

Inquiry into the extent and nature of poverty in Australia

## JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

A silent emergency



Larissa Kaput

28 April 2023

“WE HEAR a lot about loud emergencies of global warming and ozone layers and ocean pollution,” said United Nations adviser Dr. Mahbub Ul-Haq, but he added: “Global warming and many other loud emergencies have yet to kill anybody [while] the silent emergencies are wasting many lives in the developing countries every day.” Dr. Ul-Haq commented on one of those silent emergencies. “**Poverty,**” he said, “is really the greatest killer.”<sup>1</sup>

As quoted in the magazine, *Awake!*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses

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<sup>1</sup> <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101997091?q=really+the+greatest+killer&p=par>

Senator Janet Rice, Chair

Senator Marielle Smith, Deputy Chair

and Committee Members

**RE: Inquiry into the extent and nature of poverty in Australia**

I thank the Senate Community Affairs References Committee for allowing me the opportunity to provide a submission in relation to the committee's current inquiry on the extent and nature of poverty in Australia.

This submission advises the government on poverty concerns within the Jehovah's Witnesses community and builds on concerns raised in previous Royal Commission submissions, Joint Select Committee submissions and other inquiries. These submissions are generally available on the saysorry.org website with the topics they cover having been regularly highlighted within the media, in relation to the religion of Jehovah's Witness Church, its administrative management corporation, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia Limited, their controlling parent organisation Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, Inc., and the governing body of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The primary concern for this Committee, is that the leaders of Jehovah's Witnesses actively:

- Discourage higher education,
- Discourage secular career planning,
- Coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to donate cash, resources (including child labour) and time,
- Coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to transfer their assets,
- Coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to nominate Jehovah's Witness corporate entities in Wills,
- Coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to exclude non-Jehovah's Witness family members from Wills,
- Perpetrate child labour, and
- Target and victimise whistleblowers.

It is my belief that in undertaking these actions, corporate financial abuse is committed towards Jehovah's Witnesses and their families, and by extension, former members.

Yours sincerely,

Larissa Kaput

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## Introduction

I am a survivor of the Jehovah's Witnesses religion, who now uses my time and resources to advocate for fellow exploited and vulnerable victims and survivors from within the religion. Since 2016 I have, either individually or as part of a team, provided up-to-date factual and unique information to local and international law enforcement agencies, government bodies, politicians, inquiries, royal commissions, law firms, and the media in relation to Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watch Tower Society. In doing this, I have made written submissions to, or appeared before, the Disability Royal Commission, the Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme, the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, the NSW Inquiry into Modern Slavery Act 2018 and Associated Matters, and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

### **Being a Jehovah's Witness is a driver of poverty in Australia.**

From my experience, Jehovah's Witness girls were raised to be housewives and the boys were raised to be construction workers or to be window-washers, both of which fitted into the patriarchal ideology of gender specific roles. I saw that when I was young. I observed this from a young age, I saw through many things and I didn't want to be there. So, I left. But it didn't make me immune from their silent emergency - poverty.

It is my concern, that even today the Jehovah's Witnesses are holding my family and friends emotionally and financially hostage. In fact, 8 million of them are holding each other's family, and friends, hostage. The threat of disfellowshipping (excommunication) is ever-present once you're baptised into the Jehovah's Witnesses, as I was when I was only a child. If you get disfellowshipped you are shunned. If your friend or family member gets disfellowshipped then you have to shun them. "Unless they are reinstated, this punishment is for the remainder of their life, causing tremendous emotional suffering."<sup>2</sup>

When I was little, we learned about how you can and should lie to protect Jehovah and the Watch Tower Society. As an adult I learned that this is a formal doctrinal teaching and policy called 'theocratic warfare'<sup>3</sup>. This means we didn't have to tell the whole truth to authorities to protect Jehovah's people. The threat of shunning underpins financial abuse and poverty in this religion. Coercion involving fear, obligation and guilt (FOG) via theocratic warfare keeps them silent.

