

« [AUSTRALIA: Protecting Children Inquiry hears evidence about ongoing refusal of Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watch Tower Society to comply with mandatory child protection laws as legislated in the Working with Children Act 2005 for "religious organisations"](#) »



JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES HIERARCHY CHARGED

July 26, 2011

IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE: 26 JULY 2011

Link to this Press Release: <http://wp.me/p1G1hC-4O>

Link to this Web Page: <http://jwnews.net>

Worldwide Church Hierarchy Charged With Child Abuse

AUSTRALIA: The entire worldwide religious and corporate hierarchy of the church of Jehovah's Witnesses were formally charged today in the State of Victoria, Australia, with the mass committing of criminal offences against children.

Criminal charges were officially filed today in the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, Australia, against the entire worldwide religious and corporate hierarchy of the church of Jehovah's Witnesses. The charges allege ongoing breaches of the Victorian *Working with Children Act 2005* as it applies to "religious organisations".

An initial 35 criminal charges, alleging breaches of mandatory child protection laws, were individually filed against the following corporations and bodies as named in the court documents ("Charge-Sheet And Summons" No. 066484):

Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses (7 charges)

Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (7 charges)

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia (7 charges)

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses (7 charges)

Faithful and Discreet Slave (7 charges)

All of the accused legally form part of the Committee of Management for the Religion of Jehovah's Witnesses in the State of Victoria.

Each of the 35 charges carries a fine of up to Au\$144,000.

All charges are in relation to allegations of unlawful activities carried out within the Traralgon Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses by the entire Body of Elders within the Traralgon Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

All current members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses are also facing potential arrest and charging in relation to each alleged offence as they

“knew of, or knowingly authorised or permitted, the commission of the offence.”

If convicted they individually face up to two years imprisonment per “offence” and even the possibility of being placed on the state's Sex Offenders register.

It is expected that over 100 additional sets of criminal charges could be laid as more evidence comes to light and more offences are formally identified.

The total number of corporate and individual charges could exceed several thousand with some estimates tipping that they could easily pass the 10,000 mark being spread across all congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses operating within the State of Victoria.

The filing of all 35 charges was formally approved by Victoria's Chief Magistrate after the Department of Justice carried out a thorough review of the evidence and application of the legislation and law as it applies to “religious organisations” including within the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The first round of charges were then filed today by Mr Steven Unthank.

Mr Unthank had recently given testimony at the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry held last month on 8 June 2011 in relation to the refusal of the entire Committee of Management for the Religion of Jehovah's Witnesses to comply with mandatory child protection laws, which primarily prevents convicted sex offenders, child rapists, drug dealers, and murders from having access to children across a range of industries and organisations.

All court fees for the filing of the charges were donated by a number of children, through their parents, for and on behalf of all children within the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Following the filing of the charges, the Registrar of the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, acting under direct instruction from the Chief Magistrate, formally referred the case to the Office of Public Prosecutions which is the statutory authority responsible for preparing and conducting criminal prosecutions in Victoria.

In relation to the seriousness of the charges and allegations of wide spread child abuse and neglect within the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses, a formal submission to the Australian Senate is now being prepared for the purpose of requesting an immediate Senate inquiry into the alleged ongoing criminal activities being committed within Australia by the Committee of Management for the Religion of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Many members of the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses, and their families, are now demanding the immediate resignation or removal of the entire Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses and the entire Board of Directors of the Watch Tower Society as well as the forming of church-based Judicial Committees in relation to these serious child abuse charges. This has been made even more urgent by the fact that every charge is an indictable criminal offence, with the victim being a child, and every alleged perpetrator being a current church elder holding a position of responsibility within the religion.

In commenting on the filing of the criminal charges in the Magistrates' Court today, Mr Steven Unthank has released the following personal statement

“The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watch Tower Society knew about these child protection laws and refused to comply from the outset. They were notified well before the laws were made compulsory for “religious organisations.”

“They ignored the counsel and the need to comply. They were then warned that they could face criminal charges. They did nothing about it and nothing to protect the children and nothing to protect the name and reputation of the church.

“Even the Department of Justice notified them and offered to assist them in complying with mandatory child safety laws. This included an offer to conduct training and information sessions. The State Government had previously waived all the fees so that the religion could comply without a financial burden to anyone. The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watch Tower Society completely ignored the offer of help.

“Again they were informed that they were still facing imminent charges and were given an opportunity to sort the matter out. They refused mediation.

