

## **Renee Spencer – supplementary information to the transcript**

**The CHAIR:** Yes, okay. One other thing I would like to pick up from your opening statement too: you spoke about surveillance, surveillance that your daughter is under as being part of this group. Is there any consent involved in the surveillance? Do you think your daughter and other group members know that they are being surveilled? (p. 17)

**Additional comments from Renee Spencer:** As I said in the hearing, yes members are aware that they are under surveillance and there is an element of consent. However, this is not what I would call informed-consent. McKay phrases the surveillance as “safety” and “sharing everything”. Members are not aware that information gathered from surveillance such as reading personal letter/emails is used against them, ie., information gathered can be used to subtly coerce members. For example, McKay used information I sent to Ellicia in private emails to portray me as a devil worshipper – the civil defamation trial details the level of sophistication used to manipulate Ellicia’s perception of me, her mother, via the so-called consensual monitoring of emails.

In regards to members having emails they send out to family members monitored, the practice of sending these to leadership (usually David McKay, [REDACTED]) is presented as “coaching”. I have multiple sources of evidence to support this coercive practice.

While group members have a level of awareness of being surveilled, their family members don’t know the full of extent in which they are being surveilled.

**The CHAIR:** Then I guess my final question around surveillance is: what do you think the government’s role here is, to help address the surveillance of members of this group? (p. 17)

**Additional comments from Renee Spencer:** From what I understand of the law, given that the illusion of consent is provided by members of the Jesus Christians, pursuing them under existing legislation is troublesome (ie., current laws are not sufficient to address the issue of coercion).

My comments of the government needing to be aware that this is taking place, therefore falls within developing a broader picture of how these groups operate and manipulate people. The “consensual” nature of surveillance within the group should be understood along similar lines to instances of sexual assault (rape) that is coerced.

On the topic of surveillance: myself and other families have long suspected that McKay is monitoring our emails through third party software. We do not have sufficient hard evidence to prove this and raise a case with cybercrime. During the civil trial process, there were some inconsistencies between emails sent and received that confirm this may be happening. Additionally, there are circumstantial and unusual coincidences that suggest this email are being surveilled and tampered

**Renee SPENCER:** That is where it is tricky, because there are lots of behaviours, and it can be different. What I have done actually is I have made a rubric, which is different, basically, indicators. Part of my approach and way of thinking with that is I think that is appropriate for a school-based environment, because kids know how to use rubrics – that is how they get marked. So things like

isolation and thinking in terms of, well, if someone is trying to isolate you, okay, they may only be doing it a little bit or they could be doing it a lot, and just looking at the full spectrum of different behaviours and knowing that it might be three behaviours here that are really high and ones down here are low, but you have got to look at the big picture; you cannot just look at –

I am trying to gather my thoughts. You cannot actually say exactly what every warning sign is going to be for every group, because it can vary a little bit. (p. 21)

**Additional comments from Renee Spencer:** For my daughter, the warning sign was sudden and unexpected stopping of communication without warning. By the time this occurred, it was too late, she'd already been recruited.

In other circumstances, the recruitment process is slower, therefore other warning signs may be present.

## Rubrics - defining cults and coercive control

AUTHORITATIVE LEADERSHIP		CONTROL OVER INFORMATION
<b>Cognitive:</b> Manipulation of thought, belief, and reasoning processes to suppress critical thinking and enforce ideological conformity. Tactics may include: information restriction, loaded language, black-and-white thinking, and doctrinal filtering.	Members are discouraged from forming independent judgments or questioning authority. Critical thinking is eroded as all answers come from the leader.	Access to alternative perspectives is denied or ridiculed, leading to epistemic enclosure. Members are conditioned to distrust anything not sanctioned by the group.
<b>Emotional:</b> Control over emotional expression, experience, and attachment. Tactics may include induced guilt, withdrawal of affection, public shaming, gaslighting, or prescribed emotional responses. These mechanisms undermine emotional autonomy, suppress dissent, and foster dependence on group validation.	Emotional dependency is fostered; members may feel fear or guilt at the thought of disappointing the leader or “betraying” their trust.	Fear, guilt, or confusion arises when members encounter contradictory information. Cognitive dissonance may be overwhelming.
<b>Behavioural:</b> Control over conduct, routines, and physical autonomy to enforce conformity and suppress resistance. Tactics may include surveillance, forced participation, ritualised routines, behavioural conditioning, and compelled labour.	Daily decisions, values, and reactions begin to mirror the leader’s preferences. Members imitate or model themselves after the leader.	Members avoid news, books, or conversations that might challenge the group’s version of reality. Some may self-censor or destroy outside materials.
<b>Social:</b> Restriction or restructuring of a person’s social world to enforce group conformity and dependency. Tactics may include isolation, surveillance, monitored communication, enforced relationship loss, and manipulation of social bonds.	The group becomes stratified around the leader’s perceived authority. Peer-to-peer influence is diminished in favour of top-down control.	Relationships with outsiders diminish; internal sources become the sole authorities. Independent learning is discouraged or penalised.
<b>Existential:</b> Manipulation of identity, meaning, and moral worldview to create dependency and suppress autonomy. Tactics may include fear-based cosmologies, conditional belonging, imposed purpose, and moral absolutism.	The leader is elevated to a godlike status, positioning themselves as the source of truth, purpose, or salvation. One’s identity is defined by allegiance to the leader.	The group’s knowledge is positioned as the only path to enlightenment or safety. Truth is no longer a matter of discovery but of obedience.
<b>Linguistic:</b> Regulation of language and expression to shape perception, limit dissent, and reinforce group authority. Tactics include loaded language, thought-terminating clichés, redefinition of terms, and suppression of alternative vocabulary.	Members use reverent or deferential terms (e.g., “father,” “master,” “guru”) and adopt slogans or catch phrases that glorify the leader’s wisdom.	External ideas are dismissed with phrases like “mainstream lies,” “fake news,” or “spiritual poison.” Internal information is called “divinely guided” or “channeled truth.”

