)]
78. If the local body of elders and travelling overseer unanimously agree to proceed with the appointment, arrangements are then made for the travelling overseer and a representative of the local body of elders to meet with the individual at which time he is informed of the recommendation and asked the following questions as outlined in the letter July 14, 2014 – (WAT.0002.001.0039 – WAT.0002.001.0044):

"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?"

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?"

79. If, following that meeting, it is determined that there is no obstacle to the appointment proceeding, the individual is advised that before his appointment can be confirmed he must obtain a WWCC in States and Territories where that is required. Once there is confirmation that the process with the WWCC is complete, an announcement of the appointment can be made in

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the local congregation. The appointment is confirmed in writing to the Branch Office and to the congregation by the travelling overseer.

iv. Judicial Reproof

80. Please see my detailed explanation in paragraphs 43 & 44 above.

v. Privileges

81. Even in the case of child abuse that took place many years ago, the Service Department must be consulted before an individual would be considered for any privilege, if ever. This would include even smaller privileges, such as assisting with literature supplies or other non-teaching Kingdom Hall duties. This is explained in the letter dated October 1, 2012, paragraphs 22-24 (WAT.0001.004.0070 WAT.0001.004.0071) as follows:

Elders should keep in mind what is stated in the January 1, 1997, Watchtower article "Let Us Abhor What Is Wicked," page 29, paragraph 2: "Child sexual abuse reveals an unnatural fleshly weakness. Experience has shown that such an adult may well molest other children. True, not every child molester repeats the sin, but many do. And the congregation cannot read hearts to tell who is and who is not liable to molest children again. (Jeremiah 17:9) Hence, Paul's counsel to Timothy applies with special force in the case of baptized adults who have molested children: 'Never lay your hands hastily upon any man; neither be a sharer in the sins of others.' (1 Timothy 5:22).

Hence, privileges of service should never be extended hastily. Considerable time should always pass before one who has sexually abused a child is recommended, if ever. It would be up to the local body of elders to determine whether such a recommendation should be made to the branch office, taking into account all factors in each individual case. Please note that unless specifically approved by the branch office, one who has sexually abused a child should not be used to conduct any meetings held in the congregation or in a prison, and he does not qualify to work on any Kingdom Hall project other than one involving the congregation where he serves as a publisher.

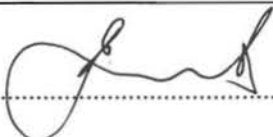
If the elders as a body conclude that one who has sexually abused a child in the distant past may now qualify for privileges, they should assign two elders to call the Service Department.

H. BCH - **My Experience**

82. In relation to the Commission's question regarding the case involving BCH I first came into contact with him early in 1990 while I was serving as an elder in the Beenleigh East Congregation, in South East Queensland. BCH started to attend public meetings at our Kingdom Hall. As a disfellowshipped person, in harmony with our Bible based principles and practices he was not allowed to communicate with any congregation members.

83. After some months, he applied to the body of elders to be reinstated into the congregation and I was one of the three elders appointed to the local judicial committee to review his request.

Signature:



Witness:



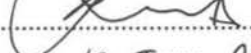
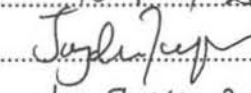
84. As is the standard procedure for all judicial committees prior to meeting with an individual, we reviewed the relevant guidelines to bodies of elders and then conducted an extensive interview with BCH [redacted]
85. After our meeting with BCH [redacted] and in line with the guidelines, we communicated with the original judicial committee that disfellowshipped him in Mareeba. As a result of the discussions of both committees, it was determined that BCH [redacted] did not display "godly sadness" nor have a record of "works that befit repentance" for his established offences. (2 Corinthians 7:10 and Acts 26:20) Therefore, he did not qualify to be reinstated into the congregation and our committee informed him accordingly.
86. Later in 1990, I shifted to Rockhampton in Central Queensland and did not have any further contact with BCH [redacted] or involvement with his requests for reinstatement until after 2007.

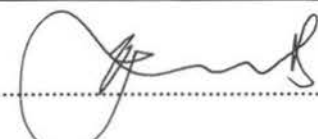
G. BCH [redacted] - *Service Department*

87. In January 2007, I began working in the Service Department at the Branch Office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Sydney. Since that time, I again became aware of BCH [redacted] who was in a disfellowshipped state in relation to the sexual abuse of his daughters and his denial of those offences. In processing correspondence, I noticed that he had been convicted by a court of law in relation to sexual offences against his daughters.
88. While he has repeatedly requested reinstatement into a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Service Department has assisted the local judicial committee in the congregation where he attends meetings in Western Australia, and the judicial committee where he was disfellowshipped in Queensland, to closely follow published procedure in reviewing his situation.
89. Clear direction has been provided to the elders that, until he fully acknowledges his sins of child abuse and of lying in connection with these offences, it would be difficult for the committees or the victims to consider that he was repentant. He remains disfellowshipped at this time.

SUMMARY

90. In summary, the Service Department guides and assists congregation elders in supporting child and adult victims of sexual abuse, and in addressing the prevention of and response to child sexual abuse. As with the wider community, the worldwide procedures of Jehovah's Witnesses have been refined over the years. We will continue to pursue the best possible approach for protecting children from the crime and sin of child sexual abuse.

Signed: 
Date: 10 July 2015
Witness: 
Date: 12 July 2015

Signature: 

Witness: 