



Community Services Oversight Policy

POL-0004

Statement

Every member of the Uniting Church in Australia (**Church**) is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. The Church acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of his Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service. The Church provides for the exercise by men and women of the gifts God bestows upon them, and orders her life in response to his call to enter more fully into her mission.

This policy has been developed to assist congregations who are planning and delivering community services in their local communities. Specifically the policy sets out the Synod's oversight requirements in relation to community services conducted by congregations. This is to ensure the services meet consumer and community expectations including that quality requirements are met, risks are managed and accountabilities are met.

The Synod By-Laws assign roles and accountabilities to various entities in relation to community services conducted by congregations. Specifically the UnitingCare Queensland Board has responsibilities to assist with Church-run community services. Through this policy the respective roles and responsibilities of the Synod and UnitingCare Queensland in relation to the oversight of these community services are identified.

Scope

This policy applies to community services operated by congregations. It does not include any community services run by schools or Wesley Mission Brisbane.

Principles

1 Congregation response to community need

When it began in 1977, the Uniting Church stated that, "A Christian responsibility to society has always been regarded as fundamental to the mission of the church. In the Uniting Church our Christian response to the gospel will continue to involve us in social and national affairs." (Inaugural Statement to the Nation 1977) This is lived out in our response to community need, and aligns with, "The Church's call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself." (Basis of Union, Par 3)

In fulfilling the worship, witness and service of the Church in Queensland, a congregation may decide to conduct a community service. Over many years congregations have done so through many initiatives. These currently range from annual Christmas events, outreach activities such as visiting the elderly, thrift shops to help raise funds, through to more formal services such as retirement living, childcare centres or crisis care services. Some of these services have involved the establishment of separately incorporated entities. These community services represent considerable social capital in communities and form a very important layer of care, community and social support at a grassroots level. This is a recognised role of the Church as it lives out its witness and service in communities across Queensland.



2 Church laws

The Synod By-Laws set out the respective roles and accountabilities of various entities in relation to community services, and are detailed in **TOO-0006** (*Community Services related by-laws*).

3 Regulatory environment

Community services operate in an environment of increasing regulation and compliance requirements, coupled with higher consumer and community expectations. Therefore, the respective roles and responsibilities of various Church entities need to be well understood and documented. Ultimately the Synod needs to be assured, as far as reasonably practicable, that community services meet regulatory and compliance requirements, are of high quality and are sustainable from a financial, human resource and service delivery perspective.

4 Categories of community services

Two categories of community services have been identified (see Table 1) based on an assessment of the current range of community service activities undertaken by congregations. Eight types have been identified, again based on an assessment of current congregation-led initiatives. It is recognised that this is a dynamic area, with some congregations involved in planning for services (category 2A) and some conducting long-standing community services that are part of the social infrastructure in communities (e.g. Blair Athol).

As the descriptions of the two categories identifies, there are regulatory requirements in both events and activities, as well as the services identified in category 2. However a distinction has been made between ongoing professional services to vulnerable people that characterise category 2, from ongoing social or community development activities that fall into Events and Activities. As this policy proposes, only category 2 services will be the subject of ongoing monitoring by UnitingCare Queensland.

Category	Type
1 Events and Activities One off or regular, self-funded or modest funding, lower level regulatory requirements, community participation focus	1A Events/Activities
	1B Op Shops
	1C Men's Sheds
2 Services and Service Planning Ongoing, higher level regulatory requirements, service agreements, professional services, inherent risk, involving external funding (usually recurrent). Also includes services in development	2A Service planning
	2B Childcare services
	2C Supported accommodation & related programs
	2D Aged care and HACC
	2E Counselling/Support

Table 1 – Categories of Community Services

5 Recognition of Institutions in the Life of the Church

Under this policy, the Synod has determined that only category 2B-E community services may be recognised as Institutions under regulation 3.7.4.7. Effectively, this requires a high standard of accountability and governance. The service planning type (category 2A) may eventually result in an Institution being recognised. A complementary policy will be developed by the Synod



6 Community Services - Roles and Responsibilities

The Synod has established a framework which sets out the respective roles and responsibilities of various Church entities in relation to community services. As well as citing the formal responsibility as in relevant Synod By-Laws, it also sets out practically what congregations, presbyteries, Synod (Finance, Investment and Property Board) and UnitingCare Queensland Board should each do to support Church-run community services. This framework is in **TOO-0005** (*Community Services Roles and Responsibilities*).

