



**uniting
church**

in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

Media Kit for Congregations, Presbyteries & Synod Entities

Title	Media Kit for Congregations, Presbyteries & Synod Entities
Creation Date	
Version	
Last Revised	16 January 2014 – reformatted 23 June 2014 – edited to include 'Synod entities'
Approved by	
Approval date	

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the updated media protocols for Congregations, Presbyteries and Synod Entities. These are designed to assist authorised representatives of the Church relate to media. Included in the kit are tips on writing a media release and tips for speaking with the media. It also includes media protocols for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The advice that follows applies to queries by local media. Please refer inquiries by metropolitan or national media relating to the wider Church to the Synod Communications Team or Assembly Senior Media Officer. This will ensure we have a well-coordinated response to media.

The Synod is committed to responding pastorally to media coverage involving its congregations and entities. If you or someone in your congregation, faith community or entity are involved in an event or incident that is likely to attract media attention, please report the matter immediately to the Synod Communications Team so we can work together.

If you are planning proactive media on an issue of local importance that may have broader implications, please contact the Synod Communications Team, who can advise you on how best to target your audience and deliver your message to maximum effect.

NSW/ACT Synod Communications & Marketing Team, Uniting Resources

Phone: 02 8267 4304

Email: adriand@nsw.uca.org.au

2. Working with Local Media

Congregations, Presbyteries and Synod entities are encouraged to maintain a positive profile with local media. Church Councils may also from time to time want to talk publicly about events in their community.

Local media tend to be less sensational than mainstream media. Reporters are generally looking for a local angle to a bigger story and are more interested in getting to the heart of an issue and how it will affect their audience.

Getting your story in the local or regional media has the potential to inform large numbers of people, to challenge incorrect perceptions, inform and possibly change the way people think about faith, the Uniting Church and Christian views on a variety of issues.

Outlined below is a series of steps that can be taken to help you in this task:

1. **Read your local newspapers;** get a feel for their style and the stories they like to cover. What are the areas that feature on a regular basis and how do they cover special topics?
2. It is good to be able to **build relationships with your local journalists.** If you do not know who they are, contact your local paper's news desk to find out the journalist covering the area you wish to write about or publicise (the compiler of the local diary, the sports reporter, the church reporter.) If you know them, try and make contact and ask for their advice on the kind of stories they are looking for and how best to get coverage in their paper. Journalists are always looking for good "new" stories or angles. Remember, however, journalists work under pressure so don't waste their time if you don't have a genuine news idea.
3. **Put together your own database** of publications, names of contacts, and all their contact details. Nearly all journalists use email and mobiles, but they also use postal addresses and faxes. It is important to know when papers have their news deadlines. Find out when these are. This will help you plan your news cycle and releases. You may have a great story, but if you miss the news deadline, you miss an opportunity to be heard.
4. Local media is normally only interested in local news stories. However, you may be able to **localise a Synod or national Uniting Church story.** Contact the Synod Communications & Marketing Team if you would like to receive media releases that could be given a local angle and contacts. For example, "Uniting will be working with churches and groups in Brewarrina to highlight the needs of homeless and disadvantaged young people this Christmas." We will also send you versions of key releases that can be tailored to your local media.
5. It is very likely that a journalist will come back to you requesting information that you do not have or asking questions you do not know the answers to. It is always better to **say you will get back to them rather than guessing** — giving incorrect information is the quickest way of losing your credibility. It is important to get back to them quickly after checking the facts. The Synod Communications & Marketing Team can be contacted at any time or emailed for information or clarifications on items.
6. We suggest you **keep a log of all the journalistic contacts** made and also please do let us know of any news release, no matter how small it may seem.
7. If you are contacted by radio or broadcast media please **get in touch with the Synod Communications & Marketing Team** to find out what to do next.

8. If you have a good news story about your church or faith community or about a project currently supported by a Synod Grant, please **email details to adriand@nsw.uca.org.au**.

