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## Former Jehovah's elder on sex assault charge

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A FORMER Jehovah's Witness elder who apologised to his alleged victim on Facebook has been charged with two counts of indecent assault. Richard Hill will appear in the Heidelberg Magistrate's Court on March 1 over allegations that he sexually assaulted a six-year-old girl in 1981.

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The victim, now 38, told Fairfax Media that Mr Hill did everything except penetrate her - "he tried, but couldn't manage".

She said she "did not realise the gravity" of what had happened until she was about 14.

At that point she told her mother, who could not act because of a Jehovah's Witness rule that allegations of sexual abuse would only be acted on if two elders witnessed it, she said.

Much later, the victim confronted Mr Hill on Facebook. "He turned around and apologised," she said. "He became an elder within the church and rose quite high up. Since he was charged, he has stepped down."

The Victorian inquiry into how churches handled complaints of child sex abuse heard from two former Jehovah's Witnesses on Monday, who say they have been ostracised by the church.

Fairfax Media reported on Monday that the child was one of four who clubbed together their pocket money to raise the \$69.70 needed to launch a prosecution against the church over its alleged refusal to get working-with-children checks.

*This story was found at: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/former-jehovahs-elder-on-sex-assault-charge-20130218-2enhi.html>*