

**Submission
No 156**

**INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT METHODS AND IMPACTS OF
CULTS AND ORGANISED FRINGE GROUPS**

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Submission to the Inquiry into the Recruitment Methods and Impacts of Cults and Organised Fringe Groups

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Brittany Fussell-Jones, and I'm writing from the United States to share my personal experience growing up and living within the Jehovah's Witnesses organization. Although I now live in the U.S., I believe my story reflects the same patterns of control, fear, and emotional harm that people around the world — including in Australia — have experienced.

I was never disfellowshipped or publicly shamed. In fact, from the outside, my experience may seem "better than most." But the psychological and emotional grip of the organization still shaped much of my life.

Though my family was able to eventually leave — particularly when internal conflicts escalated — that process didn't undo years of silent conditioning. As a woman, I learned early on to stay quiet, submit, and ignore my own critical thinking. I watched how women's voices were minimized, and I absorbed the fear of "worldly" people and the constant anxiety around being spiritually "weak."

When we left, we didn't make noise. We were fortunate — my mother's family had connections in the congregation, so I was never formally shunned. I went to college, earned a master's degree, and even started my doctorate. But it wasn't until later that I truly began to unravel how deeply the teachings had affected my identity, confidence, and ability to trust myself.

There's often a misconception that unless someone is disfellowshipped, they weren't harmed. I want to be clear: emotional control, fear-based belief systems, and the suppression of individuality are forms of harm. They may not always be visible, but they stay with you — sometimes long after you've physically left the group.

I'm not writing to place blame or ask for compensation. I simply want my voice to be one more among many, supporting any efforts to investigate and regulate the influence of high-control religious organizations. Every story matters — even the quiet ones.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Brittany Fussell-Jones

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