Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Volunteer Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose and overview

This policy confirms the Church's intent, purpose and commitment to the inclusion of volunteers which includes Church members. This policy provides guidance about the way the Church works with volunteers to ensure their time, skills, expertise and points of view support ministry and mission across the life of the Church.

This policy supports a safe environment for people and aims to reduce risks of harm to self and others while volunteering.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers engaged in the Church across Victoria and Tasmania. This includes, but is not limited to Faith Communities, Congregations, Presbyteries, Church and governance committees, events, programs, and outreach activities related to a governance committee and the councils of the Church.

This Policy affirms that in the overwhelming number of situations, volunteers are Church members offering their gifts and graces to contribute to the Church's response to following Christ.

This Policy recognises the Church's understanding that membership leads to expressing faith through participation in worship, witness, and service. As such, members volunteer their time and effort by exercising their skills and gifts through appropriate service, reflecting their part in the ministry of Christ.

3. Policy statement

The Church recognises the valuable and generous contribution made by volunteers. The Church acknowledges that volunteer involvement is a two-way relationship, providing an opportunity for people to make meaningful contributions in support of the Church's ministry and mission.

For some individuals, volunteering provides an opportunity to be involved in activities reflecting their interests, using and developing their skills. Meaningful activity in turn may promote a sense of belonging, connection and deepening of faith.

The Church acknowledges that volunteer involvement requires leadership and a culture that support volunteers. Volunteers have rights, which include the right to work in a safe and supportive environment with appropriate infrastructure and effective management practices.

The Church commits itself to the creation and maintenance of a safe culture to ensure the care, protection and safety of all people engaging with the Church in any of its entities. Of paramount concern is the provision of a safe environment for children and vulnerable people.

One of the methods to achieve a child safe culture is to recruit well by using good practices in the recruitment and screening of volunteers.

It is important that the contribution volunteers make is understood, appreciated and acknowledged.

It is also important that people engaging volunteers are aware of the resources available on the Synod Victas website and staff intranet.

For interpretation, advice and support with this policy and procedure, contact People & Culture and/or the Culture of Safety.

4. Roles and responsibilities

People & Culture: Assist and support the engagement of volunteer as outlined in this policy. This may include the development of resources available to congregations via the Church website.

Culture of Safety: The Culture of Safety team establishes protocols and practices across congregations, presbyteries and the Church to ensure that the Church is a safe place for all people, and complies with its ethical and legislative requirements. The team has responsibility for Safe Church training and implementation of the relevant recommendations from the Royal Commission on Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Church Council: Congregation Church Councils must ensure that all volunteers go through a recruitment and screening process before they are appointed, inducted and supervised appropriately once they are appointed. Church Council can delegate this role to a committee, Church member, ministry agent or paid employee. If the Church Council delegates this responsibility, they must periodically review the delegation to ensure volunteers are being effectively managed in accordance with this policy. The safety of children and vulnerable people is the paramount consideration.

5. Procedure

5.1 Roles

5.1.1 Position descriptions

Roles for volunteers must be defined and clearly communicated in the form of a position description. A template for a volunteer position description is available on the Church Ministries and Operations intranet and Synod website.

The position description should include a supervisor's name, and describe duties and tasks and how the role aligns to ministry and mission goals.

Volunteers should receive their position descriptions prior to their first day as a volunteer.

5.1.2 Role review

Volunteers may review their roles in consultation with Church leaders, including paid staff and ministers.

Roles should be monitored to ensure that volunteer contributions are meaningful for both the volunteer and the work and/or worship context.

5.1.3 Supervisor

All volunteer roles must have a supervisor responsible for leading and managing volunteer involvement. The supervisor must ensure a safe environment and that records about the volunteer's involvement are correctly maintained.

5.2 Recruitment and selection

5.2.1 Interviews

A structured process to select, invite and or offer volunteer opportunities should apply. Supervisors must be on interview panels and/or involved in appropriate selection processes. More than one person should be involved in the selection of a volunteer.

Suitability should be assessed on attributes, skills, qualifications and capacity. An assessment of character should inform decisions about the suitability to volunteer.

In addition to the relevant background checks as described in in 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, references should be sought as appropriate. Referees can assist with character assessment as well as information regarding the volunteer's skills and abilities.

