

**NORTHERN SYNOD**  
**MINISTRY HANDBOOK**  
For all persons in Placement

Working Document



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this handbook, the term minister or ministry shall include a Minister of the Word, a Deacon, a Deaconess, a Specified Ministry of Youth Worker, and a Pastor in an approved placement.

The Uniting Church in Australia Northern Synod (the Synod) Ministry Handbook (handbook) is provided as a guide and reference for policy matters relating to placements and entitlements for those in ministry within the Synod.

It is intended for use by those in ministry placements as well as for those responsible for the pastoral and administrative oversight such as representatives of Church Councils, Presbyteries and Synod Boards and Committees.

Each Synod is authorised to determine stipends [Regulation 2.7.1 (a)], provisions and allowances [Regulation 2.7.1(c)]. In the Northern Synod, the Finance and Property Services (FAPS) Committee is responsible for recommending to the Synod Standing Committee. A key function of the FAPS Committee is to review the stipends, allowances and entitlements for ministry.

Information is published on an annual basis prior to the start of each new financial year in the Stipend and Allowance Schedule. This information is sent to the Treasurers (or equivalents) of all appointing bodies and to ministers.

This Handbook is provided for your information and should be referenced in conjunction with the relevant UCA Regulations.

Whilst this handbook is intended as a summary of key policies, guidelines and procedures relating to the remuneration and entitlements of ministers, it may not cover every possible scenario. If the reader has an area of uncertainty, they should contact the Synod Operations Manager.

All interpretation shall be determined by the General Secretary or the Synod Operations Manager.

## 2. LETTER OF CALL and TERMS OF PLACEMENT DOCUMENTATION

As a minister and the appointing body discern a call, the arrangements are documented in the Letter of Call (LoC) and Terms of Placement (ToP) documents. This is not a contract of employment as Ministers are not employees, but a covenant which sets forth the expectations of both parties. The overseeing body, PPNA Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) RC or NRCC Executive need to approve all LoC and ToP documents. Synod also needs to ensure that all arrangements are in line with Australian Tax Office (ATO) Rulings and church policies and procedures.

The Terms of Placement is a Synod document authorised by the Synod Placements Committee.

Once the LoC and ToP is drafted, it should be sent (in draft form) to Chair of Placements Committee and for PPNA the Chair of PRC; for NRCC the Chairperson via the Administration Manager. - Final checking is by the Operations Manager for governance review regarding tax, and all other requirements before issuing.

The Terms of Placement document contains all the required stipend and allowance information and shall be signed by the following parties:

- Minister
- Appointing body / Presbytery Chair
- PPNA PRC Chair / Chair of the NRCC Executive or



- General Secretary /Chair of Placements Committee

It then goes to the appropriate body; either PPNA PRC, NRCC Executive or equivalent for formal approval. PPNA PRC Chairperson or the NRCC Chairperson, the appointing body and the minister keep a signed copy of the ToP together with a copy to be filed by the Synod Office in the minister's SharePoint file and hardcopy in locked payroll cabinet.

Refer link in Glossary to current Terms of Placement templates\* for:

- Full-time placements
- Supply:
  - Retired ministers
  - Non-retired ministers
- Variation to placement

## 3. THE STIPEND

### 3.1 Background

Ministers are not employees. They are servants of God and as such do not receive salary or wages. Instead, ministers are provided with a stipend and associated allowances ('the Stipend Package') to provide for them as they undertake their ministry.

A useful paper about the underpinnings of the basis of stipends is included in the Reference section, 'The Theology of Ministerial Stipend'.

The Stipend figure is normally adjusted each financial year; however, this is not guaranteed. The allowances are also reviewed annually.

The FAPS Committee makes a recommendation to the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) prior to the end of the calendar year. Ideally this would be decided no later than end September to allow for communication to Appointing Bodies to adjust their budgets accordingly. These changes are communicated to the wider Congregation Treasurers, equivalent of the Appointing Bodies and the payroll office by the General Secretary or Operations Manager.

### 3.2 Religious Practitioner (RP) Tax Exemption Benefit

The full base stipend amount (100% of the base stipend amount whether full-time or part-time equivalent) can be broken down for taxation purposes because of the ministers' eligibility for the ATO's Religious Practitioner Tax Exemption Benefit.

