



Abuse in Care

Royal Commission of Inquiry



Jehovah's Witnesses Case Study

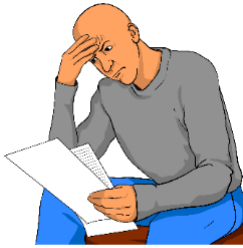


Published: August 2024

Before you start



This Easy Read document is about a report written by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.



Some of the information and pictures used in this document is very upsetting.



This document is about people being badly hurt by people who were meant to look after them.



The people who were hurt include:

- children
- disabled people.



Before you read it you might want to make sure you:



- are in a safe place
- have people who can support you.



If you do not feel safe call the police on **111**.



If you are upset after reading this document you can talk to your:

- whānau / family
- friends.



NEED TO TALK?



free call or text
any time



You can also talk to a counsellor at
Need to Talk by:

- calling 1737
- texting 1737.

It does not cost any money to call /
text 1737.

You can also find support through the
Survivor Experiences Service
website.

[https://survivorexperiences.govt.nz/
support-services/](https://survivorexperiences.govt.nz/support-services/)

[https://survivorexperiences.govt.nz/
for-survivors/disabled-survivors/](https://survivorexperiences.govt.nz/for-survivors/disabled-survivors/)



You can contact them the Survivor Experiences Service by:



- **phone: 0800 456 090**

- **text: 8328**



- **email:**

contact@survivorexperiences.govt.nz

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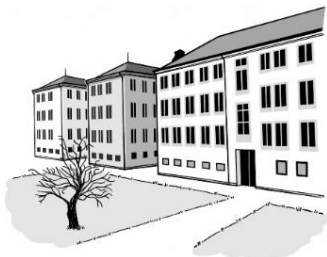
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About the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care



Abuse in Care
Royal Commission of Inquiry

The **Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care** is looking into abuse that happened to people **in care**.



In this document being **in care** means that the Government or a **faith-based institution** was in charge of your care.



Faith-based institutions are run by religious groups like churches.



Abuse can be:

- **physical** – a person kicking or hitting you
- **sexual** – a person doing sexual things to you that you do not want them to such as:
 - touching your body or private parts
 - kissing you
 - making you have sex with them – this is called rape
- **emotional** – a person yelling or saying things to you that are not nice
- **neglect** – a person not giving you the things or care you need.

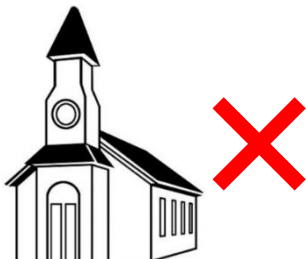
The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care is also called the **Commission.**



The Commission is not part of the Government.



The Government cannot tell the Commission what to do.



The Commission is not part of any faith-based organisations like churches.

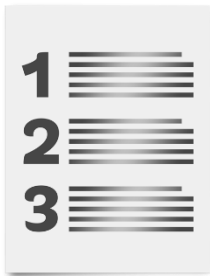


The Commission calls people who have been through abuse in care **survivors.**

What is this document about?



This Easy Read document is a **summary** of a **case study**.



A **summary** is:

- shorter than the main document
- tells you the main ideas.



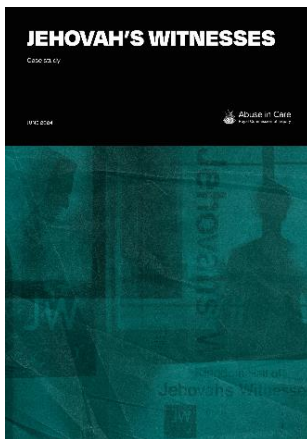
A **case study** is research that is done on 1:

- person
- group
- place.





The Commission asked for case studies to be done to talk about the abuse in care that happened to certain communities of survivors.



This case study is called **Case Study: Jehovah's Witnesses**.

It is about the abuse that happened to people who were part of the Jehovah's Witnesses.



This includes abuse that happened to:

- children
- young people
- women.



The Commission has given a **trigger warning** to go with this document.



A **trigger warning** is a statement that says the information you are about to read has upsetting things in it.



The Commission says:

We honour and uphold the dignity of survivors who have so bravely shared their stories here.