Be seen: start getting noticed

Develop and pursue a consistent strategy for relationship-building in your local community and keep everybody informed of every small success. Your church or entity will grow in grace, strength and numbers. Articulate a vision to the congregation or entity of what a powerhouse your faith community could be if you used the gifts God has placed among you. Gather together and start asking the questions.

You have a spiritual identity ... proclaim it. You have a worship space ... share it.

Participate in local community events. Take up a special offering to help a local church or school damaged by fire; help build a community playground or donate a bench; work with an environmental group on a clean-up day; set up a Christmas display at a public site; perform in a shopping centre.

Offer to sponsor community events in your church or entity; develop a Speakers Panel to tell your story to groups and schools in the area; ask the congregation to recognise other groups whose efforts are consistent with your values by affording them recognition at the beginning of a Worship Service; invite their leadership and members to attend; sponsor an ecumenical service in partnership with other local churches and clergy; cooperated with the local Mental Health Association to sponsor mental health programs on church property (always be sure to acknowledge participation of other groups, and give them lead roles in whatever you're doing).

Your church or entity website

Remember that your congregation or entity's webpage on the nswact.uca.org.au website is a first point of contact for many people in your community. Churches or entities, who place a priority on being understandable and welcoming to non-Christians, find that they can really reach into the community.

Build contacts

Learn to use local media. Analyse your local media carefully. Identify reporters whose style and presentations make a favourable impression on you. Take time to find the name(s) of the appropriate contacts. Cultivate them. Try to get some dialogue going. Address media releases to them personally. If possible, try to meet up with them occasionally and without being pushy, establish a relationship which will give credibility to your materials — and maybe give you a new friend too. Journalists usually have open and inquiring minds with an interest in people.

When you are planning events, or when you are doing anything in the name of the Uniting Church, always try to see it as the media might see it and try to make it interesting and attractive from that point of view. Invite the media to attend your event or activity, and look after them if they arrive. But remember that most news desks are short-staffed and are unlikely to be able to attend many events.

Most churches or entities are involved in activities and events that will interest the local newspapers and radio, and sometimes regional TV. This is particularly true when the events involve the wider community.

3. Preparing Media Releases

“Put it in writing” is often the best way of ensuring your “news story” has a good chance of publication or broadcast — and phone the news desk in advance to alert them to the story (but not on their press day).

News items are often submitted as “media releases” — a piece of paper or email message with all the basic information presented in a logical sequence.

A well-written media release provides you with the type of advertising money can't buy. Since it is a news story — if the editor thinks the release newsworthy — more people will read it than a full-page ad. And, best of all, it's free.

Of course, the key words here are “well-written”. Many people send out media releases only to have them discarded by the local media. This isn't because the editor didn't like the organisation or didn't want to print the release. Rather it was because in order to fix the release enough for publication would just take too much time.

Editors, however, do like well-written media releases. They have all that white space to fill each day or every week and they have just a few hours in which to fill it. Media releases provide them with valuable leads for in-house features as well as community-oriented stories providing basic information about local events.

A good, basic media release is easy to write. The challenge is to make yours stand out and catch the news editor's eye.

Tips for writing an editor-friendly media release

Is it news?

Before writing a release, ask yourself, “Is this really news?” Your minister's weekly sermon title or the annual business meeting are probably not news. Remember that it is the unusual or special that makes news. “Church holds service” is not news. Nor is “Minister preaches sermon”. But “Church holds service in supermarket, or “Minister speaks out against/for (a newsworthy local or national issue)” are news items more likely to win coverage.

News for church groups or entities generally falls into four categories: Milestones, Events, Programs and People.

Every church or entity experiences milestone events. These would include dedicating a new sanctuary, opening a day-care centre, or celebrating an anniversary. These events have news value. In fact, if the milestone is significant enough, the editor may send over a reporter to prepare a feature.

Special events are the easiest to publicise. Concerts, outreach events, Christmas and Easter programs are the meat and potatoes of a newspaper's church columns. These announcements are why most people read that part of the newspaper. Every time you have a special event, you need to consider sending out a media release.