Working with Children

The protection and safety of children is the paramount consideration of the Uniting Church and its volunteers. All volunteers are required to observe the UCA Child Safe Policy-Synod and the Working With Children Check/Vulnerable Persons Registration Policy, and cooperate with strategies to ensure the safety, protection, and wellbeing of children.

All volunteers who are deemed to be appointed leaders by their Church Council must have a Working with Children Check/Working With Vulnerable People Registration or Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Registration.

A nominated person must keep a register of the Working with Children Checks (WWCC)/Working with Vulnerable People Registrations (WWVPR) and supply this information to the Synod.

If any such person refuses to apply for a WWCC/R, the Church Council chairperson or the ministry agent should work with the person until the objection is resolved and the person makes application. If the objection cannot be resolved, the Presbytery and the Culture of Safety Unit cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au should be advised. There is advice on handling such a situation on the Synod's Keeping Children Safe website: http://ucavictas.org.au/keepingchildrensafe/

Once an application is made, failure to obtain a WWCC/R is referred to as a Negative Notice (Victoria), Refusal (Tasmania and NSW). A negative notice, refusal or bar may be issued either on initial application or when an individual's WWCC/R has been suspended or cancelled. This will indicate that the person is not suitable to be considered or remain an appointed leader, for any leadership role, most especially participation in child-related programs, activities or events.

It is paramount that the Church Council or program, activity or event organisers immediately remove this person from leadership and from having all access to children or vulnerable people.

If a Negative Notice or Refusal is received you must immediately contact the Synod General Secretary gensec@victas.uca.org.au or (03)91161400. Penalties apply for failure to act immediately.

In some circumstances, receiving a Negative Notice, or Refusal will lead to the application of the Church's Person of Concern Policy. The Safe Church Coordinator will be in contact on behalf of the General Secretary if this is required.

5.2.2 Criminal History checks

Some volunteer roles require additional background checks. These may include, for example, book keeping, payroll and/or treasury roles. It may also include roles related to aged care and/or vulnerable people.

Volunteers engaged in these activities must provide evidence of a recent National Criminal History

Check, or agree to a National Criminal History Check being conducted, prior to commencing.

Alternatively, volunteers may provide evidence of a recent (12 months) National Criminal History Check (Victoria) or Criminal History National Police Records Check (Tasmania), or agree to a National Criminal History Check (Victoria) or Criminal History National Police Records Check (Tasmania) being conducted prior to commencing.

If the criminal history check has been completed using the Synod Criminal History Check service, applicants may dispute adverse Criminal History Information (CHI) by completing a National Police Checking Service (NCPS) Dispute Form.

5.2.3 Adverse Criminal History checks

In the event that an adverse CHI, the Volunteer Supervisor (or employee responsible for ensuring a satisfactory screening and checks) must discuss the adverse result with the volunteer. Discussion with others involved in the selection process should take place and a determination of the volunteer's suitability for the role should include the relevance and proportionality of the conviction.

To guide suitability in this circumstance, it will be helpful to consider the following:

a) The significance of the conviction in relation to the duties of the position;
b) Whether excluding a person from the volunteer role is an outcome which is proportional to the type of conviction;
c) The length of time since the conviction occurred;
d) Whether a person has been satisfactorily employed or performed in a voluntary capacity since the conviction;
e) Assessments, reports or findings in relation to treatment of a person since a conviction;
f) Whether the conviction represents an isolated incident or a pattern of criminality;
g) The likelihood of an incident recurring and impact that may have on others in light of the volunteer

role and duties;

h) Risk of harm to the people the role may interact with, including vulnerable people;
i) The impact of a prospective incident; and
j) Strategies and/or procedures that could be put in place to reduce the likelihood of an incident occurring.

5.3 Support and development

5.3.1 Induction

All volunteers must receive an induction before commencing at any site, service or program.

An induction should include an orientation of the physical environment and the safety features in place to mitigate risks to wellbeing. This should include emergency procedures.

Induction should also include information about relevant policies and procedures and the Code of Conduct.

5.3.2 Training

Volunteers must receive training in all aspects of the role as needed. For example, training may relate to technical knowledge, operational matters and/or codes of conduct. Supervisors should evaluate training needs and provide training using the most suitable method.

