



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

Code of Conduct and Ethics

Live our Values, know our Code

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A few words from Rev Jane Fry

I hope you'll love working with the Uniting Church, Synod of NSW and ACT as much as I do.

Our working environment is one of fun, flexibility, creativity and respect. We value our people for their individuality and the unique gifts they bring to us and to those we serve.

As the largest non-government provider of community services in Australia, the Uniting Church in Australia (The Church) is in all of Australia's largest cities and remotest towns. Every day, we touch the lives of thousands of people around Australia—which is not only a great honour but also a great responsibility. Our reach is a testament to the commitment and devotion to those with whom we work – volunteers and employees alike.

Working for the Church is more than a job; it's a way of life. Our environment is dynamic, purposeful, rewarding and, above all, welcoming. I hope you'll find the work you do uplifting. Although we are a Christian-faith-based organisation, we respect the rights of those around us to follow their own religion or to be guided by their hearts. Good comes from many places and it's the way we treat and respect one another that matters most.

Our inclusive culture encourages you to learn and grow in a supportive and caring environment, focusing on what's important to you. After all, I want you to love what you do and who you do it for.

We have developed this Code of Conduct and Ethics (Code) so that everyone who works with us knows what's expected and, importantly, so that we can feel the spirit of what we bring to communities in our own workplace.

Thank you for choosing to work with the Synod.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Fry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Jane Fry

1. Our Compass, Our Values, Our Conduct

Our Code is our road map for how we work together. The Code sets out requirements for our conduct and serves as a foundation for our policies, procedures and guidelines, all of which provide additional guidance.

This Code contains some rules because we want to be upfront about what is and isn't ok in the workplace. Our actions, words, behaviours and deeds matter. Regardless of the role we perform, when we do what's right—in other words, when we act with integrity, compassion and a generous heart—we show we truly care for the communities we serve and for the people with whom we work. We are absolutely committed to providing a rewarding experience for all.

2. Applicability (scope)

The Synod Office, including Uniting Financial Services and churches and congregations within the ambit of the Synod of NSW and the ACT (**'Synod'**) are committed to providing an ethical, safe and inclusive environment for all its employees (permanent, fixed-term and casual), volunteers, independent contractors, and temporary agency staff (collectively referred to in this policy as **'Individuals'**).

The Code extends to all places where work, or work-related activity, is carried out, whether within or outside of working hours. This includes:

- ▶ at an Individual's usual workplace;
- ▶ where an Individual is working remotely or at an alternative location, including when the Individual is working from home or is attending church or a community member's premises in the course of work; and
- ▶ where an Individual is representing the Synod or the Church or engaging in work-related activity such as community consultation, conferences, training, business trips, social events whether or not on Synod or Church owned or run premises.

The Code also extends to all written and verbal communication, both inside and outside the workplace, including, but not limited to, letters, reports, email, instant messaging, text messages and social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and other forms of social media where content can be shared and/or comments made.

3. Vision and Mission

Our Vision

To be a fellowship of reconciliation, living God's love and acting for the common good to build a just and compassionate community.

Our Mission

To inspire, empower and support the Synod and the Church in all its varied expressions to live out our Christian faith. We affirm that this means supporting the goals of:

- ▶ Bringing people to God's Love
- ▶ Responding to human need and strengthening community
- ▶ Transforming unjust social structures
- ▶ Continuing to learn and grow
- ▶ Protecting and renewing creation.

4. Our Values

Our values guide the important work we do, defining our approach with our people and with those we serve. We are guided by:

- ▶ compassion
- ▶ respect
- ▶ collaboration
- ▶ integrity.

What do our values mean in reality? Here's some examples:

- ▶ See someone you don't know? Say hi and introduce yourself; if they're new, welcome them and introduce them to others.
- ▶ If you make a mistake, or don't know how to do something, say so. Making mistakes then fixing them is a normal part of learning and growing.
- ▶ Has someone come to you after having made a mistake? Listen, support and ask questions and seek to understand.
- ▶ If you need to give feedback, give it - be frank, and be kind.
- ▶ Justice and fairness matter; if you see something you think is not quite right, fix it, speak out, do something, but don't do nothing. We all need a champion sometimes.
- ▶ Sometimes the world feels just a little lonely – if you see someone who's down, or a bit withdrawn, check in. Talk to them; ask if they're ok and take a real interest (without being intrusive).
- ▶ Got a great idea for how we can do something new or different? Raise it; have courage and take heart. We can't promise it'll be adopted but we can promise it'll be heard.
- ▶ Got an interesting and challenging project or assignment? Before delegating it, think beyond the usual suspects. Who else may benefit from, and enjoy, the opportunity to be involved?

