



WINGS for Truth

NZ Media Weighs in on CSA



wingsfortruth11

April 19

[NZ LOCAL NEWS](#)

<https://diary.nz>

FBI investigates reports of historical child sexual abuse within sect also operating in New Zealand

[Written by Editor](#) Apr 19 · 5 min read

By Amy Williams of [RNZ](#)

WARNING: Story contains distressing content about sexual abuse

A victim advocate says police are investigating multiple reports of historical child sexual abuse within a secretive house-church that has operated in New Zealand for over a century and is being investigated by the FBI.

The religious group meets in homes and has no official name but is commonly known as Two by Twos to those who have left, and The Truth to those who belong.

Advertisement [Advertise with NZME.](#)

The FBI is investigating the sect in America, where more than 700 alleged offenders have been reported to a hotline. There have also been reports of abuse in the UK and Australia.

It has taken a high-profile FBI investigation overseas and multiple reports of child abuse in other countries for New Zealand victims to come forward.

Jillian Hishon grew up in the sect in Australia, but left the religious group when she married someone who was not part of it.

She now runs a hotline set up for Australasian victims of the sect known as The Truth, after evidence of child abuse emerged in America last year, and has been fielding calls from New Zealanders.

Advertisement [Advertise with NZME.](#)

"To date, they are all historical child sexual abuse, so they've happened years ago. So these people who have abused, some are still in the church, so some of the abusers are still in the church, they're still attending meetings, some of them, some have been removed, others have already passed away."

Hishon said of the 140 perpetrators identified on the hotline, 20 per cent were from New Zealand.

She said people have kept a lid on their trauma for years.

"It's been swept under the rug, you know, you think you're the only person and next thing you find out, oh no, there's actually probably someone in my meeting that was abused, they've just been told by the ministers to just put a lid on it and be quiet, and 'oh we'll deal with it', and nothing ever gets done."

A current member of the Christian sect who was born into it spoke to RNZ but did not wish to be identified.

They said there were between 50 and 60 leaders, known as Workers within the sect, who travel in pairs and stay in houses of sect members, known as Friends, where meetings were held.

"They still stay in homes because it's an itinerant ministry. That is one thing I think needs to change, that they don't stay in the homes of families with children," they said.

"The culture of don't talk about bad things, don't make trouble ... for the most part historically you didn't go to police, you didn't go to media. I think the culture is you don't talk about it. It's damaging."

Hishon said the nature of the meetings in homes created an unfortunate environment for abuse.

"You could have two men come and stay in the home where there's, you know, four young children and because we trust these people in the church, there could be plenty of time for misadventure."

Advertisement [Advertise with NZME.](#)

The member who spoke to RNZ said they understand there were at least half a dozen historical child sexual abuse reports under investigation by police in New Zealand, of people linked to the sect – some of whom were still actively involved.

They said the sect's lack of a name was going to make it hard for the police to find a pattern and link the reports of abuse.

RNZ understands police have received complaints relating to alleged child abuse by people within the sect but police have not confirmed this.

Religious expert, professor emeritus of history at Massey University Peter Lineham, said the secretive sect has been active in New Zealand for 120 years.

He has been researching the sect since the 1970s, and said the esteem awarded to the leaders who travelled house-to-house, called the Workers, created a power imbalance.

“Potentially, this is a very vulnerable group of people because in effect the very high respect held towards the Workers or the Two by Twos meant that the ordinary people really had no other point of reference that they could compare notes about what might be happening.”

Advertisement [Advertise with NZME.](#)

Lineham said the sect appears to follow Christian beliefs but had a rigorous separation from society and refusal to identify as a group – which made it challenging for those wanting to report abuse.

“If there are issues within them, it’s very difficult to come to terms with those issues because this person may deny that they are a follower of anything when challenged.”

Around 20 people who had left the Two by Twos had spoken to him over the years and all carried shame and guilt and spoke about their dislike for certain leaders, he said.

“What I have seen is [an] extraordinary sort of shame about the group, the feeling that in some way or other this group was in their heads, they couldn’t get it out [of their head], they felt guilty for leaving, they found it very hard to make the break, and that’s the classic behaviour of people who have been in a very closed sectarian group.”

Hishon said she knew of three people linked to the sect who had been forced to leave after reports of child abuse.