UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA
Georges River

To facilitate, support and empower
congregations in the mission of Jesus

Equipping for Growth
GRP SAFE CHURCH TRAINING

GRP – Procedures to be a Healthy, Safe and Compliant Congregation

Title	How to be a Healthy, Safe and Compliant Congregation
Creation Date	April 2025
Version	V1.1
Last Revised	
Approved by	
Approval date	

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1. Introduction

A Culture of Safety – What Every Church Council needs to do

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount concludes with two linked parables. Jesus tells the crowd that those who listen and follow his teaching will be like the man who builds upon rock – the storms and floods come, but the house stands. Those who do not listen will be like the one who builds on sand – the storms, winds and floods will come, and the house will fall (Mt 7:24-27). Building a healthy, safe and complaint congregation is about building our foundations for ministry and mission. Without the time and effort spent on ensuring what we do, who we do it with, and where we do it is safe and secure for all, the ministry – no matter how good it looks - is inherently risky. Developing a culture of safety, and ensuring good processes is about building solid foundations for ministry and mission. Without it, the risk of failure is much greater.

In a business or an enterprise, we sometimes talk about the "back office" support that enables the upfront sales or primary activity; all the important, necessary jobs (finance, employment, logistics etc...) that support the main objective.

In the same way, the Church's "main game" is supported by a range of compliance, financial and safety requirements - all the things that you will find in this paper.

These tasks are increasingly important for the Church to do, and indeed take much energy, but the Church's main game will always be the mission of God - sharing Christ's love in word and deed in the power of the Spirit. This is where our passion is. This is where our heart belongs.

The material that follows gets us to the starting line of being safe, accountable, transparent organisations that can operate in this world of legal, financial and statutory requirements. The challenge for the Church today is to balance the world's 'necessary' with Christ's 'mission of love' and to see increasingly that we can't have the latter without attending to the former.

This document is primarily aimed at Church Council members, who ultimately bear the responsibility for all church activity. This tells you what you need to know to be compliant and how to implement a culture of safety in your church.

It is divided into sections for ease of navigation. Sections _2_, _3_ and _7_ cover the things that all Church Councils need to do. Subsequent sections are targeted at groups or individuals such as the Next Gen Leaders (Section _4_), Property (Section _5_) and the Finance Team or Treasurer (Section _6_). Please note that the Church Council remains responsible for ensuring all sections are enacted.

All documents referred to are included in the Appendices at the end as templates or samples. These may be used as is, or they may be tailored or rebranded for your own Congregation, provided your version includes all aspects of the one provided. A soft copy is also available.

How to get Help

It is really important not to allow this to overwhelm you. Assistance can be arranged by phone, zoom or in person. Please reach out to the Presbytery Office: Admin.grp@nswact.uca.orga or 9579 4682.

2. Preparation Required by Church Councils

> It is the responsibility of Church Council members to ensure that these policies and procedures are in place.

Commitment to Safety

All congregations need to adhere to the *UCA Child Safe Commitment Statement* (see page *29*) and comply with the National Child Safe Standards[1]. This includes volunteer screening, safety compliance and procedures that relate to the whole of the church.

Attend Culture of Safety Workshops

All Ministry Agents, members of Church Council, Elders and Volunteers must attend a Culture of Safety Workshop at least once every 3 years. These workshops will explain more about the rationale behind this compliance and offer some practical ways to fulfil your responsibilities. Contact Presbytery for details of the next Culture of Safety workshop.

Appoint a Safe Church Officer

All Congregations must appoint a person to be the Safe Church Officer (SCO). A team may assist, but one person needs to be the nominated person. The Safe Church Officer's Role Description can be found in the Appendix.

Please keep the Presbytery Office informed of the name of the current Safe Church Officer for your Congregation.

Working With Children Checks

All Ministry Agents, members of Church Council, Elders and Volunteers must obtain a Working With Children Check (WWCC) from Services NSW.

The Safe Church Officer needs to verify these. *See How to Register with the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian as an Employer* on page *21*.

See *How to Verify WWCCs* on page *21* in the Appendix.

Screening all Volunteers

It is now a legal requirement[2] (NSW Office of the Children's Guardian – OCG) for all volunteers to be screened. It is part of the role of the SCO to ensure this is done and that the relevant documentation is stored securely[3]. Screening can be done as part of onboarding a worker. See *How to Screen Volunteers* on page *22*.

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[1] https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-scheme/what-are-child-safe-standards
[2] https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-scheme
[3] Synod is working on a establishing a secure place for all Congregation SCOs to use.

Adopting Policies, Procedures and other Relevant Documentation

You may have other policies and procedures, but this is the minimum list. Use this as check list:

