

**Submission
No 60**

**INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT METHODS AND IMPACTS OF
CULTS AND ORGANISED FRINGE GROUPS**

Name: Karen Alsop

Date Received: 1 August 2025

Karen Alsop - Public Submission

Name: Karen Alsop

Group: [Casey City Church](#)

Senior Leader, CEO: [REDACTED]

Years as a Member: 2004 - 2023 (and thereafter advocating for victims)

Roles: Elder, Director, Staff, Media, Music, Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Church Co-ordination, Building Committee, Livestream, Video, Photography, Marketing, Promotions, Events Manager, Music Teacher, Band Manager, Artist Manager.

Church Incorporated: 2003

ABN: 30868896130

Type: Independent Non-denominational Pentecostal

My Diagnosis: Complex PTSD - [REDACTED]

Inquiry into the recruitment methods and impacts of cults and organised fringe groups

For the purposes of this submission, I have included names, details, and supporting written evidence to assist the inquiry in understanding the full context of events. This information is provided in good faith and solely to aid the Council's examination, foster transparency, and contribute to the development of appropriate safeguards and solutions.

This submission is not intended to cause undue harm or embarrassment to any individual. Rather, it seeks to outline factual information relevant to the inquiry's scope. Given the high-profile nature of the church and its leadership within the City of Casey, and the influence exerted both within and beyond the church, it is necessary to detail key associations and alliances to illustrate the broader systemic issues involved.

Not all cults hide away.

Not all cults shout extremism.

Not all cults preach fringe beliefs.

Not all who become entrenched come from brokenness.

Sometimes, it's the most educated, the most composed, the most visionary and entrepreneurial who become the fiercest defenders—the loyal vision-bearers—for the boldest, most well-disguised coercive leaders.

In our case, the cult we were deeply embedded in appeared inclusive, woven into the fabric of the **City of Casey** and claiming to influence the world for the Gospel of Christ. But after two decades trapped, the scales began to fall from our eyes.

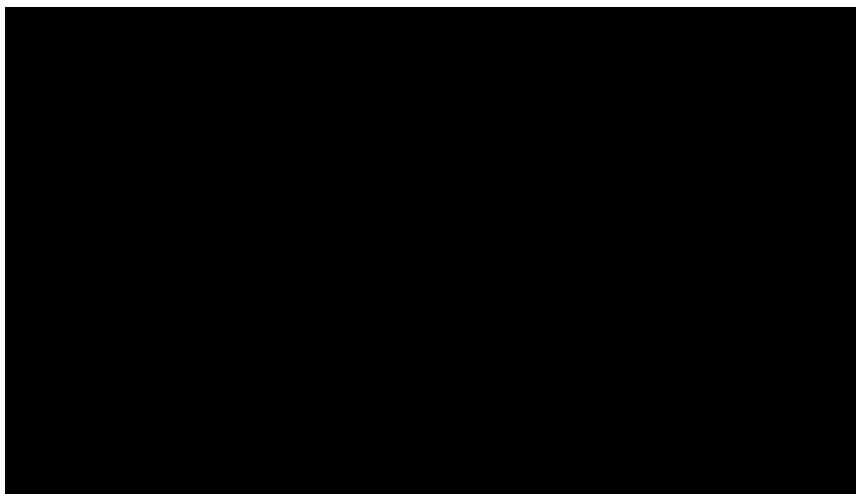
We had given everything—our time, our resources, our finances and our hearts—to feed the vision and ego of the CEO at the top of the pyramid. His vision was wild: Disneyland, hubs and spokes, marketplace ministry, dominion theology, and the Starship Enterprise.

It was never really about the Kingdom of God. It was about the leader's kingdom.

Transcript:

God gave us [REDACTED] the desire to go out and plant a work. I was struggling with the whole expression of how the local church was gonna be expressed in the way we would carry it out. I remember visiting the States then. And this was way back in 2001. And as we [REDACTED] visited, we went to Disneyland and we went to Universal Studios and... Sitting outside Disneyland, there is just an array of cafes and entertainment centres and all of that.

It was like an entertainment precinct. And as we were sitting out there. And as I looked at people coming in and going out, and then moving into Disneyland, which was the main attraction – I looked at my wife and I said, '[REDACTED], this is it. This is what I believe that the Lord is wanting to do through us!' He's wanting to plant the work that that looks something that looks something like this, meaning that the church is gonna be right smack in the middle.



The church is the hub, and around that would be businesses, would be entertainment centers, would be a cafe, would be various things that would engage our community.

It's (about) getting the church out into the community, into our community. It's for us to be, as a church, incarnationational. And see our city transformed for Christ.

And there are three specific areas that we, we feel that, uh, are three strategies.

One is to **impact young minds**. The other is to impact the **socioeconomic climate** of the city. And the third is to impact the **entertainment industry**. And as we do this, we will begin to, in many ways, see our city really transformed. How about believing with us in seeing this city transformed for Christ?

[REDACTED]

My Story

My husband, [REDACTED], and I were married in 2001. We both grew up in Christian homes and were part of churches that were generally safe, accountable, and connected to wider oversight bodies, like the Assemblies of God, before it restructured into ACC (Australian Christian Churches). That same year, I began my teaching career at a Christian school as Music Director. In 2004, Stuart joined me there, taking on the role of Marketing Manager—a position he still holds today.

During this time, we were both significantly involved in the Royal Rangers (Rangers Australia) ministry. I had been a Ranger since I was six, and we shared a strong desire to start a Ranger Outpost at the school. We required an “accountable covering”—a partnering church that could provide spiritual oversight and support.

The church we attended at the time was 30km away, which made it logistically unfeasible. So we began approaching local churches in the **City of Casey** to find one that might be open to partnering. The nearby Assemblies of God church wasn’t in a position to take on another ministry like ours.

That’s when we heard about [REDACTED] new church plant—Casey City Church.

