

Commitment to participating in the life of the congregation—someone who regularly attends Church services and is involved in the ministry or activity which the Person of Concern has expressed an interest in.

Accountability—someone willing to be accountable to the Church Council.

Confidentiality—someone who is able to maintain strict and appropriate confidentiality.

Ability to maintain appropriate boundaries—someone who understands their role is not to befriend the Person of Concern nor to offer them pastoral care.

Vigilant—someone who will be vigilant to the possibility of being “groomed” themselves.

Realistic expectations—someone who is committed to the demands of the role as a medium-to-long-term undertaking.

We acknowledge

- there are survivors of abuse in congregations and we seek to care for them effectively
- the high level of community concern about sexual abuse
- the duty of care to provide a safe environment for all people in our Synod
- that there is no typical Person of Concern and so we need individually tailored Safety Agreements rather than a generic one
- the issue of forgiveness and the Person of Concern’s right to privacy
- the risk management and liability issues around a Person of Concern’s reoffending
- the need for Assembly and Synod support, training, monitoring and oversight in this pro-

Is this a Christian response?

A Christian congregation can be one of the few places where a person of Concern, as a recipient of God’s love and grace, can find a place of welcome. However, participation in the life of a congregation is not a guarantee against re-offending.

A Safety Agreement offers clear expectations and firm boundaries with transparency and accountability. It is a way of including the Person of Concern in the life of the congregation while maintaining the Synod’s commitment to providing a safe place for everyone to grow in their discipleship of Jesus, and in relationship with one another.

For further information please contact the Synod Safe Ministry Admin Contact by email: safechurch@ns.uca.org.au



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The Uniting Church in Australia Northern Synod



Person of Concern: Policy and Intervention



Safe Church in the Northern Synod

Person of Concern: Policy and Intervention

The Uniting Church in Australia is committed to safeguarding those with whom we are in relationship. Safeguarding means working in ways which ensure children and vulnerable adults feel and are safe and supported. Leading in ways which ensure the wellbeing of others is the way of the Gospel. This means we have an ethical, moral and legal responsibility to provide safe leaders, safe programs and safe places.

The Uniting Church in Australia, Northern Synod has developed a range of policies to provide a framework for this commitment. One of these is the Person of Concern Policy which deals with managing the risks posed by a known sex offender in a congregation.

Who is a Person of Concern?

A Person of Concern is anyone who has been convicted of, has pending charges relating to, or has been imprisoned due to sexual offences and wishes to be involved in the life of a congregation or faith community. Anyone about whom there are reasonable concerns they may be behaving, or have behaved, in a sexually abusive or inappropriate manner is also included in this policy.

How does the policy work?

The policy works to place clear boundaries and expectations on the person's participation in the life of the congregation or faith community. The Person of Concern is included in the conversation about how the Synod, Presbytery and Church Council can work together to ensure safety for all. This process may result in a Safety Agreement.

Establishing a Safety Agreement

A Safety Agreement records the terms and conditions of a Person of Concern's participation in the life of the congregation. It is not a substitute for Mandatory Reporting, criminal proceedings or a means of concealing inappropriate behaviour. Nor is it intended to exclude the Person of Concern from the life of the congregation. It works with them, taking all reasonable steps to ensure the invitation for all people to encounter Christ's call to love and forgiveness can be offered safely and with integrity.

Under the terms of a Safety Agreement, a Person of Concern is unable to take **ANY** leadership role in the congregation or wider Church. A Safety Agreement nominates specific people who are willing and able to act as monitors of the agreement.

Signatories to the agreement are the Person of Concern, Presbytery Minister and Synod General Secretary. The Minister of the Congregation, or the Chairperson of the Church Council if there is no Minister in Placement must indicate their support for the agreement.

Who can form a Safety Agreement?

It is the responsibility of the Presbytery Minister and General Secretary to enter into a Safety Agreement. Reaching agreement occurs after consultations between the relevant parties, ensuring the Church's conditions are met and adhered to for the long term.

The Role of Monitor

A Monitor is tasked with ensuring compliance with the conditions of the Safety Agreement. People who serve in this role need to be able to exercise compassion at the same time as understanding the seriousness of the situation and the importance of their role.

Characteristics of a potential Monitor:

Ability to prioritise—someone who supports compliance with the Agreement's conditions, placing priority on the safety of the community over their relationship with the Person of Concern.

Assertiveness, resilience and alertness—someone with the confidence to identify and report any potential or actual breaches of the Agreement.

Ability to report facts without judgement—someone who neither minimizes nor exaggerates the seriousness of the Person of Concern's offence and who respects the need for an agreement.