“They were also given the opportunity to have the complaints of serious wrongdoing and allegations of breaches of child protection laws heard within the church format under the religious category of “sins”. They refused to even conduct an initial investigation to establish whether there is substance to the report and whether evidence is available showing that a serious sin actually has been committed.

“So now the complaints will be heard under the Criminal Code as indictable “crimes”. This was approved following an initial investigation by the Department of Justice to establish whether there is substance to the report and whether evidence is available showing that an indictable crime may have actually been committed.

“Why they never contacted the one complaining against them at law to settle the matter quickly while they were on the way to court is serious cause for alarm. To contact the “complainant” before he officially becomes the “informant” is church doctrine and a religious obligation. To sort out a dispute before it gets to court is not negotiable within the church format. It must be done. If absolutely no attempt is made, then the accused loses all rights of objection to having been charged with an offence under criminal law.

“The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watch Tower Society outright refused to follow their very own procedures. They now have only have themselves to blame. You reap what you sow.

“These men are no longer free from accusation and neither do they have a fine testimony even from people on the outside of the congregation. They are no longer blameless.

“As of 31 March 2011, 738,563 adults from all walks of life within the Victorian community have formally complied with the Working with Children laws and undergone child safety checks to verify that they are not convicted criminals, so that they can continue their duties within the organisations they work or volunteer in and where children are present.

“The Victorian community will not tolerate any religious organisation that refuses to comply with mandatory child protection laws with claims that their church elders and officers are exempt from child protection laws. They are not and any claim of being “exempt”, regardless of

who issued that claim, is an outright lie. The Department of Justice has not issued any exemption to any religious organisation. These child protection laws apply to “religious organisations” by default.

“Children form part of every congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. Elders are appointed by the Committee of Management for the Religion of Jehovah's Witnesses as overseers in each congregation. As overseers they are continually instructed that part of their Internal Ministry involves shepherding the children and being available to assist children, help children, mentor children, and to encourage children to join the local congregation's Ministry School as a student. This is called working with children.

“The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watch Tower Society have refused to comply with legal requirements in relation to the activities of their appointed corporate officers and representatives and elders. For refusing to comply they have been criminally charged under corporate law literally in relation to their activities as corporate officers of a “religious organisation.”

“This has never had anything to do with preaching activities and the preaching work of the members of the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. Those activities are protected under freedom of religion. The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watch Tower Society have always been made aware of this undisputed fact.

“They ignored the counsel and as a result have been charged with criminal offences. You can't undo being charged. You can't hide being charged. You can't deny being charged. Once charged with committing criminal offences against children always charged. This is child abuse. Negligent child abuse that has resulted in being charged with the committing of indictable criminal offences against children.

“These men are no longer irreprehensible. They refused to protect the children and the church. They abandoned the congregation and the children.

“And now that they're being held accountable, will they be the loudest to scream violations of human rights and freedom of religion and religious persecution?”

“Not likely! Corporations do not have human rights. Only humans have human rights. Freedom of Religion only applies to humans. It does not apply to corporations or unincorporated bodies and associations. And as for any claim of Religious Persecution—being held accountable for the committing of criminal offences against children can hardly be the basis for one's claim of being persecuted.

“It's time for these men to be removed from their office of overseer. They themselves have gone on record and said that “anyone in a responsible position who is guilty of child abuse would be removed from his responsibilities without hesitation.”

“It's time for their own removal. Or will they have themselves declared righteous and claim that they are exempt from their own rules they enforce within the congregation?”

“A ten point Special Resolution was presented earlier this year to the Voting Members of the Watch Tower Society for adoption. The resolution appears on page 589 of the 664 page Religious Manifesto entitled “A Submission”.

“This Religious Manifesto, which provides damning evidence of the breadth and scope of criminal activities being committed within the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia, is the very same document that was thoroughly reviewed by the Department of Justice before the

Chief Magistrate authorised the filing of criminal charges against the entire Committee of Management for the Religion of Jehovah's Witnesses, namely the entire worldwide religious and corporate hierarchy of the church of Jehovah's Witnesses.

"The time has come for this resolution to be unanimously adopted by the accused. They have 14 days."

Others within the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses have started a call this month demanding to see a copy of the churches "Child Safety Policy" and their "Child Protection Policy" but their requests have so far been refused.

Questions have also being raised as to whether the State Government of Victoria should allow access next month to the state-owned Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne, so that the Watch Tower Society can hold a religious gathering in which over 2,500 children from within the community will be invited to attend.

A directly appointed Australian representative of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses continues to claim that the allegations of criminal activities are "an absolute beat-up."