[REDACTED] and his wife, [REDACTED], had been looking to enrol their children in the college. And in Christian circles at the time, there was plenty of talk about [REDACTED] nephew, [REDACTED]. As a young, idealistic Christian music teacher in my mid-20s, the idea of working with someone connected to such a well-known Christian artist added to the appeal. It felt like *a God opportunity*. Looking back now, I see just how much that first impression shaped everything that followed.

I picked up the phone and called [REDACTED] to discuss the possibility of partnering with us. This was my first conversation and introduction to the man. To my surprise, he wasn’t just open to the idea—he was instantly on board. He saw the Ranger ministry as perfectly aligned with his vision of “impacting young minds” and was eager to get started right away.

What followed was a whirlwind. In just a few months, we dreamed, planned, and launched the [REDACTED] Rangers ministry at [REDACTED] Christian College. [REDACTED] Rangers took off. We quickly grew to an average of 200 children attending every Friday afternoon, with weekly activities that appealed to a broad range of families—horse riding, canoeing, firecraft, campcraft, archery, camping. It was vibrant, exciting, and full of momentum. At the time, it felt like something truly special was beginning.

We harnessed the fame of [REDACTED] to advertise the program across Australia. [REDACTED] filmed his nephew talking about when he was a little Ranger himself [REDACTED] and I created a promotional video.

[REDACTED]

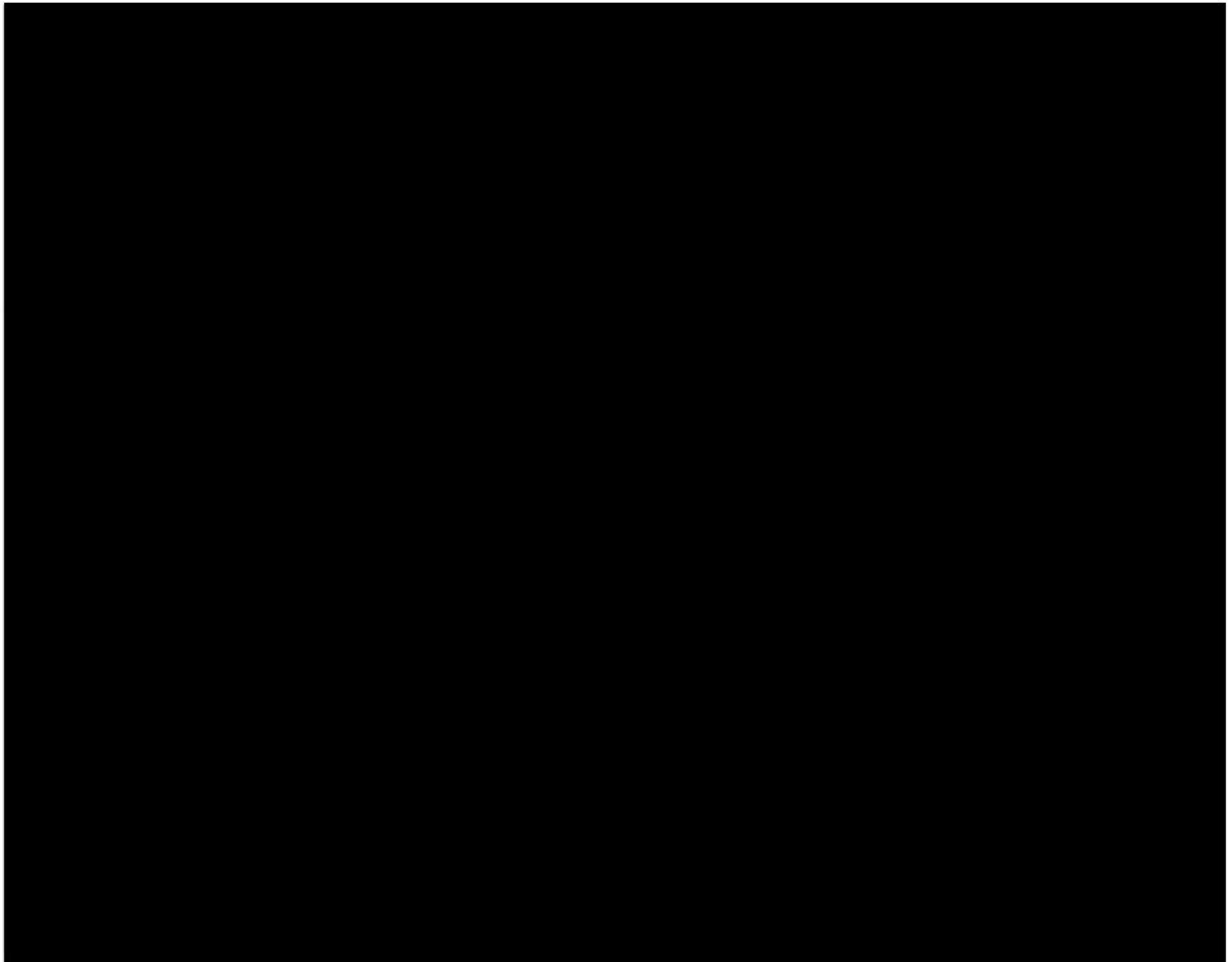
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In the first six months of running [REDACTED] Rangers, we continued attending our original church. But as time went on, and with increasing pressure coupled with the excitement of bold dreams and big vision at Casey City Church, we were persuaded to shift our roots into the small but ambitious congregation.

At the time, the church was meeting in a hired hall and looking for a more permanent base. We suggested they consider using my own music classrooms at the college, and that's precisely what happened. It started there, but quickly expanded. The church office took over one section of the portables, [REDACTED] claimed another space for his personal office, and by early 2006, Casey City Church was firmly embedded in the [REDACTED] College community—both physically and strategically—as the school's 'partnering church.'

[REDACTED]



Influencing Young Minds

In 2006, [REDACTED] continued his 'vision casting' with the focus to **influence young minds**, and **influence the entertainment industry**.

In my role as Music Director at the school, I had been managing the instrumental music program and coordinating the tutors. As part of an effort to bring more activity under the church umbrella—and to generate income for what was then a fledgling congregation of just 30–40 people—we launched a business called *Cre8 Music House*, operating under the church's ABN.

