



# Obligations for Ministry Agents

C/2.1.5

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline specific obligations held by ministry agents 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 2011 (the Regulation). This document provides guidance in four sections as follows:

1. General obligations relating to all ministry agents (including specific instruction for ministry agents working in other settings)
2. Specific obligations for lay preachers and retired ministers who are not available for supply, and who are not working above the **threshold**: not conducting ministry functions for more than a cumulative total of seven days in a calendar year. For example, a retired minister who is not available for supply and does not perform the following ministerial functions on more than seven days in a calendar year:
  - a) Preach and/or lead worship in their own congregation; or
  - b) Preach and/or lead worship in any other worship services (including weddings and funerals);  
or
  - c) Preside at the sacraments; or
  - d) Perform any systematic pastoral care
3. Specific obligations for ministry agents not remunerated by stipend (paid a wage or volunteer)
4. Specific obligations for ministry agents remunerated by stipend (in/or available for placement or supply).

## Scope

This procedure applies to ministry agents in the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod. The definitions are outlined in each section.

## Procedure

### 1. All ministry agents

#### 1.1. Obligations

- 1.1.1. All ministry agents are required by law to comply with the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (the Act) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011 (the Regulation).
- 1.1.2. Irrespective of whether you are paid or voluntary, under the Regulation you are classified as an employee. It has been determined that the roles of lay preacher and ministry agent require a blue card, as under the Act these roles are considered a 'religious representative'.

#### 1.2. Blue cards

- 1.2.1. All ministry agents are required to hold a current, valid, appropriate blue card. The General Secretary reserves the right to stand aside any ministry agent, with or without payment, if the ministry agent is not in possession of a current positive notice.

#### 1.3. Training

- 1.3.1. All ministry agents must complete Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) training for ministry agents annually, and any other training as appropriate to your engagement with the church and activity with children.



#### 1.4. Reporting abuse

- 1.4.1. It is a mandatory requirement that all ministry agents report suspicions or knowledge of abuse.
- 1.4.2. Ministry agents must follow the mandatory reporting process for ministry agents. All ministry agents must complete [C/2.1.5.4 Complaints and Allegations Statement Template](#) and must provide a copy of this completed Complaints and Allegations Statement to the Associate General Secretary and the Presbytery Minister.
- 1.4.3. For suspicions or knowledge of abuse involving the Presbytery Minister, then a copy of this completed Complaints and Allegations Statement to the Associate General Secretary and advice should be obtained from the Associate General Secretary in relation to the matter.

## 2. Ministry agents working in ‘the setting’

‘The setting’ is defined as an institution or organisation which has their own reporting obligations separate to the Synod (for example, a ministry agent employed by Education Queensland as a Chaplain).

#### 2.1. Obligations

- 2.1.1. All ministry agents continue to have the same obligations as in 1.1; however, must comply with any additional obligations required within the setting.

#### 2.2. Blue cards

- 2.2.1. All ministry agents are required to hold a current, valid, appropriate blue card. The General Secretary reserves the right to stand aside any ministry agent, with or without payment, if the ministry agent is not in possession of a current positive notice.
- 2.2.2. Ministry agents must comply with any blue card requirements specific to the setting and may also be subject to penalties within the setting, for failure to comply with blue card requirements.

#### 2.3. Reporting

- 2.3.1. Where a ministry agent is engaged in a setting with its own reporting obligations, the safety of the child must be the priority in all decisions to report abuse or suspicion. In addition to the requirements of this procedure, ministry agents must be aware of, and be trained in, the contemporary reporting obligations of the setting and are required to comply with the reporting obligations of the setting. For example, a ministry agent employed by Education Queensland as a Chaplain, must follow the Education Queensland guidelines for reporting as the school/Education Queensland is the setting.
- 2.3.2. Where the ministry agent is satisfied that reporting has occurred in compliance with the obligations of the setting and that no child remains at risk of abuse or harm, reporting obligations under this procedure are deemed to have been met.
- 2.3.3. The ministry agent must keep written records of all instances where they have complied with the reporting obligations of the setting.

#### 2.4. Training

- 2.4.1. All ministry agents must complete Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) training for ministry agents annually, as well as any other training required by the setting.

## 3. Lay preachers

#### 3.1. Obligations

- 3.1.1. Irrespective of whether you are paid or voluntary, under the Regulation you are classified as an employee. It has been determined that the role of lay preacher requires a blue card, as under the Act you are considered a ‘religious representative’.



