



Person of Concern Policy

C/2.4

Purpose

This document is the Queensland Synod's response to the requirement by the Uniting Church in Australia ("Uniting Church"), for each Synod to implement a Person of Concern (POC) policy which aligns with both state legislation, and the Uniting Church policies and frameworks. The primary purpose of this document is to continue to ensure that the church is a safe place, at all times, for all people. Whilst the Uniting Church affirms the unconditional saving grace of God in Christ Jesus, the Person of Concern (POC) Policy recognises that forgiveness is not unconditional. God's forgiveness comes with the need for repentance and the need to not forget past destructive behaviour. This document supports the Uniting Church's vision, mission and ministry with children and vulnerable adults, within the Queensland Synod. Compliance is achieved through adherence to the Principles.

Scope

This policy applies in the event a congregation and/or ministry agent becomes aware a POC is identified and interacting in church activities within the bounds of the Synod of Queensland as part of the Uniting Church congregations and faith communities. This policy does not apply to agencies, regulated business, colleges and schools of the church.

Legislation

The *Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020*, the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld)* and the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020 (Qld)* define the suitability requirements for persons wishing to volunteer or work with children.

This policy document aligns with the Uniting Church in Australia National Person of Concern Policy Framework and stands alongside the Uniting Church in Australia National Child Safe Policy Framework. These frameworks along with this policy document also align with all ten of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and with the Safe Ministry with Children: Providing Safe Ministry Policy.

The Principles

The following principles apply when a POC has been identified within a congregation or faith community:

1. The Church has a primary responsibility to care for children and those who are vulnerable in the Church; and will seek to ensure they are safe and protected from harm. This responsibility includes reporting all incidents of sexual abuse, suspected sexual abuse, or grooming to the police.
2. The POC must be advised that they are not permitted to attend any events, activities or programs connected to the church community nor are they allowed to be present on any church property in their local community unless a Safety Agreement is in place. A POC can only participate in the life of the church community in accordance with the terms of a Safety Agreement that is established between the church and the POC and consented to by the General Secretary or their appointee/ delegate.



3. A Safety Agreement may only be entered into where the responsible church council believes that through a Safety Agreement the church is able to reasonably manage the risk the POC's participation in the church's activities. A POC may be refused the offer of a Safety Agreement if the Church considers they pose an unacceptable risk to the safety of the Church community.
4. The POC, the Congregation representative, the Presbytery Minister (or their delegate) and the General Secretary (or their delegate) must agree that the POC will not act in any leadership positions, be employed by the Church, or partake in any activities requiring a Blue Card (including volunteering with children or being engaged as a consultant or contractor to work with children).

Related documents

Safe Ministry with Children: Providing Safe Ministry Policy
Privacy Policy

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Participate in the life of a congregation or faith community of the Uniting Church in Australia	means attending Church services or other activities. A consultant or a contractor are not participating in the life of a congregation or faith community unless they are also attending these activities.
Person of Concern (POC)	<p>means any person who wishes to participate in the life of a congregation or faith community of the Uniting Church in Australia and who has engaged in criminal sexual behaviour and /or is reasonably suspected of engaging in harmful sexual behaviour toward a child and/ or adult that has led to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • criminal charges relating to sexual offences against children and/or adults • conviction for sexual offences relating to children and/or adults • placement on the Register of Sexual Offenders • suspension of a Working with Children card • negative notice for Working with Children card • refusal of a positive Working with Children card • not having a negative notice or a suspension revoked • recording on the National Coordinated Criminal History Check • concerns in the congregation, faith community, Presbytery or Synod that the safety of others is at risk
Leadership position	<p>(includes but is not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing for or accepting nomination for any leadership position in the congregation, Presbytery or Synod including membership of Church Council, Presbytery Standing Committee, or Synod Standing Committee, any committees or task groups of the Congregation, Presbytery or Synod • Membership of any Congregation/faith community task



Persons of Concern

Term	Meaning
	<p>groups/portfolio working groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leading worship in any capacity including but not limited to saying grace, prayers, singing as an individual or member of a band/group/choir, bible reading, lighting candles, offering votes of thanks, carrying Communion elements or the Bible into the Church, serving Communion elements, addressing the congregation in any way, standing in the sanctuary space• Leader or helper role of any children or youth activities including but not limited to creche, Sunday School, Kids Group, youth group, days camps, fun days• Greater, welcomer, pastoral care visitor• Key access to any Church property, afterhours access to any Church property, access to any Church computer equipment or technology• Leading bible studies, home/life/fellowship groups, organizing or hosting any Church events, activities or programs, involvement in religious education programs• Any other activity which a reasonable person might identify as acting in a leadership role/position with the Uniting Church

Revisions

Document number		C/2.4			
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
3.0	01.12.2022	Synod Standing Committee	01.12.2022	General Legal Counsel	Complaints and Compliance Officer
Next scheduled review		01.12.2024			