



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

Compassionate Leave

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Table of Contents

- 1. Overview/Background 4
- 2. Purpose of Policy 4
- 3. Applicability (scope) 4
- 4. Responsibilities 4
- 5. Principles 5
- 6. Applicable Policies and Legislation 6
- 7. Review 6
- 8. Terms and Conditions 6

1. Overview/Background

We understand that losing the ones we love can be difficult. Grief hits us in different ways and it's important that, in the event of serious illness, injury or death of a loved one, we take time to grieve and to remember the happier moments we've shared with those who have passed, or will soon pass, from this physical life.

2. Purpose of Policy

We understand that from time to time individuals may need time off to cope with the serious illness or death of a close family member or friend. This policy outlines the circumstances under which individuals are able to take paid compassionate leave.

Where paid compassionate leave doesn't apply:

- ▶ e.g. to casual employees, volunteers and independent contractors, unpaid compassionate leave can be taken;
- ▶ e.g. for employees where the bereavement relates to a loved one who sits outside of the definition of 'immediately family or household member', accrued personal leave may be an option.

3. Applicability (scope)

Paid compassionate leave:

- ▶ applies to all permanent or fixed term employees ('**individuals**') of the Synod of New South Wales and ACT ('**Synod**');
- ▶ does not apply to casual employees, independent contractors or volunteers, but time out can still be taken.

4. Responsibilities

The Director, People and Culture owns the policy and is responsible for its implementation and application.

People Managers have a responsibility to:

- ▶ Extend support to the individual;
- ▶ Consider the absent individual's work commitments and re-allocate work if and as appropriate;
- ▶ Notify others (e.g. team-members) of the individual's absence together with any necessary adjustments to work priorities;
- ▶ On the individual's return, ensure the individual completes a leave request form and providing the completed form to Payroll in a timely manner; and
- ▶ Where an individual is away for an extended period to:
 - ▶ Keep in touch with the individual and offer support (balancing care for the individual against the individual's need for rest, recuperation and privacy); and
 - ▶ Re-allocate the individual's work as appropriate.

Payroll has a responsibility to accurately record compassionate leave and to identify any inconsistencies with this policy.

Individuals, casual employees and contractors have a responsibility to:

- ▶ Notify their People Manager as soon as possible of their need for compassionate leave (or time away from work) together with the expected duration (if known);
- ▶ If possible, notify their People Manager of any work or meetings that require attention during their absence (we acknowledge that depending on the reason for the absence, this may not always be possible);
- ▶ In the case of absences of more than three days, keep their People Manager informed of their likely return;
- ▶ On their return to work, complete a leave application form for submission to Payroll;
- ▶ If an extended period of compassionate leave is required, individuals are to speak with their People Manager or their People and Culture Business Partner. Depending on the circumstances, other leave options may be available.

5. Principles

5.1 When can compassionate leave be used?

Compassionate leave is available:

- ▶ When an immediate family member or member of an individual's household:
 - ▶ contracts a potentially life-threatening disease or develops a potentially life-threatening illness; or
 - ▶ sustains a potentially life-threatening injury.
- ▶ On the death of an individual's immediate family or household member.

An **immediate family member** means a spouse, former spouse, de facto partner, former de facto partner, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling of either the employee or of the employee's spouse, de-facto partner, or former spouse or de facto partner. It also includes step-relations such as step parents and step children as well as adoptive relations.

Employees are able to take compassionate leave for other relatives (eg cousins, aunts and uncles) if they are a member of the employee's household.

We recognise that there are other circumstances in which an associate may suffer emotional distress as a result of a bereavement and require some time off work, for example, on the death or serious illness (or injury) of a friend, a relative outside of the immediate family, or on the death of a beloved pet. In these circumstances, permanent and fixed-term employees may be eligible to take personal leave, or may wish to take annual leave or leave without pay.

For short periods of absence, e.g. to attend a funeral, time in lieu may be appropriate. Agreement to a time in lieu arrangement is at the full discretion of the relevant People Manager, Director or Executive and we ask employees to understand that it may not always be feasible.

Individuals are required to notify their People Manager as soon as possible of their need to take time off for compassionate reasons and the reason for it. Where possible, individuals are also asked to provide the likely duration of their absence.

5.2 How much compassionate leave can be taken?

Individuals are entitled to up to three (3) days paid compassionate leave per occasion. As compassionate leave is circumstance-related, it is not cumulative. In the event that an employee needs to travel interstate or overseas for a funeral, they are encouraged to discuss with their manager and the People & Culture Team.

Those employed on a casual basis, volunteers and independent contractors are entitled to up to three (3) days unpaid compassionate leave.

Compassionate leave may be taken as:

- ▶ A single continuous period of leave; or
- ▶ Separate periods agreed between the individual and the Synod.

The Synod reserves the right to request evidence that would substantiate the reason for leave.

Individuals on another type of leave (e.g. annual leave) who need to take compassionate leave can use the compassionate leave instead of their annual leave.

6. Applicable Policies and Legislation

Annual Leave Policy
Personal Leave Policy
Leave Without Pay Policy
Fair Work Act (Cth) 2009

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed three years from its date of implementation or sooner as required either by legislative changes or circumstances.

8. Terms and Conditions

This Policy 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.