I began working one day a week for the church in a multi-role capacity: Cre8 Music Director, Events Manager, Media Coordinator, and Rangers Senior Commander. Like many others, I was encouraged to be listed as "ministry staff." This arrangement meant the church could retain the tax component of our wage and pay us the same take-home amount we would have received as regular employees, but at a reduced cost to the church. – [FBT Churches](#) (This was not the intended purpose, but this loophole was capitalised on by Pastor [REDACTED] over many years - more on this later).

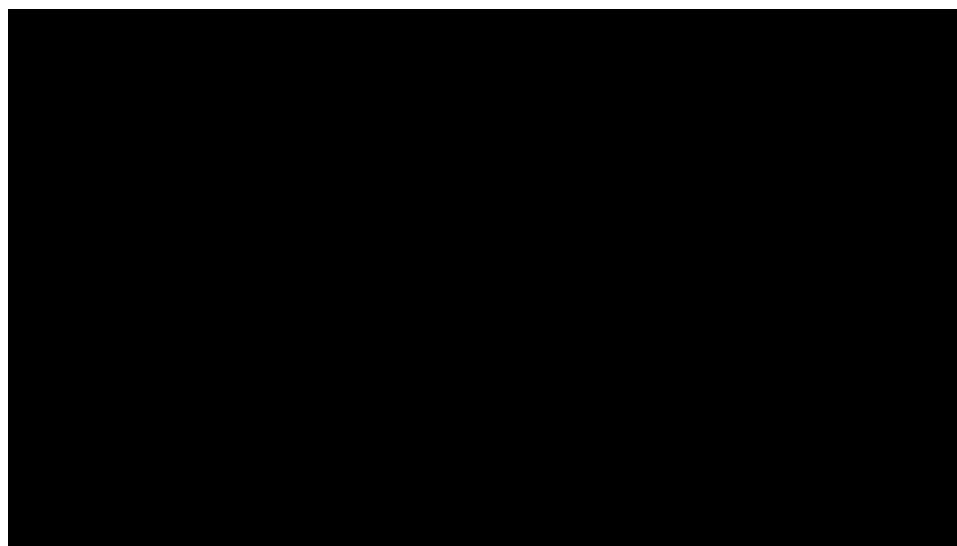
Most of my time outside my part-time teaching role at the college was spent working on church operations and projects. Though I was also running my own photography business during this

period, it regularly operated at a loss, primarily because of the time, energy, and unpaid labour I was investing into Casey City Church.

Influencing The Entertainment Industry

Alongside the music school, we managed artists under the sub-business 'Infusion Nites'. I acted as manager to FIDO and other emerging musicians—securing gigs, providing support, and creating events to showcase their talent. Casey City Church regularly hosted large-scale entertainment events, often sponsored or supported by Casey Council, including Club Idol (2004), Road to Christmas with [REDACTED] (2008), Carols by Twilight (2008–present, averaging 10,000 attendees), and the Impact Big Tent Event (2008). These high-profile platforms were used to elevate the church's public image and strengthen its civic influence.

Even in those early years, [REDACTED] had already begun leveraging his network and building influence within government and council circles. His growing connections were prolific by 2010, when the then [REDACTED] of the City of Casey delivered a speech at the grand opening of the City Edge Centre. The speech highlights not only [REDACTED] early sway but also his ongoing influence within both the music scene and civic leadership circles.



[REDACTED]

Transcript of Speech by [REDACTED] 2010, at Casey City Church, [REDACTED] Grand Opening:

And he [REDACTED] told me of his vision, and I thought, you are nuts! But everything he said has come true and much more, and it's fantastic. So I'm really pleased for [REDACTED] and for the church and for [REDACTED].

I met [REDACTED], I don't know how many years ago. When did you arrive in Casey? About 10 years ago. I can't remember.

But I remember sitting down with [REDACTED] and he told me his vision and we shared our passion for the arts. And I thought, yep, this is a man I've gotta stay in touch with.

And of course, his much-famous nephew came along, which made him even more attractive to get to know.

█████ and I shared lots of adventures in the arts, and I really, treasure that friendship. And our mutual passion for performance and music, and then that's what this building's gonna be all about.

So I congratulate █████ and █████ and the church because I think it's a fantastic opportunity and not just for your church members, but for the whole community. So, congratulations, well done, and your vision came true. I'm very impressed. – █████
- City of Casey, █████ 2010

Marketplace Ministry (Church as a Business)

In 2006, the idea to offer before and after-school care to the College community began to take shape. That vision became *3C Kidz Care* - <https://3ckidzcare.com.au/>. Over time, Casey City Church secured full certification and expanded the program to multiple schools across Melbourne. *3C Kidz Care* eventually became the church's primary source of income, sustaining its operations for years and compensating for the consistent financial shortfalls within the congregation.