Date Adopted	Document	Used to …
	UCA Child Safe Commitment Statement	declare your commitment to make your church safe for everyone including children and vulnerable people
	10 National Child Safe Standards https://youtu.be/S2Wro71MRNM	understand the National position on Child Safety. Other resources include a Poster, video etc
	Child Safety Policy	explain the steps your Congregation is taking to keep everyone, especially young people and vulnerable adults, safe.
	Volunteer Manual	distribute to all volunteers and obtain a signature that they have read and understood it
	Screening Policy	acknowledge that screening will take place.
	Ministry Engagement Form combined **Screening** and with **Code of Conduct**	distribute to all volunteers and obtain a signature that they have read and understood.
	Referee Check - Non-Child related	Validate the volunteer's appropriateness
	Role Descriptions[4]	describe each role. These can be included on the relevant Ministry Activity Form[5].
	Activity Policy	declare that all activities have been approved by Church Council and minuted at a meeting.
	Combined Congregations Activity Policy	understand the division of responsibility for joint events: when 2 or more Congregations collaborate on a ministry or activity, one Church Council must take the main responsibility, and the other(s) need to note the activity at their CC meeting.
	Work Health Safety Policy	identify the precautions taken to provide a safe worship and work space
	Food Handling Policy	identify the precautions taken to provide hospitality in a safe, clean and hygienic manner.
	Privacy Policy	articulate the steps that will be taken to safeguard the privacy of your congregants' personal data and that of visitors or other stakeholders.
	Social Media Policy	describe precautions to be taken to manage, limit and restrict the publication of inappropriate material. It also serves to promote awareness of the potential harm from unrestricted use of social media. This may be incorporated into the Privacy Policy.

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[4] See examples of Role Descriptions on https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/safe-church-more-information/
[5] Please see below or the GRP website for more details

Date Adopted	Document	Used to …
	Complaints Policy	raise awareness of how to lodge a complaint and describe how a complaint will be handled.
	Policy Concerning behaviour towards Vulnerable People including Children	raise awareness of how to tell someone of a concern about a potentially unsafe situation. Note the *Speak out in Confidence* Campaign.
	Money Handling Policy	ensure the integrity of the process, to reduce the opportunity for malpractice and to protect and minimise the responsibility from falling on an individual.

Preparing Forms

You will need the following forms which are in the Appendix or can be downloaded from the GRP website[6]. Some can be used as is, others will need to be tailored for your Congregation:

- Volunteer Manual Volunteer Manual (NB This needs to be customised on pages 4 & 6 for your Congregation.)
- Volunteer Register *Volunteer Register Template* on page *31* – to kept by the Safe Church Officer of records of Volunteers' details and dates of the following:
  - Read the Volunteer Manual
  - Signed the Code of Conduct (now included in the Ministry Engagement Form)
  - WWCC reference number
  - Verification of WWCC
  - Expiry of WWCC
- Ministry Activity Form
  - This needs to be completed for each activity of the congregation including Sunday Worship
- Activity Risk Assessment Form See GRP website Activity Risk Assessment Template
- Permission to use photographic or video images for promotion
- Incident Report Form see GRP website Incident Report Form
- Screening Volunteers Form for 18-year-olds and older

How to Verify WWCCs

The SCO needs to register with the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian[7] as an Employer and obtain login authorisation to do subsequent verifications.

See the GRP website[8] or click the link *How to Register with the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian as an Employer* on page *19* in the Appendix.

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[6] https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/
[7] https://wwccemployer.ocg.nsw.gov.au/Register
[8] https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/help-for-church-councils/how-to-register-with-the-office-of-the-childrens-guardian/

3. General Compliance

General Risk Management

☐ Conduct a Risk Assessment for the whole of church and its activities. This will include Next Gen activities (see *Next Gen Ministry* on page *9*) and any special activities that your Church Council is responsible for eg a Combined Congregations Activity.

How to Conduct a Risk Assessment:

See *How to Conduct a Risk Assessment:* on page *22* in the Appendix.

Annual Information Statement (AIS) /ACNC update

The Australians Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) website needs to be updated by 31 December **each year**[9].

This is a legal requirement.

There needs to be at least two **Authorised Person**, usually the Chair, Secretary and/or Treasurer, who can make updates to the ACNC site; the other members will be **Responsible Persons**.

Most Congregations are categorised as a Basic Religious Charity (BRC). For BRCs, there are only two parts to this:

1. **Responsible or Authorised Persons**. All members of the Church Council should be listed on the ACNC website as Responsible Persons. One or more persons should be listed as Authorised persons.
2. The **Annual Information Statement** (AIS) which describes what the charity (church) does. A sample version can be found in the Appendix. You can use the previous year's AIS as a guide. A Sample AIS is provided for your guidance.

NB If your annual income is greater than $500,000 you will need to also submit financial reports. Please contact the presbytery office if you need assistance with this.

How to Update the ACNC website:

Go to the GRP website https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/help-for-church-councils/acnc-how-to-report/ or click here *How to Update the ACNC website:* on page *23*.

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[9] Assuming your Financial Year is from July to June

4. Next Gen Ministry

This section is aimed at Youth and family ministry which require some additional oversight. It can be skipped if there are no activities exclusively for younger people.

Preparing Forms

Where congregations have active Emerging Gen Ministry, leaders need additional forms and parental approvals to those for listed in earlier sections. The following forms are in the Appendix and can be used as is, or tailored for your Congregation:

Date Adopted	Document	Used to….
	Ref Check Form (Child Related)	screen volunteers and helpers who are under 18 years, such as "teen leaders" in a ministry. Used in conjunction with Ministry Engagement Form
	Child and Youth Information Form	obtain important contact, emergency and allergy information about children attending any of our ministries
	Volunteer Driver Declaration Form	Screen drivers of young people (such as on youth outings) when the driver is involved in group transport to a venue or activity (such as youth rally or ten pin bowling)
	Child and Youth Passenger Permission Form	Gain permission of parent for their child to travel in a car with a driver appointed by the ministry leaders
	Permission to Take Photos and Videos of Under 18s suggested wording	Gain permission from parents for their child to be photographed for promotion and sharing of the activity.
	Permission forms for participation in activities off-site	

5. Property

> The content in this section could be managed by the Property Committee. Any reports including inspection reports need to be brought to the attention of the Church Council for their consideration and decision if required. The council may delegate property decisions to the Property Committee, but if so, the scope and spend amount of the delegation must be clearly articulated in the Church Council minutes, included in the Property Policy, and reviewed regularly.