Special programs, especially humanitarian programs serving the local community, can be easily turned into news features.

People make the news. Are there interesting people in your congregation? Is your minister retiring after 30 years of service in your church? Do you have a member who is celebrating her 100th birthday? Did one of your congregation members paint a mural on the side of the church? These human interest stories make great reading.

Send an editor something with news value and your media release has a much better chance of being published.

The basic media release

1. Be objective

When writing your media release, be objective, stick to the facts and remember its purpose is to report the news and not to evangelise. That's what a good news story is – just the facts. Any opinions need to be expressed through quotes from a church spokesperson and not stated as a fact in the article. And, from an editor's point of view, scripture is not a fact. So, placing a scripture verse at the top of your article won't get it a better reading and it will most likely be deleted in editing.

2. Write a snappy headline

Think of a title that tells the story and put it at the top of your release. It will help to summarise it for the news desk. Do not be disappointed if your title does not appear in print, nor if your release is reworded before publication or broadcast. Media outlets normally like to produce material in their own style.

3. Structure it as an inverted pyramid

Your media release should be written in what is called "inverted pyramid" style. This means you begin with the most important information and then present information of less importance further down in the article. This allows the editor to "cut from the bottom" if the article needs to be shortened. It should be possible to cut every media release paragraph by paragraph, working back from the end, and for it still to make sense.

Include all the basic facts in your first paragraphs. Answer When? Who? Where? Why? How? Early in the release.

4. Use short sentences and direct language

Use short, snappy sentences, with no passive tenses and keep paragraphs no longer than a few lines. Edit and re-edit to cut out extra words or duplications. Remember, you are writing in the "third person" about your church group or entity: "they" not "we".

Use direct quotes. A relevant comment from a person directly involved in an event adds interest and helps the flow of the news item. If you want to express an opinion, do it in a quote.

Steer clear of religious and church jargon. If you cannot find a way of translating a religious phrase into everyday English, leave it out. Do not assume that reporters will know the meaning of church terms like "presbytery", "synod" or "minister of the word". If you need to use these words, explain them.

5. Provide contact details

Use a format with "news release" and your church or entity's name displayed prominently. So the news desk can see easily the source of the information.

Add your contact details. Make sure you are available to answer follow-up questions from the media during the day. Local radio may also want to interview you "on air" and ask you to go through the key points. Put both your home and work telephone numbers on the release.

6. Other points to remember

Keep the release to the equivalent of **one sheet of A4 paper**, if possible. Two at the very most. If journalists need more information, they will contact you.

Double-spacing is essential between paragraphs as it allows a copy-editor to mark up changes easily.

Above the main text of the media release, **include the date of release** and any embargo date before which the item must not be published.

Check your information with the organisers of the event before sending out the release. In many churches, the minister will also wish to agree the wording. If not, let him or her have a copy as a courtesy. Journalists may contact them to ask about the event — even if their name is not on the release.

Email, post, fax or hand-deliver the release in good time to all relevant media. If you email, send your release as part of the body of the message — as well as an attachment.

Send information about an event in the future, rather than an event which has happened. Future events are more likely to win coverage — and you may get coverage after the event as well.

Supply a photograph if you can. But you need to know the style of photograph the newspaper is likely to use. And don't miss a deadline waiting for your prints to come. Increasingly, newspapers like good quality digital photographs sent in JPEG format. Make sure that your image file isn't so large it gets caught in the newspaper's firewall. If you need to send a file larger than 2MB, use a file sharing program like Dropbox or Google Drive.

An example of media release structure

St Stephen's Church will host a neighbourhood Block Party at Gilliam Community Centre from 9 am until sunset on Saturday January 27.

This should then be followed by a very short summary of what to expect:

The party, called Gilliam Alive, will feature music, free food, games, children's programs, a mini carnival, crafts fair and informational booths for local businesses and civic organisations.

Then a quote from someone in authority can come next:

"We have been in this community for five years now and have had wonderful response from the residents," said the Rev. Michael Cleese-Jones, minister at St Stephen's. "This is just our way of giving something back to the community."