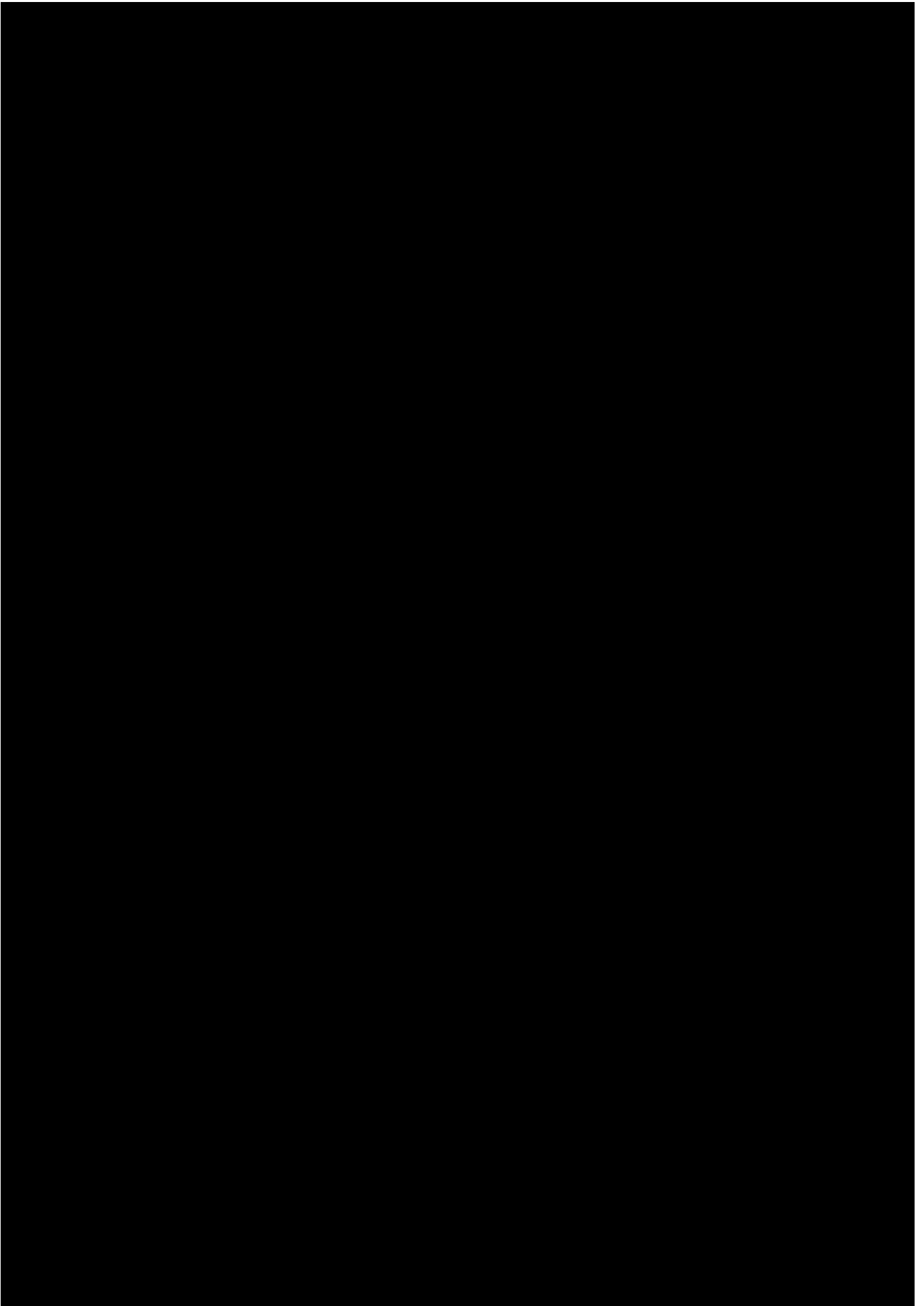
3C Kidz Care has remained one of the few consistently profitable ventures connected to Casey City Church. In its early years, █████ was heavily involved in its day-to-day operations.

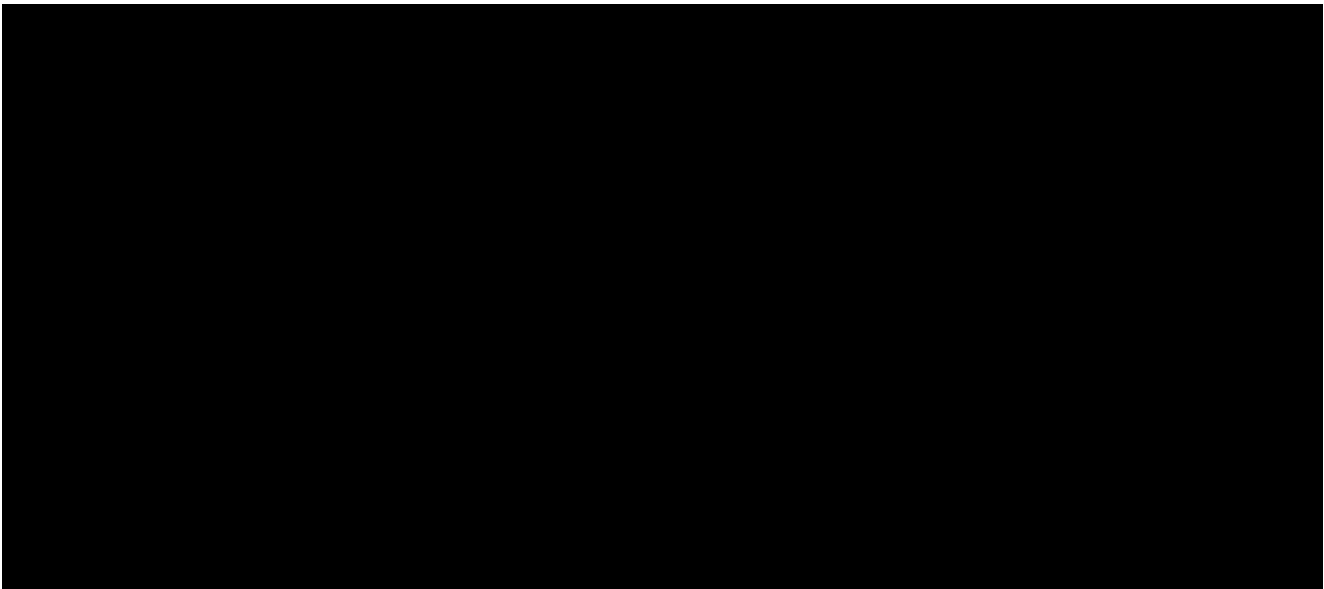
Over the past two years, multiple investigations into his conduct have led to a growing number of testimonies from former staff detailing severe workplace bullying by █████, both behind closed doors and in public settings. Former staff, primarily women, reported significant deterioration in their mental and physical health as a result of his behaviour, with many still grappling with the long-term effects today.

Even more disturbing are the testimonies describing █████ shaking, berating, and intimidating children in his care—incidents reported to have occurred within *3C Kidz Care* and other church-run ministries, all while operating under the oversight of the Department of Education.

