

Reference Material

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Date: July 2022

Owner: Risk and Compliance Team

Congregation Volunteer Policy

The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is a welcome part of confessing faith in Christ crucified, and in being his faithful servant. We acknowledge that the members of the church have a diversity of gifts. Some may be equipped to contribute practically to the logistics of a gathering or activity, or to use their abilities for leadership, organisation, encouragement, teaching or other ways of serving. All gifts can play a part in the work of the church, and all ministry activities have a part in the ministry of Christ.

The Synod places trust in our volunteers as they work; recognising our responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of volunteers, and acknowledging our responsibility to support volunteers to fulfil their roles as we work together for the protection of everyone and for the Gospel.

1. Purpose

The primary purpose of the Congregation Volunteer Management Policy is to give congregations tools to assist them to protect the health and safety of volunteers and anyone who may be affected by their acts or omissions.

By following this policy, procedures and supporting documents, volunteers will be selected prudently, provided support to do their roles well and safely, and supervised to ensure they are able to thrive in their service to the church. The formality and rigor of these processes should be in proportion to the responsibility and risks of each role.

2. Congregation Responsibilities

- 2.1 The church council should follow the Congregation Volunteer Procedures (provided below) to assist them in the appropriate selection, instruction, training and monitoring of the work and conduct of volunteers. Volunteers should be supported and supervised to ensure they are carrying out their role appropriately in terms of their conduct, capability and safety.
- 2.2 Volunteers should be made aware of how to raise concerns, and what to do if they have a concern about anything which arises as part of their role.
- 2.3 Each congregation should appoint a member of church council (a 'Volunteer Contact Person') to oversee and take responsibility for volunteers including creating and maintaining the Volunteer Register. Other tasks associated with managing volunteers can be delegated to other members of the congregation, as appropriate.
- 2.4 All volunteers should be included on the Volunteer Register. The register is to be kept securely and confidentially, with the Church Council minutes. The register will include details which assist with the management of volunteers, as per the template at Appendix 1.
- 2.5 The Volunteer Register should be reviewed by Church Council and updated at least annually.

3. Volunteer Responsibilities

All volunteers are to;

- Do their best to serve well, and to keep themselves and others safe.

- Read, sign, and abide by the Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Attend any required training
- Fulfil their WHS responsibilities including by reporting hazards and incidents, and informing the appropriate person of any concerns.

Some volunteers will also be required to read the Volunteer Manual (see section 5 high-trust volunteers).

4. Who is a Volunteer?

When congregations and other groups gather, each person contributes in their own way and according to their gifts. While each person plays a part, not all contributions are made by people in the capacity of volunteer roles.

A **volunteer** is a person who is recognised and appointed to a role, contributing to the work of the church, ministry or service activity without being paid. A person is a volunteer when they perform a specific identified role, needed by the entity, and they are selected to perform that role. There are two types of volunteer roles, including 'high-trust' and 'other' volunteer roles.

High-trust volunteer roles are those with responsibility for others, including ministry leaders, elders, Church Council members and all those who work with children or vulnerable people (see section 5).

Participant helpers are those who are willing and able to perform tasks or meet operational needs when they attend a service, event or activity. This may be just through seeing a need and providing help. It may also be at the request of a leader or another participant. Such participation is an important contribution, but is not recognised as a volunteer role.

The following is a guide to help distinguish between a volunteer role and that of a participant helper. A volunteer role satisfies any one of the following criteria;

- The role serves regularly, intentionally and in addition to normal participation;
 - Serving at an event or service the person wouldn't usually attend as a participant, or performing tasks outside the usual service or attendance times in order to help
 - Regular and routine service, usually not ad hoc
 - There are specific and articulated expectations for the role. The role may have a title, and has specific tasks and expectations.
- The role should be identified as a volunteer role when it has a duty of care for others related to the person's leadership or authority;
 - The role supervises or coordinates the work of other people
 - The role works with children or vulnerable adults.
- The role has or could have significant responsibility such as to oversee or coordinate a ministry or ministry area, deliver core functions, or additional responsibility for resources. This would include all members of Church Council and will include elders and other leaders such as managers and supervisors.

For more detailed information and examples to help congregations in determining if someone is a volunteer, and what type, refer to Appendix 2. Participant helper roles do not need to be included in the volunteer management processes, such as being added to the volunteer register.

5. High-trust volunteer roles

All volunteers have responsibilities to fulfil the requirements of their role to their best ability. This includes abiding by the Volunteer Code of Conduct, being reliable, caring for others and letting someone know when they need help themselves.

High Trust Volunteers in congregations are those with additional responsibilities. These may be;

- Responsibility for, or leadership of others and so having an additional duty of care
- Work with vulnerable people, including children
- Responsibility for a critical service or an area of worship
- Responsibility for significant resources, or in a position where there are significant safety or other implications from the performance of the role.

Volunteers in high-trust roles in congregations must confirm they have read the Volunteer Manual, in addition to signing the Volunteer Code of Conduct. The purpose of the Volunteer Manual is to;

- Give recognition to the significance of volunteer service in leadership and/or service to vulnerable people
- To support volunteers to care for others and be cared for in their roles, in particular through facilitating access to Safe Church policies and other Synod resources.
- To assist leaders to train and orient volunteers. The Volunteer Manual can be used as the basis for orientation for any new volunteers or for regular training for current volunteers. The Volunteer Manual should be tailored to reflect local contact details or procedures.

Confirmation that high-trust volunteers have read the Volunteer Manual must be recorded in the Volunteer Register.

6. Relevant Legislation

[Children's Guardian Act 2019](#) (NSW)

[Children and Young People Act 2008](#) (ACT)

[WHS Act 2011](#) (NSW)

[WHS Act 2011](#) (ACT)

7. Related documents

Synod Volunteer Policy

[Child Safe Screening: pre-appointment screening for staff and volunteers National Policy Framework 2020](#)

Volunteer Code of Conduct

Volunteer Manual

Congregation WHS and Safe Church Statements

8. Policy Review

This guideline is to be reviewed every 3 years by Synod Risk & Compliance and amendments approved by the Synod Board.

Congregation Volunteer Procedures

The following procedures have been developed to assist congregations in the effective management of volunteers.

Selection of volunteers

Policy and procedures for the selection of volunteers should be followed. The process should be in proportion to the responsibility and risk associated with the role. This includes both discernment about the suitability of the person for the role (consideration about a person's character, abilities and behaviour) and any relevant background checks needed for the specific role. See the [Background Checks Policy](#) for more guidance.

Resources to support the selection of volunteers in direct contact with children and vulnerable people can be accessed on the [Safe Church Unit](#) webpages.

Managing, Supporting and Training Volunteers

Volunteers should be supported in their roles through supervision, being given instruction, and for some roles, formalised training. The person responsible for an activity involving volunteers should provide enough supervision and feedback so volunteers are supported. The person responsible should provide oversight so they can be sure that the activity is being performed well, and safely.

The Volunteer Register is a record of all authorised congregation volunteers. It should be accepted and recorded as being received within the minutes of the church council at least every six-months or more frequently depending on the level of change or frequency of new rosters being published. A copy of the register should be kept with the records of the church council meeting. This process is supported by the Volunteer Contact Person.

Volunteer Contact Person

Each congregation should identify a member of Church Council who is responsible for the oversight of volunteers. This Volunteer Contact Person should;

- Keep the Volunteer Register (as per section 2) which identifies the volunteer roles in the congregation, and who is filling them
- Identify the roles which work with children or vulnerable adults, and any other high-trust roles
- Ensure there is a system in place to verify working with children/vulnerable people checks, and keep them up to date
- Be a contact person for volunteers if they have concerns
- Ensure that a Volunteer Code of Conduct is signed by all volunteers and that high trust volunteers have also read the Volunteer Manual
- Monitor attendance and provision of training, and keep records.

The person in this role is a high-trust volunteer and must have a working with children/vulnerable people check and attend safe church awareness training. Their details on the register should be counter-signed by another member of Church Council. The Volunteer Contact Person can be the same person as the Safe Church Contact Person, or the two roles can work collaboratively.

Protection and Expectations

Volunteer Safety

Each congregation is to have systems in place to protect the health, safety and welfare of volunteers.

This system is to include measures for;

- Managing any risks to the health and safety of volunteers
- Training, instruction and supervision of volunteers in the interests of their safety
- Including volunteers in consultation arrangements
- Having systems in place for volunteers to report hazards or incidents, and assisting and supporting volunteers if they are injured or become ill in the course of their work
- Keeping any such measures under review.

The work of volunteers is to be overseen and monitored to ensure compliance with safe work procedures, codes of conduct and so that any specific expectation is met in the interests of the safety of everyone.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

It is important that there is a shared understanding of appropriate conduct, behaviour and attitude so that we can care for each other well and function with peace, mutual respect and care.

Every volunteer must read and sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct and abide by it. If the Code of Conduct is not signed, the volunteer should not perform the functions of a volunteer, and should not be placed on the congregation Volunteer Register.

The Volunteer Code of Conduct includes the expectations of the UCA Lay Leaders Code of Conduct, so signing also satisfies this requirement for volunteers in leadership roles.

Safe Church

There are additional expectations and protections in place in relation to volunteers who work with children and vulnerable adults. The key structures in place include;

- Volunteers who work with children are mandatory reporters of child protection concerns
- Volunteers are employees for the purposes of the reportable conduct scheme
- Volunteers who work with children and vulnerable people need a WWCC or WWVP
- All volunteers who work with children and vulnerable adults or who are in a trusted leadership role must undertake regular Safe Church Awareness training.

See section 9 for Safe Church references for further information.

