



Hillsong Safe Church Framework Overview

PREFACE

The purpose of the Hillsong Church's 'Safe Church Framework' is to enable the provision of safe and secure environments for all people who are a part of Hillsong Church and its community services, in compliance with relevant legislation.

This 'Hillsong Safe Church Framework Overview' document provides an explanation of Hillsong Church's approach to the protection of our people, the overarching governance arrangements within Hillsong Church, and how these arrangements work to achieve its safety objectives.

The Framework applies to Hillsong Church Limited and all related entities (i.e. 'Hillsong') operating within Australia. The Framework applies to all those who are a part of Hillsong Church, collectively known as 'Hillsong-Related People'.

The Framework Overview is principally an oversight tool for the Board of Directors and Executive Management to manage and monitor its approach to church safety. However, as important members of the Safe Church Framework, the Framework Overview is made available to all those who work for or operate on behalf of Hillsong Church.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Aghajanian".

GEORGE AGHAJANIAN

General Manager / Director

SAFE CHURCH COMMITMENT STATEMENT

The following is an extract from the Safe Church Policy describing Hillsong's commitment to church safety –

'...

Hillsong is committed to providing physical, emotional, and spiritual environments that are safe and secure for all Hillsong-Related People.

Through the outworking of the Safe Church Framework, Hillsong aims to reduce the risk of harm occurring to Hillsong-Related People. It is committed to a caring and appropriate response, should any suspicion, allegation, disclosure, or complaint of misconduct or abuse occur.

In making this commitment, Hillsong acknowledges the shared responsibility of all Hillsong-Related People to:

- Understand and respect people's boundaries, in particular those who are vulnerable
- Take reasonable care for one's own health and safety
- Take reasonable care that one's own acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons
- So far as is reasonably able, abide by any reasonable instruction that is given by Hillsong Executive Management, to allow Hillsong to comply with relevant legislation
- Understand the indicators and impact of harm
- Act on concerns raised regarding people's well-being
- Know and follow the law in relation to the reporting of harm
- Foster and protect a culture of well-being and wholeness for all Hillsong-Related People.

Due to the significant proportion of children and young people who constitute Hillsong-Related People, Hillsong will maintain a zero tolerance approach to registerable sex offenders as it poses an unacceptable risk. Those who are registerable sex offenders are not permitted to take part in any of Hillsong services, programs, activities or events.

...'

SAFE CHURCH OBJECTIVES

Based on the Safe Church Policy Statement, the Executive Management have identified three (3) clearly defined objectives, which are:

- Provide safe and secure physical, emotional, and spiritual environments
- Reduce the risk of harm occurring to Hillsong-Related People
- Provide a caring and appropriate response, should any suspicion, allegation, disclosure, or complaint of misconduct or abuse occur.

The fulfilment of these objectives is the focus of the Executive Management and all those who have responsibilities within the Safe Church Framework. To assist with the fulfilment of these objectives, the Executive Management has established the 'Safe Church Office' and the 'Safe Church Framework Model'.

SAFE CHURCH OFFICE

The Executive Management recognised the need for dedicated focus on the matters relating to church safety. The Safe Church Office has been established and staffed by personnel who have roles and responsibilities dedicated to the Safe Church objectives. Within the scope of their responsibilities, Head of Safe Church Office has been given authority to ensure effectiveness and integrity in handling reports of concerns or disclosures of harm.

FRAMEWORK MODEL

The Safe Church Framework Model (Framework Model) has been developed to describe the multifaceted approach to safety adopted by Hillsong.

There are eight (8) key Elements within the Framework Model, which are:

- Strategy & Resourcing
- Policy & Procedures
- Culture & Code of Conduct
- Risk Management
- Recruitment & Selection
- Training & Monitoring
- Handling Concerns & Disclosures
- Caring for People Following a Disclosure

Each of the individual Elements of the Framework Model and their integration with each other have been graphically represented in Figure 1.



Figure 1 – Safe Church Framework Model Elements

MODEL ELEMENTS EXPLAINED

The Framework Model Elements are unique but work together to serve the common purpose of a safer church.

Element 1: Strategy & Resourcing

In relation to the prevention of harm, including child sexual abuse, Hillsong has adopted the strategic approach termed 'situational prevention'. The approach is promoted by the NSW Office of the Children Guardian as 'about creating safe environments rather than focusing on safe individuals'¹. It is achieved through the purposeful design of environments 'in ways that reduce problematic behaviour by any person in that environment'. The approach is considered proactive and preventative.

Hillsong is also well positioned to protect children through its culture of building relationship with and caring for families. The NSW Office of the Children Guardian refers to this as 'Extended Guardianship' where the care for children and young people is considered a collective responsibility, not just for the parents.

The key resourcing required for the effective operation of the Safe Church Framework is reviewed annually through established budgeting processes. Any additional expenditure required out of budget is given special consideration by the Executive Management.

Element 2: Policy & Procedures

Policy and procedures are provided for the effective operation of the Framework. Procedures explaining safe practices, including the recruitment and monitoring of Workers in child-related roles, are provided to Managers to implement. While the operation of the Safe Church Office is supported by clearly documented procedures and templates. The policy and procedures are updated as often as required, but at a minimum reviewed annually.