Responsibility for Property

All UCA property belongs to The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (NSW), but your Congregation may have responsibility for it, known as beneficial stewardship. This means that your Congregation can use the property freely and can benefit financially from 3rd party users. But with this comes the obligation to take care of the property and in particular to ensure it is safe for your Congregants and others to use.

Insurance

The UCA Insurance covers your buildings, contents and public liability for your Congregants who engage in activities that have been approved and minuted by Church Council.

All 3rd party users need their own Public Liability Insurance.

Policy for Property

Every Congregation should have a Property Policy. The GRP has a Property Policy on the GRP website https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/media/17466/policy-for-property-grp-may-24-1.pdf , which may be adapted for your Congregation and then adopted if you don't already have one.

Property Risk Assessment

A Property Risk Assessment should be conducted and reviewed regularly, at least annually. It can be part of the general risk assessment. See *General Risk Management* in the section *General Compliance* on page *8*.

Take a walk around all your buildings and list all the potential hazards.

See *How to Conduct a Risk Assessment:* on page *22* in the Appendix.**22**

If repairs or upgrades have been identified to mitigate high risk items, these will need to be prioritised. Other lower risk items should be taken into account when the next budget is being prepared.

Fire Safety

The buildings under your responsibility should be fitted with all necessary fire safety equipment. You will need advice from a licenced fire safety contractor to tell you what equipment is required. Fire safety equipment includes but is not limited to:

- fire extinguishers
- fire blankets
- fire hoses
- illuminated exit signs
- emergency exit lighting
- evacuation diagrams

Emergency Evacuation Diagrams are essential tools in fire safety and take into account the designated emergency exit routes. If new emergency exits have been designated, evacuation diagrams may need to be revised. You might also have to update locks and door handles to ensure easy and safe egress in case of an emergency.

Regular Inspections

The fire safety equipment must be inspected by a licenced Fire Safety Contractor at least annually – some fire safety equipment requires 6 monthly inspections. The Fire Safety Contractor will advise you. All equipment must be tagged and stamped at each inspection.

Annual Fire Safety Statement

At the annual inspection, an Annual Fire Safety Statement (AFSS) should be requested. If your local council has not requested that you submit an AFSS to them, then simply display it in a central location. If your local council has requested that you submit it, then you will need to do so by the date indicated on the correspondence and also send a copy to Fire and Rescue NSW at afss@fire.nsw.gov.au - the details will be on the AFSS document. Wait to be asked by your local council, before submitting it to them – not all churches are required to.

It is appropriate for an Office Bearer to sign an AFSS as the agent for the property.

Appropriate Fire Safety Precautions – Including Emergency Evacuations and Drills

As well as having the necessary fire safety equipment in place, it is important that your congregants are familiar with the potential emergency exits and muster stations. To this end, it is important to hold emergency evacuation drills with your congregants, preferably annually.

Note: this does not need to be a surprise event! Congregants could be asked to wait at the end of a regular service, and then explain to them the process, indicate the exits they are to use and where to meet up. It is a good idea to suggest that they look around and take note of who is near them and when they get to the muster area to check that those people have exited safely. Ideally, this evacuation drill would be timed.

Property Inspections

Manse – Mutual Expectations

Congregations with Ministry Agents in placement for at least 50%, must provide appropriate residential accommodation for them. Prior to the move-in date, the Manse should be inspected and the appropriate section of a *Manse Premises Condition Report* completed. As soon as is practicable

after the Ministry Agent has taken up residence, the Ministry Agent should fill in the relevant section. Both parties (a Church Council Office Bearer and the Ministry Agent) need to sign this and send it to the Presbytery for their signature. Any discrepancies between the two sets of comments need to be addressed immediately. Presbytery can help if this arises.

Annual Inspections

All buildings should be inspected annually, including any Manses with Ministry Agents living in them, and a report written with recommendations as to repairs and maintenance required. Ideally this is done around March so that a property budget can be incorporated into the Church annual budget, which should be prepared around May.

If a property is managed by a Real Estate Agent, the agent should initiate annual inspections – it is a good idea to have someone from your Church attend the inspection at this time.

Hiring out UCA Property

Short-term Bookings

One-off use of property is called a "Hire"; regular but casual use is known as "Use"

One-Off bookings

Occasionally, an individual or organisation may request to hire property that you have responsibility for eg hire of the church hall for a special birthday party.

If the 3rd party does not have Public Liability Insurance, this can be obtained from Synod Insurance for a one-off occasion using the application form ***Hall Hirer's Public Liability Insurance Application*** Form available from the Synod website under Insurance Resources.

See the GRP website[10] or click the link *How To Arrange One-Off* on page *25* in the Appendix.

