

Child Protection in Religious Organisations and Settings Investigation

SUBMISSION BY LLOYD EVANS AND PR-A5

1. We note the Chair's Provisional Determination, dated April 6, 2020, and respectfully ask the Inquiry to reconsider holding the hearings related to Jehovah's Witnesses by video conference in the weeks commencing 11 May 2020 and 18 May 2020.
2. We fully understand and appreciate the difficulties faced by the Inquiry in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the unprecedented challenges this has presented. These are remarkable times calling for great flexibility and ingenuity in order for progress to be made in the Inquiry's important work. However, we consider the allocation of just one day of normal hearings for understanding the complexities of a religious organisation that accounted for the highest number of reported abuse in the Truth Project outside of the Church of England and Roman Catholic Church to already have been wholly disproportionate to the point of potentially sending a message that the Inquiry does not consider there to be a significant problem within the religion. For a single day of hearings to be effectively watered down into a video conference is, we feel, one concession too far.
3. We note the Inquiry has allocated the week of 10 August 2020 to hear evidence from those who are not able to give evidence in May. As a compromise, we recommend that a day of normal hearings into Jehovah's Witnesses should be scheduled at Pocock Street for that week, pending advice from the government. If government advice at that time requires hearings to take place by continuing to observe social distancing, we will happily defer to these instructions. However, if there is even a chance that the hearings can proceed normally at that time rather than by video link, we would prefer to pursue that option. We consider this to be a fair and reasonable compromise in light of the circumstances, and considering the scale of the problem of CSA in the Jehovah's Witness organisation as highlighted in the Truth Project report, for which an apology by CCJW on the first day of hearings was notable by its absence.
4. We also take this opportunity to reiterate our respectful request for the Inquiry to use its powers to compel CCJW to disclose records related to all CSA accusations (not just those where the alleged abuser was an elder or ministerial servant, or where the

abuse was alleged to have taken place in a kingdom hall) for the past ten years. Though normal hearings cannot currently take place, in the intervening period between now and August, thorough scrutiny of these records by an independent expert would put the Inquiry in a far stronger position to adjudicate as to culpability or lack thereof on the part of the Jehovah's Witness leadership, particularly in light of CCJW's continuing refusal to acknowledge that any problem exists at all.

5. We hereby submit this request for your careful consideration.

Lloyd Evans

PR-A5

Signed:



Dated: April 7, 2020