



# Guidance Notes for Church Councils and Presbytery Committees

C/2.1.10.3

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## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance by defining and outlining the specific obligations held by the members of church councils and presbytery committees of the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod (the Synod) in relation to [C/2.1 Safe Ministry with Children: Providing Safe Ministry Policy](#) (SMC Policy) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (the Act) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020 (the Regulation).

## New Reporting Laws

New laws start on **5 July 2021** which target behaviour that ignores or hides the sexual abuse of children pursuant to the *Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020*. These new laws mean:

- all adults must report sexual offending against children to the police unless they have a reasonable excuse
- adults in an institutional setting (e.g. a school, church or sporting club) must protect children from the risk of a sexual offence being committed against them.

This means that you **must** make a report to the police in all cases where:

- sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,
- you suspect that sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,

## Scope

This information applies to all persons, appointed as members of the church council or presbytery committee in congregations, and presbyteries of the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod. This information in this document follows on from the [Overseeing Safe Ministry procedure](#).

## Church Councils

### 1. All Church Councils must annually adopt the Safe Ministry with Children policy

- 1.1. All church councils are required to formally adopt (or reaffirm) the Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) Policy on an annual basis, and to record a statement of commitment in church council meeting minutes.
- 1.2. A template is available for congregations to use.
- 1.3. A copy of the template, or a copy of the minutes **must** be provided annually to the presbytery in response to the general secretary's annual audit survey request. Information and support can be obtained by the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer on 0491 491 227 or [safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au)

### 2. Church Council resolution to not conduct child-related activities

- 2.1. For those church councils which make a formal resolution to **not** conduct child-related activities, the resolution must be formally minuted. The members of the church council are **not** required to hold a



blue card or exemption card **for the period** that the formal resolution is in place. Please note that the formal resolution **cannot** be in place for longer than 12 months and **must** be renewed annually if applicable.

- 2.2. A template is available for congregations to use.
- 2.3. A copy of the template, or a copy of the minutes must be provided annually to the presbytery in response to the general secretary's annual audit survey request. Information and support can be obtained by the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer on 0491 491 227 or [safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au)

### 3. Blue cards and governance requirements

- 3.1. All church council members **must** hold blue cards because they are relevant decision makers, which includes making decisions about child-related programs or activities. This means that persons who are **ineligible** for a blue card or who do not hold a linked blue card are **unable** to be church council members, unless the church council has made a formal resolution to not conduct child-related activities.
- 3.2. All church council members **must** annually sign a Statement of Personal Commitment which outlines the required code of conduct for all lay staff and volunteers.

### 4. Training

- 4.1. All church council members **must** complete Module 1 – 6 of the SMC training, every 2 years, irrespective of whether the church council has made a formal resolution to not conduct child-related activities.
- 4.2. The church council chair **must also** complete Module 7 of the SMC training, every 2 years.

### 5. Reporting

- 5.1. All church council members are to follow the Mandatory Reporting Process for Lay Workers keeping a written record on the template for complaints and allegations. Note that under the new reporting laws, you **must** make a report to the police in all cases where:
  - 5.1.1. sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,
  - 5.1.2. you suspect that sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,

## Presbytery Committees

### 6 . All Presbytery Committees must annually adopt the Safe Ministry with Children policy

- 6.1. All presbytery committees are required to formally adopt (or reaffirm) the Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) Policy on an annual basis, and to record a statement of commitment in presbytery committee meeting minutes.
- 6.2. A template is available for presbyteries to use.
- 6.3. A copy of the template, or a copy of the minutes must be provided annually to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer, in response to the general secretary's annual audit survey request. Information and support can be obtained by the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer on 0491 491 227 or [safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au)



**7. Blue cards and governance requirements**

- 7.1. All presbytery committee members **must** hold blue cards because they are relevant decision makers, which includes making decisions about child-related programs or activities. This means that persons who are **ineligible** for a blue card or who do not hold a linked blue card are **unable** to be presbytery committee members.
- 7.2. All presbytery committee members **must** annually sign a Statement of Personal Commitment which outlines the required code of conduct for all lay staff and volunteers.

**8. Training**

- 8.1. All presbytery committee members **must** complete Module 1 – 6 of the SMC training, every 2 years.
- 8.2. The presbytery chair **must also** complete Module 7 of the SMC training, every 2 years.

**9. Reporting**

- 9.1. All presbytery committee members are to follow the Mandatory Reporting Process for Lay Workers keeping a written record on the template for complaints and allegations. Note that under the new reporting laws, you must make a report to the police in all cases where:
  - 9.1.1. sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,
  - 9.1.2. you suspect that sexual abuse or grooming has occurred,

**Related Documents**

Safe Ministry with Children: Providing Safe Ministry policy  
 Overseeing Safe Ministry: A guide for committees and councils  
 Statement of Personal Commitment  
 Complaint/ Statement Template  
 Mandatory Reporting process for Lay Workers and Volunteers

**Revisions**

Document number		C/2.1.10.3			
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
3.0	30.06.2021	Manager, Risk and Compliance	30.06.2021	ED Strategic Resources and Assurance	Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer
Next scheduled review		30.06.2026			