



**uniting  
church**  
in Australia,  
Synod of NSW & ACT

# Background Check Policy and Procedure

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For Staff of the Synod Office, Ministers,  
Lay Ministers, Volunteers and Members of Councils  
of the Uniting Church, Synod of NSW and the ACT

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## Background Check Policy and Procedure

This document provides all Uniting Church organisations within the bounds of the Synod of NSW and the ACT with information to enable them to meet their legislative obligations in relation to background checks.

Background checks include, but are not limited to, Working with Children and Vulnerable Person Checks, Criminal Record Checks and Entitlement to Work in Australia Checks.

### 1. Policy

All Uniting Church organisations within the bounds of the Synod must undertake background checks on both existing and prospective paid and unpaid workers in accordance with prevailing legislation and Synod requirements.

A “**Uniting Church Organisation**” is any church entity within the bounds of the Synod of NSW and the ACT, this includes all Synod Boards, Institutions, Presbyteries, Parish Missions and Congregations.

Where prevailing legislation mandates that a background check must be undertaken, no individual can be engaged in paid or unpaid work within a Uniting Church organisation without the organisation being first provided with documentary evidence to substantiate the individual’s suitability for the role to be undertaken.

A “**paid worker**” is an individual that receives some form of remuneration or remuneration in kind for the services provided.

An “**unpaid worker**” is an individual who volunteers his/her services and receives no form of payment for the services provided.

Prevailing legislation includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998 (NSW); and
- (b) Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Bill 2011 (ACT); and
- (c) Aged Care Act 1997 (Cth); and
- (d) Migration Act 1958 (Cth).

### 2. NSW Working with Children Check obligations

A Working with Children Check is mandatory for any individual in NSW involved in child-related work. Child-related work is defined as face-to-face contact with children in a child-related sector or work in a child-related role. All Uniting Church organisations fall within the scope of a child-related sector; however, some organisations may not engage in face-to-face contact with children.

The Synod of NSW and the ACT requires that;

- All ordained ministers or individuals engaged as religious leaders or spiritual officers must undergo a Working with Children Check regardless of whether they engage in face-to-face contact with children. Working with Children Clearances can only be issued by the NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian and are valid for five (5) years.
- All individuals seeking to engage in child-related work must provide a clearance number issued by the NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian to an organisation before they can be permitted to engage in such work; and
- All organisations must 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 with their organisation.

**It is imperative** that where a Uniting Church organisation is informed that an individual:

- cannot obtain a working with children clearance in the first instance; and/or
- has had 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 the organisation **must** immediately report to and seek guidance from the Synod Safe Church Unit.

Contact details for reporting purposes are:

- ordained ministers or individuals engaged as religious leaders or Ministry of Pastor - Associate Secretary: Rev. Bronwyn Murphy - Phone: (02) 8267 4327, Mobile: 0428 411 830, Email: [associatesecretary@nswsact.uca.org.au](mailto:associatesecretary@nswsact.uca.org.au);
- all other individuals (employees and volunteers) - Synod Safe Church Unit, Secretariat Executive Assistant: Monique Mumby – Phone: 02 8267 4325, Email: [safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au).

### **3. ACT Working with Vulnerable People Check obligations**

The ACT Working with Vulnerable People Check is mandatory for any individual in the ACT involved in regulated activities with vulnerable persons.

Vulnerable persons are defined as children under eighteen years of age or disadvantaged adults.

The Synod of NSW and the ACT requires that;

- All ordained ministers or individuals engaged as religious leaders or spiritual officers must undergo a Working with Vulnerable People Check regardless of whether they engage in regulated activities with vulnerable persons.  
Working with Vulnerable People Clearances can only be issued by the Commissioner for Fair Trading and are valid for three (3) years.
- All individuals seeking to engage in regulated activities with vulnerable persons must provide a clearance card issued by the Commissioner for Fair Trading to an organisation before they can be permitted to engage in such work; and
- All organisations must ensure that all individuals hold a clearance card issued by the Commissioner for Fair Trading before they permit an individual to engage in regulated activities with vulnerable persons within their organisation.

**It is imperative** that where a Uniting Church organisation is informed that an individual:

- cannot obtain a Working with Vulnerable Person clearance in the first instance; and/or
- has had their clearance subsequently revoked and/or a bar or limitation placed upon their capacity to work with children by the Commissioner for Fair Trading

The organisation **must** immediately report to and seek guidance from Uniting Resources.

Contact details for reporting purposes are:

- ordained ministers or individuals engaged as religious leaders or Ministry of Pastor - Associate Secretary: Rev. Bronwyn Murphy - Phone: (02) 8267 4327, Mobile: 0428 411 830, Email: [associatesecretary@nswsact.uca.org.au](mailto:associatesecretary@nswsact.uca.org.au);
- all other individuals (employees and volunteers) - Synod Safe Church Unit, Secretariat Executive Assistant: Monique Mumby – Phone: 02 8267 4325, Email: [safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au).

#### 4. Aged Care Criminal Record Check obligations

A criminal record check is mandatory for any individual involved in activities within an aged care service in NSW and the ACT.

Criminal Record Checks must be issued by an authorised government agency and are valid for three (3) years.

- **The Synod of NSW and the ACT requires that;**All individuals seeking to engage in activities within an aged care service must hold a valid Criminal Record Check clearance issued by an authorised government agency before they can be permitted to engage in such work; and
- All organisations must ensure that every individual holds a valid Criminal Record Check clearance issued by an authorised government agency before they permit an individual to engage in activities within an aged care service.

#### 5. Obtaining Background Check Clearances

Annexure A Guide to obtaining a NSW Working with Children Clearance

Annexure B Guide to obtaining an ACT Working with Vulnerable People Clearance

#### 6. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years by the Associate Secretary to ensure compliance with legislation and continuous improvement of Background Check requirements and procedures.