



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

Child Safe Policy Synod of NSW & ACT

This policy applies to all Synod entities other than those which require a specific tailored policy. In particular, it is for Ministers, Ministry of Pastor, Lay Leaders, Employees, Volunteers and Members of Councils in a Congregation, Parish Mission or Presbytery of the Uniting Church, Synod of NSW and the ACT.

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Child Safe Policy

1. Introduction

The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of NSW and the ACT (Synod) is committed to the protection and safety of children and vulnerable adults.

- 1.1. We believe that all people, including children, are made in the image of God, and that our relationships with each other should express love, integrity, compassion and respect. As a church, we are committed to providing safe environments for all people including children, so that they may live life in all its fullness.
- 1.2. Preventing and responding to child abuse is both an individual and collective responsibility of the Uniting Church, and all who engage with it. This policy applies across all Synod Bodies and to all church staff, ministry agents, volunteers and members.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 We keep children and vulnerable people safe primarily because of our understanding of God's desire for love and justice. We also safeguard children in response to a range of external standards and regulations such as the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the relevant legislation in NSW and the ACT.
- 2.2 We confirm the Synod's commitment to the National Safe Church Framework. The purpose of this Policy to support the establishment of frameworks and systems across the Synod for:
 - the identification of children at risk of harm and appropriate response
 - reporting of child protection concerns
 - prevention of reportable conduct, and appropriate response to allegations
 - having systems in place to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults and for the development of a child safe organisation.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1 All children who are involved in any of the Synod's activities, services, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Synod is committed to providing safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.
- 3.2 We have zero tolerance of all forms of child abuse and will do all in our power to safeguard children from abuse.
- 3.3 The Synod shall establish a policy framework, supported by systems and procedures for the protection and safety of children and vulnerable adults who attend our congregations, participate in other services or who we have responsibility or care for.
- 3.4 The Synod is committed to the creation and maintenance of a child-safe culture to ensure the care, protection and safety of all children engaging with the Church through any of its entities.
- 3.5 All Synod Bodies which engage in child related services or activities will have in place a policy framework for the protection of children, and where relevant, vulnerable adults. Where entities develop their own policies, they are to align with and meet the standard of Synod policies, and their implementation is to be monitored.
- 3.6 Synod Bodies, such as Presbyteries, Congregations, Faith Communities and Parish Missions (which do not require a tailored policy framework) are to implement the Synod policy framework and to measure and monitor its implementation.

- 3.7 All Synod Bodies are expected to act with transparency in terms of their internal processes, and though demonstrating willingness to share and report on child protection management systems with the Synod Office, and any external regulator when required.
- 3.8 Child protection and safe church systems will be maintained, developed and monitored. The systems will be kept under review, and continuously improved.
- 3.9 All Synod Bodies support the active participation of children in programs, activities and services and provide a range of ways for children to provide feedback or raise concerns.
- 3.10 The views of children will be taken seriously, we will listen, respect what they say and involve them when decisions are being made about matters that directly affect them.
- 3.11 Recruitment processes will maintain rigorous and consistent screening and selection processes. For all child related positions this will include references, working with Children Check (NSW) Working with Vulnerable People Check (ACT) and interview questions that explore behaviours and responses in child related situations.
- 3.12 Induction processes for all child related positions will include a briefing on the Child safe polices and procedures upon commencement.
- 3.13 All people involved in either the governance oversight or delivery of child related activities will complete training as identified by the Synod.
- 3.14 All policies and procedures relating to children will be publicly available.
- 3.15 Parents or guardians of children will be provided with the policies, procedures and dealing with complaints relating to the specific programs that their child is enrolled or attending.

4. Child Safe Standards

- 4.1 The Child Safe Standards will be adopted across the Synod.
- 4.2 All Synod Bodies will have measures in place to establish systems and to create a culture which promotes child wellbeing and prevents harm. As relevant and appropriate to the Synod Body, entities will consciously and systematically:
 - create an environment where children’s safety and wellbeing is the center of thought, values and actions
 - place emphasis on genuine engagement with, and valuing of children
 - create conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people
 - create conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm
 - responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions.

5. Related Policy and Legislation

- 5.1 This policy aligns to the UCA National Child Safe Policy Framework. Other references include:
 - National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
 - NSW Child Safe Standards
 - UCA National Member or Adherent Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Complaints Policy.
- 5.2 This policy is supported by a range of Synod policies, guidelines, resources and training materials to assist us to protect children and vulnerable adults. Key policies and resources include:
 - Synod Reportable Conduct Policy
 - Safe Church Guidelines – Reportable Conduct (for NSW and for the ACT)
 - Person of Concern Policy and Safety Agreement Template

- Safe Church Guidelines – Mandatory Reporting (for NSW and for the ACT)
- Safe Church Guideline – NSW Working with Children Check
- Safe Church Guideline – ACT Working with Vulnerable People Check
- Synod Background Check Policy
- Synod Volunteer Policy
- Safe Church Awareness Training
- Safety and Protection Policy (Template for congregations)
- [Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice](#) and [Ministry Handbook](#)
- National Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders
- Synod Body codes of conduct
- Synod Body child protection policy frameworks
- Leaders Code of Conduct (Template for Congregations)

6. Policy Review

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