Now, you can follow with either more details about the event or a few details about the church.

According to Mr Cleese-Jones, St Stephen's was established in 2001 with 15 members and has grown to over 80 in attendance each Sunday. Other outreaches of the church include a nursing home ministry, a food bank for the poor, travelling musical groups, and Bible classes taught both on Sunday morning and Saturday afternoon.

Then perhaps a "fluffy" quote which will likely be cut out, but sometimes it makes it in:

"We really love this community," said Mr Cleese-Jones. "We hope that this party will be a big thank-you hug for the whole neighbourhood."

Then finish with contact information.

For more information about the Block Party or any of the other St Stephen's programs phone the Rev. Michael Cleese-Jones, XXXX XXXX, XXXX XXXX or visit www.stStephens.uca.org.au.

4. Key Messages

Key messages help to tell our story. Key messages influence what is being said in the media about the church.

Our key messages are:

The Uniting Church is a fellowship of reconciliation, living God's love and acting for the common good to build a just and compassionate community.

The Uniting Church is the third largest Christian denomination in Australia. The Uniting Church strengthens community.

Through Uniting, it is the largest provider of non-government community services in Australia – carrying out work in aged care, children's services, hospital and prison chaplaincy, crisis support, counseling, housing, disability services, etc.

The Uniting Church is 2,800 Congregations, 51 Presbyteries and six Synods. We are 48 schools and 300,000 Uniting Church members and we are connected by a single story, worshipping every week in more than 38 languages.

The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of NSW and the ACT is one of six Synods responsible for overall support and resourcing with a focus on community services, mission planning, theological education and other educational services, administration relating to ministers and to property, finance and other shared services.

The Uniting Church in Australia was formed on June 22, 1977, as a union of three churches: the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

The church seeks to transform unjust social structures. It is active on many social issues and is well known for its views on matters such as Aboriginal affairs, economic policy, international human rights and various ethical matters.

The Uniting Church is:

- inclusive and generous
- honest and accountable
- just and compassionate
- is hopeful and courageous

Uniting

Uniting is an umbrella of more than 400 agencies, institutions, and parish missions throughout Australia. Areas of service include; aged care, children, youth and family, disability, employment, emergency relief, drug and alcohol, youth homelessness and suicide.

Uniting is one of the largest providers of community services in Australia, via a network that employs 35,000 staff, supported by 24,000 volunteers, to one in eight Australians each year in 1,300 sites in every state and territory across remote, regional, rural, and urban Australia.

Uniting Financial Services

Uniting Financial Services is neither a bank nor a building society. It's a religious charitable organisation. For more than 80 years it's provided income to The Uniting Church in Australia's Synod of NSW and the ACT, directly contributing to the Uniting Church's mission and service to communities in need, as well as supporting church life and congregations.

It offers a range of specialised investments, loans and facilities to Uniting Church organisations and investors (including companies and trusts). It also provides a number of services including a cheque facility and corporate card.

Uniting Mission and Education

Uniting Mission and Education has a broad range of responsibilities and offers a wide range of services. Its primary role is to help the Church provide education, theological insight, strategy, research and resources for leadership, discipleship, ministry and mission to serve Christ who rules and renews the Church and seeks the reconciliation of creation.

5. Media Interview Tips – Local Media

Preparation is all important when working with media, so here are a few pointers if a local journalist calls you:

- Find out what the journalist wants to talk about, where they are from and their contact details. What sort of information do they have already? What do they already know about the issue? What do they need to know? Do they have a media release you've sent them? (If not, make sure you send them a copy before talking to them). What is the deadline?
- Arrange a time to call them back after you've had the chance to gather the facts. Then spend some time thinking about how you will respond before calling them. Note some of the key words they used during your chat; they may help you anticipate some of the questions that will be asked – i.e. *I just want to get a feel for, I'd like to do a story that...., I guess I'm concerned that...* Write down the key points you want to communicate.
- Contact the Synod Communications Team if the matter affects more than just your congregation or entity or you need help to prepare your response.
- Do not comment on any matters that do not relate to you or your congregation or entity or involve any investigations or events unrelated to you. Instead contact the Synod Communications & Marketing Team which is best placed to identify the most appropriate spokesperson.