### 3.2. Blue cards

- 3.2.1. You must hold a paid or volunteer blue card i.e. apply using the blue card application. On the application form, you should list the details of your Presbytery Chairperson in the 'organisation's contact person' section.
- 3.2.2. You are required to complete additional blue card linking forms if you work in more than one part of the church. For example, if you work for an agency in addition to your local congregation, complete the 'Link an applicant/card holder to this organisation' form, listing the details of the person nominated by the agency in the 'Organisation's contact person' section.

### 3.3. Training

- 3.3.1. Complete Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) training for lay workers every two years and any other training as appropriate to your engagement with the church and activity with children.

### 3.4. Reporting abuse

- 3.4.1. Follow the mandatory reporting process for lay workers, keeping a written record on the statement template.

## 4. Retired ministers

Retired ministers who are not available for supply and who are not working above the threshold: not conducting ministry functions for more than a cumulative total of seven days in a calendar year.

### 4.1. Obligations

- 4.1.1. Where the ministry agent holds any leadership position within the Uniting Church, they are required to meet the blue card and other obligations outlined for that position.

### 4.2. Blue cards

- 4.2.1. Unless you are providing voluntary services, which include activities with children, you are not required to hold a blue card. If you are providing volunteer services which include activities with children, you should follow the instruction for lay preachers outlined in 3.2.
- 4.2.2. Please note that preaching and/or leading worship is considered to be an activity that includes children, as these activities form part of the role undertaken by lay preachers and meets the definition of 'religious representative'.

### 4.3. Training

- 4.3.1. Carers, parents or guardians of children and vulnerable adults should be able to expect the same degree of understanding of safe ministry care at all Uniting Churches in Queensland.
- 4.3.2. All retired ministers should still meet the requirement to complete Module 1 of the SMC Lay Worker training, and complete SMC training every two (2) years.
- 4.3.3. If you are providing volunteer services which include activities with children, you should follow the instruction for lay preachers outlined in 3.3.
- 4.3.4. If you become active above the threshold, you should follow the instruction for lay preachers outlined in 3.
- 4.3.5. Please note that preaching and/or leading worship is considered to be an activity that includes children, as these activities form part of the role undertaken by lay preachers and meets the definition of 'religious representative', and therefore additional SMC training modules will be required to be completed bi-annually'.

### 4.4. Reporting abuse

- 4.4.1. Follow the mandatory reporting process for lay workers, keeping a written record on the statement template.



## 5. Ministry agents appointed as volunteers or employees

This section refers to ministry agents who are not in a placement but are engaged as an employee (and paid a wage) or ministry agents who are engaged on a volunteer basis.

### 5.1. Obligations

- 5.1.1. Irrespective of whether you are paid or voluntary, under the Regulation you are classified as an employee. The role of ministry agent requires a blue card as a 'religious representative' under the Act.

### 5.2. Blue cards

- 5.2.1. You must hold a paid or volunteer blue card i.e. apply using the blue card application. On the application form, you should list the details of your Presbytery Chairperson in the 'Organisation's contact person' section.
- 5.2.2. You are required to complete additional blue card linking forms if you work in more than one part of the church. For example, if you work for an agency in addition to your local congregation, complete the 'Link an applicant/card holder to this organisation' form, listing the details of the person nominated by the agency in the 'Organisation's contact person' section.
- 5.2.3. The General Secretary reserves the right to stand aside any ministry agent, with or without payment, if the ministry agent is not in possession of a current positive notice.

### 5.3. Training

- 5.3.1. Complete SMC training for ministry agents annually and other training as appropriate to your engagement with the church and the organisation/setting where you are employed.

### 5.4. Reporting abuse

- 5.4.1. It is a mandatory requirement that all ministry agents report suspicions or knowledge of abuse. Follow the mandatory reporting process for ministry agents and the [C/2.1.5.4 Complaints and Allegations Statement Template](#).

## 6. Ministry agents engaged in a covenantal relationship

Ministry agents remunerated or eligible to be remunerated by stipend, and includes retired ministers who are available for supply and ministry agents awaiting placement

### 6.1. Obligations

- 6.1.1. Due to your covenantal relationship with the Church you are determined under the Regulation as conducting your own regulated business as a religious representative.

