



Uniting Church in Australia

Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

3. Keeping Children Safe: Recruitment, Selection and Screening

Eltham Montmorency Uniting Church

We are committed to having child safe recruitment, selection and screening practices. These practices aim to assist with recruiting the most suitable people to work in our programs. Child safe recruitment practices are outlined below.

Advertising

In recruitment of employees, volunteers and placement of people in specified ministries¹, our child safe message will be promoted in the advertisement or profile. For example: *We are committed to providing an environment which maximises the safety and well-being of children and young people. All successful applicants are required to sign and work within our Code of Conduct and undergo the relevant pre-employment checks.*

One aim is to promote the self-selection of applicants. A copy of our *Statement of Commitment* and our *Code of Conduct* will be included in the information package sent to potential staff and volunteers or people in specified ministries.

Where appropriate, job descriptions are required for positions (staff, volunteers, consultants, lay leaders, and people in specified ministries) which describe key selection criteria and outline tasks and accountabilities. Position descriptions are another opportunity to reinforce our commitment. They may include statements such as:

We are a child safe organisation. All who work or volunteer here are required to:

- *Undertake to observe our Keeping Children Safe Policies and procedures.*
- *Undertake to cooperate with strategies to actively ensure the safety, protection and well-being of children who come into association with us.*

The following resources have been specifically developed for congregations by the Synod and are available at: <https://www.victas.uca.org.au/UCA%20Resources/PeopleAndCulture/Pages/Congregational-Resources.aspx>

¹ The UCA Regulations (2.2) define specified ministries as including Ministers (of the Word and Deacons); Pastors; Lay Pastors; Lay Preachers; Youth Workers and Community Ministers. The ministries of Lay Pastor, Youth Worker and Community Ministers were closed for entry by Assembly on 31 December 2007. Anyone still operating in one those now closed ministries is covered by this policy.

Selection

This applies to discernment processes in making a placement decision, employment processes for staff and selection processes for volunteer roles. Applications and resumes should be carefully reviewed in advance. Any inconsistencies, patterns or gaps in dates should be explored in detail in the interview/conversation. Interviews/conversations should be conducted for all positions working with children. Face-to-face discussions allow the panel/Joint Nominating Committee to review the person's ability to relate to others, and assess body language during the interaction.

A mixed gender panel provides a good balance of views. Consideration will be given to include a young person on the panel when recruiting for a youth service. Behavioural-based questions will be used to ask for examples of the applicant's past behaviour and experiences. Past behaviour is the best predictor of future actions. When talking with applicants working directly with children or young people, the panel will explore the applicant's motivations for wanting to work with children and young people, their values, attitudes and understanding of professional boundaries and accountability. Some example questions are:

- Tell me about a time you had to work with a child who was difficult to relate to?
- Give an example of a situation where you had to speak up about an issue or action of a colleague. What was the outcome?
- Please describe the essential ingredients in the relationship between adults and young people/children in the context of our environment?
- What do you think of our *Statement of Commitment* or our *Code of Conduct*?
- Please describe your experiences of being managed?
- What are your strengths?
- What areas do you feel could be improved?

In Victoria, interviews/conversations will also be used to ensure that applicants to the position know about the three new Victorian criminal offences to protect children on:

- Grooming – the use of techniques by abusers to develop a relationship over time, calculated to lead to the abuse of a child
- Failure by persons in authority to **protect** children from sexual abuse
- Failing to **report** to police sexual offences committed against children under 16 years of age.

The criminal offences are described in plain English in Facts Sheets available at:

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/betrayal+of+trust+implementation>

Reference Checks

A minimum of two reference checks are to be completed for certain paid and voluntary applicants. The applicant's more recent supervisor/employer where relevant should generally be included. The identity of the referee will be verified and they will be contacted. Written references can be accepted but will be followed up with the referee.

When carrying out a reference check the following should be covered:

- Establish the nature of the relationship between the applicant and the referee.
- Clarify dates and the role the candidate performed in their previous job/role.

- Ask the referee questions that are relevant to working with children and young people. Some example questions are:
 - How does the person respond to supervision/oversight?
 - Would they engage him/her again?
 - Did they have any reason to be concerned about the person's behaviour with children?
 - Would you feel comfortable allowing the person to be alone with your child?

Employee/volunteer checks

The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (the Synod) has responsibility for a broad range of high trust activities and therefore requires a satisfactory National Criminal History Check (NCHC) or Police Record Check (PRC) for all staff members prior to commencement of employment and as requested from time to time. It is a requirement for checks to be renewed every three years.

Under the Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) any staff member, volunteer, person in specified ministries or appointed leader involved in child related work must hold a valid and current Working with Children Check (WWCC). The WWCC helps to protect children from sexual or physical harm by checking a person's criminal history for serious sexual, violence or drug offences and findings from professional disciplinary bodies.

An appointed leader is defined in Section 3 of the Victorian Act. The appointed leader of a local religious congregation in an organised religious institution is defined as one who has general authority over the operations of that congregation within the institution.

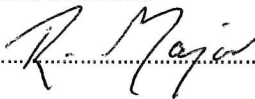
Tasmania has recently introduced the *Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 (Tasmania)*. This legislates for Working with Children Registration. It is being brought into operation in a staged way. Those working or volunteering in Religious Services have been required to have registrations in place by 1 April 2015.

It should be noted that screening is an ongoing process and should continue throughout the orientation process, probationary period, employment, appraisals and supervision/oversight.

Eltham Montmorency Uniting Church

Adopted/approved by: *Church Council*

Signature.....



Name Rex Major

Position Secretary

Date 14th February 2017