Ironically, a published statement and accompanied video news release, appearing on the official web site for the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses, states the following in relation to those charged with allegedly committing criminal offences against children

"We have no objections to the laws of the land that come into force on whatever has taken place there. Crime is crime. And we recognize there are penalties for crimes committed."

Time will tell.

A total of 5 separate court hearings have been scheduled for 13 September 2011 in the Magistrates' Court of Victoria at Latrobe Valley with the accused to be served by summons to appear.

Link to this Press Release: <http://wp.me/p1G1hC-4O>

Link to this Web Page: <http://jwnews.net>

For further Press Releases and Links:

www.jwNews.net

Share this: 4 [Facebook](#)

Posted in [Press Releases](#) |

•

• Pages

[About JW News](#)

[The JW News Team](#)

[Contact Details](#)

[Court Documents](#)

[Working with Children – Your Legal Obligations](#)

[Watch Tower Society – Child Safety Policy? – official media release](#)

- [Press Release – 16 June 2011: Victoria's Child Protection Inquiry Hears Evidence Against Watch Tower Society](#)
- [Press Release – 6 July 2011: Watch Tower Society and Jehovah's Witnesses refuse assistance from Department of Justice over Child Protection Laws](#)

• Categories

[Child Protection Inquiry transcript](#) (1)
[Press Releases](#) (1)

• Archives

[July 2011](#)

-

• About Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watch Tower Society

[BBC Religions – Jehovah's Witnesses – a brief look](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – an introduction](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – beliefs \(official list\)](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – books and publications](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – churches and Kingdom Halls](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – civil liberties and government interactions](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – corporations used by the religion](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – criticism of](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – doctrinal history and development](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – organizational structure and hierarchy](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – persecution of](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – schools and teaching programs](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – The Watchtower magazine](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – their ministry \(official media statement\)](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – view of authority and the law](#)
[The Faithful and Discreet Slave](#)
[The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses](#)
[Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society – an overview](#)
[Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society – current president](#)

• Downloads

["A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation"](#)
["Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry" transcript – 8 June 2011](#)
["Working with Children Act 2005" – current Victorian legislation](#)
[Child Protection – Australia's "National Framework" – Schedule 1](#)
[Child Protection – Australia's "National Framework" – Schedule 2](#)
[Child Protection – Australia's "National Framework" – Schedule 3](#)
[Child Protection – Australia's "National Framework" – Schedule 4](#)
[Creating Safe Environments for Children – Organisations, Employees and Volunteers – Australia's "National Framework"](#)
[State Government of Victoria – "Victorian Families Statement"](#)

[Working with Children Check – Child-related Occupational Fields](#)
[Working with Children Check – Child-Related Work](#)
[Working with Children Check – interstate application guidelines for non-residents of Victoria](#)
[Working with Children Check – list of occupational fields](#)
[Working with Children Check – offences checklist as of October 2010](#)
[Working with Children Check – phasing in schedule](#)
[Working with Children Check – Proof of Identification Requirements](#)
[Working with Children Check – sample application form](#)

• follow jwNews

[follow us on Facebook](#)

[follow us on Twitter](#)

• Press and Media Release Links

[Attorney-General of Victoria – Media Releases](#)
[Office of Public Prosecutions Victoria – Media Releases](#)
[State Government of Victoria – Media Releases](#)
[Watch Tower Society and Jehovah's Witnesses – Media Releases](#)

• Recommended Reading

["Secrets of Pedophilia in an American Religion, Jehovah's Witnesses in Crisis" by Barbara Anderson](#)

• Website Links

[Attorney-General of Victoria](#)
[Department of Justice Victoria](#)
[Jehovah's Witnesses – official web site](#)
[Office of Public Prosecutions Victoria](#)
[Office of the Child Safety Commissioner Victoria](#)
[Premier of Victoria](#)
[Working with Children Check official web site](#)

• Working with Children Check eNews

[Working with Children Check eNews – Issue 1](#)

• World Press and Media Coverage

[01 – Herald Sun newspaper – APRIL 10, 2011 – Former Jehovah's Witness taking on Watch Tower](#)
[02 – Herald Sun newspaper – APRIL 17, 2011 – Hot Topic: Children before religion](#)
[03 – Herald Sun newspaper – JUNE 18, 2011 – Church won't budge on child checks](#)
[04 – Herald Sun newspaper – JULY 16, 2011 – Door Closes On Jehovah's Witness Campaign](#)

• Meta

[Register](#)

[Log in](#)

[WordPress.com](#)

[Blog at WordPress.com.](#)

Theme: [Neat!](#), [Entries \(RSS\)](#) and [Comments \(RSS\)](#).

..