During the interview

- Don't be afraid!
- Start with your conclusion or main message. Try to offer that message as part of every answer that you give.
- Remember to keep your answers as short as possible. The longer you talk, the greater risk of diverging from the key message or of the comments not being used. Try to deliver your answer and key message in 5-10 seconds for radio or three sentences for written media.
- Don't be afraid to question the interviewer if you are unsure what they are really asking, or if they are asking one question but really wanting an answer to another.
- Silence is golden – say what you want to say, and then stop. Resist the natural temptation to fill the silence. The reporter will know what they want to ask and will move the interview along – that is their job not yours.
- Really listen to the words the reporter is using and try to incorporate some of them in your response.

Be positive - Avoid negative language and use the active voice. Say what is, not what isn't. Humans think in pictures, so paint pictures where you can.

Use visual language - Use expressive and colourful words that can help cut through the usual bland language.

Avoid

- “As I said before” – it ruins a TV and radio report and can come across as insulting and defensive
- Pronouns. “It” can be anything and can be edited out of context. Assume each and every quote you give could be used in isolation and, therefore, pronouns can catch you up
- The journalist's name – again it ruins a quote, especially, if you are in a media conference with many reporters
- Names of other media organisations or competition
- Phrases like “your listeners” or “your viewers”

Note: This advice applies to queries by local media. Refer queries by metropolitan or national media relating to the wider Church to the Synod Communications Team or Assembly Senior Media Officer.

6. Local Congregation Policy Example

St Stephen's Uniting Church is committed to a positive working relationship with the media.

In alignment with the Synod Media Policy, we will always try to provide prompt, well-informed responses to media inquiries on St Stephen's or broader church issues.

The media is a very effective tool for communicating with local communities. Community and metropolitan radio and newspapers, for example, are the public's best source of information about church services and events.

Even when the story is a contentious issue, the media's interest provides us with an opportunity to contribute to a balanced report and influence further news coverage.

Every media inquiry must be used as a positive opportunity to get St Stephen's message across to the public.

The person assigned the media and publicity task is the first point of contact for all media inquiries about St Stephen's activities. This person should consult with and provide advice to clergy and church officers working across the full range of church ministries and activities. All media inquiries should initially be referred to the Synod Communications & Marketing Team unless a prior arrangement has been made.

The media and publicity officer will refer inquiries about non-local issues to the Synod Communications & Marketing Team.

The media and publicity officer will find out the nature, priority and deadline of the inquiry. They will develop a plan with the Synod Communications & Marketing Team and ensure all requests needing a response are forwarded to the appropriate spokesperson as soon as possible.

The media and publicity officer will help with interview arrangements and, in consultation with senior clergy and church officers, arrange for the relevant staff to provide a background briefing for the spokesperson.

If they are approved as a spokesperson, the media and publicity officer may give interviews on non-crucial issues — provided they have consulted with the Synod Communications & Marketing Team or where appropriate the Assembly Senior Media Officer and have been properly briefed.

The media and publicity officer will take the lead role in advising on and enabling positive external communications on behalf of St Stephen's. They will liaise closely with senior clergy and lay leaders.

All St Stephen's news releases and media briefing notes will be issued by the media and publicity officer and in line with the Synod Social Media Guidelines contained in this document and in consultation with the Synod Communications & Marketing Team.

As a general policy, all St Stephen's media publicity will promote St Stephen's and the Uniting Church as an active and important member of the community.

Note: Any spokespeople who are not Church leaders should not venture into commentary beyond their area of authorisation.

