



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

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Dear friends,

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS/REGISTRATION AFFECTING ALL UCA CONGREGATIONS

The Synod is committed to ensuring that children who participate in Uniting Church activities, programs and events within the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania are safe and led by adults who have obtained either a positive Working with Children Check (Victoria and New South Wales) or a Working with Children Registration (Tasmania) as required by relevant state government legislation. Therefore, at its meeting on 12 February 2016 the Synod Standing Committee resolved to approve the attached Working with Children Check/Registration Policy (WWCC/R) which supersedes any previous Synod Working with Children Check policy.

As there is some variation in the relevant state government legislation for Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales, this policy has been developed to cover all requirements and ensure that the Synod has one consistent policy. This may mean that the Church's WWCC/R policy goes beyond the basic minimum requirements as defined in some state legislation.

The most significant and notable difference to new the WWCC/R requirements is the broadening of who now requires a check to remain active in congregational leadership. This includes, but is not limited to, Lay Preachers, Elders, Church Councillors, worship leaders, anyone commissioned by the Church Council to perform a leadership role, music leaders, organists and Bible study leaders as well as all those involved in programs with children and young people. Church Councils are expected to **add** to this group any other persons involved in activities within their bounds where it is reasonably expected the person might have contact with children as they fulfil their role. Worship in the Uniting Church is open to all people. This means that all congregations will be required for their leaders involved in activities where children would be welcome to attend – worship particularly – to have a WWCC/R regardless of whether or not children regularly attend those activities.

Additionally, each state government Department of Justice has obligations for organisations. A number of these are legal obligations and others are requirements set out by the relevant Department.

Victoria:

www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/about+the+check/what+the+check+means+for+you/or+ganisations/organisations

Tasmania: http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/working_with_children/employers

New South Wales: <http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/working-with-children/working-with-children-check/child-related-employers>

One of the common requirements is for organisations to keep a record for each volunteer/worker. The Synod has established a secure, confidential WWCC/R database to assist with this requirement. This enables record keeping for both the Synod as the 'organisation' and each congregation, program or local event. Church Councils or event organisers, if they have not already, will need to appoint a Contact Person and register their congregation or event on the Synod WWCC/R database. Details of how to do appoint a Contact person are on pages 3-4 of the WWCC/R policy. The Database allows each Contact Person to only have access to information about the persons they register for their congregation or event.

It is also important to ensure that leaders who already have a WWCC/R have listed the Uniting Church as one of their organisations. If they have not done this, they must update their details online. In the past for Victoria and Tasmania, sighting a copy of a person's WWCC/R may have been accepted as adequate. This is not the case from now on. Each volunteer or worker is required to ensure the information registered with their Department of Justice is updated, including details of the organisations they are volunteering/working with. In Victoria this must be done within 21 days and in Tasmania in 10 days of commencing with a new organisation. It is therefore essential that each person list the Uniting Church as one of their organisations/volunteer bodies/employers with their state government's Department of Justice. This is done simply by updating or changing their details on the appropriate Working With Children webpage. Please ensure both the Synod and the congregation/program/event/employing body are registered as outlined on page 5 of the WWCC/R policy. Registrations on the Synod database should only be made on receipt of a letter from the Department of Justice advising that a WWCC/R has been passed or if the check has been verified online by the Contact Person for the congregation/event.

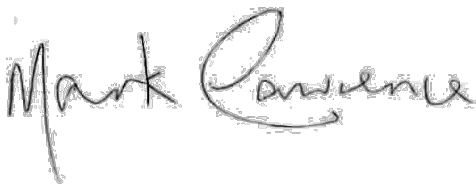
I urge all Church Councils to be familiar with this policy. Please read the WWCC/R policy carefully and ensure the Church Council puts in place a process to ensure that the policy requirements are met in your congregation.

The new laws in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania include penalties (fines and/or imprisonment) to the individual, congregation, program and/or Synod for failure to obtain a WWCC/R or failure to immediately report a WWCC/R being denied. These are significant and include up to two years imprisonment and monetary fines of up to \$182,000.

This WWCC/R policy is just one part of the processes and practices each congregation should have in place to assist in ensuring the safety of children in the Church's care. For more information please contact Josh Wollett or look at the Synod's Culture of Safety webpage: www.victas.uca.org.au/CultureofSafety

For further information and assistance, please email WWCC@victas.uca.org.au or contact Josh Wollett, Safe Church Educator, on 03 9340 8810.

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mark Lawrence', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev Dr Mark Lawrence
General Secretary