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# Jehovah's Witnesses shield child sex abusers from police, report says

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By [Trey Bundy](https://www.revealnews.org/author/treybundy/) / December 7, 2015



Jehovah's Witnesses policies allow child sexual abusers to operate within their congregations without fear that they will be reported to police, according to a [new report](https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2641989-Submissions-of-Senior-Counsel-Assisting-the.html) (<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2641989-Submissions-of-Senior-Counsel-Assisting-the.html>) published by the Australian government.

The report stems from public hearings held this summer, during which top Jehovah's Witnesses gave sworn testimony about the organization's child abuse protocols.

Since 1950, Jehovah's Witnesses headquarters in Australia has fielded allegations of child sexual abuse against 1,006 members involving at least 1,800 victims, according to the report. Although 579 members confessed to abusing children, none were reported to police or other authorities.

“It is the policy and practice of the Jehovah’s Witness organisation ... to not report allegations of child sexual abuse to the police or other authorities unless required by law to do so,” the report said.

Attorney Angus Stewart, who led the inquiry for the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, submitted 77 separate points critical of the Jehovah’s Witnesses policies and practices toward child sexual abuse, and testimony given during the hearings.

The findings back up those of a [Reveal investigation](https://www.revealnews.org/article/jehovahs-witnesses-use-1st-amendment-to-hide-child-sex-abuse-claims/) (<https://www.revealnews.org/article/jehovahs-witnesses-use-1st-amendment-to-hide-child-sex-abuse-claims/>) that showed how Jehovah’s Witnesses’ policies have shielded child sexual abusers in the U.S. from prosecution, in some cases allowing them to [abuse more children](https://www.revealnews.org/episodes/one-thing-leads-to-another/) (<https://www.revealnews.org/episodes/one-thing-leads-to-another/>).

Stewart wrote that the organization had fostered among its followers a sense of distrust of secular authorities. He was especially harsh toward the organization’s internal judicial process, in which a victim of child abuse must confront the abuser in person and is prohibited from bringing anyone along for support during the process.

“The current documented process for responding to allegations of child sexual abuse in the Jehovah’s Witness organisation is focussed largely on the rights and comfort of the accused, with little regard to the requirements of a victim of abuse,” he wrote.

He also took issue with the Witnesses' practice of shunning members (<https://www.revealnews.org/article/jehovahs-witnesses-cover-up-child-sex-abuse-and-oust-a-victim/>) who leave or are kicked out of the organization.

“The Jehovah’s Witness organisation’s policy of requiring its adherents to actively shun those who leave the organisation ... is particularly cruel on those who have suffered child sexual abuse in the organisation and who wish to leave because they feel that their complaints about it have not been adequately dealt with,” Stewart wrote.

During the summer hearings, Stewart questioned Geoffrey Jackson, a member of the organization’s Governing Body in New York about the organization’s handling of the abuse allegations of two victims, who also testified before the commission. In his report, Stewart challenged Jackson’s assertion that he felt sympathy for them.

Jackson’s failure to review the testimony of the victims before giving his own “belies his stated sympathy for the survivors and his stated recognition of the importance of their perspectives,” Stewart wrote.

Jehovah’s Witnesses headquarters in Australia receives allegations of child sexual abuse about three or four times each month, Stewart’s report says.

The Royal Commission has the authority to investigate any private or public organization that works with children, including churches, schools, treatment centers and sports clubs. The commission lacks the power to prosecute accused child abusers but has referred more than 800 cases to law enforcement agencies in Australia.

Jehovah's Witnesses are also currently under investigation in the United Kingdom by the commission that regulates charities there for possible failure to protect children from abuse.

In the U.S., the Witnesses are fighting more than a dozen lawsuits brought by alleged victims who say they were abused as children by members of their congregations.

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