7. Media Protocol in 'Crisis' Situations

A 'crisis' situation is where an incident or event occurs that potentially affects the reputation or day-to-day operation of the Church. A 'crisis' situation often requires decisions to be made within a short time frame, and often after an event has already taken place. So as to ensure a strategic and informed response to media during a crisis situation, the designated official spokesperson, spokespersons for the Synod including the Moderator and the General Secretary will speak for the Church. Experts on the topic can be made available to speak.

The Synod is committed to responding pastorally to media coverage involving its congregations, entities and members.

If you or someone in your congregation, entity or faith community are involved in an event or incident that is likely to attract media attention, report the matter immediately to the Synod Communications Team so we can work together.

If you are involved in an event that you know in advance is likely to attract media attention, you are obliged to alert the Synod Communications Team as soon as possible.

If you are contacted by a member of the media seeking information about a specific matter or incident, again, please report that contact to the Synod Communications Team.

Please do not attempt to respond to this kind of media query on your own.

These phrases are helpful

"Thank you for your call. All media enquiries should be made to the Synod Communications Team on 02 8267 4304."

or

"Please give me your name, phone number and what publication / outlet you are from so I can have someone from the Synod Communications Team call you back"

While you may feel you are in a position to comment about a matter, there are likely to be factors to consider in responding to the media that you may not be aware of.

Synod communicators have developed protocols for handling media queries and have access to people with a range of gifts and talents who can assist in any response, including pastoral care, media relations, internal communications, legal expertise, and occupational health and safety.

It is vital for the pastoral care of our members and congregations that the Synod is informed of this kind of media query as early as possible so that we can ensure a well-considered response.

Similarly, if you plan proactive media on an issue of local importance that may have broader implications, please contact the Synod Communications Team, who can advise you on how best to target your audience and deliver your message to maximum effect.

Contact:

Synod Communications & Marketing Team, Uniting Resources

Phone: 02 8267 4304

Email: adriand@nsw.uca.org.au

Assembly Communications Unit

Phone: 02 8267 4233

Email: MattP@nat.uca.org.au

8. Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse – Media Protocols

The Assembly Standing Committee has set a framework for engaging with media queries about the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

All media queries on this matter must be referred to the relevant area for a response by an authorised spokesperson. All referrals should also be notified to the contacts below.

* If you are unsure of the appropriate contact point, please immediately contact the Synod Communications & Marketing Team on 02 8267 4304 or Assembly Communications Unit on 02 8267 4233.

QUERY/ COMMUNICATION	WHO RESPONDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matter with national implications Whole of Church statements Pastoral letters Commentary / statements on the Royal Commission 	President / Assembly Secretariat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pastoral letters Matter of Synod responsibility with national implications 	President
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matter of Synod responsibility with no national implications Commentary / statements on the Royal Commission as it relates to Synod 	Moderator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency or school specific query with national implications 	Authorised spokesperson (with advice to Assembly Media Officer)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency or school specific query with no national implications 	State Director / authorised spokesperson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational issue 	Authorised spokesperson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local query of specific interest 	Authorised spokesperson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matter with implication for multicultural and cross-cultural ministry 	President
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matter with implication for Aboriginal and Islander Church members 	Chairperson of Congress or nominee

9. Social Media Guidelines

The Policy Statement

This policy provides standards for staff, Ministers and Volunteers within the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of New South Wales and the ACT ("the Synod") engaging in communications using public facing social media channels.

Definitions

Social media:	an umbrella term that defines the various activities that use technology, primarily internet, web and mobile based tools, for social interaction and content creation and sharing. In the interests of simplicity, this social media policy is focused on those social media activities that are used for discussions and information sharing such as social networks, blogs, wikis, and forums.
Social media platform:	software or technology that enables users to build, integrate or facilitate community, social interaction and user-generated content. Examples include blogs, wikis, forums/discussion boards, social networks, social bookmarking, and video and photo sharing websites
Social media channel:	a presence on a social media platform. Examples include a Facebook page, a wiki page, a YouTube channel or a Twitter account

Scope

All official social media accounts are managed by the Synod Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources.