Regular bookings eg weekly hall use

For short-term regular bookings eg a weekly dance class:

See the GRP website[11] or click the link *How To Arrange Short-Term Regular Bookings eg weekly hall use* on page *26* in the Appendix. Short term is preferably up to six (6) months, but may be up to twelve (12) months.

All 3rd party users must hold their own current Public Liability Insurance which is in the same name as used on the User Agreement.

Long term Rentals eg Leases and Licences

For long term (longer than 12 months) use of church property a lease or licence is required. This needs to be prepared by an authorised person eg a Real Estate Agent or Solicitor.

If the entire site is to be rented out for exclusive use by one party, and there are no common areas of use with any other party, including your Congregation, the arrangement needs to be a lease.

If there are any shared areas, then the arrangement needs to be a licence.

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[10] https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/help-for-church-councils/how-to-arrange-one-off-hall-bookings/
[11] https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/help-for-church-councils/how-to-arrange-short-term-regular-bookings/

NB The lease or licence needs to be in the name of "The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (NSW) on behalf of ………………………….. Congregation". Use your Congregation's ABN

Congregation Office Bearers may engage a Real Estate Agent but are not authorised to sign a licence or lease.

Licences and Leases needed to be signed by Synod Property Services.

You are required to liaise with Presbytery on all arrangements longer than 12 months.

See the GRP website[12] or click the link *How To Arrange Long-Term Rentals* on page *26* in the Appendix.

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[12] https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/help-for-church-councils/how-to-arrange-long-term-rentals/

6. Finance

> The Treasurer will be responsible for initiating and guiding these tasks. The Church Council members should assist and support, where needed. The church Council is responsible for ensuring all these are addressed.

Annual Financial Returns

The Synod of NSW and ACT requires all Congregations to submit an Annual Financial Return (AFR) by 31 August each year for the preceding financial year (July to June).

If your annual gross income is

- below $100,000 for the year, this needs to be signed by the Treasurer and Chairperson.
- between $100,000 and $500,000 and are eligible for Variations to Qualifications under UCA regulation 3.8.7 (e); please have two independent, fit and proper persons appointed by the Church Council, sign the declaration of accuracy
- more than $500,000, an Auditor who possesses a current CPA/CA qualification must be appointed to audit the books and records and submit a report by 31 October each year.

Send Audited and Unaudited AFRs to admin.grp@nswact.uca.org.au and afr@nswact.uca.org.au by 31 August.

Send Audited AFRs with the Auditor's report to the above email addresses by 31 October.

Contact the GRP Office if you need help with this.

Business Activity Statement (BAS) to Australian Tax Office

Congregations may elect to submit Business Activity Statements (BAS) to the Australian Tax Office (ATO) monthly or quarterly.

- Monthly BASs are due by the 21st each month for the previous month
- Quarterly BASs are due on:
  - 28 February for the quarter October to December of the previous year
  - 28 April for the quarter January to March
  - 28 July for the quarter April to June
  - 28 October for the quarter July to September

Contact the GRP Office if you need help with this.

Budget Preparation

You Congregation needs to prepare a budget of expected (projected) income and expenditure for the forthcoming financial year July to June.

Preparation for the budget should begin at least by May.

- It is essential to consider Mission Planning
- Building inspections and reports will help to inform necessary property expenses
- The Congregation must approve the budget
  - the Church Council should assist the Treasurer and may make a recommendation to the Congregation only

NB The Annual Congregation meeting to present the Budget is one of the two required Congregation meetings[13]. Ideally this is held _before_ July which is the start of the financial year.

- The Church Council's role is to ensure that the budget is adhered to - specific approval should be sought if it is thought necessary to exceed the approved budgeted amount on any item.

Annual Insurance Renewal Questionnaire

This annual questionnaire from Synod is to clarify and update the list of properties that your Congregation has responsibility for.

The questionnaire will be sent by the Synod Insurance team and needs to be completed and returned by 28 February each year.

Money Handling Policy

A money handling policy is important to clearly state how your Church Council protects its finances, is transparent in all financial dealings and protects those involved with financial transactions particularly cash handling. It can be extended to cover all financial transactions and management.

Your policy should include:
- that 2 people are required to count cash offerings
- that 2 people are required to authorise any financial transactions eg electronic payments from your bank account
- how and where cash is to be stored and for how long until it can be banked
- which local financial institution can be used to deposit cash to go into your UFS account
- how suppliers are engaged and paid
- your management of the purchasing of goods and /or services by Congregants who then seek reimbursement
- how to deal with an urgent or unexpected payment

As part of the policy or as an annexure to it, should be the procedures on how the policy should be carried out and who is authorised to do each task.

Relevant forms should be included eg:
- to record offerings when counted
- to arrange payment for a supplier
- to seek reimbursement for items purchased

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[13] The other required Congregation Meeting is the one to present Annual Reports – elections for Office bearers are usually held at this meeting.

Annual Information Statement

For Congregations whose annual Income is less than $500,00

See the GRP website[14] or *Annual Information Statement (AIS) /ACNC update* on page *8*

For Congregations who do not qualify as Basic Religious Charities

If your gross annual income is greater than $500,000 you do not qualify as a Basic Religious Charity.

When submitting your Annual Information Statement (AIS) to the ACNC website (see *How to Update the ACNC website:* on page *23* in the Appendix), you will need to submit financial reports as well.

If you need assistance to do this, please contact the Presbytery Office.

