



ADF Chaplain Policy - Placements Committee

K5.1

Purpose

As the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod, we are committed to valuing Uniting Church Ministers of the Word and Ministers of Deacon who apply for, and/or are appointed to serve as chaplains in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), and to support those ministry agents, part-time and full time, as they transition through postings, deployments and discharge. Part-time Chaplains, who form part of the Reserves, face particular challenges as they seek to fulfil their obligations as ADF members and as Ministry agents in placement and when changing placements.

This policy seeks to:

- clarify and make explicit the ways in which the Queensland Synod gives expression to the protections defined in the Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act 2001¹
- clarify the situation where ADF Chaplains are in a covenant relationship with the Church and are also employees of the Defence Force.

Scope

To define the engagement with Uniting Church Defence Force Chaplains - Valuing, Affirming, Supporting and Protecting Uniting Church ministers who are applying for, serving as and in transition as ADF Chaplains.

This policy applies to all Uniting Church Defence Chaplains, full time and reserve, and those leaders in the Uniting Church in Australia who by virtue of their role are engaged with the placements (ACOMP), Joint Nominating Committees, Presbytery Ministers, Chaplaincy oversight and the Uniting Church member of the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services (see Annex 2).

Policy

The Queensland Synod is committed to the following:

1. Affirms that Chaplaincy in the Australian Defence Force, full time and part-time, is a suitable context for living out the call of God as a Minister of the Word or Minister of Deacon.
2. Affirms and values the ministry of Chaplains who are appointed to part-time and full-time roles in the Australian Defence Force.
3. Recognises that all ADF Chaplains maintain their obligations for compliance with requirements for UCA Ministry agents around Professional Pastoral Supervision, Continuing Education for Ministry, training and awareness for Code of Ethics for Ministry Practice plus Safe Church training, in addition to mandatory training for ADF members around Youth Safety.
4. Recognises that while Ministry Agents are not deemed to be Employees, but rather are people who are in a “covenant relationship with the Church”, serving ADF Chaplains have responsibilities and obligations by virtue of their employment and commission as members of the ADF. Chaplains are required to comply with the Code of Ethics of the Institutions and organisations they serve.



5. When filling a vacancy, Reserve Service is to be included in matters for consideration.
6. Ensure that people involved in Placements (ACOMP) and Joint Nominating Committees are educated around the matters raised in this policy and the Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act 2001 (Cwth). *“The Act makes it an offence for an employer to discriminate against, disadvantage, hinder, prevent or dismiss an employee or prospective employee for rendering Defence service (including training) The Act sets out entitlements and prohibitions that apply in relation to people who are rendering, or have rendered, defence service as members of the Reserves.”*
7. Promoting awareness of the Defence Reserve Support Scheme⁴ which offers some financial support to the “employer” where “employees” are on duty for extended periods on deployment, training or exercises.
8. Value that during times of national or state emergencies, in their various roles, ADF Chaplains bring significant value to the communities that we serve as ‘church’ and that our Ministers who also serve as ADF Chaplains are an extension of the work and mission of the UCA.
9. Acknowledge that the professional development and training that Chaplains in the ADF receive⁵ is a benefit for them personally and can be recognised as Continuing Education for Ministry; plus it benefits the wider Church as Reservists gain skills and qualifications and experience to invest in the role in which they are placed.
10. Further, that study leave (CEM) may be utilised for reservist education.
11. Agree that up to 14 days (2 regular working weeks) per year are available for reservist duties leave.
12. Flexible working hours, to meet Reservist commitments, are to be negotiated with the Presbytery Minister and Chair of Church Council/ Director of Chaplaincy/ Director of Mission of the appointing body.
13. Ensure that stipend continues to be paid during any deployment/call up. For deployment/call up, the Agency/congregation/ appointing body receives the Employment Support Payment Scheme.



Related Documents and Policies

1. Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act 2001 (Cwth)

https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/num_act/drsta2001340/index.html

The Act makes it an offence for an employer to discriminate against, disadvantage, hinder, prevent or dismiss an employee or prospective employee for rendering Defence service (including training) The Act sets out entitlements and prohibitions that apply in relation to people who are rendering, or have rendered, defence service as members of the Reserves.

2. Changes to Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act 2001

<https://dra.org.au/371/images/DRSORSPChangesprotectionActfactsheet.pdf>

3. Fair Work 2009 Defence Reservists rights and responsibilities at Work

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources/fact-sheets/rights-and-obligations/defence-reservists-rights-and-responsibilities-at-work>

4. Defence Reserve Support Scheme <https://www.reserveemployersupport.gov.au/employers-of-reservists/employer-support-payment-scheme/>

5. Initial training for Chaplains includes elements such as Mental Health First Aid, Suicide Asist, and gain the qualification of a Diploma in Institutional and Operational Chaplaincy. Each Chaplain now undertakes awareness training in Moral Injury and the Pastoral Narrative Disclosure tool for responding to people who have been impacted by their service in the military. The collaboration with Chaplains of other faith groups and other sectors of the Australian community enhances the impact of ministers of the Uniting Church in the ADF and beyond.

Definitions/Glossary

Employer	In this document refers to the ADF organisation
Ministers in a Covenant Relationship	Ministers of the Word and Ministers of Deacon are deemed to be in a covenant relationship with the Church not an employment relationship. However, that does not absolve the Uniting Church in Australia from the obligations under the Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act 2001.
Employee	In this document refers to Full-time or Part-time ADF Chaplains
Reservist	The Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act 2001 refers to “Reservist” as “people who are rendering, or have rendered, defence services as members of the Reserves”. The Defence Act 1903 provides definitions of Naval Reserve, Army Reserve and Air Force Reserve which in summary is “officers appointed to, and people enlisted in, the Reserve, and members of the Defence Force transferred to the Reserve”.
Specified Ministry of the Church	In this document in particular refers to the ordained ministries of Minister of the Word (MOW) and Deacon (MOD)



Additional Material

Annex 1 Inclusions for Placement Conditions

Example of a Reservist Agreement:

Acknowledge Australia's Defence Reserves are an essential component of the Navy, Army and Air Force. Our Reservists make a vital contribution to the defence and security of Australia, and to Australia's contribution to the global community as a good world citizen.

Study leave (CEM) may be utilised for reservist education.

Up to 14 days (2 regular working weeks) per year are available for reservist duties leave.

Stipend continues to be paid during any deployment/call up. For deployment/call up, the Agency/congregation/ appointing body receives the Employment Support Payment Scheme.

Flexible working hours, to meet Reservist commitments, can be negotiated with the Presbytery Minister and Chair of Church Council/ Director of Chaplaincy/ Director of Mission of the appointing body.

Annex 2 Religious Advisory Committee to the Services (RACS)

Religious Advisory Committee to the Services (RACS) advises the Chief of the Defence Force and the Service Chiefs (Army, Navy, Air Force) on religious matters, religious policy advice, and the provision of religious, pastoral and spiritual support for members of the Australian Defence Force, their families and the communities in which they serve. RACS members are responsible for the endorsement of chaplains from their faith group. Chaplains are charged with the responsibility of providing pastoral care, religious and spiritual support and to care for and facilitate support for people who have no stated religion where appropriate. RACS operates under a Memorandum of Arrangements (5 December 2018) signed by the Chief of the Defence Force and 10 members appointed by peak bodies for various faith groups and religious organisations in Australia.

Revisions & Reviews

#	Date	Reason	Author / Reviewer	Approved
1	27/06/25	new	L Hanson AGS	RNC