And yet, despite the seriousness of these allegations, █████ █████ He continues to hold complete control of the organisation, and still retains a current Working with Children Check.

Further insight into these public testimonies can be found in a 2024 investigative article by *The Roys Report*:
<https://julieroys.com/australian-pastor-sebastian-refuses-resign-despite-allegations-abuse-manipulation/>





Love Bombing Phase

In 2009, I was driving past a prominent corner building in the City of Casey—a former lighting shop that now sat vacant, with a ‘For Sale’ sign out front. After five years of hearing [REDACTED] vision for a “Disneyland-style” church and marketplace ministry hub, I was constantly on the lookout for a place that might fulfil it. I had been so deeply immersed in his language and ideals that I could recite the vision word for word—and often did, on his behalf, in meetings.

By that stage, I had become [REDACTED] unofficial PA and spokesperson. I was young, enthusiastic, and deeply committed—but also incredibly naïve. I didn’t yet recognise the red flags that, in hindsight, seem glaringly obvious.

Around this same time, my husband and I were being groomed for eldership. We were eventually appointed as the church’s first elders, which only tightened our entanglement. Holding director roles and carrying the weight of the vision made it even harder to step back. We were all in—and [REDACTED] knew it.

From the early days, we were clearly being love-bombed and groomed to become ‘**Armour Bearers**’ for [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

By the time I first saw the building, I had already been accompanying [REDACTED] on visits to extravagant venues—luxury hotels and casinos worth millions—as we dreamed of what Casey City Church could one day own. Nothing was considered out of reach. With God on our side, we were told, obstacles didn't apply.

At the same time, [REDACTED] had entered into conversations with an overseas businessman about a range of ventures tied to the church. The language was spiritual—"kingdom business"—but the discussions were financial. Suggestions were made for a significant loan to support these so-called ministry initiatives.

Financial Abuse

When I saw the building listed for sale, I rushed back to the church office, filled with excitement, and shared the news with [REDACTED] and the rest of the staff. Within months, [REDACTED] had secured a \$1 million interest-free loan from the overseas investor he had been in talks with. The remaining \$1.8 million still needed to be raised.

After a series of high-pressure meetings, [REDACTED] arranged financing through the Bank [REDACTED], working directly with manager [REDACTED]. -

<https://www.ato.gov.au/media-centre/victorian-accountant-and-banking-director-sent-to-jail-for-tax-fraud>

Because the church held no collateral, the bank required personal guarantees. The responsibility fell to the church directors—[REDACTED], and me—to sign as guarantors. If the loan defaulted, we would each be personally liable for the full \$1.8 million. Ministry and personal risk had become dangerously intertwined.

[REDACTED] and I were very hesitant to put our home and future on the line—but we were told that if [REDACTED] were willing to "pay the price," then we had to as well.

We requested legal advice through the church, but were told it wasn't possible due to financial constraints. Instead, we were encouraged to seek our own legal counsel, which we did—despite having minimal funds. The advice was clear: do not sign.

But the pressure didn't stop. [REDACTED] reassured us repeatedly, promising it was only temporary—just until the constitution could be amended, which he insisted would happen as a priority. We believed him. We trusted him. And under duress at the last possible moment, we signed.

Throughout the following years, we continued to request release from the financial responsibility. We wanted to start a family, and the pressure was eating away at us. Not only this but once we moved into the building in 2010 the pressure increased exponentially.

The building was envisioned as a marketplace—a mix of external business tenants and church-run enterprises, designed to generate enough income to cover the hefty \$12,000 monthly interest repayments.

[REDACTED], then a Bank [REDACTED] manager and a professing Christian, felt “led” to personally contribute \$144,000 to help cover the loan in 2012—essentially committing to the \$12,000 monthly payments on behalf of the church. This was hailed as a miracle, a sign of divine provision, after more than a year of extreme strain on church members being pressured to give.

But after a few months, [REDACTED] faced personal and family difficulties and approached [REDACTED] to ask if he could stop the payments. Instead of compassion, he was met with spiritual manipulation. [REDACTED] told him he couldn't go back on a promise made “to the Lord.” According to their own admissions, [REDACTED] spent three hours with [REDACTED], prophesying and pressuring him to continue the payments.

[REDACTED] wasn't even a member of our church.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

This instance represents one of numerous documented examples of [REDACTED] ongoing pattern of coercive conduct, extending beyond the internal church environment into broader spheres including business, government, and the general public. In this case, the manipulation of an external party was not incidental; it served a dual purpose by simultaneously reinforcing psychological control over internal recipients of the communication. The message conveyed was strategic and deliberate, intended to assert dominance, suppress dissent, and maintain an atmosphere of unquestioned authority.

Psychological Impact

During this period of heightened control and psychological pressure, we announced the pregnancy of our first child, who was born in early June 2011. Upon sharing the news with [REDACTED] his immediate response was one of disappointment. He stated that my pregnancy was ill-timed, as it would prevent me from continuing to serve him and the church in the same capacity.

As someone intensely loyal and conditioned to prioritise church service above personal wellbeing, I internalised this disappointment. I convinced myself I could do both—be a new mother and maintain my role under his leadership. The consequences were devastating. My mental health deteriorated, and my newborn daughter experienced a failure to thrive, losing dangerous amounts of weight.

This is just one example among many. The damage inflicted under [REDACTED] coercive and cult-like leadership during this time is extensive. As part of my healing, I have been documenting our story—a record of two decades within this system—and amplifying the voices of other survivors who have bravely chosen to speak out. – www.willowfree.com

Seeking Help and Accountability

In 2012, in a state of growing distress, we reached out to the newly appointed executive pastor—who was also a close personal friend of [REDACTED]—in a desperate attempt to seek help in addressing [REDACTED] escalating manipulative and coercive behaviour. By this stage, the control being exerted over us was causing significant personal and psychological harm. We had attempted to resign from our roles on the eldership board, but our request was denied. We were not released; instead, we were effectively held in position against our will under mounting pressure.

