

Safe Church Short Story

Background

Synod members may know about the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Uniting Church Assembly has set up a National Task Group to respond to recommendations from the Royal Commission, especially about ways to make sure that places like churches are safe and that children are not abused.

There is also a Northern Synod Task Group, with Thresi Mauboy Wohangara, Steve Orme, Bruce Slater, Helen Paine (Safe Church Coordinator), Robyn Kidd and Peter Jones (Convenor), who work with the Assembly National Task Group. The main thing our Synod's Task Group has done is to develop a set of policies and procedures to make sure that all people are safe at church or when involved in church activities.

It should also be noted that should there be a complaint about child sexual abuse, our Synod will contact and use the policies and procedures from the Uniting Church Queensland Synod to hear the story and work with the people affected.

What is being done?

The Northern Synod Task Group, led by Helen Paine, is working on policies, procedures, checklists, guidelines and other information covering:

- Prevention of abuse;
- Sexual abuse and sexual misconduct complaints;
- Bully and harassment;
- Codes of conduct;
- Criminal history and working with children checks;
- Disclosure;
- Dispute and grievance resolution procedures;
- First aid and medical attention;
- Food preparation and storage;
- Privacy;
- Ministry activity risk assessment;
- Building safety and property checklists;
- Building risk assessment;
- Volunteers checks and procedures;
- Incident reports;
- Staff recruitment, selection, appraisal and remuneration;
- Workplace ethos and values.

Safe Church Manual

The completed ***Safe Church Manual*** will not be available until later this year. However Helen Paine, our Safe Church Coordinator, has been conducting training workshops on some of the above policies and procedures as they have been completed. It is intended that all congregations across our Synod will have undertaken a safety audit and be well on the road to being places of safety for all during 2016, with further training workshops to be conducted in 2017.

What are we asking Synod 2016 to do?

To get the ***Safe Church Manual*** ready for printing, to hold further training workshops and to have the manual available on the Synod website, Synod is asked to note the following policies:

- Code of Conduct for the Prevention of Abuse;
- Privacy;
- Persons of Concern;
- Safe Leaders Policy Agreement;
- Harassment, Bullying and Sexual Harassment Policies and Procedures;
- Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Complaints;

and that the Synod Standing Committee be asked to do more work.

Proposal

The Northern Synod Royal Commission Child Abuse Task Group is asking the Synod to:

1. Note this report (Synod Task Group exists, our focus in addressing safety for everyone through developing our *Safe Church Manual*), and
2. Note the above policies and request Synod Standing Committee to undertake further work in using these policies to underpin development of the Northern Synod's *Safe Church Manual*.

Peter Jones
General Secretary

Helen Paine
Safe Church Coordinator