**This is a silent emergency.**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/disfellowship-shunning.php>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/quotes/theocratic-warfare-lying.php>

## Being a Jehovah’s Witness (or former Jehovah’s Witness) is a driver of poverty in Australia

Jehovah’s Witnesses have the highest rate of poverty of any religion

The Jehovah’s Witnesses had the lowest income of all religions in the Pew Research studies. “[The] Jehovah’s Witnesses (48%) ... report household incomes of under \$30,000 a year.”<sup>4</sup>

**Household income of U.S. religious groups**  
*% of each religious group with total family income of \_\_\_\_\_ per year*

	<\$30,000	\$30,000-49,999	\$50,000-99,999	\$100,000+
Jewish	16%	15%	24%	44%
Hindu	17	13	34	36
Episcopal Church	19	13	34	35
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	24	15	29	32
Atheist	24	18	28	30
Agnostic	22	18	30	29
Orthodox Christian	18	17	36	29
United Church of Christ	31	16	23	29
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	19	22	32	26
United Methodist Church	23	20	31	26
Presbyterian Church in America	27	17	31	25
Unitarian Universalist	30	17	30	23
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod	22	21	34	22
Mormon	27	20	33	20
Muslim	34	17	29	20
All U.S. adults	35	20	26	19
Catholic	36	19	26	19
*Nothing in particular*	38	21	24	17
Churches of Christ	37	23	24	16
Southern Baptist Convention	32	22	31	16
Seventh-day Adventist	37	24	24	15
Buddhist	36	18	32	13
Assemblies of God	43	23	24	10
American Baptist Churches USA	53	18	21	9
Church of God in Christ	46	26	19	9
National Baptist Convention	49	21	21	9
Jehovah’s Witness	48	25	22	4

Note: Results recalculated to exclude nonresponse. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
 Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014.  
 PEW RESEARCH CENTER

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/05/12/chapter-3-demographic-profiles-of-religious-groups/#educational-attainment-and-income-of-religious-groups>

On 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022, the Attorney-General of Australia, the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP, announced the commencement of a public consultation on a draft of the National Principles to Address Coercive Control. Out of that consultation became the recommendation to address religious coercive control.

**Recommendation 1: Train psychologists in religious behaviours to create structured pathways to support persons who may be under coercive control that keeps them in a poverty cycle.**

Leaders actively discourage higher education

The official Jehovah's Witnesses website (JW.org) shows that Jehovah's Witnesses are actually discouraged by their leaders to obtain higher education:

***Spiritual education has greater value than secular education.** Unlike secular education, Bible-based spiritual education provides the lifesaving knowledge of God.*

And

*Jehovah's Witnesses feel that the environment in some universities or similar centers of higher learning can pose moral and spiritual dangers. For that reason, many Witnesses choose not to immerse themselves or their children in such an environment.*<sup>5</sup>

Some printed Jehovah's Witness literature has been removed from circulation, but copies of which can be found on JWfacts.com:

*"Higher education: Jesus warned against 'seeking your own glory.'" Watchtower 2011 Jun 15 p.32*<sup>6</sup>

And

*"That is why parents who base their lives on God's prophetic Word find it much more practical to direct their young ones into trades that do not require such long periods of additional schooling." Awake! 1969 May 22 p.15*<sup>7</sup>

And

*"Rather than looking to the advanced educational systems of this world for security, a Christian trusts in Jehovah." Watchtower 2008 Apr 15 p.4*<sup>8</sup>

And

*"Are we encouraging young ones, who are often steered by schoolteachers and others to pursue the world's higher education, to set spiritual goals instead and pursue the highest education—divine education?" Kingdom Ministry 2011 Oct p.3*<sup>9</sup>

