## Sample Complaint:

**Written Complaint to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)**

**To:** Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)
**Address:** GPO Box 5108, Melbourne VIC 3001
**Phone:** 13 22 62
**Website:**<https://www.acnc.gov.au>

**Subject:** Complaint Against the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia (Jehovah’s Witnesses) for Practices Infringing Charitable Obligations

### **Complainant Details:**

* **Name:**
* **Phone Number:**
* **Address:**

### **Complaint Against:**

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia, the organization overseeing Jehovah’s Witnesses in Australia, registered as a charitable entity with the ACNC.

### **Description of the Issue:**

I am filing this complaint against the Jehovah’s Witnesses organization for engaging in practices that infringe upon fundamental human rights and obligations expected of registered charities under Australian law. Specifically, the organization penalizes its members for participating in political processes, including voting or running for public office, which I believe violates its charitable status obligations under the **Charities Act 2013 (Cth)** and **ACNC regulations**.

#### **Evidence of Practices:**

1. **Prohibition of Political Participation:**Jehovah’s Witnesses enforce strict neutrality in political matters, as outlined in their internal literature and teachings. Members who vote, campaign, or run for public office are subject to expulsion or “disassociation,” effectively severing them from their religious community. This includes complete social ostracism by other members, even family.
2. **Penalties for Violations of “Neutrality”:**The organization’s manual for leaders, *Shepherd the Flock of God*, specifically states that members violating neutrality by participating in politics will face judicial action. This manual also indicates that other members are prohibited from associating with expelled or disassociated individuals.
	* Chapter 18, section 3.4: Describes political activity as grounds for disassociation.
	* Chapter 12, section 17.1: Specifies that associating with expelled members may result in expulsion for the associator.
3. **Internal Literature on Political Neutrality:**
	* The book *Keep Yourselves in God’s Love* states: *“Jehovah’s servants remain neutral in political matters and do not participate in any form of political action, including voting.”* (Page 244)
	* The *Watchtower* magazine and other publications consistently teach members that political participation is incompatible with being a faithful Witness.
4. **Social Isolation as Punishment:**Expelled or disassociated members are shunned entirely, including by immediate family members. This creates a coercive environment that discourages political engagement and infringes on fundamental rights.

### **Relevant Legal and Charitable Frameworks Violated:**

1. **Charities Act 2013 (Cth):**
	* **Section 6:** Requires that charities act for the public benefit. Coercive practices that restrict members' rights to participate in democratic processes conflict with this principle.
2. **ACNC Governance Standards:**
	* **Standard 1 – Purposes and Character as a Not-for-Profit Entity:** The organization’s punitive measures for political engagement conflict with charitable obligations to uphold individual rights and public benefit.
	* **Standard 5 – Suitability of Responsible Persons:** Encouraging or enforcing policies that violate human rights suggests poor governance.
3. **Australian Constitution:**
	* While freedom of religion is protected, coercive measures restricting political rights may violate individuals’ freedoms under Australian law.

### **Request for Action:**

I urge the ACNC to:

1. Investigate the practices of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia regarding their policies on political neutrality and associated penalties for members.
2. Assess whether these practices align with the obligations and public benefit requirements under Australian charity laws.
3. Take appropriate action, including revoking their charitable status if violations are confirmed.

### **Attachments:**

* Full book and excerpts from *Shepherd the Flock of God*, highlighting relevant policies.
* Full book and excerpts from *Keep Yourselves in God’s Love* (Page 244)

**Yours sincerely,**