7 Local communication between congregations and UnitingCare Queensland

Setting out the respective roles and responsibilities provides a helpful framework particularly for congregations and presbyteries. It can facilitate information sharing and networking between congregations, presbyteries and local UCQ services. There are already such interactions, reflected in ad-hoc requests, use of Church premises and respective services forming part of a local service system with cross referrals. In some regions, there are regular meetings between local UCQ personnel/services, presbyteries and congregations. Building these relationships encourages information sharing and potentially seeking assistance and advice, should the need arise.

8 Reporting Requirements

The Roles and Responsibilities also confirms the importance of information exchange and reporting between the various Church entities. Timely and comprehensive information from congregations and presbyteries to the Synod enables assessments to be made of community services conducted, or proposed to be conducted, by congregations. This would include information about compliance with legislative, regulatory and other external requirements, and insurance/indemnity matters. This information also enables the Synod to seek advice from UnitingCare Queensland. A general reporting framework will be developed by the Synod.

Note a 'Service Planning' type has been identified (category 2A). At the outset, the intent of any community service in development may be clear (as in a proposal to develop a childcare service); however in the case of redevelopment of a Church site, it may be more exploratory. Either way, this framework proposes that UCQ's advice is warranted at the developmental stage. Subsequently, if there is a business case or formal proposal, the framework sets out the various parties' responsibilities in terms of endorsement of the business case or proposal.

9 Specific Role of UnitingCare Queensland

UnitingCare Queensland has responsibility for service groups, service centres and service programs under its control. In addition, it plays a lead role on behalf of the Synod in relation to community services conducted by congregations.

Whilst the By-Laws referred to in **TOO-0006** set out the respective roles of various Church entities, in practice, application of the relevant By-Laws has been on an ad hoc basis, often reactive or in response to problems that have arisen. One of the aims of this policy is to clarify the role of UnitingCare Queensland in relation to community services conducted by congregations.

10 Annual Schedule and Reporting by UnitingCare Queensland to Synod

A risk-based approach to oversight is proposed whereby on an annual basis the Synod will develop a schedule listing the community services over which it requires UnitingCare Queensland to have oversight. This schedule (refer to **TOO-0007**) will set out the



requirements the Synod has in relation to this oversight and reporting. It is proposed that this schedule would be limited to Category 2 community services.

Community services operate in a dynamic environment and what is included in the schedule may vary year to year. In addition, within a 12 month period, ad hoc matters may be included by agreement. Over time additional types of community services in Category 2 may warrant consideration and inclusion in the schedule, and therefore oversight by UnitingCare Queensland.

Matters covered in an annual report to the Synod include issues relating to compliance with legislative/regulatory/contractual requirements; financial matters; quality and performance issues, governance, significant events and any other relevant commentary which is helpful for the Synod.

11 Triggers for Intervention

The circumstances and process for the Synod's, or UnitingCare Queensland's intervention in relation to a community service conducted by a congregation are outlined in **PRO-0002**(*UCQ Intervention Triggers*).

Dictionary

Term	Meaning
UCQ	UnitingCare Queensland

The other terms used in this policy have the same meaning as defined in this policy itself, the Regulations and Queensland Synod By-laws.

References & Related Documents

- Uniting Church in Australia Constitution
- Uniting Church in Australia Regulations
- Queensland Synod By-laws
- PRO-0002 UCQ Intervention Triggers
- TOO-0005 Community Services Roles and Responsibilities
- TOO-0006 Community Services related by-laws
- TOO-0007 UCQ Community Services Reporting Template

Revisions & Reviews

#	Date	Reason	Author / Reviewer	Endorsed	Approved
1.0	07.08.14	Created	Synod Director Finance & Property Services UCQ Director Strategy	Gen Sec UCQ CEO Presbyteries	SSC (#14.170)
DUE	xx.xx.xx	Review cycle – every x years			