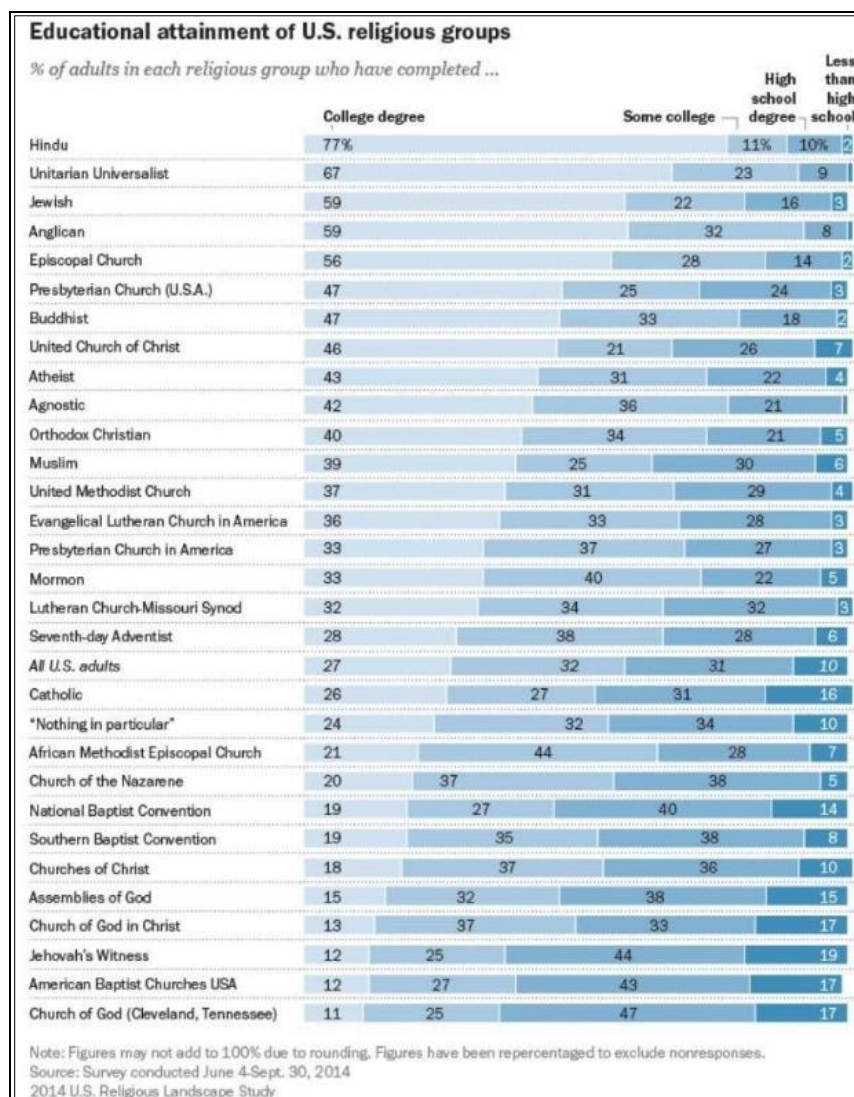
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/jw-education-school/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.jwfacts.com/images/watchtower-2011-jun-15-p32.jpg>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.jwfacts.com/images/awake-1969-may-22-p14-15.jpg>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.jwfacts.com/images/watchtower-2008-apr-15-p4.jpg>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.jwfacts.com/images/kingdom-ministry-2011-oct-p3.jpg>



According to a Pew Research Center report in 2007, just seven percent (7%) of Jehovah’s Witnesses in the US had obtained a college (university) degree. In 2014, that number had only increased to twelve percent (12%). The report found that Jehovah’s Witnesses had the second lowest education rate of all religions in the Pew Research studies.<sup>10</sup>

**Recommendation 2: Create multimedia education (via newspapers, radio, social media and television) for the general public to recognise religious coercive control as a barrier to escaping poverty (akin to gambling warnings).**

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/05/12/chapter-3-demographic-profiles-of-religious-groups/#educational-attainment-and-income-of-religious-groups>



### Leaders actively discourage career planning

The official Jehovah's Witness website (JW.org) demonstrates that leaders discourage Jehovah's Witnesses from following a career path:

"A Christian's view of the future should also affect his choice of **career**. With 'the world passing away,' a **career** based upon worldly ambitions is most unrealistic."<sup>11</sup>

It is anecdotally known by those who grow up in the Jehovah's Witnesses that men are best suited to construction work (note: the Jehovah's Witnesses have a billion-dollar property portfolio acquired from their members). For women, their role is generally to be an old-fashioned house-keeper and mother.

"As a youth, Jesus was taught carpentry. Although it was not to be his career, he learned the trade so well that he became known as "the carpenter." ... Today, not enough people place value on the trades."<sup>12</sup>

If being in a construction trade is not an option, such as because the Jehovah's Witnesses want to proselytise more extensively, then many are encouraged to take menial jobs that will allow them to preach door-to-door<sup>13</sup>. A window-washing career is an unfortunate 'in' joke amongst former Jehovah's Witnesses<sup>14</sup>. I have seen on social media that many Jehovah's Witnesses obtain extensive government benefits alongside their window washing and that it is encouraged by the religion to be able to spend more time proselytising.



Even if you are a former Jehovah's Witness, it was likely your desire for higher education was heavily discouraged and looked down upon. For many who leave (approximately 66% of children raised as Jehovah's Witnesses later leave the religion as adults<sup>15</sup>), some go on to complete higher education as mature students. However, learning late impacts early earning ability.

