

Hon David Parker BCom, LLB

Attorney-General

Minister for the Environment

Minister for Oceans and Fisheries

Minister of Revenue

Associate Minister of Finance



18 May 2022

Marcel Luc

By email: fyi-request-19160-fee5b8b7@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Marcel

OFFICIAL INFORMATION REQUEST – REQUEST TO CONSIDER CHARITY STATUS OF ABUSIVE ORGANISATIONS

Thank you for your email dated 19 April 2022 in which you raise concerns about the Jehovah's Witness church and request a Royal commission of inquiry into the harm caused by the religion.

To the extent your concerns relate to alleged abuse committed by members of Jehovah's Witness against minors, I refer you to the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry currently underway. The inquiry has been investigating the abuse of children, young persons and vulnerable adults in the care of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand. It has, most recently, extended the scope of this investigation to include the Methodist, Presbyterian and Salvation Army faiths. It will also be seeking evidence from survivors of abuse from the Jehovah's Witness church as well as other faiths such as Gloriavale and Exclusive Brethren (more recently known as Plymouth Brethren Christian Church). I note the main period of investigation is 1950-1999, however the inquiry has discretion to consider issues and experiences prior to 1950 and after 1999 in order to inform its recommendations.

Abuse is defined in the inquiry's terms of reference as physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse and neglect. Neglect is not defined in the terms of reference, but the inquiry considers neglect may include physical, emotional, psychological, medical, educational, spiritual and cultural neglect.

Royal commissions are appointed by and report to the Governor-General. The appropriate Minister is then required to present the report to Parliament. You may also wish to raise your concerns with your local Member of Parliament.

Regarding the charitable status of the Jehovah's witness organisation, it is correct that an organisation which successfully applies to the Charities Services division of Te Tari Taiwhenua Department of Internal Affairs, and is registered as a charity, is entitled to certain tax advantages. These are subject to some limitations in the tax legislation, depending on the entity's activities.

It may also qualify as a donee organisation, entitling donors to a tax credit. From time to time, the Commissioner of Inland Revenue may review the status of some organisations, but charitable status is largely a matter for Charities Services to confirm.

Beyond these general words though, neither I nor the Commissioner of Inland Revenue can enter into a discussion with you concerning a particular person or entity's tax affairs or status,

due to the strict confidentiality provisions outlined in section 18 of the Tax Administration Act 1994.

I have referred your correspondence to Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan's office, as the issues you raise also fall within her responsibilities as Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Parker', written in a cursive style.

Hon David Parker
Attorney-General
Minister of Revenue