Excerpt of my email to Executive Pastor [REDACTED] dated May 3rd, 2012

...I'm actually afraid now to meet with him [REDACTED]. Afraid of what he will say in regards to the grudge he's been holding and what it is because when I look back, the biggest difference I felt I made for the Lord, the biggest impact I made on lives, the times I felt closest to God and excited about what he was doing, was when we were running the Ranger ministry. So any attack he has on this, I feel may just break me further and make me feel that ALL our time at Casey City Church has been wasted. I don't want to feel that, so I'm just working out ways to protect myself?

I don't know if that makes any sense to you, but there is so much more, and so much I've pushed down and here's where we are at now...

We feel the only healthy thing we can do is remove ourselves from [REDACTED] and his destruction over us. It's progressively got worse and worse over the last couple of years.

But we feel so deeply for the church, for the people, for those who have been hurt, and for those who don't have a clue what's going on. And all we see is this continuing. This sabbatical seems to have done nothing to assist [REDACTED] in fact in some ways it may have made it worse? So what now. I don't know...

The Trap of Family Ties

We also reached out to the other newly appointed elders—[REDACTED] sister and brother-in-law. At that time, they weren't just leadership figures—they were family to us. By then, we had become deeply integrated into the wider [REDACTED] clan. We were embraced as part of the extended family, trusted with the “famous ones,” and given access to inner family dynamics in a way few ever were.

That level of access came at a cost. It created a powerful sense of obligation and silence. We felt emotionally bound and socially captive—unable to speak to anyone outside the inner circle without fear of disloyalty. Even seeking help from a psychologist once left me riddled with guilt. It felt like betrayal. I never went back.

It was around this time that we came across the concept of the narcissistic pastor. As we read through the documented traits and patterns of narcissistic leadership, we were stunned—every characteristic seemed to mirror [REDACTED] behaviour.

Link to article shared:

<https://truth4freedom.wordpress.com/modern-society-engulfing-philosophies/narcissism/>

Still, we held on to hope. We weren't looking to label him or tear him down. We longed to see him experience a personal breakthrough, to turn from the patterns that were damaging so many. At that stage, we still saw him as a friend. We believed that with the right support, healing, and accountability, he could continue in ministry.

We genuinely believed that without [REDACTED] the church couldn't survive. He was the visionary, the driving force behind what made us feel unique and set apart. Without him, it felt like the identity and future of the church would collapse.

In a 2012 video produced by MP Anthony Byrne, I appear speaking positively about [REDACTED]. The video, in hindsight, captures the complex dynamic of cult-like environments, where members, even those under significant control, often publicly endorse their leader. It serves as a revealing example of how support can be shaped by manipulation, loyalty, and fear.



Watch Youtube Video: <https://youtu.be/LRYOliQabmM?si=LFIpOI6pCH-2mhKK&t=137>

In the sincere hope of bringing about change, we naively shared our findings—along with supporting documents—with [REDACTED] brother-in-law and sister. As both elders and close family members, we believed they would understand the gravity of what we were seeing. And initially, they did seem to listen. There was a genuine effort among the elders at that time to address the dysfunction. They acknowledged the dangerous behaviour and attempted to introduce accountability measures, including proposed amendments to the church constitution.

But in 2013, in what became a calculated power move, [REDACTED] removed the entire elder board. They leveraged their influence over the congregation to spin a narrative of betrayal and mutiny. It was a strategic purge designed to maintain control.

The fallout was immense. The extended family dynamic shattered, the church split in half—nearly 50% left. We stayed. By then, our focus had shifted to survival. We had long-term friendships in the church—relationships we couldn't imagine losing. Our second child was born in May 2013, and we wanted to raise our kids with these people, in that community. The bonds were tight. Severing them felt unthinkable.

And we were still 'responsible' for the building. We had to 'pay the price'.

Mind Altering

Over time, the sharp memory of [REDACTED] narcissism dulled. He appeared to soften, or at least to adjust his public behaviour. There was a noticeable contrast between [REDACTED] in the first decade and [REDACTED] in the second—more polished, more strategic. Looking back, it seems he learned how to mask the traits we had once tried to gently expose.

[REDACTED] continued to leverage political power in multiple ways. He held strong ties with the City of Casey and built close relationships with several key council members. His influence wasn't subtle—it was openly displayed.

When we submitted the permit application for the church building in 2010, it was swiftly pushed through by Cr [REDACTED], who was then chair of the permit committee. Emails between [REDACTED] and the church, along with [REDACTED] speech at our grand opening, revealed a close working relationship but didn't raise questions at the time as we were programmed to honour (culture of honour) and not question our leader.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Council Influence

Back then, we had no idea what would later come to light about the inner workings of the City of Casey Council, or the findings of the IBAC inquiry. What once felt like a favour now looks very different in retrospect.

In his speech at our Grand Opening in 2010, [REDACTED] openly stated that he had personally pushed the committee to approve the permit for [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Transcript of speech 2010 by [REDACTED]:

(When [REDACTED] spoke to me) about, uh, what he wanted to do with this building. It was so exciting because it was basically, um, a concept that would place God right in the heart of the City of Casey. Right here. And when I started talking to our planning department, I basically said to them just that. This proposal, this planning proposal, will place God in the middle of the City of Casey. So watch out! Any unnecessary delays, any muckups, any bureaucratic red tape, you only have to answer to the Lord himself. And that has worked. (Crowd Laughter)

So, um, I, I'm just so excited that Casey City Church has the vision and enthusiasm to think of a, uh, an amazing commercial development like this to really spread Christian mission right in our city.

You'll have my support forever. Um, I really congratulate you. I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart. It is just so amazing. It makes me, as a Christian, I belong to another Christian tradition. But it just makes me so proud, to see this. And I really agree. It's not just as a councillor of the City of Casey, but also from our, um, Diocese Bishop here in Melbourne, Bishop [REDACTED], whom I've talked to, about this development, and he's amazingly excited. I can guarantee you a lot of patronage, at least for the bookshop. So, congratulations and, uh, well done. Excellent. - Cr [REDACTED]

Casey Council Investigation - Operation Sandon

Until the IBAC Inquiry—[Operation Sandon](#)—[REDACTED] maintained close ties with Casey Councillors and various government authorities. He leveraged these connections strategically, gaining access to events and spaces no other pastor in the City of Casey could. Within both civic and church circles, Casey City Church was viewed as the “small church doing big things,” with influence that extended far beyond its size. Or rather, [REDACTED] influence did.