5. Diversity, equality and inclusion

We work in a diverse range of communities supporting a diverse range of needs and so it's only right that our workplace mirrors that diversity. We see opportunity in uniqueness and strength in difference. We respect and value diverse life experiences and heritages and we want all voices to be heard.

A diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace is one where all employees, volunteers, and contractors, whatever their gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, sexual orientation or identity, education or disability, feel valued and respected.

We are absolutely committed to equal opportunity for employment and advancement across all of our teams and programmes and throughout the employee life cycle. We believe in investing in our people to help them be the best they can and to make the greatest difference to those around them.

We see diversity, inclusion, and equity as integral to our mission and vision. In all that we do, we lead with respect and tolerance and expect all employees, volunteers and contractors to do the same in all practices at all times.

What is diversity, inclusion, and equity?

- ▶ **Diversity** is the presence of difference within the workplace; the differences can be wide and varied in themselves, e.g. race, gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation or identity.
- ▶ **Inclusion** is not just welcoming but truly valuing a diverse range of people for the unique perspective that they bring. It is possible to have diversity without inclusion. For example, there's a diverse range of animals at the zoo, but the lions don't feel welcomed into the monkey's cage.
- ▶ **Equity** is ensuring everyone has access to the same opportunities. Equity recognises that we don't all start from the same place because advantages and barriers might exist. Equity acknowledges uneven starting places and seeks to correct the imbalance.

We are passionate about the work we do, the people we work with and the communities we work for and we hope to instil that passion in you too.

6. Work Health and Safety

We are committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for all of our people in any work locations and in any work function.

Just as we have a duty to you, you have a duty to us, to yourself and to others. If you see a hazard, report it, or remove it if it's safe to do so. Our duty also extends to any visitors on our premises (including suppliers) and we ask for your support in observing the protocols for visitors to our premises.

Work Health and safety in the workplaces encompasses both physical safety and psychological safety. The definition of psychological safety is broad but in essence it encompasses people management, work environment, work design, work allocation and delegation, workload management (including stress management) and not being singled out or humiliated for offering suggestions, raising concerns or making a mistake. It can be a complex area and it's therefore important that we all read and understand our Work Health & Safety policies in detail.

As with many things in life, in matters of health and safety, prevention is better than cure. If you have any concerns – whether they relate to physical or psychological safety and even if you think it's minor– please speak with your supervisor, Manager, Director or the People & Culture team

For a more detailed understanding of our approach to Health and Safety and the role of Individuals and Leadership alike, please see our policies.

7. Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination

We are committed to an environment free from bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, vilification and victimization ('inappropriate behaviour').

Inappropriate behaviour runs contrary to who we are, what we do and what we believe and these behaviours won't be tolerated. If an individual's poor behaviour can be linked to work in any way, there can be consequences under this Code and our policies.

Full details of the type of behaviours that constitute inappropriate behaviour can be found in our Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy. It's important that we familiarise ourselves with this policy as inappropriate behaviours can range from subtle to overt.

We encourage anyone who experiences or witnesses inappropriate behaviour – even if it seems

minor – to either ask the person to stop, or to come forward and report it. More detail can be found in our Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination policy.

Q&A

Q: *I overheard a colleague telling a lewd joke. Others laughed but I didn't like it. It wasn't told to me directly; should I just ignore it?*

A: *No. Telling lewd jokes is inappropriate and shouldn't occur in the workplace. Whether you were the intended audience or not is irrelevant.*

8. Social Media

Social media includes digital communication channels that allow individuals to create and share content and post comments.

As we know, what's said on the 'net,' stays on the 'net' - forever – even if we think we've deleted it. As quickly as we regret a post or comment and try to delete it, it can spread around the world.

Our Social Media Policy is in place to provide guidance about the appropriate usage of digital communication channels and to protect the reputation of the Synod and the Church. We all have a responsibility to familiarize ourselves and comply with the Synod's social media policy.

While the predominant focus of our social media policy is on use on behalf of the Synod, it also applies to personal use in certain circumstances. For example, where an individual's inappropriate personal post can be traced back to either the Synod or the Church, the Individual may find themselves in breach of both our Social Media Policy and possibly other policies as well.

