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Jehovah's Witness child sex predator joined other congregations, royal commission told

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A self-confessed child sex abuser moved between different congregations of the Jehovah's Witness Church without members being warned of his potential risk to children, according to evidence before a royal commission.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse heard that a high-ranking member of the Jehovah's Witness Church allegedly molested four of his daughters in the 1970s and 1980s.

The man, given the pseudonym BCH, appeared before a committee of church elders where he was confronted with the sex abuse allegations as well as a claim of adultery, the commission heard.

Church elder Kevin Bowditch told the commission BCH was cast out of his congregation due to the adultery claim but not the allegations of sexual abuse.

In evidence he said BCH was "disgusting" but was unsure why the sex abuse allegations against him had been omitted from the committee's initial findings.

The commission heard it was not practice to warn the wider community about alleged child sex offenders.

"You don't seek to protect or take care of children outside of the congregation?" counsel assisting, Angus Stewart SC, asked Mr Bowditch.

"We take consideration of them but what ability have we got to protect every child in Australia?" Mr Bowditch said.

Mr Stewart responded: "You can report them to the child protection authorities."

Mr Bowditch agreed in evidence the church could report alleged offenders but it was not generally done.

When asked by Pauline David, legal counsel for BCG, whether BCH was "left out there in the community", Mr Bowditch agreed.

BCH went on to attend two new congregations in Queensland.

In previous evidence, one of BCH's daughters, given the pseudonym BCG, gave [a harrowing account of her abuse](#) and the way her complaint was handled by church authorities.

A 2002 letter from another daughter, given the pseudonym BCK, raises the possibility of her father molesting other children.

In the letter to the head of the Jehovah's Witness legal department tendered to the commission, BCK wrote: "I am concerned that he may still have contact with young children in his congregation and they may be in danger of being abused by him.

"I am not sure many in his congregation are aware of his attitude toward paedophilia and may unknowingly expose their children to risk."

BCH was found guilty of a number of sexual offences against BCG in 2004, serving four years in prison.

Evidence before the commission shows he moved to Western Australia upon his release where he joined a new congregation and repeatedly asked to be reinstated.

"My conscience is perfectly clear," he wrote in a 2013 letter tendered in evidence.

"Jehovah will judge those making false accusations."

The hearing before Justice Peter McClellan has adjourned until Friday.

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800

Adults Surviving Child Abuse 1300 657 380

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/jehovahs-witness-child-sex-predator-joined-other-congregations-royal-commission-told-20150805-gin2iu.html>