



27 August 2021

Dr David Morgan, Secretary  
Church Council of Glen Waverley UC

[councilsec@gwuc.org.au](mailto:councilsec@gwuc.org.au)

Dear Church Council

**Re: Essential Safety Measures (ESMs) – VICTORIA (sent to all Church Councils in Victoria)**

Victorian State Government legislation has over recent years progressively tightened the regulatory environment that applies to the use of non-residential buildings. The UCA just like any other property owner is obliged to adhere to the legislative changes in this increasingly complex and onerous area. Synod is aware of the challenges and uncertainties this presents to congregations and other Responsible Bodies. Through its governance committees, Synod is conscious of the need to assist church bodies in understanding the obligations that they have and must meet, and also to provide concrete help in the form of information and contractor support for the activities that must be undertaken.

The Property Applications Review Team has recently endorsed the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania's Essential Safety Measures approach. This communication is being sent to all Presbyteries and Church Councils and outlines the required actions for ALL Uniting Church non-residential buildings (including churches, halls, shops, offices, kindergartens) for which your Congregation is the Responsible Body.

The actions in the table below are required whether the building is occupied or unoccupied. Essential Safety Measures (ESMs) must be in place to protect persons from injury or death in an emergency. Non-compliance can result in fines and/or prosecutions for those directly responsible for maintenance of the building.

**CHURCH COUNCIL ACTION**

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| <p>Step 1 <b>Buildings built before 1 July 1994</b><br/>(where no upgrades have been undertaken):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain a Maintenance Determination from a Registered Building Surveyor which will outline your ESM Maintenance Schedule.</li> </ul> <p><b>COST:</b> \$1,500-\$2,000 once-off for Maintenance Determination &amp; ESM Schedule</p> | <p><b>Buildings built or altered after 1 July 1994</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Display your Occupancy Permit in the foyer of your building.</li> </ul> <p><b>COST:</b> \$0 provided the Occupancy Permit is displayed</p> |
| <p>Step 2 Service/maintain (including testing) your ESMs in accordance with the Occupancy Permit or ESM Maintenance Schedule.<br/><b>COST:</b> depends on maintenance required</p>   |  |
| <p>Step 3 Obtain an Annual Essential Safety Measures Report (AESMR). At least 12 months' evidence of testing is required to complete an AESMR. If you are not utilising Statcom, email your completed AESMR and evidence to <a href="mailto:aesmr@victas.uca.org.au">aesmr@victas.uca.org.au</a><br/><b>COST:</b> \$850 per annum if through Statcom (billed quarterly)</p>    |  |

Only a Registered Building Surveyor can prepare an ESM Maintenance Determination or Schedule. The Synod's Property Services Team has negotiated discounted rates for Uniting Church buildings with Statcom as a supplier of a compliant ESM service. Church Councils are encouraged to take advantage of these rates (see page 3 of this letter for more information).

Where a closed (or closing) building is to be sold within the next 12 months, an ESM Audit and Report (at an approximate cost of about \$400) can alternatively be undertaken. This option will need to be approved by your Presbytery.

Once an ESM Maintenance Schedule has been established for a building, Church Councils are invited to be part of a tender process to service/maintain (including testing) the ESMs. This tender process will also provide for pricing of regular actions that may be required – e.g. test'n'tag of extinguishers. There is no obligation to use the services of any firm participating in the tender, provided that any alternative contractor is appropriately qualified to perform the services. To be part of this program please complete the enclosed *ESM Maintenance Contractor plus 'Test & Tag' Tender Enquiry* form.

The above Church Council Actions need to be started as soon as possible as the legislative requirement is already in place and 12 months of testing evidence is required in order to sign off an Annual Essential Safety Measures Report. An update on the progress of congregations working towards having their ESM program in place will be reported to the Property Applications Review Team by the end of February 2022.