As a safeguard, we should all assume that whatever we say or share can be seen by our colleagues, our leadership, our communities and congregations with the result that it could impact the way others view who we are.

Always use good judgment when engaging in social media activity; keep a kind and generous heart. On this point, from time to time, a minor or other vulnerable person may seek to befriend you on social media. While we recognize that as a lovely symbol of the trust they have placed in you, we ask you not to accept and instead to find a way to let the child or vulnerable know and support them in other ways. It's important that, at all times, we do the right thing and that we are seen to do the right thing. Accepting a friend request from a minor or vulnerable person could give the perception of impropriety and impact the reputation of yourself, the Synod and the Church.

Because of the potentially far-reaching impacts of social media, it's important that we familiarise ourselves with the full policy.

Q&A

Q: *A co-worker posted an offensive comment about me on their personal social media page. Are they allowed to do that?*

A: *No. Use of online media must comply with all relevant Synod policies*

9. Social Responsibility

At the Synod, we are passionate about transforming unjust social structures, recognising the inherent value of each human being. We know that many of our employees share the same passion. So, we want to give you the opportunity to be more hands-on. We have heard you and we thank you.

To support employees who want to do some 'field work,' the Synod will provide two days of paid time off* for volunteer work. To maximise the contributions of our people and our organisation, we've placed some parameters around the charities and organisations supported. This is because focused effort has greater impact. More information can be found in our Employee Volunteer Guidelines.

We hope that you'll take advantage of the wonderful opportunity to work more closely with our communities. Ultimately, though, it's your choice. All of us have different strengths and interests and some of us will have a greater passion for working behind the scenes keeping everything running smoothly. We thank you for that too.

** The two days per annum of paid volunteer leave is for full-time employees; pro-rata leave is available for part-time employees. The programme doesn't apply to casual employees or volunteers.*

10. Compliance with Legal Requirements

The Synod will act with utmost integrity and comply with all governing laws and regulations. We will never compromise our integrity or our faith and nor will we ask our people to compromise their integrity or faith.

If you think a conflict exists between a legal requirement and what you're being asked to do, please raise it immediately with your Supervisor, Manager or Director. In the event, that you don't feel comfortable doing so, please speak with the Director of People and Culture or contact Speak Out, our confidential third-party hotline service via <https://nswact.uca.org.au/speak-out-in-confidence/> or calling 1800 951 145.

11. Data, Privacy and Confidentiality

We observe all applicable laws in relation to data privacy and protection. Through our work with our communities or with each other, we may be in possession of confidential information and data. When this is the case, we are in a position of trust and we must make every effort to protect that information and data. That means observance of our policies around how we collect, store and retrieve data and the circumstances under which it should or should not be shared with others, including our colleagues.

The unauthorised release of confidential material, whether intended or not, could have disastrous consequences for the Church/the Synod legally, reputationally and personally. All individuals are required to read and comply with our policies and to immediately notify any breach or potential breach of data integrity or confidentiality to the responsible persons named in the relevant policies.

12. Ethics

12.1 Conflicts of interest

All of us have a duty to act in the best interests of the Synod and the Church at all times. That means our duty of care and loyalty supersedes anything that could result in personal gain by avoiding something that is (or could be perceived to be) in conflict with our mission.

It is incumbent on all of us, and particularly those liaising with congregations and communities, to ensure that their personal or financial interests don't conflict with their Synod - related roles and responsibilities or the Synod more generally. Any conflict, or potential or perceived conflict, should be raised with their line manager.

To this end, we require that any employee considering taking additional external employment or a company directorship speak to their line manager, in advance of accepting any appointment.

12.2 Confidentiality

Depending on our role with the Synod, we may be privy to varying levels of sensitive or confidential information. Sensitive or confidential information includes information about the internal operations of the Synod or the Church, including financial information, and any information about our communities and congregations (or their members), any reports of misconduct (either in or outside of the Synod), etc.

As a faith-based organization, trust is imperative. Individuals must maintain the highest standards of confidentiality at all times and only ever share sensitive information with those who need to know the information to do meet their responsibilities, or as required by law.

To this end, it is absolutely critical that Individuals refrain from discussing Synod or Church business in public, e.g. on public transport, at cafes or restaurants or other places where the conversation could be easily overheard. We never know who can hear us.

As a general rule, all of our communication with others should have the impact of increasing their trust and faith in us.

Our obligations of confidentiality exist:

- ▶ both during and after our employment or association with the Synod or the Church has ended and
- ▶ regardless of whether or not those obligations form part of our formal employment or engagement documentation.