Volunteering by Children and Young People

Consideration should be given to safety arrangements specifically for children and young people who volunteer. A risk assessment should be conducted which includes;

- Supervision arrangements such as requiring parents/carers to be present, or supervision by another suitable adult
- Any risks to health and safety, including psychological risks, or those associated with people's behaviour
- Any specific competencies or informal suitability screening needed, such as for working with children
- The capacity, skills and maturity of the potential volunteer.

Parental consent and duty of care requirements for these volunteers is to follow the processes for their engagement in other programs where the child or young person is cared for away from their parents/carers ie. written consent from parents/carers, and collection of any needed health or contact information.

Wellbeing

Managers of volunteers are encouraged to consider the wellbeing of volunteers through:

- Pastoral encouragement individually, and through congregation recognition of the value of volunteers
- Not over-loading individuals
- Having systems in place to provide emotional supports in times of stress, and for recognised volunteers to access to the Synod Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Encouraging openness, transparency and mutual support amongst volunteers.

Privacy and Data

Personal data about volunteers will be collected, stored and disclosed according to the Synod Privacy Policy. Volunteers should also keep all confidential information private and secure.

Expenses and payments

Volunteers are unpaid, meaning there is no monetary reward, or payment in-kind, however, expenses of volunteers can be reimbursed when the purchase was approved, and a receipt provided.

Honorariums and allowances

Honorarium means a one off or ad hoc reward or payment made to a person for voluntary service; or a fee for professional services voluntarily performed, paid as a gesture of thanks or goodwill.

Honorariums cannot be paid to a person on a regular and/or systematic basis and should be a token amount compared to the cost of the equivalent services. For example, no more than 10% of the usual cost of the services.

Allowances are payments of a fixed predetermined amount to cover a volunteer's expenses.

See Appendix 4 for more information, including arrangements for casual preaching.

Insurance

Volunteer Insurance cover is in place to protect volunteers when they are performing their duties. All volunteers in congregations are covered by Synod Insurance when they are performing their volunteer tasks and are injured or become unwell as a result of their voluntary work (within any insurance policy limits or conditions). A participant helper who is injured in the course of performing tasks for the congregation, can also be covered by volunteer insurance if the congregation can vouch that the person was performing volunteer tasks relevant to the injury.

If injured, a volunteer should inform the Volunteer Contact Person or ministry agent and access a claim form for reimbursement if needed.

Guideline - Working with Children Check in NSW

Background

A Working with Children Check is mandatory for any individual in NSW involved in child-related work.

Child-related work is work in a child-related sector where the person has direct contact with a child or children, and that contact is a usual part of and more than incidental to the work.

Direct contact includes physical contact or face-to-face contact with children. Child-related work also includes child-related roles specified in the legislation.

All Uniting Church organisations fall within the scope of a child-related sector; however, some entities, or some workers may not engage in child related work. In some cases, therefore, a WWCC may not be required.

All holders of a WWCC (employed and volunteer) are also Mandatory Reporters so it is important that all holders of WWCC undergo training to meet the mandatory reporting requirements.

Please refer to the Mandatory Reporting Guidelines for NSW on the Synod Safe Church Website.

WWCC Summary of Requirements

- individuals seeking to engage in child-related work must provide a WWCC number issued by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian to an entity before they can be permitted to engage in such work; and
- entities must register online and then verify every individual's clearance number online with the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian before they permit an individual to engage in child-related work. They must keep accurate records and recheck clearances when they are due.
- Any WWCC holder who cannot obtain a working with children clearance in the first instance; and/or their clearance subsequently revoked and/or a bar or limitation placed upon their capacity to work with children by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, must notify the entity, and the entity must immediately report it to the Safe Church Unit at: safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au

Responsibilities for WWCC

Each Synod Body is responsible for the oversight and management of WWCC in their entity. Many Synod Bodies will manage WWCC under their own policies and procedures. This guideline applies wherever an entity does not have its own policy.

WWCC is to be managed as part of the recruitment and management of staff;

- When a role is created or advertised, the necessity for a WWCC is to be considered and included in the job description
- Before a person starts a child-related role whether paid or on a volunteer basis, they must provide the appropriate WWCC number and their date of birth (for verification purposes)
- A register should be kept showing the WWCC clearance number and expiry date
- All relevant employees (including volunteers) are responsible for keeping their WWCC current, and providing this information to the appropriate person
- All employees (including volunteers) who are required to hold a WWCC must immediately inform the appropriate person if their WWCC status changes.

Who needs a Working with Children Check?

The Office of the Children's Guardian defines child-related work (including voluntary work) as:

- providing services for children under 18 and you are over the age of 18
- where the work normally involves being face to face with children
- where contact with children is more than incidental to the work.

A Working With Children Check is required by all ordained ministers or individuals engaged as religious leaders or spiritual officers who must undergo a Working with Children Check regardless of whether they engage in face-to-face contact with children.

Examples of those who need a valid WWCC in the Synod context:

- Ordained ministers
- SRE Teachers
- Ministry of Pastor roles
- Chaplains
- Child-care workers
- Teachers, Principals and various other school staff
- Lay church leaders (see definition in table below)
- Any employed person or volunteer who contributes to any program involving children.

Who Does NOT require a working with children's check?

- People under 18 years of age
- People whose work occasionally includes helping out with children as an incidental part of their role

See table below for further examples.

If you are unclear about whether a working with children check is required, refer to the [Office of the Children's Guardian](#) website.

Or contact the Synod Safe Church Unit – safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au

Summary of WWCC Process

1. Identify everyone within your entity who requires a WWCC.
2. Everyone who requires a WWCC must apply online at [ServiceNSW](#) and follow the instructions to have their identification documents verified in person at Service NSW.
3. Obtain WWCC numbers from each person who requires a WWCC and ensure they have clearance. No person is able to work with children until their WWCC is granted. If a WWCC is refused then they are unable to work with children and the Safe Church Unit must be notified immediately so appropriate actions can take place under the Persons of Concern Policy.
4. Verify each person online with [ServiceNSW](#) so they are linked to your organisation.
5. Maintain a WWCC register showing the details of each holder of a WWCC. A template is provided on the Safe Church Unit website
6. Ensure that all holders of WWCC renew before their WWCC expires (every 5 years).

Further Information

Lay church leader	<p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of church council • Elders recognised as having an active spiritual ministry within the congregation • People identified by the ministry agent as key leaders such as in the areas of worship, music and technology • Accredited lay preachers
Other exemptions to the requirement for a WWCC	<p>Some other examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is with children is very short term e.g. a visitor to a school as a guest speaker • a co-worker or supervisor of a worker who is under 18 (and you are not in child related employment) • visiting from interstate and working with children for fewer than 30 days • volunteering as a referee, umpire or lines person or other sporting official where the work does not involve contact with children for extended periods without other adults being present • work in an organisation that delivers services for children but do not have more than incidental contact with the children • informal domestic work at a home where there are children.

Guideline Review

This Guideline is to be reviewed annually by Synod Risk & Compliance and amendments approved by the Synod Governance Oversight Committee (SGOC).

Synod Safe Church Commitment Statement

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) Synod of NSW and the ACT is committed to the protection and safety of all people, and especially recognising our duty of care for children and vulnerable adults.

This Commitment Statement provides a summary of the Synod's agreed commitments articulated in its Child Safe Policy. To assist us to demonstrate this commitment, this commitment statement should be displayed, and communicated such as on church webpages, via announcements by Church Councils and in recruitment and welcome packs.

Safe Church Commitment Statement

We believe that all people, including children and vulnerable adults, are made in the image of God, and that our relationships with each other should express love, integrity, compassion and respect.

We recognise everyone who is involved in any of the Synod's activities, services, events or programs has a right to feel and be safe. We therefore acknowledge our moral and legal responsibility to ensure the safety of children and young people involved with any Synod organisation.

As a church, we are committed to providing environments which are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe for all people including children, so that they may live life in all its fullness.

We have zero tolerance of any form of child abuse and will do all in our power to keep children and vulnerable adults safe from abuse. Protecting children and vulnerable adults is both an individual and a collective responsibility of the Uniting Church, and all who engage with it.

This commitment will be central to our decision-making and guide our practice. We will seek to understand our risk areas and develop strategies which aim to prevent and minimise risks to children and young people as far as possible, taking an approach of continuous improvement.

We are committed to implementing the Synod Safe Church Policy Framework, and to the ongoing development of a child safe organisation, in particular through implementation of the UCA Child Safe Principles.

We welcome feedback from anyone with an interest in this commitment, including children.

The UCA Child Safe Principles

The Synod will continue to embed a child safe culture through the implementation of the UCA Child Safe Principles, and so the following standards are met:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
4. Diversity is respected and equity is promoted
5. Our people are suitable for work with children and committed to the values of child safety and wellbeing
6. Child-focused complaints processes are in place
7. Our people are provided with ongoing education and training on child safety
8. Physical and online environments promote safety
9. Policies and procedures document child safety
10. Review and continuous improvement of policy, procedure and practice.

Safe Church Policy for Congregations Template

Context

The Uniting Church in Australia believes that all people, including children, are made in the image of God. As a community of faith, the Uniting Church is committed to providing safe environments for all people including children and vulnerable adults, so that they may live life in all its fullness

This Safe Church Policy enables *XXXX Uniting Church* to live out its mission in ways that keep people safe, especially in ministries with children and vulnerable adults. Implementation of this policy, along with accompanying procedures, ensures *XXXX Uniting Church* meets its responsibilities as part of the Uniting Church in Australia to be compliant with Australian legislation and the various safeguarding policies and guidelines of the Synod. It ensures that a framework of practices exist to minimise harm to children and vulnerable adults, that programs are organised so they are accessible to all, that any concerns are reported appropriately, and remain compliant with legislative requirements.