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[14] https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/help-for-church-councils/acnc-how-to-report/

7. Employing New Staff

Ministry Agents

Placement of ministers is a joint responsibility between the congregation and the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) of Presbytery. The Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) will usually be aware of the need or desire to call a new Ministry Agent into placement to a Congregation – if not, please contact the Presbytery Office. The PRC will guide the Congregation through the process.

The Church Council will be the point of contact for the PRC. The main responsibilities will be:

- to ensure the congregation has a mission plan – a simple statement of their goals and plans in the mission Christ calls them to;
- to select a diverse group (up to 6) who is representative of the Congregation members and subgroups within eg age groups, cultural groups etc., to be members of the Joint Nomination Committee (which PRC will set up and Chair).
- to prepare a Congregation profile, under the guidance of the PRC, which describes the Congregation, its mission, its vision, theological position, preference of leadership style, geographic and socioeconomic situation etc etc
- to provide suitable residential accommodation for the Ministry Agent and family if the placement is to be 50% or more.
- to work with PRC on mutually suitable Terms of Placement (TOPs) and this will spell out other responsibilities eg provision of the internet, an office etc

See *Employing a new Ministry Agent* on page *27* for more details.

Lay Ministry of Pastor Positions

Lay Ministry of Pastor Position (LMOP) is a Uniting Church designation. The Australian Tax Office (ATO) uses the term Religious Practitioner for all Ministry Agents and LMOP positions.

Pastors are entitled to take advantage of having a Ministers Benefit Fund, which has favourable tax implications.

Pastors are entitled to continuing education / study leave. (25 hours p.a.)

If your Congregation is considering employing a Lay Ministry of Pastor Position (LMOP), the first step is to discuss this with the PRC and then to liaise with the People and Culture Team (P&C) to be clear on the process. There is a UCA template to develop a position description. Synod P&C will advise you on the details to ensure this role qualifies as a LMOP position. This needs to be approved by the PRC committee as well.
See *Employing a Ministry of Pastor Position* on page *28* in the Appendix for more details.

Other Lay Workers

When the need arises for a new employee, the Church Council should liaise with the People and Culture Team (P&C) to be clear on the process. This includes the steps as for a LMOP, but without the necessary LMOP requirements in the position description.

See *Employing a Lay Position* on page *29* in the Appendix.

Setting up Payroll

This is in abeyance until the new system Horizon allows onboarding – expected to be June 2026.

8. Appendix

Basic Checklist for Congregations

Actions

What	By	Page Links for more information
Adopt the *Safe Church Commitment Statement*	Church Council Congregation	
Attend *Culture of Safety Workshops*	Church Council members Elders Volunteers	5
Appoint a *Safe Church Officer*	Church Council	5
Obtain *Working With Children Checks*	Church Council members Elders Volunteers	5
Verify *WWCC*s	Safe Church Officer	21
Adopt and Sign the *Volunteer Manual*	Church Council Elders Volunteers	
Adopt and sign the *Volunteer Code of Conduct*	Church Council Elders Volunteer	
Adopt and maintain a *Volunteer Register*	Safe Church Officer	

Policies

These can be found on the GRP website: https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/about-us/our-policies/

What	By	Page Reference for more information
Adopt the *10 National Child Safe Standards*	Church Council Congregation	
Adopt a *Screening Policy*	Church Council	
Adopt a Child Safety Policy	Church Council Congregation	
Adopt a *Privacy Policy*	Church Council	
Adopt a *Social Media Policy*	Church Council	
Sign the *Volunteer Code of Conduct*	Church Council members Elders Volunteers	
Develop *Job Descriptions*	Church Council	
Write an *Activity Policy* for each activity including worship	Church Council	
Adopt a *Combined Congregations Activity Policy*	Church Council	
Adopt a *Work Health Safety Policy*	Church Council	
Adopt a *Food Handling Policy*	Church Council	
Adopt a *Privacy Policy*	Church Council	
Adopt a *Social Media Policy*	Church Council	

What	By	Page Reference for more information
Adopt a *Complaints Policy*	Church Council	
Adopt a *Policy Concerning behaviour towards Vulnerable People including Children*	Church Council	
Adopt a *Money Handling Policy*	Church Council Treasurer	
Adopt a *Property Policy*	Church Council Property Committee	
Adopt a *Bullying and Harassment Policy*	Church Council	

Forms to be Developed

Samples can be found on the GRP website:

What	Who will use this	Page Reference for more information
Activity Risk Assessment Form	All church activity leaders	5
General Risk Assessment Form	Church Council	
Permission to take photographs or videography of under 18-year-olds	All Next Gen church activity leaders	
Permission to take photographs or videography for promotion	All church activity leaders	
Incident Reporting	All church activity leaders	
Referee Checks for Volunteers Form for 18-year-olds and older	All church activity leaders	
Referee Checks for Volunteers Form for under 18-year-olds	All Next Gen church activity leaders	
Under 18 Information Forms	All Next Gen church activity leaders	
Child and Youth Ministry Driver Declaration Form	All Next Gen church activity leaders	
Permission forms for participation in activities off-site	All Next Gen church activity leaders	
Transport permission forms	All Next Gen church activity leaders	
Money Recording Form	Stewards	

UCA Forms to Download from GRP website[15]

What	For	Page Reference for more information
Manse Premises Condition Report	Property Committee	5
Hall Hirer's Public Liability Insurance Application	Property Committee	

