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Jehovah's Witnesses procedures for dealing with sex abuse 'deficient' and can re-traumatise victims, a church expert admits at child abuse commission hearing

- **Dr Monica Applewhite was hired by Jehovah's Witnesses for the royal commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**
- **She said in Sydney that the church did not meet best current practices**
- **But she also said the church performed better than others in Australia**

By [Aap](#) and [Rachel Eddie For Daily Mail Australia](#)

Published: 12:44 GMT, 31 July 2015 | Updated: 23:50 GMT, 31 July 2015

An expert hired by Jehova's Witnesses has admitted the church is 'deficient' at responding to allegations of child abuse.

Monica Applewhite, a US-based consultant specialising in child abuse risk analysis and education programs for institutions, mostly churches, was employed by Watchtower Australia to evaluate the Witnesses' policies for the royal commission hearing into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Sydney.

Watchtower Australia is the legal entity of the Jehovah's Witness church.



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Justice Peter McClellan asked Dr Applewhite if the process used by Jehova's Witnesses was appropriate for handling child sex abuse allegations. Dr Applewhite agreed the process could further traumatise victims



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Jehova's Witnesses' response to child sex abuse allegations is better than other churches, but still 'deficient', an expert hired by the church said

Dr Applewhite, who has been an expert witness in abuse trials in Britain and the US, submitted a report in which she noted the Jehovah's Witnesses were a cut above other religious organisations in Australia.

The doctor, who has listed work with the Catholic archdioceses of Melbourne and Adelaide on her extensive CV, said she had not found examples in Australia of a religious organisation that provided better information than the Witnesses on how to support abuse victims.

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But she confessed her research was based on Jehovah's Witness publications, not on empirical studies.

Her knowledge of every religious organisation was also limited and she was unable to immediately identify the other religious organisations to which she was referring.

When asked by Angus Stewart SC, counsel for the commission, whether Jehovah's Witness procedure was "deficient when measured against current best practice", Dr Applewhite replied: "Does it meet all current best practices? It probably doesn't."

Jehovah's Witness procedure is based on biblical teachings.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse heard this week from two women who had gone through the Jehovah's Witness process for handling child sex abuse allegations.

In both cases the church did not uphold the allegations because, under church law, two witnesses are required to prove any wrongdoing.



CA Royal Commission
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The Jehovah's Witnesses hearing has resumed for the day and the new witness is Dr Monica Applewhite

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Dr Monica Applewhite, a US-based consultant specialising in child abuse response and prevention, was employed by Watchtower Australia, the legal entity of the Jehovah's Witness church



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The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse heard this week from two women who had gone through the Jehovah's Witness process for handling child sex abuse allegations

This rule is based on the Witnesses' interpretation of scripture and the handling of wrongdoers.

The women told the commission how an internal judicial hearing required them to detail the abuse to three church elders, all men, in front of the alleged abuser.

Justice Peter McClellan asked Dr Applewhite if she thought this process was appropriate. Dr Applewhite said there were better ways.

She also agreed that under the two witnesses rule, abuse victims could be further traumatised because they were not being believed.

Justice McClellan said: "It is by no means an ideal place for someone's psychological wellbeing to be placed?"

Dr Applewhite replied: "That's true."

When Andrew Tokley SC, counsel for the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia, suggested Dr Applewhite be allowed to submit a supplementary report, Justice McClellan said it needed to be more than an expression of opinion.

He pointed out the commission needed information that would help address the obvious flaws in the Witnesses' procedures.

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use hidden by any religion is plain wrong! This religion is run by hypercritical cowards.

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h's Witnesses lag so far behind in dealing with child abuse and spousal abuse, they make the Catholic church look good.

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ot a fan of Jehova's Witnesses, but I can't see much wrong with their procedures. In UK victims have to give evidence in Court in front of the abuser, and there needs to be a bit more than the victim's word against the accused.

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peeping tom who is a JW and his wife was aiding and abetting him so I don't believe they don't want their wives to find out about things, their wives are obedient and compliant.

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urch protects its paedophile members because its their club, to band together, protect each other, and network their vile ways. Such indecent, disgusting men abusing people's trust and forever destroying the innocence of children. Hope you all rot in hell.

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otmany so far reads like a 'expert for hire' job to me. shame on you Dr Applewhite. You have no empirical evidence of other bodies procedures, you have never seen the JW's process in work, you so called evedence is conjecture and vapid. shame on you!