XXXX Uniting Church is committed to implementing the Child Safe Principles (as outlined in the UCA National Child Safe Framework) and commits to a continual improvement process which ensures compliance with this policy and that it is amended in response to changes in legislative requirements.

Application of this Policy

This Safe Church Policy applies to all ministers, staff members, elders, church councillors, leaders and volunteers associated with the ministry in *XXXX Uniting Church*.

This Safe Church Policy aims to:

- Minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of power
- Ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled in compliance with Synod policies and Australian legislation
- Ensure that leaders and our church programs are safe, with particular attention to background screening, skills and experience of people during the recruitment process.
- Ensure that all people are respected and valued and have a voice in our community
- Ensure that a culture of Safe Church is developed and nurtured within this church
- Ensure compliance with current Synod policies that relate to Safe Church practices

This church commits to:

Best practice leadership

As a Church Council, we acknowledge that good governance underpins a safe church culture and practice. In our church:

- Leaders work actively to develop a culture of safety, demonstrate safe behaviours, and do everything they can to ensure the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of others
- Leaders work collaboratively in teams and are accountable for their ministry
- Leaders give a voice to children and vulnerable adults in decisions that affect them
- All activities are approached with a lens of safety and risk management.
- Church Council appoint safe church contact people to support compliance with safe church practices
- Safe Church is on the agenda at each council meeting
- Church Council ensures compliance with relevant legislation relating to child protection and WHS
- Church Council is committed to developing a plan to implement the Child Safe Principles identified in the UCA National Child Safe Framework

Safe recruitment of staff and volunteers

The Church Council commits to ensuring robust recruitment and screening processes exist for staff and volunteers to ensure that the right people are placed in roles appropriate to their gifts and skills and to prevent unsuitable people from gaining contact with vulnerable groups. These practices include:

- The creation of role descriptions to enable the matching of the gifts and skills of potential leaders and volunteers with each role and ensure a common understanding of expectations. Where a role has contact with children or vulnerable people, additional safeguards are included within the role description.
- The church should discern the appropriateness of a person for a role via an in-person interview process, screening questions specific to safeguarding children with structured questions for reference checks and by gathering relevant information from others.
- All leaders participate regularly in the life of the church for six months before being appointed to a leadership role
- All staff and volunteers undergo appropriate screening checks before being appointed (e.g. Working With Children Checks (NSW), Working with Vulnerable People Check (ACT), Police Checks (where appropriate), reference checks (where appropriate).
- In the case of SRE teacher applications, two referees are required. Reference checks should be carried out wherever possible for other volunteer roles, especially where the volunteer will be working with children and/or vulnerable people. (E.g. ask questions of any agency the person has volunteered with before and ask specific questions about their work with children)
- All staff and volunteers are given an induction into their role which includes both the requirements of their role and the code of conduct that applies to their role.
- All church councillors, elders and program leaders will agree to follow the UCA Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders
- All ministers must abide by the UCA Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice
- The Congregation adopts the Synod Volunteer Policy, Synod Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety.

Training of staff and volunteers

The Church Council acknowledges that training is a key component to ensuring the safety and welfare of all vulnerable people. Therefore:

- Orientation training is required by all church councillors, elders, leaders and volunteers to understand their responsibility to uphold the congregation's Safety Church policy and procedures
- All church councillors, elders and leaders are required to complete Safe Church Awareness Training within six months and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years. For those who work with children, they must undergo Safe Church Awareness Training before commencing their role
- All staff, leaders and volunteers are required to attend additional ministry-specific training as necessary e.g. Monitors of persons of concern must undergo specific training

Supervision of staff and volunteers

The Church Council acknowledges that it has responsibility for the well-being of staff and volunteers and for ensuring that they are supported in their role and for ensuring that they are undertaking their role with appropriate skill and diligence and are compliant with policies and codes of conduct.

The Church Council

- Commits to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for church councillors, elders, program leaders and volunteers as appropriate.
- Commits to performing periodic reviews (at least annually) with our staff, leaders and volunteers and provide and receive feedback on their performance and any areas of concern.

Responding to concerns of harm, abuse, or misconduct

- The Church Council acknowledges that churches have not always dealt appropriately with allegations and instances of abuse and have prioritised the concerns of institutions above the needs of victims. The Church Council commits to ensuring that this is not repeated.
- All church councillors, elders, leaders, and volunteers will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, according to the Synod policies and guidelines for Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct. External agencies such as the police will be immediately informed where a child is in immediate danger.
- All church councillors, elders, leaders, and volunteers will respond quickly to concerns or disclosures of abuse towards a vulnerable adult or to reports of inappropriate behaviour of one adult towards another.
- Where a church councillor, elder, program leader or helper has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them support will be provided to alleged victims and perpetrators with the guidance of Synod.
- Church councillors will ensure that all staff who are subject to the Reportable Conduct Scheme and Mandatory/Mandated Reporting laws understand their responsibilities under the legislation.

Safe environments

- Everything in our ability will be done to keep all those in our care safe from spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect.
- Expect all leaders, as servants of Christ to serve our people and the community, sharing the good news of Jesus and leading in spiritually, physically and emotionally non-abusive ways.
- All participants, including children, will be given an opportunity to be consulted about the programs and the activities in which they participate.
- All programs will be accessible to all people by ensuring as much as is practical that any adjustments are made to cater for diverse needs of participants. (Including cultural, physical, emotional, mental as well as sexual orientation).
- Appropriate administration relating to safe church will be undertaken. This involves the use of forms, templates, registers, other tools developed by Synod to record appropriate information and permissions, as well as compliance with required screening checks and training obligations.
- Program leaders will be required to complete a written ministry approval process including a detailed risk analysis, for approval by the Church Council, at the start of new ministry programs/activities which take place in the church's name. These programs/activities will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- Church Council, elders and program leaders shall have a complete understanding of online safety measures when providing online events and services and that they provide participants with an online code of conduct prior to the event.
- Church Council is responsible for periodic audit of the church site, programs and administrative compliance with legislation, to ensure any safety concerns and non-compliances are identified and dealt with. As a guide audits should be undertaken at least annually unless there are significant safety concerns or risks which require greater frequency.

Persons of Concern

- It is acknowledged that there may be persons with a background of allegations or convictions of child abuse or who display difficult behaviours towards children or adults, who may be engaging or wish to engage with this church.
- The Uniting Church believes that God created all people, and commits to respecting all people, with the paramount obligation of protecting children and vulnerable people.

- In cases where it is suspected that a person of concern wishes to engage with our church, the Synod Person of Concern policy will be followed, and the Church Council and Synod shall work collaboratively in identifying a solution.
- The terms of any Safety Agreement made with a person of concern will be upheld in the spirit in which it was set. Appropriate reviews will be undertaken, and Church Council will work with the Synod Safe Church Unit should concerns become apparent.
- The Church Council will put appropriate codes of conduct and safeguarding measures in place to help people identify the grooming behaviours of persons of concern.

Definitions

Child	Generally, this refers to a person who is under the age of 18 years but for Mandatory reporting purposes a child is under the age of 16 in NSW.
Elders	Share with the minister in spiritual oversight of the congregation. They are responsible for building up the congregation in faith and love, sustaining its members in hope, and leading them into a fuller participation in Christ's mission in the world.
Church councillors	Members of the church council elected by the congregation, who have oversight of the total life and mission of the congregation.
Leaders	Are people responsible for a ministry program or set of programs.
Minister:	Refers to Candidates, Community Ministers, Deacons, Deaconesses, Interns, Lay Pastors, Ministers of the Word, Pastors, Youth Workers and Ministers from another denomination serving in an approved placement.
Staff	Paid employees of the congregation.
Synod	Refers to the UCA Synod of NSW and the ACT.
Volunteers	Are people who assist or help with ministry activities without payment.

Mandatory Reporting Guideline in NSW

Mandatory reporting is the legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities. Mandatory reporting laws aim to identify children who are being abused or neglected.

This guideline should read in conjunction with the Mandatory Reporting Policy of the Synod of NSW and the ACT. The purpose of the Mandatory Reporting Policy is to ensure there are processes in place to identify children who are being abused and neglected.

In NSW, mandatory reporting is regulated by the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*. Mandatory reporters, where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child (under 16 years of age) is at risk of significant harm, must report to NSW Department of Communities and Justice (previously FACS) as soon as practicable, the name, or a description of the child, and the grounds for suspecting that the child is at risk of significant harm.

Mandatory reports relate to where, during the course of the person's work or role, suspicions arise that a child is at risk of significant harm.

Other Child Protection Reporting and penalties for failing to report

Any adult who suspects, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm must report their concerns to the Police or via Child Protection Helpline on [132 111](tel:132111).

Reports should also be made regarding:

- young people (aged 16 or 17 years) at risk of significant harm
- unborn children at risk of significant harm
- homeless children and young people

In an emergency, where there are urgent concerns for the child's health or life, call the police using the emergency line, triple zero ([000](tel:000)).

There are harsh penalties under S316A of the *Crimes Act 1900* for failure to report a child abuse offence without reasonable excuse. The maximum penalty for failing to report is two years imprisonment where the penalty for the abuse is less than five years or five years imprisonment where the penalty for the abuse is five years imprisonment or more.

What is Risk of Significant Harm?

A child or young person is at risk of significant harm if there are current concerns for their safety, welfare or wellbeing because of one or more of the following:

- If the child's basic physical or psychological needs are not met or are at risk of not being met, e.g., if they do not have adequate food or clothing, or do not have a safe or secure place to live
- Parents or caregivers are not arranging necessary medical care, e.g., a child is ill or injured but is not taken to a doctor when needed
- The child is being denied an education
- A child or young person has been, or is at risk of, being physically abused or ill-treated, e.g., the child is physically injured from excessive discipline or other non-accidental actions
- A child or young person has been, or is at risk of, being sexually abused, e.g., sexual activity between the child and another child or adult
- Risk of serious physical or psychological harm resulting from family violence, e.g., where a child might be injured by a punch intended for their mother, or a child cannot sleep at night because of the fear there will be violence in the home
- Risk of the child or young person suffering serious psychological harm, e.g., a child having to take care of their parent, or a child continually ignored, threatened or humiliated.