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[15] https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/help-for-church-councils/uca-forms/

What	*For*	*Page Reference for more information*
Certificate of Correctness	Property Committee	
NSW Hire Agreement	Property Committee	
NSW User Agreement	Property Committee	

Samples to adapt or tailor to your needs

What	*For*	*Page Reference for more information*
Property Inspection Report	Property Committee	5

Procedures

How to Register with the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian as an Employer

- Go to the website of the OCG with the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian[16]
- Enter your church's details as the Organisation
  - Click NEXT
- Enter your contact details
  - Click NEXT
- For the Child related sector, choose Religious services
  - Click NEXT
- Answer YES to the three questions:
  - Are you going to check paid / contract staff?
  - Are you going to check volunteers?
  - Does your organisation deliver services to children?
    - Click NEXT

How to Verify WWCCs

The SCO needs to first register with the Office of the Children's Guardian and obtain login authorisation to do subsequent verifications. (See *How to Register with the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian as an Employer*.)

To do the verifications:

- Login https://wwccemployer.ocg.nsw.gov.au/Login with the Username and Password
- For each person, enter the:
  - Surname
  - WWCC reference Number
  - Date of birth
- Click Add
  - The Verification status will be displayed
  - Download the report
  - Record the result in the Synod CRM[17]

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[16] https://wwccemployer.ocg.nsw.gov.au/Register
[17] How to do this – coming soon

▪ You will be notified of any relevant events eg expiry due

How to Screen Volunteers

Synod's Culture of Safety team has developed a Ministry Engagement form, which covers screening. It has 3 parts to be filled in:

1. Personal Information
2. Screening Questions
3. Code of Conduct

In addition, each worker needs to have 2 referees.

There are separate referee forms for this:

NB There are 2 different forms to choose from depending on whether the role is

      i. child-related

      or

      ii. non-child related

How to Conduct a Risk Assessment:

1. List all events or situations which entail risk. These could be:
   - Strollers or adult walkers blocking emergency exits
   - Getting burnt by scalding water when making morning tea
2. For each item, decide on the likelihood that this will occur:
   a. Almost certainly
   b. Likely
   c. Possible
   d. Unlikely
   e. Rare
3. For each item, decide how big would the consequence be if it occurred:
   a. Extreme
   b. Major
   c. Moderate
   d. Minor
   e. Insignificant
4. Use this matrix to allocate a risk rating of:
   a. High
   b. Medium
   c. Low

ACTIVITY RISK ASSESSMENT

RISK ANALYISIS & ESCALATION

RISK MATRIX

		C1 Insignificant	C2 Minor	C3 Moderate	C4 Major	C5 Extreme
Likelihood	**L5 Almost certain**	Low	Medium	High	High	High
	L4 Likely	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
	L3 Possible	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
	L2 Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	L1 Rare	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High

Consequence (column header spanning C1–C5)

RISK ESCALATION & COMMUNICATION OPTIONS

Risk Rating	Escalation and Communication
High	Immediate escalation to church leadership (Board); active remediation activities in place; regular frequent (weekly) monitoring
Medium	Church management team advised; active mitigation plans in place; regular (monthly) monitoring as part of existing meetings
Low	Local management team monitoring; lower priority remediation activities

5. What will you do to mitigate this risk? eg
   - Designate the area that must be kept clear to allow easy egress in the case of an emergency
   - Re-arrange the kitchen to minimise the distance that hot water needs to be carried
6. Reassess the risk (#2, 3 & 4) with each control in place.
7. Re-order your list of risks with the highest risk rating (#4) at the top.

How to Update the ACNC website:

This needs to be done by an Authorised Person. If you don't know who from your Congregation is an Authorised Person, please contact the GRP office for help.

The Authorised Person will need to know the names, addresses and contact details of all the members of the Church Council.

- Log in to the ACNC portal https://charity.acnc.gov.au/
- Enter your email address and your password
- Click Sign in
  - If you have forgotten your password, click

- *Forgot your password?*
- Enter your email address
- Click SEND VERIFICATION CODE and an email will be sent to you
  - You should see your Congregation name listed
  - Click on your Congregation name

STEP 1 - People

- Click MANAGE PEOPLE
- Edit the list of responsible and authorised people
  - Click on the down arrow on the Right Hand Side >> Edit
  - To remove someone, simply enter an end date
    - Click SUBMIT
  - Add any new people by clicking
    - Add Responsible Person
    - *or*
    - Add Authorised Person
  - Fill in the details
- Click SUBMIT

STEP 2 – AIS Report

To Download a copy of a previous AIS report,
- Select the Reporting tab
- scroll down to 'Reporting History'
- click on the Download button next to the relevant year.

To start reporting

- Click Manage Reporting

  - Click Start 20xx AIS (where 20xx is the appropriate year)
  - Click START
  - Read and Click NEXT

Charity Details[18]

- Enter details as requested noting that
  - an asterisk - means the data is mandatory
  - a search icon – means you need to click on this after entering the details

- If you are a *Basic Religious Charity*, you will answer NO to the following:
  - Is your charity an incorporated Association?
  - Does your charity intend to fundraise in the next reporting period?
  - Could your charity be registered with any other subtype of charity?
  - is your charity incorporated or registered under certain legislation?
  - Has the ACNC allowed your charity to report as part of a group?