When the IBAC investigation began, [REDACTED] initially stood by those under scrutiny. We believed, as he did, that they were innocent. But as more revelations surfaced, he slowly began to distance himself. Still, his political influence didn't disappear—it simply shifted. With the dismissal of Casey Council, [REDACTED] redirected his efforts to the federal sphere, continuing to pursue power and proximity where opportunity allowed.

Federal Government Influence

[REDACTED] began working closely with [MP Jason Wood](#). The concept of a soccer academy came from a yearly visit by famous Brazilian soccer players for what was called ‘Tour of Hope’.

In 2019, Casey City Church received \$1 million from the Federal Government for HASA - Hope Soccer Academy.

GA ID: GA40601

Agency: Department of Social Services

Approval Date: 9-Jan-2019

Publish Date: 18-Apr-2019

Category: Community Development

Grant Term:1-Apr-2019 to 30-Jun-2021

Value (AUD):\$1,100,000.00 (GST inclusive where applicable)

As an actively involved member, I saw firsthand many positive outcomes from the program and the work of the staff and volunteers. There were genuine efforts to make a difference in lives. However, behind the scenes, the lack of proper checks and balances around [REDACTED] handling of finances became deeply concerning.

In 2022, it was publicly announced that Casey City Church had been granted \$1.5 million (plus GST) in federal funding for the HASA Hope Soccer Academy.

GA ID: GA236844-V1

Agency :Attorney-General's Department

Publish Date:13-May-2022

Category: Community Safety

Grant Term:8-May-2022 to 9-Mar-2025

Value (AUD):\$1,648,584.30

Recipient Name: CASEY CITY CHURCH INC

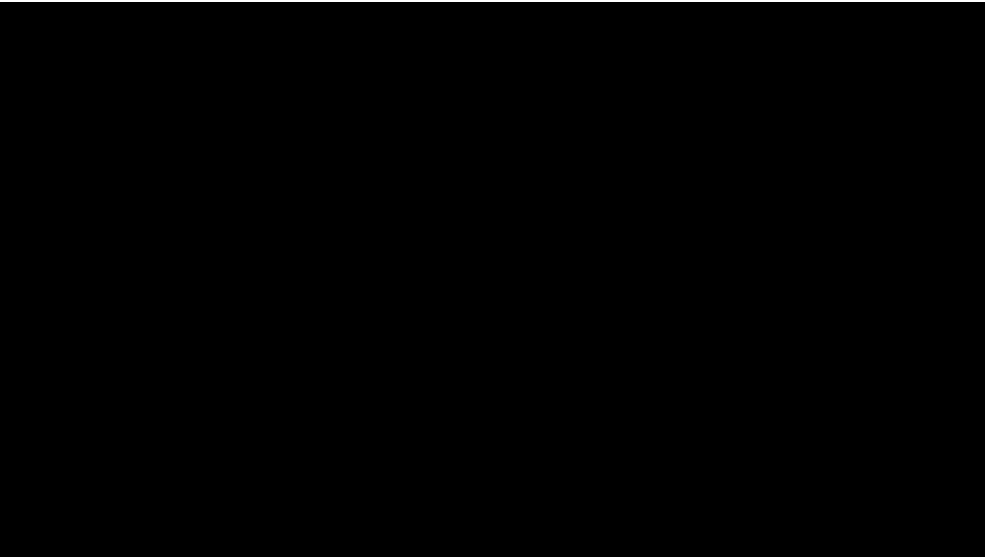
After the internal collapse of the church in May 2023, the board of directors were delivered no financial breakdown of the HASA grant—no transparency, no accountability. Despite months of formal requests through legal channels, the information remained withheld.

What made it even more troubling was [REDACTED] public commentary. On several occasions, he preached via livestream at other churches, proudly speaking about the setup of the grant and boasting of his favour with the government, all while continuing to conceal the financial details from his own board.

On April 10th, 2022—prior to the official publication of results by the government—[REDACTED] preached at a neighbouring church and publicly disclosed confidential information. This sermon remains publicly accessible on YouTube at the time of writing. Should the video be removed, I can provide a copy directly to the committee upon request.

Watch: https://youtu.be/JkqhWLytwbY?si=EVB_AYfZ3ND92FEg

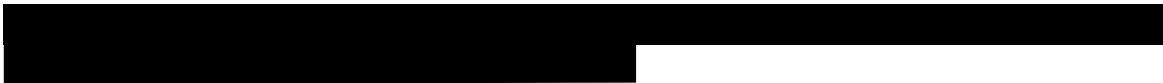
In March 2022, [REDACTED] shared with our own church community the results of the grant.



In his sermon at Full Gospel Assembly (FGA), publicly available here:

https://youtu.be/JkqhWLytwbY?si=EVB_AYfZ3ND92FEg, [REDACTED] stated that he was now able to be paid as a pastor through the federal government grant. Following this, he continued in his pastoral role while claiming the full Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) exemption—effectively receiving a tax-free income—yet the details of his salary remained undisclosed.

When I raised questions at an Annual General Meeting regarding financial transparency and accountability, I was provided no answers. Despite being a registered church member and a founding elder at the time, I still have not received any explanation regarding how these funds were allocated or what [REDACTED] wage entailed.



Following the fallout of Casey City Church in May 2023 (refer to Pastor [REDACTED] submission for further context), [REDACTED] and I continued to pursue truth, accountability, and structural change. As founding elders who had been directly involved in the church's formation and the purchase of its building, we recognised our own complicity in a system that had become profoundly toxic. That awareness compelled us not to walk away in silence, but to remain engaged in the pursuit of justice. The warning signs had been there for years—red flags we could no longer ignore.