Little “C”  
cults

RANK	TITLE	DESCRIPTOR
0	SAFE GROUP	Group respects the autonomy of its members, ensuring transparency in information sharing, and fostering an environment where individuals are free to think and act independently without fear of manipulation or coercion.
1	BENIGN GROUP	This group may have a couple of mild cult-like characteristics but is generally considered safe and non-threatening.
2	MOSTLY BENIGN GROUP	The group exhibits some minor characteristics commonly associated with cults, but these are not typically harmful on their own. Individual experiences within the group may vary.
3	VERGE OF CULTISH	Generally considered a safe group, although some characteristics may raise questions, particularly if it is a tight-knit group. Individual experiences within the group may vary.
4	A BIT CULTISH	Cult-like characteristics are noticeable and may raise concerns, but they are not inherently harmful. However, some individuals within the group may experience overt negative effects.
5	CULTISH	Cult-like behaviours within the group are pronounced, increasing the likelihood of exploitation and causing harm to its members' well-being.
6	CULT	The group's practices and beliefs pose a substantial risk of exploitation and harm to its members, affecting their physical, mental, and emotional health.
7	SIGNIFICANTLY HARMFUL CULT	The group's practices and beliefs cause harm to most members. In many cases, there is pronounced negative impacts on their lives and future.
8	LIKELY DESTRUCTIVE CULT	The group's behaviours and ideologies are explicitly harmful, resulting in significant negative impacts on its members' lives.
9	HIGHLY DESTRUCTIVE CULT	The group's practices and beliefs are profoundly damaging, posing a severe threat to its members' safety, autonomy, and physical well-being.
10	EXTREMELY DESTRUCTIVE CULT	This group exhibits the most severe cult-like behaviours, leading to extreme harm (physical, mental, and emotional), and manipulation. Potential for death of its members more likely than other categories.

Big “C”  
Cults

Safe  
Groups

Caution  
Warranted

Stay  
Away

	LEVEL 0 - HEALTHY	LEVEL 1 - RESTRICTIVE	LEVEL 2 - OPPRESSIVE	LEVEL 3 - EXTREME
<b>AUTHORITATIVE LEADERSHIP</b>	Democratic leadership style with shared decision-making	Leader/s holds authority with limited input from others	Leader/s exerts significant control over decisions with little to no input from others	Absolute authority with no room for dissent or input from others, often a charismatic leader
<b>CONTROL OVER INFORMATION</b>	Transparency and openness in sharing information	Selective dissemination of information to manipulate perception or control narrative	Restricting access to certain information to maintain authority or control	Total control over information flow, including censorship, propaganda, and indoctrination
<b>DECEPTION</b>	Honesty, transparency and openness	Misleading or exaggerated claims, during recruitment phase and ongoing	False representation, lies, and withholding information during recruitment phase and ongoing	Gaslighting, fraud, and propaganda during recruitment phase and ongoing
<b>EXCLUSIVE KNOWLEDGE</b>	Open to new ideas	Information is subject to limited interpretation	Knowledge handed down by leaders is indisputable	Knowledge is presented as indisputable truth based on a divine origin
<b>EXPLOITATION</b>	Cooperation and fair treatment	Engagement in one type of exploitation (labour, identity, financial, etc.), Exception: extreme forms (sexual) may be deemed level 3.	Participation in two types of exploitation (labour, identity, financial, etc.), Exception: extreme forms (sexual) may be deemed level 3.	Sexual exploitation and/or 3 or more forms of exploitation (ie. financial, labour mental & physical), organ donations, branding, etc.)
<b>FEAR, GUILT, &amp;/or INTIMIDATION</b>	Everyone treated with respect and dignity	Utilisation of guilt and other negative emotions to cultivate loyalty	Instilling fear through doctrines and/or threatening behaviour	Use of fear and intimidation tactics through teachings and/or threatening behaviour, which may include physical, emotional, or mental intimidation
<b>ISOLATION</b>	Independence, can freely move in and out of group	Tight-knit community, clique	Reduced interaction with dissenters or outsiders, limiting access to opposing ideologies	Severely restricted contact with outsiders, particularly those with differing beliefs
<b>MICRO-MANAGEMENT OF DAILY TASKS</b>	Individuals able to organise daily activities and responsibilities; in community living duties are shared fairly	Obligated to work through pressure tactics, eg. frequent and excessive meeting schedules	Being obligated to work full-time for the group, often without fair compensation	Living in a commune where daily routines are dictated by leaders
<b>MONITORING THOUGHTS &amp;/or BEHAVIOURS</b>	Full autonomy and freedom of thought, with no adverse monitoring and surveillance; individuals are to think and behaviour independently	Any form of monitoring, for example peer monitoring, forced confessions, accessing journals, private emails, text messages, and social media accounts	Any two forms of monitoring, one of which involves technology, ie. take online personas, use of cameras, audio listening or tracking devices in items such as handbags, phones or vehicle	Three or more forms of surveillance; stalking or demand proof of location. This could involve engaging others to follow a particular member and report back to leadership
<b>PUNISHMENT &amp; DISCIPLINE</b>	Emphasis on accountability and constructive feedback	Use of punitive measures like extra chores and verbal insults for discipline	Extreme punishments such as deprivation of food, isolation, physical torture, and relentless berating	Subjecting individuals to extended periods without access to basic needs like food or shelter
<b>THOUGHT REFORM</b>	Respect for diverse thoughts and beliefs	Subtle manipulation of thoughts and beliefs to align with group ideology	Systematic indoctrination and manipulation techniques to alter beliefs and behaviors	Coercive and extreme methods including isolation, sleep deprivation, and intense psychological pressure to enforce conformity
<b>US vs THEM MENTALITY</b>	Belief in equality for all	Biases based on gender, race, or religion	Derogatory towards those outside the group	Belief in the superiority or uniqueness of one's own group