### 6.2. Blue cards

- 6.2.1. You must hold a business blue card i.e. apply using the BCB application. On the application form, you should list the details of the General Secretary in the 'Organisation's contact person' section. The General Secretary reserves the right to stand aside any ministry agent, with or without payment, if the ministry agent is not in possession of a current positive notice.
- 6.2.2. You are requested to complete a 'Consent to discuss information' form (formerly known as the 'Authority to liaise with an authorised person' form) allowing Blue Card Services to liaise with the General Secretary on matters relating to suspension or cancellation of your blue card.



- 6.2.3. You must complete additional blue card linking forms if you work in more than one part of the church. For example, if you work for an agency in addition to your local congregation, complete the 'Link an applicant/card holder to this organisation' form, listing the details of the person nominated by the agency in the 'Organisation's contact person' section.

### 6.3. Penalties

- 6.3.1. Under the Act, a person must not carry on a regulated business i.e. fill a placement or supply, without a current positive notice (blue card).

### 6.4. Training

- 6.4.1. Complete SMC training for ministry agents annually and other training as appropriate to your engagement with the church and the organisation/setting where you are in placement.

### 6.5. Reporting abuse

- 6.5.1. It is a mandatory requirement that all ministry agents report suspicions or knowledge of abuse. Follow the mandatory reporting process for ministry agents and the [C/2.1.5.4 Complaints and Allegations Statement Template](#).

### 6.6. Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy

The Act requires ministry agents engaged in a covenantal relationship (remunerated or eligible to be remunerated by stipend) to have a Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy. Under the Act, this group is conducting a regulated business as a religious representative.

SMC policy and processes complies with the elements outlined above and may be adopted as your Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy. If you choose to adopt SMC policy and processes, you should be aware of updates to the policy and reconsider your commitment annually. You can use [C/2.1.5.1 Ministry Agents' Statement of Commitment to Safe Ministry template](#) or amend the sample Statement of Commitment below:

*"I am committed to providing safe places where people are cared for, nurtured and sustained and commit myself to the care, protection and safety of all people, particularly those who are vulnerable. I denounce and oppose child abuse and neglect, particularly sexual abuse and exploitation. I commit to maintaining the professional boundaries set out in the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice. I commit to act protectively for children who may be at imminent risk of abuse or neglect and intervening for the protection of children as is my responsibility under the Queensland Synod Mandatory Reporting Process for Ministry Agents.*

*I commit to ongoing compliance with requirements of the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011, and adopt the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod Safe Ministry with Children Policy. I will utilise Safe Ministry with Children procedures and tools to assist me to meet and demonstrate my responsibilities under the Act."*

Your Statement of Commitment/Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy should be reviewed and signed annually (on the anniversary of first signing), be displayed and made available to others upon request. A copy should be provided to your presbytery and church council for their records.

### 6.7. You have the option to write your own child and youth risk management strategy

Should you choose not to adopt SMC policy and processes you are required to ensure that your Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy meets the criteria outlined below and is annually reviewed.

### 6.8. A statement of commitment

- 6.8.1. This is a statement about your commitment to the safety and well-being of children and the protection of children from harm.



### **6.9. A code of conduct**

6.9.1. A code of conduct for interacting with children is required to be developed and implemented.

### **6.10. Policies and procedures must be developed and documented:**

- 6.10.1. For recruiting, selecting, training and managing persons engaged, or proposed to be engaged, as the procedures relate to the safety and well-being of children and the protection of children from harm.
- 6.10.2. For handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines.
- 6.10.3. A plan for managing breaches of the risk management strategy.
- 6.10.4. For compliance with chapter 8 of the Act, including implementing and reviewing the risk management strategy, and keeping a written record of matters about each person (engaged person).

### **6.11. A risk management plan**

6.11.1. Risk management plans must be completed for high-risk activities and special events.

### **6.12. Strategies for communication and support**

- 6.12.1. Written information for parents and guardians or carers must be developed and made available. This information must include detail of the child and youth risk management strategy or where the strategy can be accessed
- 6.12.2. Training materials must be developed and made available. Training materials must include information for all persons engaged in child-related activities to help identify risks of harm, as well as providing information about how to handle disclosures or suspicions of harm and outline the risk management strategy.



## Revisions

Document number		C/2.1.5_v2			
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
2.0	02.01.2020	ED Strategic Resources, Associate General Secretary	30.01.2020	ED Risk and Assurance	Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer
Next scheduled review		30.01.2025			