### **Recommendation 3: Create awareness within relevant government departments that religion and religious beliefs may be holding a person in a poverty cycle.**

<sup>11</sup> <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101985206>

<sup>12</sup> <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101985206>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.reddit.com/r/exjw/comments/kf77si/how\\_many\\_here\\_actually\\_did\\_window\\_washing\\_or\\_were/](https://www.reddit.com/r/exjw/comments/kf77si/how_many_here_actually_did_window_washing_or_were/)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.jehovahs-witness.com/topic/202506/most-jws-window-washers>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/04/26/a-closer-look-at-jehovahs-witnesses-living-in-the-u-s/>

### Leaders actively coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to donate cash, resources and time

All Jehovah's Witnesses are expected to donate their money, especially to buy land and building materials for the Church. In recent years, via cartoon propaganda called "Be Generous", young Jehovah's Witnesses have been encouraged to donate even their 'ice-cream money' to the Church<sup>1617</sup>.

Additionally, all members of a Jehovah's Witness family are expected to donate their spare time to participate in constructing and maintaining Kingdom Halls (churches). This was exposed in the attached national newspaper article, 'Jehovah's Witnesses accused of selling off assets, moving cash to avoid sex abuse compensation' (refer to Attachment 1).

In fact, some Jehovah's Witness appointments and assignments require a vow of poverty to be taken to fulfill the fulltime volunteer roles. No superannuation is contributed by the church in these fulltime positions. "Currently, there are some 67,000 members of the Worldwide Order of Special Full-Time Servants of Jehovah's Witnesses ... They are all bound by a "Vow of Obedience and Poverty," with which they agree to do whatever is assigned to them in the advancement of Kingdom interests, to live a simple lifestyle, and to abstain from secular employment without permission."<sup>18</sup>

#### **Recommendation 4: Investigate corporate coercion / financial abuse by religious charities and entities.**

### Leaders actively coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to transfer their assets

- **when the Jehovah's Witnesses claimed Armageddon was to be in 1975, they subtly coerced couples to sell their homes and become missionaries and/or donate their money,**

This happened to my former Jehovah's Witnesses friend Natalie and her husband. Other stories are here:

[https://www.reddit.com/r/exjw/comments/9z7887/people\\_here\\_that\\_were\\_witnesses\\_through\\_1975\\_can/](https://www.reddit.com/r/exjw/comments/9z7887/people_here_that_were_witnesses_through_1975_can/)

- **by holding votes in which congregation members unanimously vote for the transfer of their congregational savings to the Jehovah's Witness corporate entities, and**

All the congregants that had given their cash, resources and time to their local congregation were forced to hand over the Kingdom Hall deeds to head office, and any amounts of congregational savings above the immediate operating expenses. Please see the attached article entitled, 'Jehovah's Witnesses accused of selling off assets, moving cash to avoid sex abuse compensation'.

- **by pressuring aging Jehovah's Witnesses to reverse mortgage their houses.**

Several years ago, I attended a protest against the Jehovah's Witnesses in London. Whilst I was there, I spoke about the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse at Speaker's Corner, Hyde Park. A man in the audience come up to me and asked, "Did you say Jehovah's Witnesses?" He wanted me to talk to his mum and tell her what was reported by the Australian Royal Commission. I spoke on the phone for about 20 minutes whilst I walked to the protest. In the phone call,

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<sup>16</sup> [https://youtu.be/i-xtb\\_cd6lk](https://youtu.be/i-xtb_cd6lk)

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.reddit.com/r/exiw/comments/36ry3p/cough\\_up\\_kids\\_watchtower\\_needs\\_your\\_ice\\_cream/](https://www.reddit.com/r/exiw/comments/36ry3p/cough_up_kids_watchtower_needs_your_ice_cream/)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-april-2017/what-you-vow-pay/>

she described to me that she was being pressured by the local Elders who were trying to get her to reverse mortgage her house.

I later learned that there was a special department within the Jehovah's Witnesses branch office in England, that was specifically set up to review Wills from congregants that stipulated the Church as a beneficiary. In the event of a substantial financial amount, pressure was put on the Testator to donate the money while they were still alive. Apart from any privacy breach, such an act could potentially leave the testator in poverty.