**Cindy McLEISH:** What about children? Are there children born into the cult? Is there more than one generation now? I mean, it has only been going since the 1980s. (p. 22)

**Additional comments from Renee Spencer:** There are children within the cult, however, rather than being born into it, they are the offspring of members who join. Additionally, McKay's daughter ( ) "adopted" three Kenyan children under suspicious circumstances.

Ellicia has been on birth control consistently while a member. I know this because I brought up the topic of parenthood early on in her marriage. Growing up, my daughter always indicated that she would like to be a parent one day. The so-called choice to be childless is another reflection of McKay's coercion.

**Cindy McLEISH:** Do they do any mainstream activities? I guess there is probably hardly any schooling because the kids are at the back end of their schooling when they are recruited and, as you said, your daughter was older. Do they live in particular places? Do they live in like a commune-type thing or do they have houses near each other? (p. 23)

**Additional comments from Renee Spencer:** They generally live in places that give them access to large volumes of people that they can distribute their publications to (books, DVDs, pamphlets, etc.). I assume this is so as McKay can earn more money. These places are typically highly populated places such as Footscray and universities – I have supporting evidence of these specific locations. I also have copies of Jesus Christians newsletters in which they reference how many publications they have distributed, which goes into millions of copies. The most copies of one of their books (written by McKay) were distributed in Kenya.

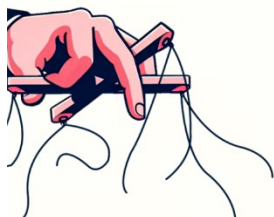
**Cindy McLEISH:** And the kidney donation stuff, have you seen evidence that that happens? (p. 23)

**Additional comments from Renee Spencer:** During the documentary process the producer, Luke Mortimer, witnessed the coordination of a kidney donation (2024). This was not shown in the final cut because McKay had been attempting to manipulate channel 7 into paying for some of the travel expenses relating to the donation and they did not want to be accused of supporting the process. The donor – a young man -- was from overseas (the US or UK, I can't remember precisely), he was in Victoria (Lalor) when McKay coordinated his kidney donation that took place overseas.

**The CHAIR:** I have got one more question to finish up with, but just on Cindy's last point around resources that might be available online as part of the recruitment process: if you do uncover any of these over the course of our inquiry, we would be really appreciative if you could share those with us because that will also help inform our work. (p. 24)

**Additional comments from Renee Spencer:** Every video posted on their videos includes an invitation to contact them via the email address:





## Description



TO CONTACT: Email [REDACTED]

Produced by: Jack  
Narrated by: Felipe  
Written by: Dave

What is "A Voice in the Desert"?

The purpose of A Voice in the Desert is to point people to the message, rather than the messenger. Most modern day prophets promote themselves more than the teachings of Jesus and the true message of Revelation. A Voice in the Desert challenges that error and more. Some of the things you hear on this channel may be difficult to understand, and may offend you. The goal, however, is to sweep away dogmas and traditions to reveal what Jesus actually taught.

If the message in this video had an impact on you, then please subscribe to stay up to date with more videos [<https://goo.gl/EFxRCR>].