It applies to the use of social media in the following capacities:

- Creating a social media presence as an official representative of the Synod
- Adding content to official, public facing Synod social media channels
- Making reference to Synod within a private capacity on a social media channel

This policy does not apply to Uniting Church staff in their personal use of social media where the staff member, Minister or Volunteer makes no reference to the Synod, its services and people.

Social media is an umbrella term that describes a range of activities and technologies that promote discussion, conversation and sharing of information, primarily over the internet. This includes, but is not limited to, blogs, wikis, discussion forums, discussion boards, podcasts, video and photo sharing, social networks and micro blogs.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Media Protocols and Telling Our Story Guidelines issued by the Synod Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources.

Policy

1. *Principles of Conduct*

All staff, Ministers and Volunteers using social media must exercise and adopt a risk minimisation approach given that all the content posted on social media immediately becomes:

- a. Public information and freely available to those who can access it
- b. Information that can be used as source material by journalists and other interested parties
- c. Information that can be used in legal matters
- d. Information that may breach the Privacy Act.

2. *Official presence of social media*

An official social media presence has:

- a. To be approved by the Synod Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources.
- b. To meet a demonstrated need for the Synod
- c. To be part of a communication strategy
- d. To comply with the Media Policy and Telling Our Story Guidelines, including requirements for branding and content
- e. To be registered within the Synod Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources
- f. To comply with our Privacy Policy.

3. *Official use of social media*

Staff, Ministers and Volunteers using social media platforms must:

- a. Have a prior approval from the Communications & Marketing Team, Uniting Resources to act as a social media user
- b. Use an official social media account / profile
- c. Not mix personal and official comments
- d. Exercise sound judgment and common sense and behave online in accordance with associated Synod Policies and Procedures

4. *Private use of social media*

Staff, Ministers and Volunteers participating in social media in a private capacity must:

- a. Not allow the use of social media to undermine their effectiveness at work
- b. Use a private social media account established with a private email address. Staff must not use a Synod social media account for private use of social media.
- c. Not disclose any confidential information obtained through work. This includes information relating to employment, email addresses, contact lists, work duties or photographs of Synod activities or staff, Ministers and Volunteers.

Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities for establishing an official social media presence are as follows.

Synod Communications & Marketing Team, Uniting Resources:

- Prepares and maintains social media strategy including procedures, templates and disclaimers
- Maintains a register of official social media accounts and channels
- Provides content and frameworks
- Outlines relevant engaging content
- Maintains internal process to ensure quality and efficiency and currency of content
- Ensures that our social media strategy is maintained and monitored.

Activity or Function	Delegated Officer
Approve Social Media Platform for official use	Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources
Approve the establishment of a public facing social media channel and/or account and/or profile that will speak with the voice of the Synod	Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources
Approval to act as a social media user for official purposes	Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources
Approval of a content framework as a source for social media	Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources

Ethical standards and related policies

Staff, Ministers and Volunteers need to follow the same behavioural standards online as they would through print or personal interaction. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with members, families, donors, media, and other stakeholders also apply online. Staff, Ministers and Volunteers are liable for anything they post to social media sites whether in a professional capacity or through a personal post and may be held accountable.

To assist you in making the correct choices, this policy should be read in conjunction with the policies below:

- Media Protocols
- Staff Procedures and Policies
- Privacy Policy
- Telling Our Story Guidelines

Posting Guidelines

Before posting anything in either a personal or professional capacity, stop and ask yourself the following questions:

Do I really want the world to see this?

There's no such thing as a private social media site. The web is viral – comments can be forwarded worldwide in seconds. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you've posted something you wish you hadn't, it's already too late to change it!

Is this information accurate?

Make sure you have all the facts before you post to avoid posting incorrect information about you or the organisation. If you make an error, be the first to correct it – quickly.

Should I be responding to this post?

Let the subject matter experts respond to negative posts. From time-to-time you may come across negative posts about our organisation or the spheres in which we operate. Avoid the temptation to react yourself – instead please pass the information to the Synod Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources, who will determine the responsible spokesperson to address such comments.