It should be noted that the Jehovah's Witnesses are global organisation with a 'cookie cutter' approach to the way they do business. Therefore, this is likely to have occurred in Australia.


**Recommendation 5: Create greater financial accountability and transparency for basic religious charities registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC).**

**Leaders actively coerce Jehovah's Witnesses to nominate Jehovah's Witness corporate entities in their Wills**

When my Great Aunt died, she had left \$5,000 in her Will (dated 22<sup>nd</sup> day of February 2009) for the Jehovah's Witnesses. I didn't know of the Jehovah's Witnesses being included until she asked me to help her distribute her money to some of our family in Ukraine. The relevant part stated:

*"(h) The sum of \$5,000.00 to the MONTEMORENCY CONGREGATION OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES located at Montmorency, Victoria, to be used for general purposes and the receipt of the Treasurer of the said congregation shall be a full and sufficient discharge to my Executors."*

The Elders had clearly showed her how to include the correct entity in her Will, and the specific wording allowing the money to be donated by the congregation to another Jehovah's Witness entity. The Will was witnessed by an Elder of the congregation, Mr

SIGNED by the said _____ as and for the last Will and Testament in the presence of us both present at the same time who in her presence and at her request and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as attesting witnesses :-	
	Signatures
	Full names

The Montmorency Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses no longer exists as a legal entity. The Australian Business Number (ABN) of the Montmorency Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses was cancelled on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, 2018 and the Australian Charity and Not-for Profit (ACNC) status was voluntarily

revoked on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2018. Interestingly, the National Redress Scheme was established the month before, on 1 July 2018.<sup>19</sup>

The governing rules for the charity can still be seen and they state that:

*“15. In the event of the Congregation being wound up the surplus assets shall be realized/transferred and thereafter all funds after payment of the Congregation’s liabilities and expenses of winding up shall be paid/transferred to any other Congregation/s of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Australia....”*

<p>15. In the event of the Congregation being wound up the surplus assets shall be realized/transferred and thereafter all funds after payment of the Congregation’s liabilities and expenses of winding up shall be paid/transferred to any other Congregation/s of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Australia, subject to the beneficiary being organized and operated exclusively for religious and charitable purposes. If the beneficiary is not in existence nor authorized by law to receive such assets, then all properties and assets shall be distributed to another charitable organization in harmony with the exclusively religious purposes of Jehovah’s Witnesses.</p> <p>Certified as a correct copy of the Rules duly adopted:</p> <p>..... Print Name</p> <p>..... Signature</p> <p>..... Coordinator/Officer Designation</p>
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**Recommendation 6: Increased regulation of basic religious charities to prevent the use of religious coercive control, and ongoing educational awareness relating to elder (financial) abuse.**

Leaders actively coerce Jehovah’s Witnesses to exclude shunned family members from their Wills

*“All in the congregation can show principled love by avoiding contact and conversation with the disfellowshipped person.”<sup>20</sup>*

After a Jehovah’s Witness is disfellowshipped, they are then shunned by current Jehovah’s Witnesses. The Jehovah’s Witnesses alternate between disagreeing and agreeing that they shun, depending on whether theocratic warfare (see Attachment 2) is needed for the situation. Although they mainly claim they do not shun, their behaviour and culture show differently.

*“Suppose a beloved relative is disfellowshipped. From your study of the Bible, you know how disfellowshipped ones are to be treated. (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 John 10) Yet, upholding the disfellowshipping decision may at times seem very difficult, even impossible. Can you trust that your heavenly Father will give you the fortitude you need to be resolute in abiding by the Bible’s*

<sup>19</sup> <https://guides.dss.gov.au/national-redress-guide>

<sup>20</sup> <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2015287>

*direction about disfellowshipping? Do you see here an opportunity for you to make your relationship with Jehovah stronger by forming a closer bond with him?”<sup>21</sup>*

When my Jehovah’s Witnesses Uncle died, I observed that my former Jehovah’s Witness mother was excluded from his Will. My Uncle had had written in his Will words to the effect that that my mother was being provided for by her (non-Jehovah’s Witness) husband, my uncle had not left anything in his Will for her. At that time, I believe that my mother was supporting herself financially. But my (current Jehovah’s Witness) Aunt was not excluded from my Uncle’s Will, although she was likely being provided for by her Jehovah’s Witness husband. If I remember correctly, my mother was also left out of one or both of her parents’ Will, and in a similar manner. It was particularly cruel and insulting. And, it meant my mother got less than all of her Jehovah’s Witness siblings, despite her diligently being loyal to her parents. I have read similar stories on social media about being left out of funeral services and Wills of family members primarily because of religious affiliation. This can create intergenerational poverty, especially when the monies are left to the church instead.