All volunteers must complete the Child Safe Training approved by the Culture of Safety Unit VicTas Synod. The level of child safe training will depend on the extent to which the volunteer role interacts with children. For example, if the role has no relationship to children, child safe training requirements may be less. Up to date information about this training is available on the VicTas Synod Website https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/culture-of-safety/

5.3.3 Infrastructure

Volunteers must be provided with resources appropriate to required tasks, including equipment and access to systems, stationary and places of rest and refreshment.

5.4 Safety and wellbeing

The Church prioritises health and safety for persons engaged in activities related to the Church. Volunteers must be aware of the health and safety requirements.

They must be trained and/or have information about health and safety requirement for example:

- codes of conduct;
- up to date OH&S notice board;
- emergency and evacuation procedures;
- first aid; and,
- manual handling best practice.

Volunteers must be provided with the correct safety equipment, signage, clothing, tools and/or gear to complete duties and tasks to ensure safety to self and others.

6. Related documents

6.1 Related Synod documents

Basis of Union (UCA)

Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Statements

Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure

Synod Workplace Values and Characteristics

UCA Child Safe Policy-Synod Vic/Tas (2020)

Working with Children Check/Vulnerable People Registration Policy (2020)

6.2 Relevant legislation and standards

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)

Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (Tas)

Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013

Working with Children Act 2005, amended 2019

National Child Safe Principals

Victorian Child Safe Standards

Privacy Principles – Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (2015) Volunteering Australia

7. Definitions

Term	Definition
Appointed Leader	Appointed leaders (or religious leaders) are people who are in a position of trust, influence or authority because of their leadership role within a congregation. A child or vulnerable adult who encounters a Church Leader, whether in the church or in the wider community, should be able to trust that person.
Congregations	Means those people (members and adherents) who worship, witness and serve as a fellowship of the Spirit of Christ, meeting regularly to hear God's Word, to celebrate the sacraments, to build one another up in love, to share the wider responsibilities of the Church, and to serve the world, and who are recognized as a Congregation by the Presbytery.
Volunteer	A person who willingly and without pay, performs a service for the benefit of the Church. A volunteer maybe a Church member.
Faith Community	A grouping of people, recognised by the Presbytery, who are seeking to explore the implications of faith in God, gathering to serve the community, nurturing one another in faith or worshipping together and seeking to relate to the Church for nurture and support.
Governance Committee	A committee that support the legal, ethical and safe functions and /or operations of an organisation and/or the activities an entity engages in. Along with common laws, the UCA Regulations are an important governance document.
National Criminal History Check	This involves identifying and releasing any relevant Criminal History Information (CHI) subject to relevant spent convictions/non-disclosure legislation and/or information release policies.
Responsible Person	A Responsible Person is the appointed leader of the work unit. This may include but is not limited to a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chair of the Church Council or General Secretary.
Supervisor	The person with some oversight of the tasks and duties. It may be a roster coordinator, a team leader, a manager of paid staff, Church Council member, a minister and/or event coordinator. Church Council need to approve the people assigned to be in a supervisory type role.
Synod	The Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.
Working with Children Check (WWCC)	In Victoria under the Working with Children Act 2005 (the Act) if you are doing child-related work and not exempt, you must have a WWC Check even if you have also had a National Criminal History Check completed. You may

	not continue working or volunteering if your WWC Act has expired. http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/applications
Working with Vulnerable People Registration Card	In Tasmania, under the *Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011* a registration card is required in order to engage in a regulated activity with children. http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/working_with_children
Vulnerable People	People in need of special care, support or protection, because of disadvantage due to, for example, disability, age, health issues, risk of abuse and/or neglect.

8. Document control

Review cycle: This document will be subject to formal review within three years.

Next review date: 2023 - 2024

Policy Manager: The Director People & Culture is responsible for the management and maintenance of this document.

Approver: Senior Leadership Team

Document management: Any minor changes made between review periods should be reflected in the below table, however, only changes of a material nature will require formal review and approval by the approver between formal review periods.

Version	Date	Updated by	Summary of changes	Approval date
1.0	April 2015	Director People & Culture	Unknown	17/04/2015
2.0	October 2019	Director People & Culture	Unknown	26/10/2019
3.0	May 2021	Director People & Culture	Moved to new template Updated in full	21/06/2021

Note: when reviewing this document, the reviewer should ensure the template used is still the most current template for Synod policies and procedures, as found on the Synod intranet. This document is based on the **August 2019** template as approved by the SLT (22/8/19).