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[18] These steps are for Basic Religious Charities ie those with an annual income of less that $500,000. If you do not qualify as a BRC, please contact the Presbytery Office for assistance.

- is your charity endorsed as a DGR or does it operate DGR funds or authorities or institutions that had total revenue of $500,000 or more in the reporting period?
- Has your charity received more than $100,000 in government grants in the current reporting period, or in either of the previous two reporting periods?
- Tick
  - Annual Revenue less than $500,000 (small charity)
  - Click SAVE and NEXT

Charity Programs

- Respond YES to the question
  - Did your charity operate in the 20xx reporting?
- Click NEXT
- Write a brief description of your purpose and click NEXT eg
  "By providing worship services and pastoral care"
- You need to add a program if you do not already have one eg "Advancing Religion"

People finance and reporting

- Complete the details about Number of Employees
  - NB FTE (Full-time equivalent) means the equivalent of the number of people working 100% - eg if 2 people worked 50% each, you would have 1 FTE
- Enter the approximate number of volunteers
- If you are a **Basic Religious Charity**, you can tick NO to the question "Do you want to complete the finance section?"
- Click NEXT

Review and submit

- You can Review the AIS before submitting it
- Add the relevant details for the Declaration
- Click SUBMIT
- Click DOWNLOAD your submitted AIS if you want a copy for your records.

How To Arrange One-Off Bookings

The following should be followed:

- obtain approval from church Council, agree on the amount of the payment and have this approval minuted
  - It is Church Council's responsibility to agree on appropriate fees
- download and complete the form from the Synod Website, ***NSW Hire Agreement***
- if the 3rd party does not have Public Liability Insurance, this can be obtained from Synod Insurance for a one-off occasion using the application form ***Hall Hirer's Public Liability Insurance Application Form*** available from the Synod website under Insurance Resources.
  - Synod does not charge for the service, but the Congregation may charge a nominal amount eg $50 for this service.
  - The form must be sent in to insurance@nswact.uca.org.au at least a few days prior to the event

How To Arrange Short-Term Regular Bookings eg weekly hall use

For short-term regular bookings eg a weekly dance class:

- obtain approval from church Council, agree on the amount of the payment and have this approval minuted
    - It is Church Council's responsibility to agree on appropriate fees
- download and complete the form from the Synod Website, **NSW _User_ Agreement**
- all 3rd party users must hold their own current Public Liability Insurance
    - this needs to be in the same name as used on the User Agreement.
    - You need to keep a copy (Certificate of Currency)

How To Arrange Long-Term Rentals

For long term use of church property by a 3rd party (ie a non-UCA entity[19]) a lease or licence is required. This needs to be prepared by an authorised person eg a Real Estate Agent or Solicitor.

Congregation Office Bearers may engage a Real Estate Agent but are not authorised to sign a licence or lease.

Engaging A Real Estate Agent

Use a standard Managing Agency Agreement but _delete_ the clauses relating to the following three things, before signing:

1. Enter into and sign tenancy agreements
   (Tenancy Lease Agreements are to be signed by the Property Trust only, not the RE Agent.)

2. Exercise the Principal's right to enforce or terminate tenancy agreements including the services of notices/recovery of monies due

3. Respond to any application by tenants before the Residential Tenancies Tribunal and represent the Principal in any such proceedings
   (Approval from the Moderator is required before any legal action can be taken.)

Tenancy Leases or Licences

- Obtain approval from the church council for the arrangement. Ensure that the proposal is minuted and that it is clear and self-sufficient to be quoted in the application you will need to make to Synod Property. Eg:

   > "That the property at 1111 The Street, Sydney be rented out for 12 months from 1 January 2000 at $800 per week."

- Complete the UCA Lease Application form, which requires approval and signatures from
    - 2 x Church Council Office bearers
    - Presbytery
    - Director of UME
    - Synod Property Services

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[19] For a UCA entity, use a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

NB Presbytery can arrange for the Presbytery and UME approvals once signed by your church council.

- Arrange with your RE Agent or Solicitor to prepare the lease or licence and get the lessee or licensee to sign.
  NB The lease or licence needs to be in the name of "The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (NSW) on behalf of ………………………….. Congregation". Use your Congregation's ABN

- Prepare a Certificate of Correctness which requires
  o 2 x Church Council Office Bearers' signatures for section 1,
  o RE Agent or Solicitor to sign section 2

- Send to Property Services for their approval and signature:
  o UCA Lease Application form
  o Certificate of Correctness
  o Lease or Licence

Employing a new Ministry Agent

The PRC will guide the Congregation through the process.

