



# WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

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LLD November 21, 2008

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Retention of Confidential Records

Dear Brothers:

No doubt you are aware of the increased emphasis governments are placing on the collection, retention, and dissemination of personal information. In an effort to minimise the unnecessary accumulation of confidential information, we wrote to you in our letter SC:LLD November 20, 2008, regarding the revised method of reporting disfellowshipping action and disassociation. Please read the November 20 letter before reading this letter.

We would like you to select two or three qualified elders from your body who are experienced in handling judicial matters to review the congregation permanent file. If there is only one elder in the local congregation, this brother will need to follow through as directed below. The selected elder(s) will undertake a review of all documents in the permanent files, other than letters from the branch office, and separate them into two categories:

1. Records regarding persons who remain disfellowshipped, disassociated, or who have been reinstated. These records must be sent to the branch office.
2. Persons reprovved by a judicial committee, removed as an unbaptised publisher, and other non-judicial files containing personal information. These records are not required by the branch office.

## **INFORMATION TO BE SENT TO THE BRANCH OFFICE**

**Disfellowshipped or disassociated persons:** The selected elder(s) will open and read each judicial file. After becoming thoroughly familiar with the contents, the selected elder(s) will complete a replacement copy on the new *Notification of Disfellowshipping or Disassociation* (S-77) form in harmony with the directions provided in our letter SC:LLD November 20, 2008. The selected elder(s) will print or type their names on the new S-77 form under the heading "The Judicial Committee" and place their signature on the space provided. Under their signatures, they should type in the names of the elders who served on the original judicial committee. A brief summation of the case should be prepared for each new S-77 form. The summation should not be stapled or fixed in a permanent way to the S-77 form. Please refer to the sample copy of the completed S-77 form enclosed in our November 20 letter.

Once the above procedure has been followed, the chairman will post all of the completed documents to the branch office via registered post marked "Attention Service Department." You will receive a date-stamped copy of the S-77 back from the branch. This copy should be placed in the congregation file and all other documents relating to the matter should be destroyed according to the instructions in our November 20 letter.

**Reinstated persons:** The selected elder(s) may destroy the record if more than five years have passed since the reinstatement, unless there is there is a good reason for retaining it

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(For example, a matter involving child abuse. See our letter September 25, 1984.) If a record is to be retained, the selected elder(s) will prepare a new S-77 form and summation as discussed above and send these to the branch office via registered post marked "Attention Service Department." After receiving a date-stamped copy of the S-77 form all other documents relating to the matter should be destroyed as discussed above.

### **INFORMATION THAT WILL NOT BE SENT TO THE BRANCH OFFICE**

**Persons reproved by a judicial committee or removed as an unbaptised publisher:** The selected elder(s) may destroy records of persons reproved by a judicial committee if judicial restrictions have been removed and more than three years have passed since the matter was handled, unless there is there is a good reason for retaining it. Similarly, if a person previously removed as an unbaptised publisher and is now a publisher again or a baptised member of the congregation, the record may be destroyed unless there is there is a good reason for retaining it.

If a record is to be retained in either of these cases, the selected elder(s) will prepare a brief summation of the matter containing only pertinent information and destroy all other records. No copies of these records should be sent to the branch office.

**Non-judicial files:** The selected elder(s) may also want to review all other files in the congregation's permanent file (For example, letters of introduction and other general correspondence.) These files should also be destroyed unless there is a good reason to retain them. These records should not be sent to the branch office. For general information on the retention of congregation records, please refer to the Question Box in the February 1974 *Our Kingdom Ministry*.

We would like all bodies of elders to ensure that confidential records relating to the new S-77 form are dealt with immediately. We therefore ask you to handle this matter urgently, so that we receive your correspondence by December 20, 2008. We realise that considerable time will be involved in following through with these instructions and we express our sincere appreciation for your diligent assistance in dealing with this important matter. May Jehovah continue to bless the self-sacrificing spirit you and your dear families show. We send our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

*Watchtower B. J. Society*  
OF AUSTRALIA

c. All travelling overseers