The report may relate to a single instance, or to a series of acts or omissions. For more information see the definitions table below.

How Does Mandatory Reporting relate to the Uniting Church in Australia

Who is a mandatory reporter?

Mandatory reporters are people who deliver the following services, wholly or partly, to:

- Children as part of their professional work or other paid employment.
- Those in management positions in these services i.e. a person who manages an employee or volunteer in these services; health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services, or law enforcement to children (either wholly, or as part of their role). Also included are registered psychologists when providing a professional service as a psychologist.

Mandatory reporter groups in NSW include:

- A person in religious ministry or a person providing religion-based activities to children (e.g., Minister of the Word/Deacon, Ministry of Pastor, creche manager, church elder, member of Church Council or leader of any ministry provided to under 18-year-olds.)

In practice, the expansion of the definition of mandatory reporter will result in the following roles within the Church, both paid and volunteer becoming mandatory reporters:

- Ministers, Ministry of Pastor and youth, family leaders
- Elders
- Special Religious Education (SRE) teachers
- People involved in designing, overseeing, managing and delivering activities to children and young people under the age of 18.
- Church Council members as those responsible for children's activities within a congregation.

If you are a Mandatory Reporter as part of your professional role outside of the Church, you must also report any concerns you have for children within the church context.

The UCA would expect anyone, whether a Mandatory Reporter or not, to report if they are concerned that a child is at significant risk of harm.

What Must a Mandatory Reporter Do?

If a mandatory reporter of the UCA, after exercising their professional judgement, suspects on reasonable grounds that a child is at risk of significant harm, they **MUST** report their concerns to the Department of Community & Justice through the Synod Safe Church Unit (or directly to the Child Protection Helpline where necessary). This must be done as soon as the Mandatory Reporter becomes concerned that a child may be at risk of significant harm. Do not wait. A Mandatory Reporter cannot dismiss any indications of a child at risk of significant harm as not being significant enough that is the task of appropriately qualified professionals.

What to do if you need to make a report as a Mandatory Reporter

If there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child within the church community is at significant risk of harm, a mandatory reporter should follow the Synod mandatory reporting procedure below. The Synod, through its Synod Safe Church Unit will lodge a report with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) on behalf of the church.

The steps to making a report are as follows:

1. If you are reporting as a mandatory reporter and are not a ministry agent, (and your concerns do not directly involve the ministry agent), speak to your ministry agent or Presbytery Minister in the first instance.

If your concerns involve the ministry agent, please contact the General Secretary of the Synod of NSW and the ACT directly. Note that child protection concerns which relate to church leaders, workers and volunteers are associated with reportable conduct. Refer to the Reportable Conduct Guideline for NSW for how to make these reports.

2. Ministry agents will report the concern to the General Secretary of the Synod via the Safe Church Unit as soon as practicable.
3. Synod will acknowledge receipt of the information, and lodge a report using the NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG).
4. Any further instructions will be given by DCJ. This may include recommendations about any other reports to be made or support services. The Safe Church Unit will assist the mandatory/mandated reporter to continue to support the child or young person.

Helpful information needed for the Synod (or the Child Protection Helpline) report includes the child's name and location, details of parents or carers and reasons for the report (what has the reporter seen, heard, or been told). Further detail can be found in the table at the end of the document.

Direct Reporting

Mandatory reporters can report directly to the appropriate authority if they are not comfortable in reporting via the Synod.

If a mandatory reporter is reporting directly, they should report their concerns to the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111.

In the instance of a report being made directly to DCJ relating to a child in the church community, the reporter must inform the Safe Church Unit of the report with its reference number.

Reports concerning a child who is not part of the church community

If a mandatory reporter has satisfied themselves that there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at significant harm and that a report needs to be made about a child who is not part of the church community or activities, the reporter should report directly to the Child Protection Helpline.

Note: this is only for cases that do not involve the Uniting Church. All other cases involving the UCA should be reported via the Safe Church Unit.

Deciding to make a report

Deciding whether to report a concern requires a degree of judgement. Mandatory reporters are strongly encouraged to contact the Safe Church Unit for advice and support.

Information about when and what to report as a mandatory reporter can be found on the Department Communities & Justice (DCJ) website at the following link: [DCJ-Mandatory Reporters](#)

If a child discloses a child protection matter, or as soon as concerns are raised, specifics should be documented immediately to ensure information is accurate, even if there is uncertainty as to whether the matter will require reporting. It is important that reporting is done as soon as reasonably practicable.

The Safe Church Unit can assist with further guidance, contact safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au

Other Requirements of Mandatory Reporters

A mandatory reporter is:

- Not required to, and must not, undertake any investigation of the matter themselves.
- Not to inform the parents or caregivers that a report to DCJ has been made.
- Required to deal with the matter confidentially and only disclose it to those necessary to comply with mandatory reporting obligations. Failure to maintain confidentiality will not only be a breach of this policy, but could expose the mandatory reporter to potential civil proceedings for defamation
- Required to continue to respond to the needs of the child or young person within the terms of their role even after a mandatory report has been made.

Protection and Support of Mandatory reporters

Where a report is made in good faith to protect a child, the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 affords protection for Mandatory Reporters and those providing information for a report. In particular:

- Mandatory reporting is not a breach of professional conduct/ethics
- There is no liability for defamation due to making a report
- There are no grounds for civil and/or criminal liability against the person making the report
- Identification of the reporter must not be disclosed without their consent, except in limited circumstances by leave of a court
- Mandatory reporters cannot be compelled to give evidence in any proceedings
- No detrimental action is to be taken against a reporter who is acting in good faith.

Mandatory reporters are also encouraged to seek support for the vicarious trauma which may arise out of dealing with a child protection concern. Support can be provided by the Synod Employee Assistance Program or guidance can be given by the Synod Safe Church Unit.

Further details of the EAP (Employee Assistance Program) can be found on the Synod website: EAP (Employee Assistance Program)

Training for mandatory reporters

Church Councils should identify those in their church community whose UCA roles make them mandatory reporters, and they should be trained as soon as possible. A list of mandatory reporters should be held by the Safe Church contact person nominated for each congregation, and information on the currency of training for each identified mandatory reporter should be kept by them.

Training for mandatory reporters should develop their understanding of the UCA National Child Safe Policy Framework and all relevant Synod policies and procedures.

The Synod provides a range of training and resources which include:

- Safe Church Awareness Training
- Regular ethical ministry training
- The formation of candidates for ministry process
- Engaging with the National Child Safe Policy Framework
- Guidance material for mandatory reporting requirements and procedures
- Tools and resources via the Synod website.

All church leaders and relevant staff and volunteers are expected to complete the Safe Church Awareness Training relevant to their role.

This section is an extract from the guideline. Please contact the Synod Safe Church team if further information is needed.

Reportable Conduct Guideline for NSW

This guideline is to assist congregations, presbyteries and ministers in placement of the Uniting Church Synod of NSW and the ACT with understanding how to identify and notify reportable conduct in New South Wales.

Some Synod Bodies are required to have their own specific child protection policies and systems, and operate under those. This guideline applies to all other Synod entities in NSW, and should read in conjunction with the Synod Reportable Conduct Policy.

1. What is a Reportable Conduct Scheme?

The Reportable Conduct Scheme provides for the reporting to the Office of the Children's Guardian allegations or convictions of reportable conduct, or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct, committed by 'employees' of the Uniting church.

Any person who holds or is required to hold a Working With Children Check (WWCC) because of their interaction with the church is considered an 'employee' under the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW), whether they are employed directly by the church or are contractors or volunteers.

The scheme requires allegations and convictions that reportable conduct against employees to be reported to the NSW Office of Children's Guardian and investigated by the church.

2. How does the scheme apply to the Uniting Church in NSW?

- Reportable conduct includes conduct alleged to have occurred inside or outside the course of a person's employment or engagement with the Uniting Church. Definitions which apply under the Act are provided in section 6 of this document.
- Religious bodies are covered by this scheme in line with recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse.
- Individuals engaged by the church to provide services to children (including in the capacity of a volunteer) are included under the scheme (see full definition in section 6).
- The purpose of the scheme is to ensure that appropriate systems and processes are in place for:
 - Preventing reportable conduct from occurring;
 - Ensuring the NSW Office of Children's Guardian is notified of allegations and convictions involving reportable conduct; and that allegations are appropriately investigated and reported upon.

3. What is Reportable Conduct?

The Children's Guardian Act 2019 defines reportable conduct as:

- a sexual offence
- sexual misconduct
- ill-treatment of a child
- neglect of a child
- an assault against a child
- an offence under s 43B (failure to protect) or s 316A (failure to report) of the Crimes Act 1900; and
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child

For more detail refer to the [Identifying Reportable Conduct Fact Sheet](#).

4. The Synod’s Responsibilities for Reportable Allegations

The Children’s Guardian Act 2019 (NSW) states that the Head of the Relevant Entity, who in the case of Synod is the General Secretary, is required to:

- notify the Office of the Children’s Guardian of reportable allegations and convictions against their employees within **7 business days** of becoming aware of the allegation
- investigate the allegation
- advise the Office of the Children’s Guardian of the outcome
- submit a final or interim report on the investigation into a reportable conduct allegation or conviction to the Office of the Children’s guardian **within 30 calendar days**
- make a finding for all allegations
- take further action to prevent reportable conduct by employees such as through policies, procedures, training and codes of conduct.
- provide an Entity report to the Children’s Guardian about the finding and action taken.