*“The cycle of poverty begins when a child is born into a poor family. These families often have limited or no resources to create opportunities to advance themselves, which leaves them stuck in the poverty trap.”<sup>22</sup>*

The threat of shunning underpins poverty within the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

## Related matters

### Child Labour

According to the International Labor Organization,

*the term “**child labour**” is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to **work that:***

- ***is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or***

<sup>21</sup> <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2015286>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.worldvision.ca/stories/child-sponsorship/what-is-the-cycle-of-poverty>

- **interferes with their schooling** by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.<sup>23</sup>

I was one of thousands of Jehovah's Witness children used as forced or coerced child labourers by the religious leaders, and corporations, of the Jehovah's Witnesses globally. I made a submission to the *Inquiry into Modern Slavery Act 2018 and Associated Matters*<sup>24</sup> in which I described that we had to:

- clean bricks on church property (called Kingdom Halls) for 'quick build' building sites;
- help to build roads on church property sites (called Assembly Halls);
- prepare food for sale at large meetings (called Conventions);
- go from door-to-door, selling church literature; and
- constantly proselytise to non-Jehovah's Witnesses to attract new members.

Parents and children are still coerced by church leaders to undertake these types of activities.

In fact, the Hon Tony Zappia MP made a speech for the anniversary of the National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse in which he stated:

*"The Jehovah's Witnesses are a very wealthy organisation. All assets belong to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and not the local congregants. They call their churches Kingdom Halls, and they are built using congregants' labour and donations. The labour is unpaid and, I understand, at times includes the labour of children.*

*They derive money from deceased estates bequeathed to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society by convening district conventions and circuit assemblies, and through the sale of real estate, which appears to have escalated since the royal commission in Australia and inquiries into their organisations in other countries. Their wealth is estimated in billions, not millions, of dollars."*<sup>25</sup>

### Financial cost of whistleblowing

In order to facilitate action, I have financed submissions, travel, websites, etc. for myself and others to the value of over \$120,000, plus lost earnings, to expose the Jehovah's Witnesses abuses. The Jehovah's Witness corporation has targeted and victimised whistleblowers like myself to stop us from speaking out.<sup>26</sup> In many cases, they have issued erroneous takedown notices.<sup>27</sup>

Below are some of the actions taken to increase public awareness, encourage more survivors to come forward, to seek justice and redress, to facilitate the government to take action, and to hold the Jehovah's Witnesses accountable:

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/65890/0023%20Ms%20Larissa%20Kaput.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Hansard/Hansard\\_Display?bid=chamber/hansardr/c4ab46e1-15d4-4e92-970f-0a08926f67b5/&sid=0210](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hansard_Display?bid=chamber/hansardr/c4ab46e1-15d4-4e92-970f-0a08926f67b5/&sid=0210)

<sup>26</sup> <https://jwleaks.org/2023/04/14/australia-jehovahs-witnesses-complaint-re-abc-four-corners-program-bearing-witness/>

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.reddit.com/r/exmormon/comments/gdyph2/the\\_jehovahs\\_witness\\_are\\_using\\_dmca\\_takedown/](https://www.reddit.com/r/exmormon/comments/gdyph2/the_jehovahs_witness_are_using_dmca_takedown/)