The Church Council Secretary will be the point of contact for the PRC (please inform PRC if this is to be someone else). The main responsibilities will be:
- to ensure the congregation has a mission plan
- to appoint up to 6 members to the Joint Nomination Committee, (which PRC will set up and Chair) taking care to select a diverse group representative of the Congregation members and subgroups within eg age groups, cultural groups etc.
- to prepare a Congregation profile, under the guidance of the PRC, which describes the Congregation, its mission, its vision, preference of leadership style, geographic and socioeconomic situation etc etc
- The Congregation must provide suitable residential accommodation for the Ministry Agent and family if the placement is to be 50% or more. See *Manse – Mutual Expectations* on page *11*. This includes the provision of a refrigerator, washing machine, dishwasher and study furniture.
- Synod will pay for 90% of the moving fee and the Congregation is responsible for 10%
- PRC will liaise with Church Council on the mutually suitable Terms of Placement (TOPs) and this will spell out other responsibilities eg provision of the internet, an office etc
- The Safe Church Officer will need to verify the WWCC of the incoming Ministry Agent
- The Treasurer will need to set up Minister's Benefit Fund with UFS (see *Setting up a Minster's Benefit Fund* on page *29*
- If your Congregation uses the Synod payroll system, the Treasurer will need to on-board the Minister. NB the current payroll system is not taking any new Congregations and the new Synod system will not take new Congregations until around June 2026.
- A new placement always begins on the first day of a month and the Ministry agent is given 2 weeks grace to move and settle in
- PRC will organise an induction service to be held close to the beginning of the new placement. This is a Presbytery run and organised service, and members of the Congregation will be invited to take part.

Employing a Ministry of Pastor Position

NB The Synod People and Culture (P&C) Team can help you will all stages of the process.

Lay Ministry of Pastor Position (LMOP) is a Uniting Church designation. Religious Practitioner is a designation of the Australian Tax Office (ATO). Under changes at the beginning of 2025, all new pastor positions will meet the requirements to be religious practitioners, thereby entitling them to take advantage of having a Ministers Benefit Fund, which has favourable tax implications.

Pastors Position Descriptions are to include

- continuing education / study leave (50 hours p.a. for full-time and pro rata'd for part time),
- professional supervision (8 hours p.a. full-time and 5 hours p.a. part-time)
- Ethical Ministry Training (Foundation Course every 5 years and 2 refreshers p.a.)

The following steps are needed:
1. Develop a position description using the UCA template
2. The P&C team to ensure this qualifies as a LMOP position description.
3. Seek approval of position description from PRC
4. PRC to submit the Position Description to ACOMP for approval of meeting ATO rulings for a Religious Practitioner
5. Advertise the position
6. Conduct interviews and select a suitable candidate
7. Assessment of core and general competencies by two authorised assessors and setting of learning goals as required. (PRC will organise assessment.)
8. Collect the personal details of the candidate specifically
   a. Correct spelling of legal name
   b. WWCC number and DOB
   c. Proof of Australian citizenship or Visa to work in Australia
   d. Address verification
9. Verify the WWCC
10. Request a letter of offer to be created by P&C using the *Letter of offer request form*
11. Send the Letter of offer and the Position Description to the candidate to be signed and the Fair Work Information Statement for information only
12. The Treasurer will need to set up a Minister's Benefit Fund with UFS because LMOP positions are eligible (see Setting up a Minster's Benefit Fund on page 25).
13. If your Congregation uses the Synod payroll system, the Treasurer will need to on-board the new employee. NB the current payroll system is not taking any new Congregations, and the new Synod system will not take new Congregations until around June 2026.
14. Send to Synod People & Culture people@nswact.uca.org.au
    a. Signed contract / letter of offer
    b. Signed position description
    c. Personal details form
    d. TFN declaration
    e. Superannuation choice forms
15. with PRC's assistance, (provisionally) commission the pastor
16. Re-assessment of competencies at 6-months. If met, provisional status is concluded. If not met, the person is transitioned out of the position.

Employing a Lay Position

Follow all steps as for employing a LMOP, with the following exceptions:

- at step #1, the position description does not need the specific LMOP inclusions. However, it should be approved by the P&C.
- leave out steps *2*, *3*, *12*, *15* and *16*.

Setting up a Minster's Benefit Fund

This is for all Ministry Agents and LMOP positions.

1. The Congregation Treasurer will need to set up a Ministers Benefit Fund (MBF). This will require
   a. the UFS Investment Application form to be completed by the Treasurer (NB the Ministry agent may have View only access).
   b. a Client Identification Form if this Ministry Agent is not yet known to UFS.

Documents and other Resources

UCA Child Safe Commitment Statement

https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/media/17630/uca-child-safe-commitment-statement-sg2025-1.pdf

10 National Child Safe Standards

Click to open document

GRP Screening Policy

https://georgesriver.uca.org.au/media/17503/policy-grp-policy-on-screening.pdf

Volunteer Register Template

Each congregation should keep a Volunteer Register. The following Volunteer Register template and example is provided as a guide to assist congregations. Where it is more practical to do so, separate registers can be maintained for different ministry or rostered areas. These should be routinely provided to the Volunteer Contact Person for noting in the Church Council minutes, such as on a quarterly basis, if practical. For more information, refer to the Congregation Volunteer Policy and Procedures.

Role title and description	High trust role?	Volunteer's name	Phone and email	Start/finish dates	Confirmation: signed Code of Conduct (date)	Confirmation: read Volunteer Manual – for high trust volunteers (date)	WWCC/WWVP number and verification (as required)	Training required	Training completed (dates)
Kid's Church Coordinator – organises children's ministry and coordinates a team of volunteers to lead children's ministry activities during Sunday morning services.	Yes – works with children	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxxx	1 February 2021	30 January 2021	30 January 2021	• Number • Date of birth • Verification • Renewal due date	Safe Church Awareness Training	30 January 2021 (refresher due Jan 2024)
Gardener / Lawn Mower	No	xxxxx	xxxxx	99/99/99	99/99/99	Y	N	N	-