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## Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

### Explanatory Notes - Question 4

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4. All documents constituting, evidencing or recording any policies or procedures prepared, maintained or applied by Hillsong Church Ltd in relation to child protection, including but not limited to:

- a. Management of allegations of child sexual abuse
- b. Investigation of allegations of child sexual abuse
- c. Response to and management of victims seeking redress for sexual abuse;
- d. Disciplinary action;
- e. Sharing of information with other institutions or agencies relating to allegations or investigations of child sexual abuse;

for the period from 1 January 1999 to the date of this summons.

#### About Hillsong Church

The legal structure and governance arrangements of Hillsong Church is aligned to other non-church not-for-profit organisations. Hillsong Church Ltd is a company limited by guarantee. The Board of Directors are made up of Executive and Non-Executive Directors who are considered to have suitable experience, and have established sub-committees to support the Board in key areas of governance.

Hillsong Church is a member of the Australian Christian Churches (ACC), which describes itself as a 'movement of Pentecostal Churches in voluntary cooperation', where each church member is self-governing. Australian Christian Churches (ACC) was formerly known as 'Assemblies of God in Australia'. One role the ACC provides is the credentialing of our Ministerial staff. Once granted their credentials are thereafter bound by the ACC Ministerial Code of Conduct.

The senior management of Hillsong Church is facilitated centrally. The senior management has two key functions which are 'pastoral' and 'operational'. All operational functions, such as finance, IT or human resources, have a single overseeing manager. These operational managers' report directly or indirectly to the General Manager, Mr George Aghajanian. Mr Aghajanian is also a member of the Board of Directors and Company Secretary. The pastoral functions are overseen by our Lead Pastor Australia, Joel A'Bell.

There are many activities our management oversee with regards to working with children, including:

- Weekend church services (age specific)
- Mid-week activities
- Pastoral care visits
- Camps
- Social events
- Childcare
- Conferences.

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To provide a safe environment for our children requires every effort from all Church staff and volunteers. The departments within our Church that serve an important part in our children's welfare are:

- Children Department – is also known by our congregation as 'Hillsong Kids'. It oversees those members of the congregation aged from 0 to 12 years old. Within this age range there are 5 tailored programs that have been developed to meet the specific needs of different age groups. The tailoring is not just to the content of the programme but also the level of supervision and support required to the children. The department has 20 full-time and part-time staff. There are currently 1,530 volunteers serving in Children's Department ministry activities. The department oversees the recruitment of volunteer support and manage their ongoing involvement. They are responsible for the development and facilitation of training.
- Youth Department – oversees ages from 12 to 25+. Like the Children Department it also has a range of programs which have been tailored to support and protect specific age groups. The department has 17 full-time and part-time staff, and a large number of volunteers serving in Youth Department's ministry activities. The department oversees the recruitment of their own volunteer support and manage their ongoing involvement.
- Pastoral Care – oversee the welfare of all congregational members. They work closely with each of the other Church Departments responsible for children and young people welfare. Often issues facing children are not isolated from problems facing the whole family. Pastoral Care has the opportunity to work directly with the parents or care-givers to provide a 'whole of family' support. Up until 2012, all congregational issues relating to allegations of abuse were referred directly to Pastoral Care to report.
- Childcare – Hillsong Church Ltd operates an accredited child care centre in Brisbane. It first commenced operation in January 2013 and is currently licenced for 75 students. Due to the specific requirements for operating a childcare centre, the policies and management of the centre are facilitated largely independent from the aforementioned departments.
- Human Resource Department – oversees human resource management of all staff, including the Childcare. They are responsible for the recruitment and engagement of staff, but not volunteers.
- Hillsong International Leadership College – oversee operation of registered training organisation and welfare of students who volunteer in Church

Individually and collectively the management of these departments are implementing policies, procedures and practices to enable the protection of our children.

#### Zero Tolerance –

As stated in our Child Protection Policy, 'Hillsong Church has chosen to adopt a zero tolerance policy towards any person who has committed any form of sexual abuse of children and young people. These people are not permitted to attend or be involved in the activities of Hillsong Church.'

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The documents provided in response to question 4 of the summons have been provided to you in Volumes 3 to 6. Documents 3.2 to 3.15 provide the current policies and procedures. Documents 3.16 to 6.16 have been grouped in the approximate years of circulation and sorted in chronological order.

Management of Hillsong Church maintain that there were procedures in existence and utilised prior to the documents provided, for which they now have no record. This can be evidenced by the letter received from the NSW Commission for Children and Young People explaining their review of the Hillsong Policy and Procedures document provided to them in 2003, for which management do not have a copy.

The documentation provides existence of Child safety and protection practices since 1995. It demonstrates Hillsong Church's commitment to actively engage with the NSW Working With Children and Young People, and continuously improve safe practices in response to the changing needs of our congregation, the community, and regulatory requirements.