Further information and fact sheets are available on the [OCG website](#).

5. What to do if you are or become aware of an allegation or conviction involving reportable conduct

What	Why	How
1. Immediately notify the General Secretary	All allegations or convictions involving reportable conduct must be made known to the General Secretary as the head of entity for congregations, presbyteries, and placements of the Synod. This is to enable the General Secretary to report to the NSW Office of Children’s Guardian and respond, as necessary.	Directly contact the General Secretary: Email: generalsecretary@nswact.uca.org.au Mail: Addressed as “Confidential” to: General Secretary, Uniting Church Synod of NSW & ACT, PO Box A2178, Sydney South NSW 1235.
2. Support and assist	As head of entity for congregations, presbyteries, and placements of the Synod, the General Secretary is required to report any allegation within 7 business days, then investigate and provide an update (either interim or final report) to the NSW Office of Children’s Guardian within 30 calendar days. The final report must include findings and actions taken.	A minister, Safe Church Contact Person and/or Church Council representative responds to any requests for information from the General Secretary’s Office, Synod Risk and Compliance Team and/or legal counsel. A risk assessment will be conducted to plan for how all parties involved will be protected, supported and cared for.
If you are a member of the church community You can Speak Out in confidence about anything relating to the protection of children.	The General Secretary’s office needs to know about any issue relating to the safety of any child in our care. As the whole church, we have a duty to protect children and to respond well when an issue or allegation is present. The matter should otherwise be kept confidential and you should not advise the employee that a report has been made.	Our preference is always to accept reports directly to the General Secretary (option 1.) If this is not possible for some reason you can Speak out in confidence by: Call the Speak Out hotline 1800 951 145 or Complete the Speak Out form on the Synod website .

If you have any questions about how reportable conduct applies to Uniting Churches in NSW, please contact the Synod Safe Church Team on safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au

6. Reportable Allegations – professional boundaries and practice

Reportable allegations can arise from an employee engaging in activity that may be reportable conduct, and these matters **must** be reported. Reportable allegations can in some cases be the result of misunderstanding, or a child feeling unsafe, regardless of whether the adult involved thought they were doing anything wrong, or meaning harm of any kind.

Every employee must follow the relevant code of conduct and the prudent practices included in Safe Church Awareness training. Remaining mindful of professional boundaries and practices to prevent unintentional harm to children, and alert to practices of employees that may be the subject of a reportable allegation. .

This section is an extract from the guideline. Please contact the Synod Safe Church team if further information is needed.

Synod Persons of Concern Policy

1. Persons of Concern (POC) Policy Background

- 1.1. The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is the paramount priority of the NSW-ACT Synod, as is the protection of vulnerable people (In line with the Children's Guardian Act (NSW) 2019 and the Ombudsman Act (ACT) 1989).
- 1.2. The Uniting Church Values Statement to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse articulates the Church's commitment to address emerging issues and challenges. One such issue involves people whose behaviour identifies them as a Person of Concern (POC) wanting to be part of a worshiping community or engage with other Church services or agencies. The Person of Concern Policy is the Church's response to this challenge.
- 1.3. As the Church we continue to affirm that all people are made in the image of God, and that all people are loved by God and are called to be in relationship with God and God's people through God's Church.
- 1.4. Our desire is to be inclusive, compassionate, and respectful of all people, however the need to protect vulnerable people is paramount. This will be done by placing appropriate boundaries around the involvement of POCs in the church community, parish mission, community service or agency of the Synod, where an assessment of risk deems this to be appropriate.
- 1.5. This Persons of Concern Policy for the Synod of NSW and the ACT (Synod) sit under the UCA National Persons of Concern Policy Framework.

2. Definitions

2.1 Person of Concern

Means a person who wishes to participate in the life of any Uniting Church community or agency within the Synod, who has engaged in criminal sexual or abusive behaviours and /or is reasonably suspected of engaging or seeking to engage in harmful sexual or abusive behaviours to another person that has led or may lead to one or more of the following:

- criminal charges relating to sexual offences against children and/or adults
- conviction for sexual offences relating to children and/or adults
- conviction of abusive/violent offences relating to children and/or adults
- placement on the Register of Sexual Offenders
- suspension or refusal of a current Working with Children Check
- recording on the Nationally Coordinated Criminal History Check
- concerns reasonably held by the congregation, faith community, Presbytery, Parish mission, or Synod that the safety of others may be at risk.

In the circumstance that a child is identified as a POC, the mandatory reporting processes applicable to either NSW or the ACT must be followed for the safety of the child and other children. This includes notification of the police/child protection unit.

In the situation where the POC is a child or a vulnerable adult, the parent/caregiver/guardian shall be included in all conversations with the POC including conversations about any safety agreements which may be offered. All communication with the child or vulnerable adult shall be conducted sensitively with consideration given to age and intellectual development and capacity.

2.2 Leadership

A leadership position or role or one that represents the Church includes but is not limited to:

- Nomination for any position within the congregation, Presbytery or Synod including membership of any associated committee or working group.
- Contributing to worship in any capacity and/or participating in any activity that might lead people to think the POC acted in an approved and trusted role. This includes but is not limited to saying grace, prayers, singing as an individual or member of a band/group/choir, Bible reading, lighting candles, offering votes of thanks, carrying Communion elements or the Bible into the Church, serving Communion elements, addressing the congregation in any way, standing in the sanctuary space.
- Leading or assisting in any church-related event or activity; especially those involving children and/or youth.
- Greeter, welcomer, pastoral care visitor.
- Key access to any Church property, afterhours access to any Church property, access to any Church computer equipment or technology.
- Leading Bible studies, home/life/fellowship groups, organising or hosting any Church events, activities or programs, involvement in religious education programs.
- Identification on Church websites as a person associated with or representing the Church in any way.
- Any other activity which a reasonable person might identify as acting in a leadership role/position with the Uniting Church.

2.3 Agreement

In this policy 'Agreement' refers to any agreement put in place to manage a Person of Concern and may include:

- A Safety Agreement with an individual created using the approved Safety Agreement Template
- A Parish Mission Protocol for use in Parish missions where POC's may attend on a sporadic basis put together using the Parish Mission Protocol guideline.
- Other Safeguarding agreements may be put in place only when a Safety Agreement cannot be entered into. Examples of such situations may be (but are not limited to):
 - Ongoing police investigations.
 - Where it is determined that the POC lacks the capacity to sign a safety agreement.
 - Where the POC is a child under the age of 18.

3. Application of this policy

- 3.1 This policy applies to all Uniting Church congregations, Parish missions within the Synod of NSW and the ACT.
- 3.2 Where a Person of Concern is identified within a Faith Community, it will be the responsibility of Presbytery to manage the Person of Concern process with the Synod.
- 3.3 This policy does not apply where the POC is an employee or prospective employee of the Synod, Presbytery, Congregation or Parish mission. In those cases, existing employment policies will apply.
- 3.4 This policy does not apply to Agencies of the Synod who have their own policy for Persons of Concern. It is expected that any policy relating to Persons of Concern approved by Agencies will not contravene this Policy.

4. Responsibilities under this policy

Synod has the primary responsibility for any Agreement made under this policy, but Congregations, Parish missions, Congregations and Persons of Concern each have a significant role in ensuring the success of any agreement.

4.1 Synod Responsibilities:

- The Associate Secretary is responsible for deciding whether an agreement may be put in place which enables a Person of Concern (POC) to engage in the life of a congregation, presbytery or parish mission of the Synod of NSW and the ACT (Synod) and is responsible for the terms of that agreement and its development.
- Is responsible for ensuring a risk assessment of the POC in the context of the congregation, presbytery, or parish mission they wish to engage with is completed.
- Is responsible for deciding the terms under which an agreement relating to the POC is terminated.
- Is responsible for ensuring reviews of any agreement take place as outlined in the agreement.
- Is responsible for investigating any reported breach of an agreement by the POC.
- Is responsible for developing the procedures regarding the management of POC's in congregations and Parish missions.
- Is responsible for ensuring that the POC management process is carried out with compassion, respect and procedural fairness.
- Is responsible for ensuring that matters relating to POC's are managed as confidentially as possible.
- Is responsible for managing all legal aspects relating to the management of POC's.

4.2 Presbytery Responsibilities:

- Is a signatory to any agreement put in place to manage a POC.
- Is responsible for the pastoral care of the minister and congregation managing a POC.
- Ensures the POC receives appropriate pastoral care during any period during the POC process where the POC is excluded from attending. Responsibility for the pastoral care of a POC ceases if the POC is excluded from any congregation within Synod.
- Supports the Synod during the POC management process, when a Synod representative cannot be present in person.
- Ensures any Joint Nominating committee chairperson working with a congregation who has a POC, is aware of this and communicates this to the prospective ministry agent.
- Manages the POC process with Synod, where a POC is identified within a Faith Community.

4.3 Congregation/Parish Mission Responsibilities:

- Signatory to any agreement put in place to manage a POC.
- Assist Synod with the risk assessment and development of the terms of an Agreement or Parish Mission Protocol.
- Ensure the terms of an agreement with an individual or Parish Mission Protocol are upheld.
- Appointing and supporting Monitors.
- Pastoral support of the POC.
- Reporting any breaches of the Safety Agreement or Parish Mission Protocol.
- Performing reviews on the effectiveness of agreements put in place to manage POC's.