We acknowledge that some content contains **explicit** descriptions of tūkino – abuse, harm and trauma – and may evoke strong negative, emotional responses for readers.



Here **explicit** means things are talked about in detail.



The Commission also says:

Although this response may be unpleasant and difficult to **tolerate**, it is also appropriate to feel upset.



Tolerate means to deal with something even though it is bad.



The Commission also says:

Respect other's truths, breathe deeply, take care of your spirit and be gentle with your heart.

Who are the Jehovah's Witnesses?



The Jehovah's Witnesses are a **Christian faith**.



Being a **Christian** means:

- believing in Jesus Christ who:
 - might have lived about 2000 years ago
 - is a person written about in the **Bible**
- trusting that what Jesus Christ said is a good way to live.

Being a part of a **faith** means being part of a religious community.



The **Bible** is a book about religion that was written a long time ago.

Different religions have different versions of the Bible.



The Jehovah's Witnesses believe in exactly what is said in the Bible.



The Jehovah's Witnesses use **principles** that were decided on over 2000 years ago to:

- practice their religion
- make rules for their people
- make sure their rules are followed.





Principles are a set of ideas that guide how something is done



The Jehovah's Witnesses have been in Aotearoa New Zealand for about 100 years.

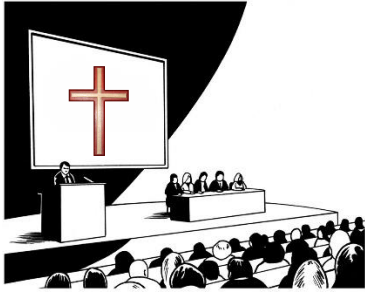


A lot more people in Aotearoa New Zealand became part of the Jehovah's Witnesses just before the 1950s.



The Jehovah's Witnesses are led by a group of 8 men in New York who give directions to:

- to all their people
- their **congregations**.



Here a **congregation** is a community of people who belong to the Jehovah's Witnesses.

A congregation can be in a:

- town
- city
- country.



An Elder is a man who is chosen to be a leader by how well they match up to the principles in the Bible.

How did the Jehovah's Witnesses influence people?



The Jehovah's Witnesses had a big **influence** on what their people did during the **Inquiry period**.

Influence means to control what people do.

1950



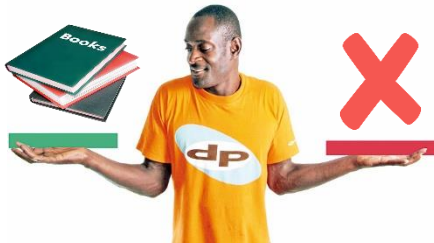
1999

The **Inquiry period** means the time the Commission looked at when they were doing research on abuse in care.

This time was from 1950 until 1999.



The Jehovah's Witnesses told their people:



- what they could do with big parts of their time

- what education they could get like going to school



- who they could:

- marry

- be friends with



- what medical treatments they could get.



2 witnesses said they were under the control of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Jehovah's Witnesses disagree that this happened.



Children and young people were in the care of the Jehovah's Witnesses when they did faith activities.



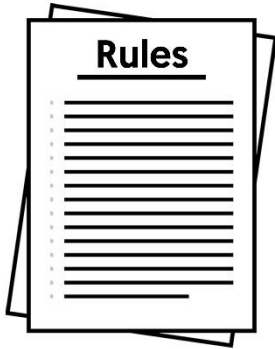
Faith activities were things like:

- going door to door to talk about their religion
- supporting people in their community
- working bees like doing jobs at church which includes things like:
 - cleaning
 - gardening.
- investigations like looking at what is going on in their community
- judicial committees which are groups making decisions.





The Jehovah's Witnesses disagreed these activities should be part of the **Terms of Reference** for the Inquiry.

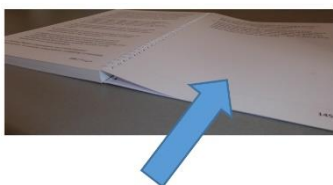


The **Terms of Reference** means things like:

- what the Commission could do
- what the Commission could not do
- who the Commission could talk to.



The Commission say that children and young people were in the care of the Jehovah's Witnesses.



The reasons for this are talked about in the next section.

How did the Jehovah's Witnesses abuse people?



Power

Elders had a lot of power over people including children and young people.