We later discovered that the Federal Government Grant had been explicitly questioned in Parliament, raising concerns that closely mirror our own. As former directors and members of the church, we have had no visibility into how the grant funds were allocated or used. To this day, no financial transparency has been provided to those of us who were once directly involved in the governance and oversight of the organisation.

CHAIR: Minister Wood has referred to intervening when it comes to Safer Communities Fund grants, and I'm wondering. You probably don't have this information in front of you, but before the election the seat of Blair was on a one per cent margin, and we had the minister and the candidate for Blair rocking up and announcing a round 6 grant that was actually awarded against the recommendations of the department.

Mr Warnes: I think all I can say in response to your question is that Assistant Minister Wood made the decision.

CHAIR: Okay—against the recommendation. I will just deal with the second grant and then hand to you, Senator Shoebridge. The second grant that you referred us to was for the Casey City Church. I think that was for \$1.5 million; that's the information I have. Assistant Minister Jason Wood and Senator David Van were present at the announcement. They announced that grant, and I have two questions again. Why did the minister intervene on behalf of that organisation?

Mr Warnes: Why did the minister make the decision? Is that what you're asking, just as a clarifier?

CHAIR: Yes. Did they provide any written reasoning for the decision? I'm aware that they have to.

Mr Warnes: I am just checking to see if I can provide you with that advice now or take it on notice.

CHAIR: Thank you—and if you have similar advice for the previous one. I think you may have already given it to us, but, if you have the reasons for the intervention or the different decision against the recommendation of the department, I would love to hear them.

Mr Warnes: I might just take it on notice and provide it on notice.

CHAIR: Because you don't have the answer, or do you want to check whether it's—

Ms McKeag: I think I can assist. At the time, the assistant minister would have made a statement and they would be the assistant minister's reasons—

CHAIR: Yes, I'm asking for those reasons.

Mr Warnes: I think we'll provide those on notice.

[REDACTED]

Some of the most serious questions that remain unanswered include:

- **Who holds [REDACTED] to account?** He refused to resign despite a seven-month external investigation that found him abusive and dangerous. He continues to operate without oversight. Ministers Fellowship International (MFI), with whom he is registered, has stated that they cannot remove him constitutionally, even though their leadership was part of the investigative committee. - See: www.tovchurch.org
- **Why is there still no external accountability for Casey City Church?** Reports have been made to government authorities, and victims have come forward to police and the CCYP. Yet the church continues to operate without transparency. The current directors listed on the ACNC website consist solely of family members, staff, and long-term loyal followers, none of whom can provide independent accountability to [REDACTED]

- **What has happened to the financial contributions of exiled members?** Serious concerns remain regarding the building purchase and current financial dealings. The original \$2.8 million interest-free loan was paid directly back to the investor without interest, yet [REDACTED] and Casey City Church are now linked to a profit of approximately \$3.5 million. Former members, many of whom invested time and money, have no understanding of where these funds have gone or how they will be used.
- **Why were standard governance processes ignored?** There was no written contract between the international interest-free lender and Casey City Church, and the directors did not approve or sign off on the financial transfers made in January 2024.

There Is Still Hope—Even in the Brokenness

Over the past few years, we—both victims and advocates—have fought tirelessly for survivors. In doing so, we’ve been branded by the inner circle as divisive, evil, and worse. But we persisted. Through months of pain, loss, and unanswered questions, we kept telling the truth—sharing the stories of the hundreds whose lives were shattered under [REDACTED] empire.

In November 2023, after a long and thorough process, external investigators delivered their findings. They were presented to the victims and to Casey City Church. You can read the full report here: <https://tovchurch.org/findings>

Despite previously promising to honour the outcome of the investigation, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] refused to resign. Instead, they’ve continued to operate Casey City Church—this time in a more covert fashion. But they are still there. Still attracting new, unsuspecting families. Still avoiding accountability.

And yet, something has shifted.

Because we did not stay silent, because we spoke up, the wider City of Casey church community has begun to confront the truth—the devastating impact of [REDACTED] leadership not only on the internal church body, but on the broader body of Christ.

Victims have started to share their stories publicly. Awareness is growing. Churches are beginning to ask the hard questions and move toward becoming safer, more authentic, and trauma-informed communities.

Through it all, we’ve continued to advocate, while still carrying our own wounds. It’s been exhausting. But there have been indications of hope.

One such glimmer is the [Casey Counselling Trust](#), established by the external investigative committee in response to their findings. This trust provides access to psychological care, counselling, and therapeutic support for those harmed by [REDACTED] leadership. It is a crucial step—but it’s not enough.

We are weary. We’ve fought so long. And the roadblocks from government systems have been disheartening. Time and again, we’ve been told there’s nothing they can do.

The current Parliamentary Inquiry has drawn much-needed comparisons between coercive control in domestic violence and coercive control in cult-like religious environments. I completely agree with the

need for reform. We must address this spiritual and psychological bullying. But we also want to preserve true religious freedom.

Personally, I still have faith. I still believe in God. I still believe the Bible is the Word of God. But I've lived through what happens when one man weaponises scripture and spiritual language to control, manipulate, and protect his own power.

The stories are heartbreaking. My friends are broken. Many have walked away from the church altogether.

I submit to this inquiry not just as a survivor, but as someone who has learned so much over the past two years. We are actively working on creating safe, healing spaces for others who've suffered similar abuse. We believe in the power of the church when it reflects Christ, not control. And we've seen that there are good people, leaders and communities who are willing to listen, learn, and change.

I believe the most powerful education in this space comes from within.

I hope to speak to the panel directly, and I am more than willing to answer any questions.

Finally—and most importantly—I want to say I'm sorry.

I'm so, so sorry for the role I played. For being a complicit leader in a toxic system. For protecting an abuser. For closing my eyes to the harm he was causing. For choosing loyalty to a man over love for the people.

I see it now. And I will not be silent again.

I will protect you now.

You can find my writings from the past 2 years here:

www.willowfree.com