4.4 Person of Concern Responsibilities:

- A person of concern must show a willingness to engage in a positive manner with the POC management process.
- Must comply with the terms of any interim arrangement.
- Must sign the Safety Agreement where this is offered and comply with the terms and conditions within the Safety Agreement.
- Must co-operate with their monitors and minister and be respectful.
- Must inform Synod if they re-offend or if there are changes to any conditions imposed on them by police.
- The POC may submit a complaint using the Synod complaint process if they feel that due process has not been followed.

5. Person of Concern Policy

- 5.1 Synod will allow POC's to engage in the life of the Church, for their spiritual nurture and encouragement where it has been determined by examining the risks associated with the POC and the congregation, and the willingness of the POC to engage with the POC process, that an agreement can be put in place.
- 5.2 Synod is responsible for the decision to offer an Agreement with an individual POC or a Parish Mission under the Parish Mission Protocol or to terminate an Agreement with an individual or Parish Mission.
- 5.3 The Agreement with a POC will include the specific terms under which the POC may engage with a congregation. The terms of the Agreement are designed to mitigate the identified risks and to protect the church community, in particular children and vulnerable people, from the POC. The terms of any Agreement will be approved by Synod.
- 5.4 The Synod will put in place procedures and guidelines which outline the process for ongoing management of a POC under an agreement, with a particular congregation. This will include:
- 5.4.1 a process for terminating any agreement regarding a POC.
 - 5.4.2 appointing and supporting monitors.
 - 5.4.3 reporting, investigation of breaches of the agreement.
 - 5.4.4 reviewing the agreement in line with the terms of the Agreement, but at least annually or when a new minister is appointed.
 - 5.4.5 A process to ensure that appropriate pastoral care is in place for the minister, congregation, monitors and person of concern.
- 5.5 The Synod will put in place a process for managing persons of concern in Parish Missions so that safeguards are in place around casual clients of a parish mission who may be persons of concern, where an agreement with an individual is not practical. Where a POC wishes a stronger and more regular engagement with the worshipping community of a Parish Mission, an individual agreement will be put in place.
- 5.6 Any Agreement made with a Person of Concern or Parish Mission will be signed by Synod, Presbytery, the minister in placement, and the person of concern.

- 5.7 Synod will ensure that all POC's who sign a Safety Agreement have the capacity to understand the agreement they are signing. If there is any doubt as to the capacity of the POC, a medical assurance from a medical practitioner should be given before the agreement is signed. If a person is determined to lack capacity, an alternative safeguarding agreement should be put in place with a power of attorney, guardian or the church council.
- 5.8 This policy and its associated guidelines are to be implemented with procedural fairness and in a way which respects the dignity of the POC, balanced against the need to ensure reasonable steps are taken for the safety of, in particular, children and young people, and mindful of the confidentiality issues inherent in these matters.

Health and Safety

for congregations

Policy Statement



Definitions: The church can be a place of work as well as worship, and so can have a special significance beyond that of a 'workplace'. While we recognise the legislation specifically relates to *work*, health and safety we have used 'health and safety' throughout our documentation to ensure it is relevant to everyone.

Why

The way we care for each other is a way we can express God's love. Whenever people connect with us, we want them to feel safe. Because health and safety is so important, the church council and other leaders also have some legal obligations.

The church is called to love everyone, but God has a special concern for the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed. Safeguarding the health and safety of children and vulnerable adults is therefore also central to our health and safety commitments.

Who

Everyone has a responsibility to protect their own safety and that of others, as far as possible.

This policy statement applies to all people (paid or volunteer) engaged to perform work for or on behalf of [insert name of church]. [insert name of church] also demonstrates care for others who connect with us in our facilities (such as visitors), by providing a safe environment.

We also commit to safeguarding the health and safety of children and vulnerable adults we connect with through our congregation.

How

[insert name of church] is committed to planning for and addressing hazards and risks that that might be harmful to our physical and psychological health and safety. We are committed to:

- Demonstrating our values by collaborating and consulting with staff, volunteers and contractors when making decisions about matters that impact their health and safety
- Listening to and acting on health and safety issues that are raised in our congregation. This includes concerns raised by children, and actively engaging and empowering young people to help ensure they are safe and protected
- Adopting a proactive risk management approach to ensure hazards and risks are identified and controlled
- Providing appropriate training, instruction and supervision for anyone doing paid or volunteer work
- Planning for emergencies and responding effectively to manage incidents and injuries
- Documenting our health and safety arrangements. This helps demonstrate we have an effective health and safety management system. It also helps everyone understand what will be done to keep them safe.

This document should be read in conjunction with our safe church commitments and documentation. This policy should also be read in conjunction with our health and safety information.

Annual Property Maintenance Checklist



Church properties must be maintained in a good and safe condition in order to meet the requirements of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all people associated with the church. *The Uniting Church in Australia Regulations* require a Presbytery Property Committee to regularly inspect or arrange for the regular inspection of properties for which the presbytery and church councils are responsible, and to ensure that such properties are maintained. The church council is responsible for the management and administration of all congregational property, including the care and maintenance and other things as are necessary or appropriate for its use and management.

Presbytery:	
Congregation:	
Address:	
Date inspected:	Inspected by:
Contact phone:	

Building environment – internal/external

QUESTIONS	YES	NO	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Is plant life blocking visibility of the property by passersby or impeding safe entry or exit from the property by vehicles or pedestrians?			
Are car parks and footpaths lit during night meetings?			
Is there security lighting in place and are there lights on throughout the night? Include details about the type of lighting in the additional comments field.			
Are paths and/or walkways free from trip hazards and other obstacles?			
Is there disabled access into the facility (ramps etc.)?			
Are any windows cracked or broken?			
Do all doors and windows open easily and shut completely?			
Are floor surfaces, carpets or mats in good condition?			
Are floor surfaces even, level and free from trip and slip hazards?			
Are internal/external steps and staircases in good condition and fitted with anti-slip tread?			
Are handrails or balustrades installed where required (i.e. on stairs or balconies with a fall of more than one metre)?			
Are all aisles, exits and access ways clear of obstructions?			
Are all electrical cords kept in a safe manner (i.e. clear of all aisles, exits and access ways, not dangling loosely from raised surfaces)?			
Are ceilings and walls in good repair (no water leakage, flaking paint, mould or mildew etc.)?			
Have gutters been cleaned in the past six months?			
Are building materials, timber pallets, cardboard, loose boards, bricks or tiles stored anywhere on the property?			
Are rubbish bins stored inside the buildings or secured away from the buildings?			

Annual Property Maintenance Checklist

Electrical

QUESTIONS	YES	NO	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Is there a safety switch or residual current device (RCD) installed on each building?			
Has the safety switch or RCD been tested in the past six months?			
Have there been any alternative energy systems (solar, wind etc.) installed at your property?			
Are all light fittings, switches and power points clean and in good repair (i.e. not cracked, loose or improperly fixed to walls)?			
Are power boards used instead of household double adaptors?			
If power boards are in use, are they limited to one board per outlet?			
Are all power boards and extension leads in good condition (not frayed or wires exposed)?			
Has all portable electrical equipment been inspected, tested and tagged by a qualified electrical worker?			
Are appliances well-maintained and operating correctly (fridges, microwaves etc.)?			

Ventilation and amenities

QUESTIONS	YES	NO	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Are church members satisfied with building ventilation (i.e. thermal comfort, air quality)?			
If the property is air-conditioned, are filters and vents regularly			
Are the property amenities hygienically cleaned (i.e. kitchen, toilets and showers)?			
Is all furniture in good stable condition (chairs, pews etc.)?			
Does the property have a commercial kitchen?			

First aid and emergency procedures

QUESTIONS	YES	NO	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Are fire exits clearly marked, easily identifiable and free from obstruction?			
Are all extinguisher and fire hoses easily accessible?			
Have extinguishers, hose reels and fire blankets been serviced in the past six months?			
Do you supply Annual Fire Safety Statement (AFSS) to local council?			
Are there illuminated exit signs or emergency lights installed in buildings? If you do not have emergency lighting, use the additional comments field to detail your measures to ensure a safe evacuation during an evening meeting.			
Are emergency and fire evacuation procedures clearly displayed?			
Are contents of the first aid kits appropriate for the property and its activities, and regularly checked and maintained?			

Annual Property Maintenance Checklist

Security

QUESTIONS	YES	NO	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Have there been any security issues during the year? If so have they been resolved?			
Is there a burglar alarm installed? In the additional comments field, advise whether this is a local alarm or monitored by a security firm.			
Are there key-operated deadlocks on all external doors?			
Have key-operated window locks or security screens been installed?			
Is the computer and multimedia equipment secured?			
Has your key register been reviewed in the past 12 months? In the additional comments field, advise how many people have keys to the property.			
Are the facilities regularly used by other church groups, agencies or the general community?			
Is there a current UCA-endorsed rental agreement in place with all groups who use the property?			
Could your property be shared with other denominations or Uniting Church Entities?			

Playground Inspection Requirements

Playground inspections are an important part of play space maintenance. The Kidsafe NSW Playground Advisory Unit (PAU) inspection services are conducted by experienced Level 3 Playground Inspectors.

An Operational Playground Safety Inspection will establish the overall safety and condition of equipment, foundations and surfaces. The inspection will verify that the play space is ready for use and that the equipment supplied and installed conforms to the current playground Standards.

QUESTIONS	YES	NO	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Does your Property Trust property have a playground erected on site?			
If so, inspections should be conducted at least once every 6 months. Have you complied with this requirement?			
Are children always supervised in the playground?			
Is the playground equipment in good condition?			
Does the playground equipment comply with Australian Standards?			
Is the playground area fenced?			
Does the playground area have soft fall?			
Are all first aid incidents recorded?			

Contact number of the Playground Advisory Unit to make a booking for an inspection: (02) 9845 0890.

Please note that any playground equipment that is used exclusively as part of a childcare service operating on a Property Trust property is the responsibility of the childcare operator.

