



# Integrated Relationship Governance Framework (IRGF) Whitepaper

The core of IRGF is governance and risk management that strengthens client–supplier relationships - closing the loop between people, systems, and psychosocial risk.

## ABSTRACT

Organisations increasingly recognise psychosocial risk as a governance responsibility rather than a wellbeing issue. Psychosocial hazards often emerge at the client–supplier boundary, where pressure, ambiguity, and misaligned expectations create relational strain and potential harm.

***The Integrated Relationship Governance Framework (IRGF)*** provides a structured governance model that measures relational integrity identifies psychosocial hazards, and response options at an organisational, not individual level. By integrating leadership, worker participation, and system processes, IRGF establishes a closed-loop risk management and assurance cycle.

IRGF aligns with Australian WHS obligations—including overlapping PCBU duties—and complements AS/NZS ISO 45003:2021 by operationalising psychosocial governance across organisational boundaries. Supported by emerging medical and organisational research linking relational conditions to psychosocial harm, IRGF enables both parties to work constructively together with reduced risk and improved clarity.

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For licensed IRGF specifications, capability statements, or implementation guidance, contact Marmel Enterprises Pty Ltd.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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*The core of IRGF is governance and risk management that strengthens client–supplier relationships - closing the loop between people, systems, and psychosocial risk.*

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**The Integrated Relationship Governance Framework (IRGF)** provides a structured psychosocial governance model designed to strengthen client–supplier relationships and reduce substantial costs to business when relationships disintegrate or psychosocial harm materialises. It's core differentiator from other models is its ability to govern the psychosocial boundary between client and supplier organisations; a space where expectations drift, communication degrades, and psychosocial hazards accumulate.

IRGF has been designed and built to comply with applicable Work Health and Safety legislation and aligned to ISO 45001, 45003, 37001, 31000 and 9001 principles and practices, open-source governance models, and practitioner experience. IRGF reframes psychosocial risk within an organisational context as predictable, manageable, and measurable elements of relationship dynamics and performance.

*The IRGF enables both parties – client and supplier - to work constructively together within a common framework to prevent and mitigate psychosocial harm, through diagnosing the conditions, advising of responses and treatment options at an organisational level, to support compliance with Australian workplace safety regulations.*

**The challenge that organisations face** is that relationships are complex, high-pressure environments and psychosocial risk often emerges unnoticed. Traditional governance focuses on contractual, financial and technical metrics but overlooks the human interactions that drive relationship success or failure. Unmanaged conflict, behavioural drift, and unclear expectations create psychosocial harm that affects both client and supplier organisations. Without a structured method for identifying, managing, and monitoring these factors, relationships become reactive, adversarial, costly and – in relation to psychosocial obligations under the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011 - increasing non-compliant.

The IRGF establishes a psychosocial governance model built around three operational levers:

- ❖ **Leadership** — setting behavioural tone, expectations, and governance direction
- ❖ **Worker Participation** — enabling constructive engagement and shared responsibility
- ❖ **System Integration** — embedding psychosocial controls into everyday processes

These elements form a closed-loop assurance cycle. The model treats psychosocial risk as a dynamic system input, enabling both parties to monitor interactions, and respond as needed.

***Relationships fail not because of technical or procedural issues, but because expectations drift, communication degrades, and psychosocial risks accumulate.***

Key Features of the IRGF include:

- A central governance mechanism that structures human interaction
- Tools for assessing psychosocial risk (P-PRI), maturity (P-PMM), and residual factors (P-ResM) and a combined composite index (ICX)
- A repeatable loop for reducing, managing, and monitoring psychosocial harm
- Alignment with ISO 45003:2021 and Australian WHS obligations
- An architecture emphasising continuity, flow, and iterative improvement

The primary benefits for organisations adopting IRGF include:

- ✓ Stronger, more resilient client–supplier relationships
- ✓ Reduced psychosocial harm and conflict escalation
- ✓ Improved trust, transparency, and collaboration
- ✓ Enhanced compliance and governance assurance & foundation for future systems

## **IRGF Roadmap**

This current IRGF Phase 1 establishes the conceptual and governance foundation. The next development cycle will translate and progress this model further to operationalise psychosocial governance and close the loop between people, systems, and organisational outcomes.

***Which path will your organisations take in governing its psychosocial hazards?***



***Figure 1: Different approaches to psychosocial hazard management exist. Some are easier than others to navigate. (images generated by Copilot from author prompts, adapted from a stock image native to Word365).***

# INTRODUCTION

## Context

Across industries, psychosocial risk has emerged as a governance issue rather than a wellbeing initiative. Recent national data shows:

- ❖ Psychological injury claims now represent **12% of all serious claims** yet consume **38% of total system cost**.
- ❖ Average claim cost has escalated from **\$146,000 (2019–20)** to **\$288,542 (2024–25)**.
- ❖ Median time lost is **four times higher** than physical injuries.
- ❖ Harassment, work pressure, and inter-relational concerns remain the leading hazard drivers.
- ❖ A further body of medical studies suggests causal linkages between psychosocial hazards and adverse mental and physical health conditions.

These numbers reveal a system under strain — not just financially.

Sections 46–49 of the Work Health and Safety (NUL) Act 2011 require all PCBUs to consult, cooperate and coordinate activities where duties overlap. This includes the extended workforce covering contractors and suppliers. IRGF provides a structured governance mechanism to operationalise these obligations across client–supplier relationships, ensuring psychosocial hazards are jointly identified, managed, and monitored.