Element 3: Culture & Code of Conduct

Appropriate codes of conduct are utilised by Executive Management as a tool to develop and maintain positive culture. Various codes of conduct and lifestyle expectations apply to Workers depending on their role and responsibilities. All Workers, including contractors, in child-related roles are required to review and accept the Working With Children & Young People Code of Conduct.

Element 4: Risk Management

As part of the outworking of the Framework, Managers actively identify risks and implement treatment strategies under the supervision of the Safe Church Office. Any significant changes in operational risks are reported to the Executive Management and Audit Risk and Compliance Committee.

The Safe Church Office also has the responsibility for managing any risks identified during the conducting of an investigation. Appropriate responses to such risks are then implemented. These may include reporting to government agencies, including the police, and prohibiting some members of the community from attending services or programs.

Element 5: Recruitment & Selection

Workers are carefully recruited and selected using appropriate processes based on the role and level of associated responsibilities. Prior to commencing involvement in child-related roles, precautions are taken.

All volunteers must be congregation members of Hillsong Church and have regularly attended Hillsong Church for at least six (6) months.

All employees and volunteers must complete an application form which requests specific details that would otherwise preclude them from engagement, the contact details of two referees, and permission to contact them.

¹ NSW Office of the Children's Guardian. (2009). Child-safe Child-friendly Workshop., (p. 2). Sydney.

A state based Working With Children Check, which complies with the legislative requirements of the state in which the applicant is involved, are requested and received prior to the Worker commencing their proposed role. The check must show that the individual is not precluded from working with children and/or vulnerable people.

All applicants must undertake an interview in person which includes an assessment of their suitability and past experience working with children or vulnerable people.

Both referees are checked and spoken to, using an agreed set of questions. The questions seek to establish the applicant's suitability for the role or position and the conversation is documented and retained on file.

Before commencing involvement in activities or programs with children and other vulnerable people, applicants must be pastorally approved through the Hillsong Leaders and Volunteers check process.

Element 6: Training & Monitoring

All Workers in child-related roles receive training based on their level of responsibility. As a minimum, all new Workers appointed to child-related roles are issued with a copy of the Hillsong Safe Church Training Manual, and receive formal training.

Refresher training based on current best practice and changes to legislation or practices are provided on an annual basis.

All Workers are appointed to teams who are supervised by Managers. Managers have procedures for monitoring their team, handling Worker discipline (both informal & formal), and resolving any grievances that Workers may have.

All those working in child-related roles are monitored for compliance with:

- The requirements explained in the Hillsong Safe Church Policy and supporting processes and procedures
- Relevant state-based legislation
- Working With Children & Young People Code of Conduct.

If at any point a Worker is deemed not suitable for working with children, their involvement is required to be discontinued.

Element 7: Handling Concerns & Disclosures

As stated previously, a key Safe Church Objective is the effective handling of concerns or disclosures of harm, such as child sexual abuse. To enable the fulfilment of this objective, the Safe Church Office has been established. The Safe Church Office has distinct and targeted responsibilities, which include planning and conducting of investigations into reports of concern or disclosures of harm. Once an investigation is complete and a finding is reached, the Safe Church Office will assess the Church's obligations to report, and act accordingly.

Beyond any reporting requirements, the Safe Church Office will assess any improvements that can be made to the Framework, and identify any breaches resulting or contributing to the impact of harm. The Safe Church Office will make recommendations to Executive Management for changes to the Framework, and report any conduct of Workers requiring disciplinary action.

Element 8: Caring for People Following a Disclosure

The responsibility of caring for people involved in allegations extends to not only the alleged victim, but also the alleged perpetrator, and any other person adversely affected by the disclosure. Hillsong's caring response will be provided by Pastoral Care and any Case Managers who may be assigned. The Safe Church Office will manage communication with those affected, in relation to the investigation's progress and any resulting court proceedings or results of any other investigation.

Elements Combined

Each of these Elements work together to provide a structured and systematic approach to church safety. The Board of Directors also utilise the Framework Model in formulating a structured approach to

obtaining the assurance it seeks, which is, that those responsible comply with their duties or obligations under relevant legislation.

FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS RESPONSIBILITY

Careful consideration has been given to responsibilities which are to be held by the Board and Executive Management, and those that are shared by others who are considered to have key roles in the Framework.

As part of the consideration of who holds which responsibility, much consideration has been given to providing segregation of duties. This is important to mitigate the risk of conflicts of interest and breaches in privacy.

Each of the responsibilities have been clearly articulated in section 5. of the Safe Church Policy. A summary of these responsibilities have been provided below and aligned to the Framework Elements.

ELEMENT DESCRIPTION	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY HELD
Strategy & Resourcing	Executive Management
Policy & Procedures	Safe Church Office
Culture & Code of Conduct	Executive Management
Risk Management	Managers & Safe Church Office
Recruitment & Selection	Managers
Training & Monitoring	Managers
Handling Concerns & Disclosures	Safe Church Office & Head of Agency
Caring for People	Pastoral Care

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

The responsibilities are shared between groups of people who are considered capable and competent to fulfil their duties. Individually, no person should feel that they carry the full responsibility for church safety. However, just as equally true, each person should feel that they have an important part to play in collectively providing a safer church for everyone.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

The Hillsong Safe Church Framework Overview document forms part of a suite of documents that explain Hillsong's approach to Church safety, referred to as the 'Safe Church Framework'. For a complete list of associated documents please refer to the Safe Church Office.

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