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Dear Senate Committee,

My name is Diane Lynn (nee Bailey). I was raised a Jehovah Witness and it is in this institution that I was sexually abused from a baby, by the son of a prominent member of the Nundah congregation in Brisbane. I told my story to the Commissioners in 2017, and I attended the Royal Commission in Sydney into the Jehovah Witness response to child sexual abuse. I appeared on the ABC national news, radio, and online to tell my story, and to highlight the fact that the Jehovah's Witnesses have failed to take up the recommendations of the Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse, including the redress scheme. I have published a book on child sexual abuse and have been an advocate of children rights for most of my life.

I am writing today to explain why I believe the Jehovah's Witness institution hasn't opted into the Redress scheme, and why only a very small number who were sexually abused in this institution have applied for redress, I also wish to express my views on what the government can do to address the issue of the Jehovah's Witnesses failing to opt into the Redress scheme and the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

Rejection, Disappointment and Expectations

Unfortunately, the child in me thought for a very brief moment that the Government was going to come to the rescue of Jehovah's Witness children, and those that had been sexually abused in this religion. I was so excited, I couldn't believe it, but when I learnt that the institutions had the option of opting in, and the only consequence was naming and shaming, I quickly realised that the Jehovah's Witness institution would not be opting into the Redress Scheme. I was devastated that I had allowed myself to have expectations and hope again.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that they are no part of the world and therefore could not be part of the Redress scheme. They don't put their trust in earthling men, or answer to Governments that are from Satan, which contradict bible law. They could not join the Redress scheme as Jehovah's Witnesses are waiting on Jehovah to solve mans problems at Armageddon (May 2019, Watchtower the Response to Child Sexual Abuse).

I have rung Bethel, the Headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses, on several occasions and they have confirmed that they would not be opting in the Redress scheme, by reiterating the May 2019 Watchtower "to wait on Jehovah, and that Jehovah will cause justice to be done for us". They also said that they would wait until the Government got their act together and enforce mandatory reporting before ever considering reporting or joining the redress scheme. I must agree with them that applying for redress appears to be a futile exercise as they are not going to opt in, and not legally required to opt in. It takes an incredible amount of courage to be exposed, re-traumatised, rejected and again not valued. Only the government had the power to change this situation, and in my opinion, the government gave institutions a loophole to let survivors past, present and in the future, down.

For a person that has experienced child sexual abuse, and wasn't allowed the basic rights of a child, to answer questions 44 and 58 were incredibly hard and distressing. I

found it so distressing to relive the trauma, and know that for me, there wouldn't be any positive outcome. It was only on my husband's encouragement, and years of therapy that I have finally put my application in.

The JW culture does not value children. They value the wellbeing of the perpetrator (wrongdoer) over the child/children. They don't even celebrate children's birthdays, and expect a child to sacrifice their own lives for their brothers, sisters and ultimately Jehovah (May 2019, Watchtower). I can honestly say that the Jehovah's Witness institution is one of the most disempowering institutions for children and women. Even in the ex JW community, they for the most part struggle with the concept of supporting the victim/survivor. I believe this is due to the Jehovah's Witness culture in which they believe in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus dying for their sins, thus exceptional protection and concern for the perpetrator's welfare, versus the child's welfare.

Jehovah's Witnesses won't change their biblical interpretation of the two-witness rule. They don't believe they are responsible, or accountable for child abuse, or accusations of child abuse, as their primary concern is for "making the sick one, the wrongdoer well" (May 2020, Watchtower).

I believe that Jehovah's Witnesses will not join redress for two main reasons;

- They can't collaborate in political, or worldly affairs, as they believe they are no part of the Satan's world, and rely on Jehovah to wipe away all the worldly people at Armageddon.
- They only see child sexual abuse as a sin, and their primary concern is for the sinner and his/her spiritual welfare. Joining redress would thus mean that they would be admitting that their foolproof bible-based system is wrong in dealing with child sexual abuse. Jehovah's Witnesses could never admit that they could be wrong, as they believe they have the absolute truth.

