



Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

**Creating a safe environment for  
children and vulnerable adults in  
our Church: Vulnerable Adults**



**Culture of Safety**

<http://victas.uca.org.au/culture-of-safety>



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## **We are committed to protecting the vulnerable from harm and abuse**

The Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania is committed to provide safe places where people are cared for, nurtured and sustained. We seek to provide a safe environment to encounter God, to develop relationships as part of a community, and to grow in faith (adapted from A Safe Place for Children, Uniting Church Press, 1999).

We commit to being a community which:

- provides and maintains a welcoming and safe environment
- offers suitable and well-equipped leadership
- provides a level of resourcing that reflects the value of all people
- provides clear and appropriate guidelines for managing the safety of all people and its programs

## **Why is there a policy?**

The Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that vulnerable adults are safe.

## **To whom does the policy apply?**

This policy applies to all members, officers, volunteers and attendees of the Church. Agencies of the Church also have their own policies.

## **What is a vulnerable adult?**

It has become evident to both Governments and to the Church that children are not the only vulnerable group of people in need of protection. A definition of a vulnerable adult is people who may be considered to be susceptible to abuse or exploitation based on factors such as their health status (physical or mental), age, grief, social isolation or financial hardship.

Vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.

## **Roles and responsibilities of Presbyteries and Church Councils**

Presbyteries and Church Councils each have specific roles and responsibilities. The policy outlines what these are.

## **Our principles for keeping vulnerable adults safe**

We are committed to developing and maintaining an open and aware culture. The Church is committed to establishing a safe environment for vulnerable adults by:

1. Recognising and identifying vulnerable adults who are present in Congregations
2. Promoting and implementing a Code of Conduct for the Prevention of Abuse which applies to all people who have interaction with vulnerable adults
3. Holding all people accountable to the Code of Conduct and other reasonable expectations of behaviour in relation to the treatment of vulnerable adults
4. Responding to bullying or other inappropriate behaviour.
5. Requiring people with access to vulnerable adults to adhere to standards of conduct regarding appropriate communication (verbal and non-verbal)

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6. Prohibiting workers and volunteers from using inappropriate physical interaction with vulnerable adults
7. Ensuring vulnerable adults are aware of the Code of Conduct, complaints/grievance process, confidentiality as well as their rights and responsibilities as members of the Uniting Church
8. The Congregation and Presbytery will plan and conduct safe programs for vulnerable adults by ensuring that venues and equipment are safe and compliant with Synod Occupational Health and Safety policy;  
<http://wr.victas.uca.org.au/hr/occupational-health-and-safety/>
9. Communicating openly and honestly
10. Being open to outside influence, transparency and accountability
11. Setting clear boundaries of behaviour for interpersonal relationships
12. Educating staff, lay and ordained leaders, Members and adherents, and volunteers to be aware of what constitutes inappropriate behaviour
13. Educating employees, volunteers and vulnerable adults to raise any concerns they have about the safety of vulnerable adults
14. Vigilantly screening and selecting all employees and volunteers who work with vulnerable adults

## Media inquiries

All media inquiries as a consequence of situations of abuse or critical events that create media interest should be responded to only by a spokesperson designated by the Uniting Church Synod Communications and Media Services Unit please ring (03) 9251 5222.

## Where to find the full policy

Download the policy at:

<http://victas.uca.org.au/culture-of-safety>

Assistance to implement this policy

If you need assistance to implement this policy, please contact the Culture of Safety Unit on (03) 9340 8810.