- 12 Sep 2019 Crikey:  
Compensation claims against Jehovah's Witnesses could be Jeopardised: Lawyer<sup>28</sup>
- 24 Jan 2018 ABC: Abandoning religion<sup>29</sup>
- 9 Mar 2017 NewsCorp: Inside the Jehovah's Witnesses: A 'perfect storm' for abuse<sup>30</sup>
- 10 Sep 2019 Crikey: Leaders of the Jehovah's Witnesses ordered to destroy confidential records<sup>31</sup>
- 16 Sep 2019 Crikey: Human rights watchdog met with Jehovah's Witnesses over child safety concerns<sup>32</sup>
- 17 Sep 2019 SBS: How the Jehovah's Witnesses 'broke' my family<sup>33</sup>
- 18 Sep 2019 Crikey:  
Paradise Lost: how the Jehovah's Witnesses punish those who speak out against child sexual abuse<sup>34</sup>
- 14 Jun 2020 NewsCorp:  
Jehovah's Witnesses accused of selling off assets, moving cash to avoid sex abuse compensation (Refer to Attachment 1)
- 1 Jul 2020 10 Play (The Project) Statement to The Project regarding the National Redress Scheme and the sales of Kingdom Halls and properties<sup>35</sup>
- 12 Jul 2020 BBC: Investigation into Jehovah's Witnesses' property sell-offs - JW.org<sup>36</sup>
- 7 Feb 2021 The New Daily: Child abuse survivor slams government's 8-year extension of national redress scheme deadline<sup>37</sup>
- 3 March 2021 The New Daily:  
Jehovah's Witnesses to join redress scheme for child sexual abuse survivors<sup>38</sup>
- 19 Apr 2021 NewsCorp: Jehovah's Witnesses resolve legal stoush with charity watchdog<sup>39</sup>
- 19 Apr 2021 News Corp: Jehovah's Witnesses charity denies tax issues with watchdog<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/09/12/compensation-claims-jehovahs-witnesses/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/religionandethicsreport/the-biggest-taboo/9354234>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.smh.com.au/national/inside-the-jehovahs-witnesses-a-perfect-storm-for-abuse-20170309-guukur.html>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/09/10/leaders-of-the-jehovahs-witnesses-ordered-to-destroy-confidential-records/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/09/16/jehovahs-witnesses-human-rights-commission/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/article/how-the-jehovahs-witnesses-broke-my-family/tioi56yxw>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/09/18/inq-jehovahs-witnesses/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://10play.com.au/theproject/articles/statement-from-the-jehovahs-witnesses/tpa200621ycelg>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViHC7XigpN4&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>37</sup> <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/national/2021/02/07/national-redress-child-abuse-extension/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/2021/03/03/jehovahs-witnesses-redress-scheme/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/jehovahs-witnesses-facing-tax-turmoil/news-story/64acd93d531eb6b7301dda758e7ee2ff>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/jehovahs-witnesses-resolve-legal-stoush-with-charity-watchdog/news-story/2627927c637ab39d03623b8ba76194aa>

- 10 Sep 2021 The New Daily: Jehovah's Witnesses join redress scheme<sup>41</sup>
- 10 Sep 2021 News Corp: Tax threat triggers Jehovah's Witnesses U-turn<sup>42</sup>
- 13 Sep 2021 ABC (Four Corners): Inside the brutal world of the Jehovah's Witnesses<sup>43</sup>

## The impact of poverty on individuals

I made a submission to the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System*<sup>44</sup>. In it I described the impact of my family who are suffering from religious harm. I said:

*"Including myself, thirteen of my family members suffered from poor mental health:*

- *All were socially isolated (including myself);*
- *Three had depression (including myself);*
- *Three had suicide ideation;*
- *Two were neurotic;*
- *Two had Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (including myself);*
- *Two were teenage alcoholics (including myself);*
- *One was a child sexual abuse perpetrator;*
- *One was manic;*
- *One was morbidly obese;*
- *One has Narcissistic Personality Disorder;*
- *One has schizophrenia; and*
- *One had generalised anxiety (including myself)."*

Financial abuse and poverty forms part of this.

## Mechanisms to address and reduce poverty

I have explained how the threat of shunning underpins poverty within the Jehovah's Witnesses. It was then described that using theocratic warfare can keep anything in the Jehovah's Witnesses covered up.

Here is the summary of recommended mechanisms that may help:

**Recommendation 1: Train psychologists in religious behaviours to create structured pathways to support persons who may be under coercive control that keeps them in a poverty like cycle.**

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<sup>41</sup> <https://thenewdaily.com.au/news/2021/09/10/jehovahs-witnesses-redress/>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/tax-threat-triggers-jehovahs-witnesses-uturn-on-redress/news-story/f986066fc13c6450199209364a0fc560>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-13/jehovah-witnesses-child-abuse-four-corners-investigations/100444320>

<sup>44</sup> [http://rcvmhs.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Anonymous\\_334.pdf](http://rcvmhs.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Anonymous_334.pdf)



**Recommendation 2: Create multimedia education (via newspapers, radio, social media and television) for the general public to recognise religious coercive control as a barrier to escaping poverty (akin to gambling warnings).**

**Recommendation 3: Create awareness within relevant government departments that religion and religious beliefs may be holding a person in a poverty cycle.**