Some reasons why I think the survivors of child sexual abuse in the Jehovah's Witness institution are not applying for redress are listed below;

- The government not making the redress scheme compulsory, thus making it a pointless exercise. Survivors understood that the **Jehovah's Witnesses had no intention of opting into the redress scheme.**
- **Shame.** It takes tremendous courage, **vulnerability** and trust to fill out the application form with such personal questions as question 44 and 58.
- We were often **blamed and shamed** for the abuse. We were not believed and even if we were believed, but no witnesses to the abuse, no action was taken as we were told to wait on Jehovah. If action was taken due to being two witnesses or confession, the repentant wrongdoer is lovingly kept in the congregation or welcomed back to be with the child/children again in the congregation.
- By the government not making the redress and recommendations compulsory, the government also appears to be not taking appropriate action against this criminal offence. This leaves vulnerable children unprotected. Naming and shaming, or even taking away their charity status, in my opinion is not good enough in stopping further child sexual abuse from occurring, or persuading them to change their policies and procedures.
- Rejection. The fear of being **rejected** again is too great. We have been asked to be vulnerable again, to be rejected and disappointed again, I don't think so. Please remember we were only children when we were

sexually abused, and told Jehovah was going to kill us at Armageddon if we told.

- Guilt. The Jehovah's Witness culture breed's **guilt**. We were told it was our fault for wearing improper clothing. We were told we should have screamed and said "No". We were told we should have fought him off. We were told it was **our fault**. The guilty repentant one is forgiven and yet we may never be told it wasn't our fault.
- We couldn't tell anyone as we will be blamed, no support, and seen as dirty and bringing reproach on Jehovah. We can't take our brother to court.
- There is **no legal support, or protection** for us against repercussions. I have been advised that there hasn't been any successful civil action against Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia.
- Many don't want to tell the secrets **fear** of speaking out is not only letting Jehovah down, the congregation down, but we are also letting our family down, and bringing shame to them.
- Some may have dissociation and memory blocks due to the extreme sexual abuse from a young age, with no collaboration allowed from others that have also been abused, due to the threat of **repercussions** and **punishment** from speaking out about it.
- Shut off from family and the congregation.
- **Fear** of not being valued again. *Jehovah's Witnesses don't celebrate birthdays, and in the 1970's, congregants were discouraged from having children, as in the last days of this wicked system, we were told that children would be a burden.
- Disempowered - Many survivors have **low self-esteem** and **feelings of unworthiness**, especially as we know that they won't ever be sorry and change their unsafe child practices.
- To receive redress the abuse can't be familial. The Jehovah's Witness hierarchy is different to the Catholic Church for example where the Priest can't marry. In the Jehovah's Witness religion, when a man gets baptised he is considered an ordained Minister of God and is able to move up the ranks from Ministerial Servant, Elder, Circuit Overseer, District Overseer right up to the Governing Body. All of these men are able to marry and have children. This makes it very likely that an abuser would be family, such as the case of BCG who testified against the JW's at the Royal Commission. BCG, like many other Jehovah's Witness survivors, is ineligible to apply for redress, as her Minister Father was the abuser.

What I think, if anything, can be done can to get the Jehovah's Witness religion to opt into the redress scheme;

I don't think that anything can be done now to get them to opt into the scheme, as I don't believe that they will not renege on their stance. For the future although, I would suggest below;

- Stop the Jehovah's Witnesses from preaching door to door, or at least do not allow children to go door to door with congregants, as paedophiles are protected in this institution.
- Stop congregants from conducting bible studies with children, especially in privacy.
- Stop them from doing their "cart" work in public places, especially at schools, childcare centres and parks where children gather.

- They must advise people, including congregants that they are not, and can't assure a child safe religion.
- Abolish committee meetings/hearings with children present. Stop men from questioning children and blaming and shaming them.
- They must be scrutinised and made to prove that they are charitable institution.
- Take away their charity status if they aren't proving to be charitable, or if their policies and procedures don't prove them to be a child safe institution.

Thank you for your time in reading my submission.

Yours truly,

Diane Lynn.