12.3 Fraud, Bribery and Corruption

Our reputation is of utmost importance to our work in the communities we serve. We must be above board in all our actions both internally and externally. We have zero tolerance for any form of fraud, bribery and corruption.

'Fraud' means to intentionally deceive someone in order to gain an unfair or illegal advantage. Fraud can range from putting personal expenses on a Synod credit card, to creating bogus suppliers to whom payments are made to taking kickbacks from suppliers or contractors.

'Bribery' means to offer, promise, give, accept or solicit an advantage for an action which is illegal, unethical or a breach of trust. Inducements could take the form of gifts, rewards or other advantages.

'Corruption' is the misuse of entrusted power for private or personal gain. Examples include blackmail, bribery, fraud, theft, extortion or perverting the course of justice.

Individuals working with the Synod, in any capacity (including unpaid volunteer work), are prohibited from providing or receiving anything of value with the expectation of, or that could create the perception of, receiving favourable treatment. Under no circumstances will we tolerate the offer or acceptance of bribes or kickbacks in the form of money, gifts or favours.

12.4 Gifts & entertainment

A gift, invitation or favour should not be accepted or given if it might create a sense of obligation, compromise your professional judgment or create the appearance of doing so. In deciding whether a gift is appropriate, you should consider its value and whether public disclosure of the gift or invitation would embarrass you, the Synod or the Church. You should also consider any previous gifts or entertainment offered by the same institution, company or body. For example, accepting an invitation to a modest lunch is acceptable, but doing so frequently could create the wrong perception.

A gift of money should never be given or accepted except of course where that gift of money is made by way of donation or bequeath as part of the Synod's or the Church's authorised official charity or community support. In such a scenario, the donation or bequeath is to be made via the Moderator's Appeal, the details of which can be found [here](#).

Unless of nominal value, any gifts offered, or invitations extended, to individuals must be:

- ▶ declared to, and discussed with, your manager, before any decision is made as to whether or not to accept;
- ▶ recorded in the Gifts and Entertainment Register together with information as to whether or not the gift or invitation was accepted.

Nominal value for gifts or entertainment is considered to be less than \$100.

We recognise that declining a gift, or an invitation, can be a delicate matter and we encourage you to seek guidance from your manager as needed. Our aim is to recognise the generosity and recognition afforded to us, while helping the offeror to understand our need to be, and be seen as being, beyond reproach.

13. Working with Children and Vulnerable People

Working with children and vulnerable people affords us the opportunity to positively impact lives but also places upon us a high level of responsibility.

As well as set out under the law, the Synod and the Church have strict rules around those who are authorised to work with children and vulnerable people. All individuals who will come into contact with children or vulnerable people whilst representing the Church or the Synod must have a current and valid Working with Children Check (NSW) or Working With Vulnerable People Check (ACT).

As per our Child Safe Principles, the Synod and the Church has implemented several measures to promote wellbeing and prevent harm. These measures aim to create an environment where the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable people are at the centre of our thoughts, values and actions. More information can be found in our Child Safe Principles.

14. Intellectual Property

During your engagement with us, anything you create for the Synod belongs to the Synod. This includes inventions, discoveries, ideas, improvements, software programs and works of authorship. This is because if it has been created or developed, in whole or in part, on Synod time as part of your duties or through the use of Synod resources or information, then the Synod has essentially paid for that work to be done on its behalf.

15. Political Activities

Any political activities must be conducted on your own time and using your own resources. You must not promote any political or personal views or beliefs (including by posting or distributing notices or other materials) on or around the Synod's premises. The Synod is an apolitical organization and, as such, any political views or beliefs you hold are wholly yours and not the Synod's.

The Synod will not make donations to any political party but does not restrict individuals from doing so in their own personal capacity.

16. Speaking to the Media

From time to time, individuals may be approached by media representatives to make statements, give interviews or to promote the work of the Synod or the Church. Unless specifically authorised to act as a media representative, any request for such involvement should be directed to Communications and Marketing.

17. Workplace surveillance

To protect its people, information and reputation, the Synod undertakes surveillance of computer software and camera surveillance at some premises. At all times, the Synod will apply with relevant privacy legislation.

Any information stored on a Synod computer, tablet or phone, whether that information is contained on a hard drive, computer disc, cloud-based software or any other manner, may be monitored and/or inspected by the Synod.