Building Fire Safety

The fire safety statement is a record of maintenance of the fire safety systems within a building that is required to be given to your local Council.

Under [clause 177](#) and [clause 180](#) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 Buildings of The Uniting Church in Australia Synod of NSW and the ACT are required to meet Fire Safety Standard.

The importance of keeping the fire safety measures up to date is essential to ensure the safety of the public, employees and other people that may be affected if a fire or emergency within a building was to occur.

Inspections and maintenance along with annual fire safety Statements must be carried out by a competent fire safety practitioner to a standard no less than to which the measure was originally designed, as identified on the building's fire safety schedule.

Below is the list of Minimum Essential Requirements.

- Exit and Emergency lights (to guide occupants to safe Egress Paths)
- Fire Extinguishers or Blankets (To allow effective first response to a fire)
- Evacuation Drill/Warden training every 12 months
- Smoke Alarms
- Evacuation Plans (to educate the regular occupants how to evacuate the building)
- Fire Safety Statement (to declare the building is capable of performing to the fire safety standard required)

Complying with the minimum essential standards shows we are meeting our legal and moral obligations and assists in providing a safe workplace and property.

If Councils have not asked you for an Annual Fire safety statements, it is still important to meet the minimum standards required for the building. The 2018 Annual Fire Safety statements must be completed by the churches "responsible body" (Regulation 4.4.1 Responsibility for Property) and forwarded to the Property Trust to sign section 9 the Owners Authorisation. **Email: property@nswact.uca.org.au**

We will then send the signed document back to you for lodgement with council.

If you are unsure this affects you please contact Synod Office Property Services. **Email: property@nswact.uca.org.au Phone: 82674300**



Health and Safety

for congregations *First aid kit contents*

A basic first aid kit should contain at least the following:	Quantity:	Yes/ No
Emergency services telephone number(s) and address(es)		
Notebook and pen	1	
Resuscitation face mask or face shield	1	
Disposable nitrile examination gloves (nitrile is a latex-free rubber suitable for people with latex allergies)	5 pairs	
Gauze pieces 7.5 x 7.5 cm, sterile 3 per pack	5 packs	
Saline, 15 ml	8	
Wound cleaning wipe, single 1% Cetrimide BP	10	
Band-aids - plastic or fabric, packet of 50	1	
Splinter probes, single-use, disposable	10	
Tweezers/forceps	1	
Antiseptic liquid/spray 50 ml	1	
Non-adherent wound dressing/pad 5 x 5 cm (small)	6	
Non-adherent wound dressing/pad 7.5 x 10 cm (medium)	3	
Non-adherent wound dressing/pad 10 x 10 cm (large)	1	
Conforming cotton bandage, 5 cm width	3	
Conforming cotton bandage, 7.5 cm width	3	
Crepe bandage, 10 cm, for serious bleeding and pressure application	1	
Scissors	1	
Non-stretch, hypoallergenic adhesive tape—2.5 cm wide roll	1	
Safety pins, packet of 6	1	
BPC wound dressings No. 14, medium	1	
BPC wound dressings No. 15, large	1	
Dressing—Combine Pad 9 x 20 cm	1	
Plastic bags—clip seal	10	
Triangular bandage, calico or cotton minimum width 90 cm	2	
Emergency rescue blanket for shock or hypothermia	1	
Eye pad, single-use	4	
Access to 20 minutes of clean running water, or hydrogel 3.5 gm sachets	5 packets	
Instant ice pack for treatment of soft tissue injuries and some stings	1	



Health and Safety

for congregations
First aid kit contents

If there is are at risk of burns (for example a commercial kitchen) the following should also be included:	Quantity	Yes/ No
Burn treatment instructions on two waterproof instruction cards: one for the first aid kit and the other to be located on the wall next to the water supply		
Hydrogel, 8 x 3.5 gram sachets		
Hydrogel dressings		
7.5 cm cotton conforming bandage		
If work is performed outside and there is a risk of insect bites or snake bites (such as a youth camp or gardening ministry), the first aid kit should also contain:	Quantity	Yes/No
A heavy duty 10 cm crepe bandage for snake bites		
Sting relief cream, gel or spray		
Where people work in remote location away from emergency services, the first aid kist should also contain:	Quantity	Yes/No
A heavy duty 10 cm crepe bandage for snake bites		
Large clean sheeting, for covering burns		
Thermal blanket, for treating shock		
Whistle, for attracting attention		
Torch/flashlight		

Additional first aid requirements

Some staff, others that perform work or members of the congregation may also have additions medical needs that you may wish to consider when the contents of the first aid kit is determined. The first aid officer or the person nominated to monitor the first aid inventory should check with employees, contractors and volunteers if they have any medical conditions that should be considered when they are inducted and when first aid inventory is reviewed (at least annually). Medications for adults, should not be kept within first aid kits and the dispensing of medications does not generally considered part of first aid.

When children are in our care

When children are involved it is important to understand if there are any specific first aid requirements for children in our care. We must store any medications (such as epinephrine and asthma spacer) in accordance with the manufacturers instructions. These should be administered in accordance with the following guidelines: Management of medical conditions for children in our care and Administration of medications for children in our care.

If you get injured at work



1 Tell your employer

Tell your employer as soon as you can. Your employer must notify the insurer within 48 hours. If your injury is serious, your employer must notify SafeWork NSW immediately on 13 10 50.

2 See your doctor

See your doctor and get a *certificate of capacity* for your employer to send to the insurer.

3 Recover at work

If you are able, stay at work or plan how to return to suitable work as early as possible.

You can make a workers compensation claim which may cover medical expenses, and weekly payments if you need time off work. Contact your employer's insurer for more information.

RECOVER BETTER AT WORK

Evidence shows you recover from an injury better at work than at home.

Being off work can affect your health and wellbeing, your financial situation and your relationships with family and friends.

If a co-worker is off injured, stay in touch and support their return to work.

Your employer's workers compensation insurer is:

.....

Your return to work coordinator is:

.....

SafeWork NSW is the work health and safety regulator. The State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) regulates workers compensation insurance in NSW. The Workers Compensation Independent Review Office (WIRO) manages workers' unresolved enquiries, or workers' complaints about insurers.

For more information go to safework.nsw.gov.au or sira.nsw.gov.au or call 13 10 50.

For WIRO go to wiro.nsw.gov.au or call 13 94 76.

This poster summarises the requirements of the *Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998* with regard to notifying injuries and making claims. Every employer must ensure information regarding notifying injuries and making claims is available at all times to workers as required under section 231 of the *Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998*.

Reporting Work-related Injury

Workers Compensation Policies

If you employ a worker, you may need a workers compensation policy. Workers compensation covers the costs of lost wages and medical treatment for employees who have a work-related injury or illness.

All placed Ministers of the Word are covered by the Workers Compensation policy which is maintained by the Ministers Support Fund. If your Congregation has an employee, other than an Ordained Minister, you need to hold Workers Compensation insurance. Consult [this guide](#) to find out if your Congregation requires an additional policy.

In NSW: Workers compensation can be provided to an employee to cover the costs of lost wages and treatment. You must have a workers compensation policy if you pay \$7,500 or more in annual wages.

In the ACT: Workers compensation can be provided to an employee to cover lost wages and treatment. You must have a workers compensation policy in the ACT if you have one or more workers. Workers include any individuals who work under a contract of service.

If you are unsure if you need a workers compensation policy or would like to establish a workers compensation policy, contact WTW via email: UCASynod.RTW@willistowerswatson.com. A certificate of currency will be provided as evidence of your insurance arrangements.

If a work-related injury or illness occurs

If a minister or staff member is injured or experiences a work-related illness, it should be reported as soon as possible, regardless of the seriousness. Please email the Synod's workers compensation advisor WTW at UCASynod.RTW@willistowerswatson.com to report the details. This will satisfy legislated reporting requirements to report within 48 hours, and you will have access to support for the workers compensation and injury management process if needed.

UCA Regulation

MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION

3.5.1 Participation in the meeting of the Congregation

General meetings

- (c) (i) General meetings of the Congregation shall be held at least twice in each year and shall be convened by the chairperson and secretary or, if there is a vacancy in one of those positions, by the remaining officer;
- (ii) At least once each year at a meeting of the Congregation financial reports shall be presented and policies, plans, budgets, appointments and other matters within the responsibility of the Congregation shall be determined.

MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

3.5.2 The Church Council shall meet at least quarterly on dates to be determined by the Council to deal with all matters relating to the responsibilities of the Council having particular regard to any matters referred to the Council by the Congregation. Additional meetings shall be held when convened by the chairperson or at the direction of a Congregational meeting, Presbytery, Synod or Assembly.

ACNC Requirements for Basic Religious Charities (BRCs)

This checklist contains ACNC requirements applicable to **Basic Religious Charities (BRCs) that do not operate outside of Australia**. This checklist excludes ACNC requirements applicable to indigenous corporations, incorporated associations, charities registered with ASIC, Deductible Gift Recipients (DGRs), Public Benevolent Institutions (PBIs) and non-reporting entities. This workbook contains information recorded on the ACNC website as at 1 July 2021. Please check the website for the latest information by clicking on the links provided.