Please find enclosed an ESM Information Pack to assist you in navigating and understanding this important area of safety for our buildings and occupants. The ESM Information Pack includes:

1. Pastoral message from your Presbytery
2. ESM Q&A sheet
3. Example Occupancy Permit
4. Letter of authorisation for congregation to obtain Occupancy Permit (for post 1 July 1994 buildings where the document cannot be located)
5. Example Statcom Quotes
6. Examples ESM Maintenance Schedule
7. ESM Maintenance Contractor plus 'Test & Tag' Tender Enquiry form
8. Understanding costs to set up your ESM program
9. ESM Flyer

If you have any questions please contact Siobhan Reed on (03) 9116 1956 or via email to [Siobhan.Reed@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:Siobhan.Reed@victas.uca.org.au)

We appreciate that there are many challenges facing our congregations during the pandemic, however we have prioritised this message as ESM maintenance is a requirement regardless of buildings being occupied or unoccupied.

Yours sincerely



**Rod Skilbeck**  
Chairperson, Property Applications Review Team



**Siobhan Reed**  
Manager, Assets & Administration

## Maintenance Determination and Schedule

*For buildings built before 1 July 1994, obtain a Maintenance Determination from a Registered Building Surveyor which will outline your ESM Maintenance Schedule.*

### **Statcom discounted rates for UCA Victoria - Maintenance Determination and Schedule: \$1,500-\$2,000 plus GST**

Contact Aaron Mackenzie, National Project Manager, Statcom Systems  
Ph: 1300 872 885, M: 0428 313 574 , E: [amackenzie@statcomsystems.com.au](mailto:amackenzie@statcomsystems.com.au)

- Identify the building's Essential Safety Measures in accordance with the National Construction Code and prepare a Maintenance Determination signed by a Registered Building Surveyor.
- Maintenance Determinations are to establish the standard of performance and the frequency of testing with adherence to the current 2018 Building Regulations. This Determination is then used by the Essential Safety Measures contractors to perform the building-specific compliance maintenance and the ESM Schedule.

*These costs relate to small-to-medium church sites. The contractor has the right to determine the fit.*

### **Other recommended Building Surveyors for Maintenance Determination and Schedule quotes:**

- Kretna Building Surveyors, Ph: (03) 9427 9333, E: [office@krneta.com.au](mailto:office@krneta.com.au)
- Hendry, Ph: 1800 875 371, E: [info@hendry.com.au](mailto:info@hendry.com.au)
- BSA Building Surveyors, Ph: (03) 5241 2559, E: [admin@bsabs.com.au](mailto:admin@bsabs.com.au)

## Annual Essential Safety Measures Report (AESMR)

**For ALL** *Uniting Church non-residential buildings (including churches, halls, shops, kindergartens, offices) regardless of what year they were built*

### **Statcom discounted rates for UCA Victoria \$850 plus GST**

Contact Aaron Mackenzie, National Project Manager, Statcom Systems  
Ph: 1300 872 885, M: 0428 313 574 , E: [amackenzie@statcomsystems.com.au](mailto:amackenzie@statcomsystems.com.au)

- This will set up the Essential Safety Measures (**ESM**) program, provide quarterly inspections for compliance and maintenance monitoring and the annual sign off (ESM Annual Report).
- Statcom Systems will attend and collect the information of the Essential Safety Measures which exists onsite, identify the contractors who will carry out the inspections/testing of each ESM in accordance with the applicable Australian Standards, Occupancy Permit or Maintenance Schedule.
- When the data has been verified, a customised Essential Safety Measures Manual will be supplied and this will provide the hard copy evidence which the Responsible Body can use at any time to demonstrate compliance to the local council or reporting authority. The Manual will include 12 months of maintenance records plus a copy of an Annual Essential Safety Measures Report (or state equivalent) ready to be signed off at the end of the 12-month maintenance period.

The service includes:

- Perform the quarterly exit door, path of travel and passive inspections, including the annual inspection and certification (**AESMR**).
- Conduct a quarterly audit of maintenance records to ensure all maintenance has been carried out during the past 12 months.
- Sign off the AESMR at the end of the 12-month period providing all maintenance has been carried out on the Essential Safety Measures.
- Install an annual update in the ESM Manual for the next 12-month maintenance period and archive last year's records.