The Synod may also monitor and block emails or messages from being sent or received from Synod systems, devices and will generally notify individuals if or when that has occurred. If you believe a legitimate email or message has been blocked, please contact [IT] to seek its release.

For the purposes of tracking any lost or stolen Synod or Church owned laptops or mobile phones, tracking has been enabled on these devices. It is not our intention to track individual movement unless deemed appropriate by exception (e.g. where there may be concerns for an individual's safety).

18. Internet and Email Usage

In using Synod technology, you are agreeing to abide by our policy on Internet and Email usage.

Technology is a wonderful tool but one which has many potential pitfalls. Among them is the fact that what we say and where we go can leave indelible footprints and, as a result, has the capacity to either help or harm us.

To protect our people, systems and information, our Internet and Email Usage policy addresses matters such as responsible use (including guarding against spam), inappropriate and unlawful use, streaming, downloading and uploading (please don't do any of them without prior permission or as required as an inherent part of your role) and security and privacy. All of these things can be summed up in three principles:

- ▶ Keep it nice (represent us and yourself in the right way)
- ▶ Keep it safe (beware spam, phishing, etc)
- ▶ Keep it whole (no downloading, streaming, uploading etc without authorisation)

19. Silence isn't Golden

If you feel your ethics, integrity or values are being compromised in any way, please speak with your Supervisor, Manager or Director. In the event, that you don't feel comfortable doing so, please speak with the Director of People and Culture or contact Speak Out, our confidential third-party reporting service via <https://nswact.uca.org.au/speak-out-in-confidence/> or calling 1800 951 145. More information about Speak Out can be found in section 21 of this Code.

20. EAP

It is the Synod's aim to provide a safe and supportive working environment for everyone. However, we know that sometimes life can throw challenges at us, often when we were least expecting them or when our resilience was already a little low. None of us has to manage alone.

The Synod's Employee Assistance Programme is a confidential, third-party counselling service. It's free and available 24/7 either by phone, or face-to-face (pending any lockdown restrictions). It's conducted through Benestar who have a team of experienced psychologists just waiting to help.

Through our experience, we've found that talking helps. Whether it's offering a different perspective, helping to deal with change (either in our personal or professional lives) and even supporting us in having those conversations we need to have, they can help.

While the Synod gets usage reports, we don't get any information that could identify who has used the programme. We want you to feel assured and we want you chat to an independent third party when you need to.

For information on how to contact the EAP, please see <https://nswact.uca.org.au/shared-resources/human-resources/employee-assistance-program/>.

21. Speak Out

To Speak Out is to raise a genuine issue of concern about the safety, wellbeing and security of the Church, the Synod and their people.

Our Speak Out Program is administrated by our integrity partners, Core Integrity. Core Integrity's Hotline platform, powered by ClearView Connects™, provides you with a safe, simple and secure platform to report a wide range of issues either confidentially or anonymously.

The Speak Out Program is not intended to stop an individual from raising a concern internally. Rather, the Speak Out Program is there by way of additional support should an individual feel unsure or uncomfortable about raising a concern.

To Speak Out is to raise a concern about:

- ▶ A safety or security concern, particularly related to children or vulnerable people.
- ▶ Work, health and safety issues.
- ▶ Data security/privacy concerns
- ▶ Concerns about any breach of any law or regulation.

<https://nswact.uca.org.au/speak-out-in-confidence/>

22. Relevant Policies and Guidelines

- ▶ Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- ▶ Social Media Policy
- ▶ Volunteer Policy
- ▶ Safe Church Policy
- ▶ Guideline – Working with Children Check NSW
- ▶ Guideline – Working with Vulnerable People Check ACT
- ▶ Persons of Concern Policy
- ▶ Child Safe Principles
- ▶ Workplace Surveillance Policy
- ▶ Internet and Email Usage Policy
- ▶ Privacy Policy

23. Terms and Conditions

This Code does not form part of any contract of employment or contract of engagement and may be amended, replaced or revoked at any time by the Synod at its discretion.

24. Important Contacts

Speak Out

There are two easy ways to Speak Out in Confidence

- ▶ Independent online Speak Out website <https://nswact.uca.org.au/speak-out-in-confidence/>.
- ▶ Independent and confidential hotline: 1800 951 145

Employee Assistance Program

Benestar Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – 1300 360 364.

Please visit <https://nswact.uca.org.au/staff-intranet/employee-assistance-program-eap/>

Synod Contacts

Director, People and Culture

Director, Finance Risk and Systems