Section	Tick	Requirement	Link to Resource
1. Keep Charity Status		A charity must make sure it continues to be entitled to registration under the ACNC Act. This includes meeting all of the criteria for initial and ongoing registration.	ACNC Keep Charity Status
		To be registered with the ACNC, a charity must:	ACNC Keep Charity Status
		Be not for profit.	ACNC Not for Profit
		Have a charitable purpose that is of public benefit.	ACNC Charitable Purpose
		Not have any disqualifying purposes (which are engaging in, or promoting activities that are unlawful, or promoting or opposing a political party).	Charities Act 2013 (Cth)
		Not be an individual, political party or government entity.	Charities Act 2013 (Cth)
		Beyond these requirements, a charity must:	
		Have an active Australian Business Number (ABN).	Australian Business Register ABN Lookup
		Provide its governing document (i.e., its constitution or rules).	ACNC Governing Document
		Provide an Address (and notify the ACNC when it changes).	ACNC Address For Service
		Provide the details of its Responsible Persons ie Church Council (and notify the ACNC of any changes).	ACNC Responsible Persons
		Report annually to the ACNC by submitting the Annual Information Statement (and Financial Report, depending on its size).	ACNC Annual Information Statement
		Not be involved in terrorist or other criminal activity.	ACNC Keep Charity Status
2. Notify the ACNC of Changes		Charities have a duty to notify the ACNC of changes to their details, including Responsible People and governing documents.	ACNC Update Charity Details
		Charities are required to notify the ACNC of changes as soon as reasonably possible or no later than 28 days (for medium and large charities) and 60 days (for small charities). Required notifications include:	ACNC Update Charity Details
		Change to charity details A charity must tell the ACNC if any of the following details change: - Its legal name (the formal name as it appears on legal or other official documents) - Its Address (where legal documents can be sent).	ACNC Update Charity Details
		Change to governing document A charity must tell the ACNC if it has changed its governing document (for example, its constitution). A charity must give the ACNC a copy of the new governing document.	ACNC Update Charity Details
		Change to Responsible Persons A charity must tell the ACNC each time a Responsible Person (a council member) takes on or finishes a role they have as a Responsible Person. This includes any change in their role (for example, if the Treasurer has been elected as the new Council Chair).	ACNC Update Charity Details
		Change to reporting period The standard ACNC reporting period is the financial year, 1 July to 30 June. Charities that want to use a different accounting period, known as a 'substituted accounting period,' must make a request to do so.	ACNC Update Charity Details
		Change to charity subtype When a charity is registered with the ACNC, it is registered with at least one 'subtype' - a category that reflects a charity's purposes. Charities can have more than one subtype. If you check the charity's record on the Charity Register, you will be able to see its subtype under the 'history' tab. Sometimes a charity may develop and change its focus and purposes. If it does, it may need to change the subtypes with which it is registered.	ACNC Update Charity Details

ACNC Requirements for Basic Religious Charities (BRCs)

This checklist contains ACNC requirements applicable to **Basic Religious Charities (BRCs) that do not operate outside of Australia**. This checklist excludes ACNC requirements applicable to indigenous corporations, incorporated associations, charities registered with ASIC, Deductible Gift Recipients (DGRs), Public Benevolent Institutions (PBIs) and non-reporting entities. This workbook contains information recorded on the ACNC website as at 1 July 2021. Please check the website for the latest information by clicking on the links provided.

Section	Tick	Requirement	Link to Resource
2. Notify the ACNC of Changes (continued)		Closing of charity A charity should request that the ACNC revoke its charity registration before closing. A charity must explain to the ACNC why they want the registration revoked, and this must be approved.	ACNC Update Charity Details
		Notify of breach of Act or Governance Standards A charity must tell the ACNC if it thinks it has breached the ACNC Act and as a result, is no longer entitled to be registered. An example of this is if a charity changes its purpose and is no longer working towards its charitable purpose. A charity must notify the ACNC as soon as it reasonably can, but no later than 28 days after becoming aware of its failure to comply. Form 3C is used to notify the ACNC.	ACNC Update Charity Details
3. Keep Records		Charities have different obligations for record-keeping. The record-keeping obligations depend on your charity's size, complexity, activities, how it spends or receives money, and whether it has extra obligations from state regulators.	ACNC Keep Charity Records
		In regard to record keeping, a charity:	ACNC Keep Charity Records
		Must keep certain written financial and operational records.	ACNC Keep Charity Records
		Can keep the records in any format, as long as they are: - in writing; - readily accessible (easy to find); and - in English or in a form that can be easily translated to English.	ACNC Keep Charity Records
		Must keep the records for seven years.	ACNC Keep Charity Records
4. Report Information Annually		All charities - except for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations registered with the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) - must submit an Annual Information Statement (AIS).	ACNC Annual Reporting
		ACNC requires charities to meet the following annual reporting requirements:	ACNC Annual Reporting
		Annual Information Statement (AIS) Basic Religious Charities must submit an AIS every reporting period (unless they have an exception). The AIS is due within six months of the end of a charity's reporting period and is submitted online in the ACNC Charity Portal. Basic Religious Charities do not need to: - answer the financial information questions, or - submit an annual financial report as part of the AIS.	ACNC Annual Information Statement

Guidelines for Treasures

Welcome and How to Start

Treasurers are tasked with important work in their Congregations and we can assist you in the reporting required. Below is a checklist of requirements to familiarise yourself with.

To ease into the role, it's vital to plan and prepare to:

- Know the Church's structure and operations
- Become familiar with important documents
- Understand the Church's reporting and taxation obligations.

Treasurers are not just bookkeepers, they are an integral part of the Church Council, Board or Committee.

You should also get in touch with all relevant parties/authorities to inform them that you are the new treasurer/contact person for the church. This includes:

- updating Uniting Resources Financial Management Services
- updating banking authorities
- updating records with the ACNC
- updating records with the Taxation Office
- updating records with ASIC and/or relevant state authorities
- informing the external accountant and/or auditor.

Becoming Familiar with Important Documents

You should also locate copies of important documents such as:

- the church's constitution and regulations (or a similar document)
- Tax File Number or Australian Business Number notifications
- correspondence from the Tax Office regarding the church's tax concessions
- correspondence from the ACNC regarding the church's registration details
- Uniting Resources insurance contracts
- asset registers
- loan/lease agreements
- employee contracts
- policies and procedures manuals.

Ensure that these documents are safely and securely stored.

Knowing the Church's Structure and Operations

To gain a better understanding of the church structure and its operations incoming treasurers should:

- obtain a copy of the church's governing document (e.g. the church's constitution, regulations and by-laws) and familiarise yourself with it
- obtain a copy of the church's structure diagram (consider making a structure diagram if the church does not already have one) – this diagram will be useful in helping you knowing the church's operation and identifying potential areas of risk
- make a list of all relevant church activities and note the people responsible, the entity type(s) and the financial reporting requirements.
- become familiar with the [Uniting Church's history and structure.](#)

Gaining an Understanding of the Church's Financial Operation

After gaining an understanding of the church's activities and operations, you should then:

- establish an understanding of the current accounting system
- determine which policies, processes and procedures are in place and what internal controls exists for transactions connected to church activities
- be familiar with Uniting Resources shared resources
- read all relevant policies and procedures manuals
- engage with staff and volunteers including the accountant, bookkeeper, auditor and the outgoing treasurer
- ensure that all activities of the organisation are included in and accounted for in the organisation's books of account, BAS and bank accounts.

Understanding the Church's Reporting and Taxation Obligations

The Treasurer is required to prepare and provide a financial report at Church Council, Board or Committee meetings.

The report should include an Income and Expenditure Statement (Profit & Loss) and a Balance Sheet.

The Income and Expenditure Statement shows funds collected and received relating to the operations of the Congregation and the costs of maintaining the property, programs and activities of the Church entity.

The Balance Sheet shows the balances of any accounts, investments, money owed to the Church entity, depreciable equipment items and property held by the Church entity as well as any money owed to others.

The Treasurer's report should give an indication of any trends that are emerging and the possible impacts this may have on the future. Church Council, Board or Committee members will need to know of any expense incurred but not yet paid and any income which is yet to be received.

Financial statements need to be audited and Annual Financial Returns (AFR) need to be submitted to Uniting Resources.

Prepare and present all above financial information at the Annual General Meeting.

Taxation Obligations

Treasurers should obtain an understanding of the [organisation's current taxation registrations.](#)

To access the organisation's ABN and associated taxation endorsements and concessions go to the [Australian Business Register \(ABR\) website](#) and search by entering your organisation's ABN.

This register will inform you of the organisation's:

- Australian Business Number (ABN)
- Entity Type – this will give you an indication of its reporting obligations
- Income tax exemption status
- Goods and Services Tax (GST) registration status
- Availability for GST or Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) concessions/exemptions
- Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status or if applicable. Please note DGR status endorsement is only available to organisations that are not classified as Basic Religious Charities (BRC).

Other Special Purpose Reports

Other management reports includes budgets, monthly reports and financial reports for specific activities. You should consider the purposes of the reports, for whom you are preparing them and how often they are required.

Continuing the Link for Newly Appointed Treasurers

When a new Treasurer is appointed we recommend "Passing the Baton" by creating a folder with the following information to ensure transferral of knowledge from the outgoing Treasurer to the incoming Treasurer.

SpeakOut

IN CONFIDENCE

Did you know that you can raise any issues, incidents or concerns via our confidential and secure reporting service 'Speak Out'?



INDEPENDENT AND CONFIDENTIAL HOTLINE

1800 951 145

SPEAKOUT WEBSITE

speakout.uca.org.au



- ✓ CONFIDENTIAL
- ✓ SECURE
- ✓ ANONYMOUS

Concerns can relate to anything that has not felt right in any of our congregations, services, or entities, and are handled by our independent partner Core Integrity, who provides the Speak Out service. Core Integrity are there to listen, understand, and help you through the reporting process.

Core Integrity will only ever share with the church details of any information you provide with your consent.

We know it can be difficult to Speak Out, but help is available. No concern is too big or too small, too recent or too far in the past to report. You will always be treated with respect and compassion when you choose to Speak Out.



Uniting Church
SYNOD OF NSW & ACT

core
INTEGRITY

Speak Out is an initiative of the Uniting Church Synod of NSW and the ACT