The Jehovah's Witnesses made it very hard for people to report abuse to:

- people in their faith
- authorities outside the faith like the police.

Barriers

The Jehovah's Witnesses had big **barriers** to reporting abuse.



A **barrier** is something that stops you from doing something.

Barriers included:



- how women were not seen as being equal to men
- rules for reporting abuse that were very hard to follow
- people were scared of being **shunned**
- people not knowing how to get on with others who were not Jehovah's Witnesses.



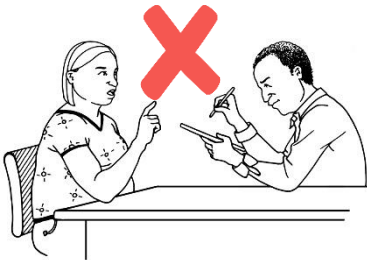


Here being **shunned** meant people being made to leave:

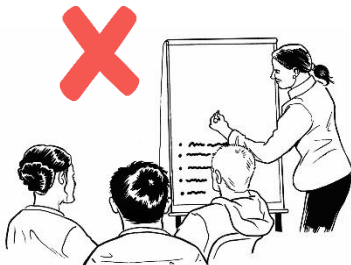
- the Jehovah's Witnesses
- their family
- the community they knew.

The Elders

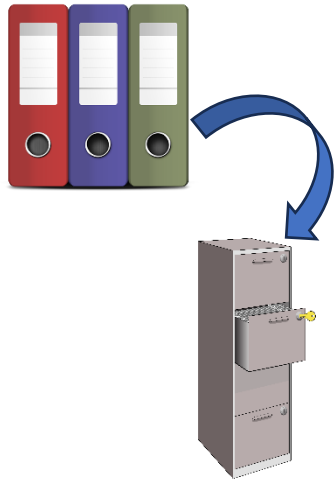
The Jehovah's Witnesses did not research if a person was good enough to become an Elder.



Elders were not trained properly in:



- preventing abuse
- responding to abuse when it happened.



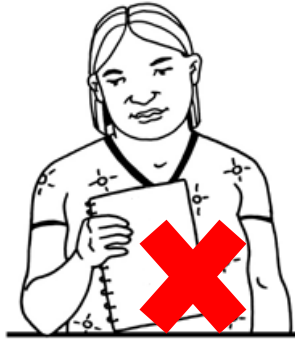
Record-keeping

Record-keeping means making sure information is put somewhere safe so it can be used at another time.

It can be things like:

- writing documents
- recording videos
- recording audio files.





The Jehovah's Witnesses did not put a lot of detail in their records about the relationships between:

- Elders

and

- the children and young people who had been abused.



This meant the Commission could not work out how bad the abuse in care had been.

The Commission did get some information from people.



One person said they had been sexually abused.



Other people said abuse happened during:

- investigations
- judicial committees.



They said this abuse had been:

- psychological which means things like making threats
- emotional like making people scared.





Rules

The rules Jehovah's Witnesses had about child sex abuse:

- came from parts of the Bible
- were in lots of different documents they had written.



The rules for how the Jehovah's Witnesses responded to people telling them about abuse:

- were old
- did not work.



An example of a rule that did not work is there needed to be 2 people who saw child abuse happen.





The Jehovah's Witnesses did not:

- report abuse to authorities outside the faith like the police
- make sure the abusers in the faith faced **consequences**.



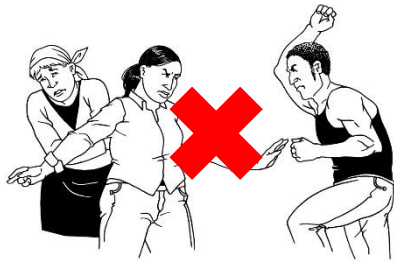
Here **consequences** means what happens to someone after they have done something wrong.

It can mean things like:



- losing their job
- going to court / jail if what they did was a crime
- paying a fine.

What did the Commission decide?



The Commission thinks that the Jehovah's Witnesses did not do enough to:

- prevent abuse
- respond to abuse.



The Jehovah's Witnesses say that children and young people were not in their care during the Inquiry time period.



This means the Commission is worried about how well the Jehovah's Witnesses kept children and young people in their care safe.



This information has been written by
The Royal Commission of Inquiry into
Abuse in Care.



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