

**Submission
No 221**

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

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Submission Text: I grew up as a Jehovah's Witness and spent 49 years inside.

The last ten years in several Melbourne congregations.

I knew even as a young child that I was gay. I also knew from that age that it was wrong and that Jehovah would punish homosexuals. Jehovah's witnesses are sort of obsessed about sex, especially sex that is considered wrong, and it's often discussed at their meetings. I knew enough about the horror of 'men who sleep with men' as a child that it shaped my self hatred as soon as I found myself attracted to another man.

Jehovah's witnesses have long denigrated non heterosexuals of any sort. Most discussion of them from the platform is of outright disgust.

In their publications it was also the same until very recently when they published in their Watchtower magazine that the LGBT community of believing JWs were acceptable if they remained celibate.

Recent court cases, such as the Norway government examination, has deep dived into their practices by watching their videos and quoting published magazines, which has been embarrassing for them as it revealed they said one thing to the public and yet another to its members.

(This shows the power of government examinations.)

On the surface what was recently published may seem like a softening of policy, but for someone who is LGBT and stuck in this group it remains depressing and dangerous.

Many have committed suicide or attempted suicide, like myself several times, when you realise you are doomed to be single and never allowed a loving partner.

I remember I would look to the future paradise earth this religion promises as a time when I would be made perfect and no longer gay.

Several years ago however on a released video one of the Governing Body members of Jehovahs Witnesses discussed homosexuals and how even if they made it into this paradise by completely denying themselves, they may still have to live maybe a hundred years until they are fixed as they become slowly perfect!

I was mentally out by then but I shuddered in disbelief and worry for those mentally caught up LGBT JW's who are personally struggling and denying themselves a huge amount just waiting for Armageddon and the JW paradise to fix them. I wonder how many committed suicide after that statement.

Although this promise of a paradise is a fairy tale, for the true believer it is real. The thought of having to live like this is often too much for many.

The final cruel straw though is the fate of such members if they give up and leave JW's, especially if they then choose to have a gay relationship.

These members are disfellowshipped and are shunned by their whole family and all past friends. Sometimes this may even affect their employment and living conditions so they are thrown out alone.

Many JW's who commit wrong are shunned, however some choose to return and are reinstated when they show forgiveness for their past wrongs. For the LGBT community though this means having to deny themselves and their whole identity, pretending they are no longer gay, and then choosing to remain celibate and single forevermore - so they can keep seeing their family and friends.

To be a Jehovah's Witness if you are LGBT is a life of sadness and denial.

You are damned if you stay in and damned if you leave and find a partner.

There are many control mechanisms used by Jehovahs witnesses that have a huge effect

on the hidden LGBT community of Jehovah's Witnesses.

They have been psychologically trained to be terrified to research options or other spiritual understandings outside of what watchtower produces, such as considering a god may accept them. They have to act and dress and perform as a straight person and hide any individuality that might hint at their non heterosexual status. They are emotionally manipulated into thinking they are wrong, bad and sick in their person. And yet they know if they leave and walk away they lose everything.

Jehovahs witnesses claim to be a loving religion but they are anything but in practice.

How does a government deal with such a group?

Doctrines such as their hatred of the LGBT community will never change.

In the end it's all about their shunning practices and their psychological control of members.

This religion has only ever attempted to make a move to change when they are threatened of losing out on tax exemptions. The only thing that spurred them to signing onto the redress scheme after the Australian Royal Commission into institutionalised child abuse, was a threat to lose their charity status.

I strongly believe the automatic charity status for faith based organisations should be removed and instead all organisations should prove they benefit society, rather than harm, in order to benefit from tax free status. This should be an annual audit.

A state government could lobby federally to have this changed.

I thank you enormously for your efforts in taking up the examination of cults for the sake of their members.