**Recommendation 4: Investigate corporate coercion / financial abuse by religious charities and entities.**

**Recommendation 5: Create greater financial accountability and transparency for basic religious charities registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC).**

**Recommendation 6: Increased regulation of basic religious charities to prevent the use of religious coercive control, and ongoing educational awareness relating to elder (financial) abuse.**

## Attachment 2 – Theocratic Warfare

The excerpt below was republished within an article by Reveal News, and shows an original *The Watchtower* magazine, with some descriptions of how theocratic warfare works in practice<sup>45</sup>. It should be noted that this Theocratic War Strategy has never been revoked:

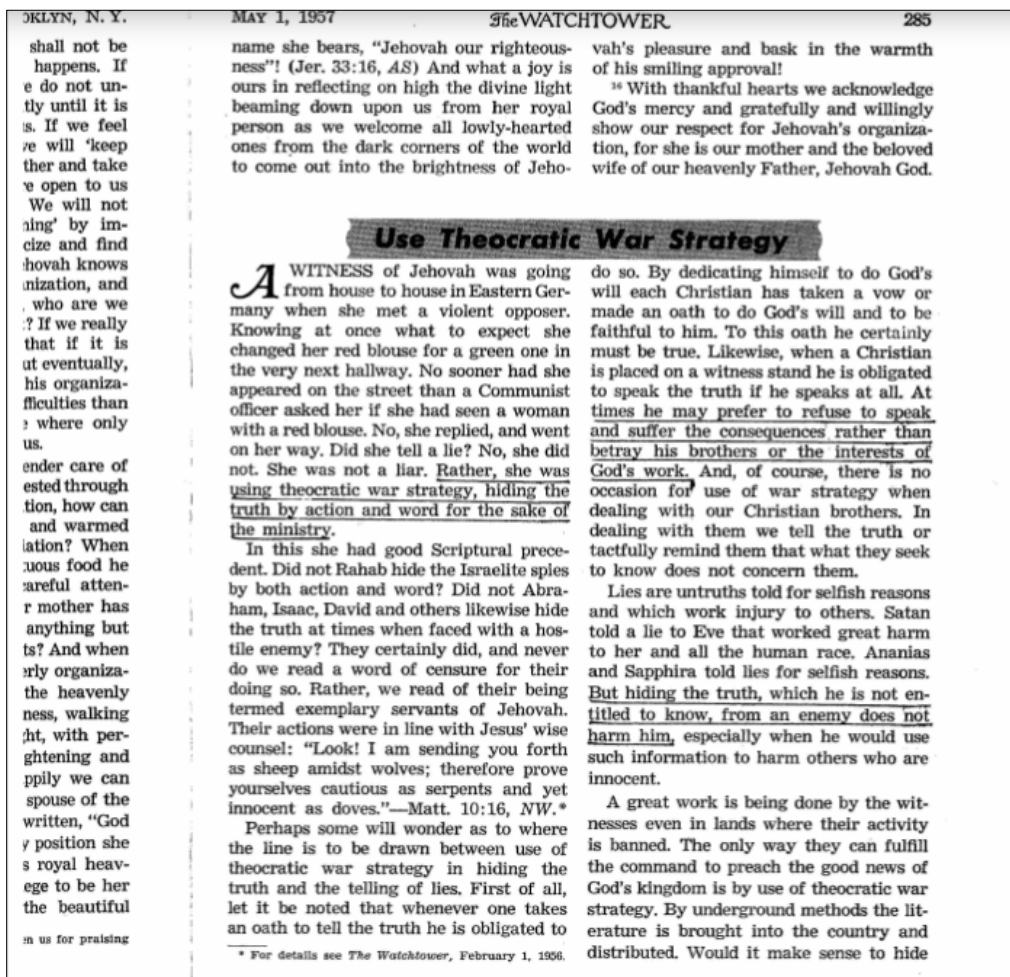
*“Rather, she was using theocratic war strategy, hiding the truth by action and word for the sake of the ministry.”*

And

*“At times he may prefer to refuse to speak and suffer the consequences rather than betray his brothers or the interests of God’s work.”*

And

*“But hiding the truth, which he is not entitled to know, from an enemy does not harm him...”*



<sup>45</sup> <https://revealnews.org/article/jehovahs-witnesses-can-hide-the-truth-in-court-to-protect-religion/>