## SAMPLE Report to the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) – Charities Services

**Subject:** Complaint Against the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New Zealand (Jehovah’s Witnesses) Regarding Practices That Restrict Members’ Civic Participation

**Complainant Details:**

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

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

This complaint concerns the **Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New Zealand**, an organization commonly known as Jehovah’s Witnesses, which is registered as a charity in New Zealand. I believe this organization is violating principles associated with the **Charities Act 2005** by engaging in practices that directly and indirectly harm public benefit and undermine fundamental rights protected under New Zealand law, such as participation in civic and political activities.

The organization prohibits its members from engaging in civic responsibilities, including voting or running for public office, under threat of expulsion or disassociation. Such punitive measures alienate members socially and emotionally, impacting their well-being and rights.

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

#### **1. Ban on Political Participation:**

The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ internal policies, as detailed in their manual *Shepherd the Flock of God*, explicitly forbid any member from voting in elections, affiliating with political organizations, or participating in any political activity.

* In Chapter 18, Section 3, Paragraph 4, the manual specifies that any member acting against “Christian neutrality” by participating in politics must be disassociated.
* The organization explicitly defines voting as a violation of their neutrality doctrine.

#### **2. Expulsion or Disassociation for Violations:**

Members who violate these rules are expelled or disassociated from the congregation. This means:

* Complete social ostracism by other members, including friends and family.
* No member is permitted to have unnecessary interaction with an expelled individual, as per Chapter 12, Section 17 of the manual.

#### **3. Organizational Doctrine Against Voting:**

The organization’s book *Keep Yourselves in God’s Love* (pages 244-246) emphasizes that members must remain “neutral,” which includes not participating in elections or political matters. It teaches that voting demonstrates allegiance to secular governments, contrary to their interpretation of Biblical principles.

### **Relevant Legal Considerations in New Zealand:**

The practices described above appear to conflict with the expectations outlined in the **Charities Act 2005**, specifically:

* **Section 5(2):** A charitable organization must provide public benefit. Restricting members from participating in civic duties is contrary to this expectation.
* **Section 5(3):** Activities that are harmful to individuals or society may render an organization ineligible for charitable status.
* Additionally, these actions may undermine rights protected by the **New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990**, including the freedom to participate in democratic processes.

### **Request for Action:**

I respectfully request that the **Department of Internal Affairs – Charities Services**:

1. Investigate the practices of the **Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New Zealand** to determine if they violate the public benefit requirements of the Charities Act 2005.
2. Review whether the organization's status as a registered charity should be revoked based on the findings of this investigation.
3. Provide updates on the progress and outcome of this investigation.

**Attachments:**

1. Excerpts from the manual *Shepherd the Flock of God* detailing expulsion and disassociation policies.
2. Relevant sections from the book *Keep Yourselves in God’s Love* concerning the prohibition on voting and political participation.

**Contact Information:**I am available to provide further details or evidence if required.

**Sincerely,**