



Media Issues

PRO-COM-05

Purpose

This process sets out communication and media management strategies for all issues involving or affecting the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod office.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- all lay staff, volunteers and contractors engaged in work and activities of the Uniting Church in Australia within the bounds of the Queensland Synod office
- all ministry agents and all members of the Uniting Church in Queensland.

Process

1. Staff encountering a media issue should immediately contact the Manager Communications and Marketing or the Communications Coordinator in the first instance. With respect to the general public or media seeking comment or feedback, no comment is to be made citing "I am not authorised to make comment" and the matter referred.
2. The Manger Communications and Marketing or the Communications Coordinator will gather accurate information from appropriate sources and complete an Issues Brief.
3. After fact gathering, the Issues Brief is forwarded to the Moderator and General Secretary for review and to decide on appropriate action (see Media Issues Policy Principle 3). The Moderator and/or the General Secretary will work with the Manager Communications and Marketing and the Communications Coordinator to identify an appropriate strategy.
4. Based on this advice, the Manager Communications and Marketing will work with the Communications Coordinator to develop a plan of action for approval by the Moderator and General Secretary. This plan should include some, or all, of the following.
 - a. Establishing a key decision-making group (eg the Executive Leadership Team) if it is determined that the magnitude of the issue merits the inclusion of this group.
 - b. Include advice from the Senior Legal Counsel if deemed necessary.
 - c. A fact sheet containing a summary statement of the situation including all known details to be released to the media This fact sheet should be analysed with respect to the public's right to know and concerns for privacy and security of any individuals and their families.
 - d. A communications strategy, including key messages for all stakeholders, and messages designed for all active electronic media channels. This strategy should also include the most appropriate means of conveying information to the media including a media release or a press conference if required.
 - e. A list of the key stakeholders to be kept informed of the appropriate details and actions taken by the Queensland Synod office (stakeholders may vary depending on the situation). Effective communications will help quell rumours, maintain morale, and ensure continued orderly operations of the organisation.
 - f. Among those that may be notified or considered for communication are:
 - i. the President and/or General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia
 - ii. staff, volunteers and contractors
 - iii. consumers and their families
 - iv. donors



- v. other synod offices
 - vi. presbytery ministers and chairs
 - vii. people in specified ministry and local congregations
 - viii. the police (if appropriate)
 - ix. general public
 - x. the media.
- g. The Manager Communications and Marketing /Communications Coordinator, in liaison with the Moderator/General Secretary and/or the Executive Management Team, will prepare an internal communications strategy. Information should be provided by email or in face-to-face meetings and should be handled by the Moderator/General Secretary or their delegate.
5. All media enquiries should be directed to the Manager Communications and Marketing or the Communications Coordinator who will determine the logistics of media communications including:
- a. when
 - b. where
 - c. how the media will be contacted
 - d. which media will be contacted
 - e. who will supervise any press conferences and
 - f. who will provide comment or appear.

Ongoing Processes

1. The Manager Communications and Marketing/Communications Coordinator is responsible for the following:
 - a. Preparing subsequent media scans with an emphasis on stories that are related to the issue. Copies of these clippings or reports should be forwarded as appropriate to the Moderator/General Secretary and/or the Executive Leadership Team.
 - b. Setting up electronic information files on the issue to reside in Communications and Marketing folders. Material related to the issue including clippings, statements, letters, memos, and any other documents should be forwarded to the Manager Communications and Marketing and filed in chronological order.
 - c. Monitoring the issue (generally a minimum of daily), taking notes and frequently updating the Moderator/General Secretary and/or the Executive Leadership Team. These notes should be reviewed and used to improve future issues management response.

Aftermath Component

1. Following any issue, appropriate action must take place to ensure key stakeholders, as identified in the action plan, receive needed information and assistance to help bring closure to the situation as well as relief from the effects of the event.
2. Immediately following the issue, it is imperative the Queensland Synod office is sensitive to the needs of staff, volunteers, contractors and congregation's members who may have been personally affected. There may be a need to offer debriefing at congregation level as well as informing staff of other available counselling or support services (eg [Employee Assistance Program](#)).
3. It is not unreasonable to expect that rumours may follow an issue, further creating an atmosphere of anxiety. Ensure the relevant staff are consulted to identify issues of continued concern and undertake communication with staff via staff meetings, email, and newsletters.
4. Depending on the nature of the situation, services and assistance may have been rendered by agencies, companies, and/or individuals from outside the organisation. Follow-up information as well as thank you letters are to be forwarded to the appropriate individuals or groups.



5. A debrief meeting of the key organising/response group shall be held within five days to review all actions taken as a result of the issue and to determine effectiveness and efficiency of operations and make any needed changes to future action plan and this process.

Dictionary

Term	Meaning
UCA Qld also called Queensland Synod office, we or us, or the Church	UCA Qld means the functions and activities of the Uniting Church in Australia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within and in relation to the bounds of the Queensland Synod office; and • outside the bounds of the Queensland Synod office (where managed by parts of the organisation located within the bounds of the Queensland Synod office), under the Uniting Church in Australia Act 1977 (Qld).
Media	Refers specifically to external sources, be they radio, television, newspaper or internet-based
Lay Staff	All employees of the Queensland Synod office
Members	Means Uniting Church adherents, confirmed members, baptised members, elders, members-in-association, ministry agents and individuals who are members of any Uniting Church in Queensland church council, commission, committee or board.
Ministry Agents	Includes Church candidates, community ministers, deacons, deaconesses, interns, lay pastors, ministers of the word, pastors, youth workers and ministers from other denominations serving in approved placements
Volunteers & contractors	people who are not employed directly by the Queensland Synod office, but are working for it in either a paid or unpaid capacity
Issues	Issues liable to public comment include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. police investigations ii. protests iii. problems arising from agency or business unit activities iv. emergencies that threaten the physical wellbeing of staff, or congregation members; or other situations that generate public interest and demand a public response v. legal proceedings

References & Related Documents

- [POL-COM-05 Media Issues Policy](#)
- [POL-COM-06 Media Relations Policy](#)
- [PRO-COM-06 Media Relations Process](#)
- [POL-0001 Privacy Policy](#)

Revisions & Reviews

#	Date	Reason	Author / Reviewer	Approved
1.0	30.08.17	New process	R. O'Rourke (consultant)	
2.0	12.02.18	Edit new process	Phillip Hay, Manager Communications and Marketing	
DUE	01.09.20	Review cycle – every 3 years	Phillip Hay, Manager Communications and Marketing	