AS/NZS ISO 45003:2021 Psychological Health and Safety at Work further establish clear obligations for organisations to manage psychosocial hazards systematically. Most frameworks still treat these risks reactively — through training, policy, or incident response — rather than embedding them within governance architecture. The paradigm and approach of IRGF is therefore unique.

## IRGF's Role

IRGF reframes psychosocial assurance as a governance system that measures relational integrity, maturity, and resilience across client, supplier, and workforce interactions. It enables executives to see psychosocial risk as a quantifiable governance dimension — one that can be tracked, improved, and reported with the same rigor as financial or operational metrics.

## Purpose and scope of this Whitepaper

This whitepaper introduces the Integrated Relationship Governance Framework (IRGF) as a governance discipline that brings psychosocial assurance into measurable organisational practice. It outlines the conceptual foundations of IRGF and its relevance to modern

governance, without disclosing proprietary scoring or implementation details. Included in this document is a conceptual overview of IRGF's intent, structure, and applicability. It is intended for leaders, governance professionals, and researchers seeking to understand how psychosocial governance can be operationalised.

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*Relationships are not isolated events — they form patterns. Monitoring and analysis reveals these patterns; intervention changes them.*

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Detailed specifications, scoring models, and analytics logic are reserved for licensed IRGF documentation.

## Why Relational Maturity Matters in Modern Organisations

Relational maturity describes how effectively people and teams respond to pressure, ambiguity, and change. Mature relational systems communicate clearly, recover quickly from disruption, and maintain alignment even under stress. Immature systems, by contrast, generate and contribute to conflict, misinterpretation, and behavioural drift.

The Psychosocial Maturity Model (P-PM) provides a structured way to understand these relational dynamics. It measures clarity, resilience, communication quality, emotional regulation, learning integration, and boundary responsiveness. Together, these dimensions form a behavioural profile of how an organisation functions in real conditions.

## A System View: Maturity, Risk, and Residue

P-PM works alongside risk identification (P-PRI) and residue management (P-ResM). Together, they form a closed-loop behavioural system that helps organisations understand how risk emerges, how people respond, and how residue accumulates or resolves over time. Within this loop, drift functions as a lead indicator, residue as a lag indicator, and maturity as the buffering coefficient that moderates both.

## Why Executives Should Care

Relational maturity is not a “soft” concept. It influences strategic alignment, cultural evolution, operational reliability, and partnership strength.

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*High maturity supports ethical governance, social cohesion, and sustainable performance — all core elements of ESG expectations. Low maturity increases hidden costs, slows decision cycles, and amplifies psychosocial risk.*

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# IRGF PHILOSOPHY

## Psychosocial Governance as a Discipline

Many organisations treat psychosocial hazards as a wellbeing or HR/People and Culture concern. IRGF takes a different position: that psychosocial risk is fundamentally a **governance problem** arising from how relationships behave, how decisions are made, and how organisational systems interact.

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*When psychosocial governance is weak, psychosocial strain within the workplace and individuals accumulates. When governance is strong, relationships stabilise and associated risks decline.*

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## Relational Integrity as a Governance Asset

IRGF is built on the premise that relationships are part of the governance system, not an informal byproduct of it. Client–supplier interactions, workforce dynamics, and cross-functional collaboration all generate behavioural signals that influence safety, delivery performance, and organisational resilience. IRGF treats these signals as measurable governance data.

## From Ambiguity to Measurability: a closed-loop governance model

Traditional IT governance frameworks (TOGAF, ITIL, COBIT, PMBOK/PRINCE2) excel at governing systems, processes, and controls — but none quantify the psychosocial dynamics that drive relational stability. IRGF fills this gap by introducing structured measurements of:

- psychosocial risk
- governance maturity
- relational residue

These measurements are only conceptualised within this paper but are fully defined within licensed IRGF specifications.

IRGF operates as a closed-loop governance discipline:

1. Identify psychosocial hazards and relational strain.
2. Assess governance, maturity and behavioural integrity.
3. Quantify residual psychosocial impact left after interactions.
4. Inform governance decisions, interventions, and uplift pathways.

This loop ensures psychosocial governance is not reactive but predictive, repeatable, and evidence-based.

## Organisational Integrity, Stability, and Resilience

At its core, IRGF is designed to strengthen three organisational qualities:

- ✓ **Integrity** — clarity, consistency, and behavioural reliability.
- ✓ **Stability** — predictable interactions across client, supplier, and workforce boundaries.
- ✓ **Resilience** — the ability to recover from psychosocial strain without degradation of performance or safety.

## IRGF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

### A Governance System for Psychosocial Integrity

The **Integrated Relationship Governance Framework (IRGF)** is a governance discipline designed to measure and strengthen psychosocial integrity across organisational and supplier relationships. It provides a structured way to understand how interactions, behaviours, and governance conditions contribute to psychosocial risk — aligning with the intent of AS/NZS ISO 45003:2021 Psychological Health and Safety at Work, which emphasises systematic identification and management of psychosocial hazards.

**IRGF does not replace existing governance frameworks;** it complements them by addressing the relational and behavioural dimensions they do not quantify.

IRGF recognises that psychosocial risk and relational behaviour evolve across the lifecycle of an organisational relationship. Conceptually, the framework considers three phases:

1. **Pre-Relationship**, where expectations, alignment, and governance readiness are established and residue from previous relationships may influence;
2. **Active Relationship**, where behavioural integrity, maturity, and psychosocial strain emerge; and
3. **Post-Relationship**, where residue may influence future interactions.

These phases provide context for understanding how psychosocial hazards develop and how governance maturity shapes relational outcomes.

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*Detailed lifecycle assessment logic is part of licensed IRGF specifications.*

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