- 50% of the Minimum Stipend amount:
  - Is taxable at the prevailing rate
  - Pay the personal Beneficiary Fund contribution from this amount if applicable
  - = *The ministers 'take home/after tax' portion*
- 50% of the Minimum Stipend amount remaining:
  - Is not taxable



- Is to be paid into the Ministers Benefit Account (MBA) along with 100% of all Allowances
- = *The ministers 'tax free' portion*

The minister can elect the tax-free percentage up to a maximum of 50% of the base stipend, a figure determined by the Synod in line with prevailing legislation.

It is the minister's responsibility to factor in their personal financial circumstances in electing the level of tax-free stipend.

### 3.3 Payment of Base Stipend Amount

Ministers cannot be paid less than the minimum stipend figure (pro-rated accordingly for part-time placements).

Ministers can be paid above the minimum stipend in certain instances (referred to as a stipend uplift). This may apply to some Synod and Presbytery placements as authorized by FAPS.

Ministers are paid fortnightly by the Synod Payroll. Payments must be paid by direct transfer. Cash payments of any kind are not permitted.

Ministers are paid via the Synod's Payroll Service without charge.

### 3.4 Documentation of the Stipend Package – see Section 2

### 3.5 Utilities

The appointing body shall take responsibility for paying all fixed costs for gas, electricity and water connections. The minister will pay all usage costs.

This shall be recorded in the Terms of Placement documentation.

### 3.6 Remote Area Allowance

Depending on the geographical location of the Placement, the Minister may be entitled to a 'Remote Area Allowance', the details of which can be found in the Stipend and Allowance Information Table.

## 4. AD HOC PAYMENTS IN ADDITION TO THE STIPEND

From time to time there may be additional payments offered to the minister.

A minister in a full-time placement should exercise discretion in line with the Code of Ethics, Section 5 as to their entitlement to any additional remuneration from any source beyond their agreed stipend package. Additional payments would normally be redirected to the placement including casual ad hoc preaching.

In the case of events such as weddings, funerals and casual lecturing, in a full-time placement, the fees or donation if accepted should be forwarded to the appointing body. In a part-time placement, should the event fall within the minister's normal hours, it shall also be forwarded to the appointing body.

If the placement is part-time and the event falls outside of agreed working hours, then the minister is entitled to receive the payment as reportable income.



Any additional financial benefits must be paid via a payroll process. The receipt of cash benefits is considered tax avoidance and not in alignment with the UCA ethos.

It is up to each minister to be aware of, and fulfil, the expectations as detailed in the Code of Ethics section 5.

## 5. HOUSING

### 5.1 Background

All ministers are entitled to housing (Manse) accommodation if their placement is equal to 50% or more. For placements less than 50% housing or housing benefit is not provided.

For Congregational placements, a Manse may be more than a family home (i.e., office). As each ministers' requirements may be different a fit for purpose accommodation may be negotiated.

Where practical, the Manse will be within the Congregational bounds. The advice of the Operations Manager should be consulted on each of these matters early in the planning stages of acquiring or renovating a Manse.

Some exemptions apply. Normally where two UCA ministers share a home, the cost of the provision of housing is split between the appointing bodies. If one appointing body provides the Manse, the other pays the full applicable Housing Allowance to them. This will enable expenses and maintenance of property to be shared fairly.

If there is no Manse available the appointing body may request that the minister live within the area of the placement and provide accommodation which is considered by the minister, placement body and Presbytery to be appropriate for the minister and their personal situation.

This may be a rented property and will be rented by the appointing body. Where a property is rented, the placement will meet all costs associated with the rental. No rental payments/reimbursements will be made direct to any minister. The property should be considered as available for rental long term so that the minister and their family are not disrupted with continual moves. Where a move must occur as a result of the lease ending, the placement is to meet the removal costs, not the Synod.

### 5.2 Responsibilities of Each Party

Maintaining the Manse or rented accommodation is the responsibility of the appointing body and / or presbytery. A high standard of repair and maintenance is required for good stewardship of the property. If any party has unresolved concerns, please contact the Chair of PPNA Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC), NRCC Administration Manager and/or the Synod's Operations Manager

The arrangement in terms of the responsibilities of both parties, can be considered similar to a person renting a home. Synod Operations Manager will instigate with the placement and as appropriate church council representative an annual property inspection. The Minister is to ensure good upkeep and asset management of the Manse.

The Congregation/Appointing Bodies responsibilities regarding the Manse includes:

- Ensuring the Manse property and surrounds are clean and habitable



- Undertaking any repairs and maintenance required i.e., standard repairs and maintenance as per asset management practices in good and tenable repair, fit for human habitation, having regard to the age, character and prospective life of the manse
- Payment of water connection fee, sewage, electricity connection and council rates
- The cost of telephone installation, internet, phone rental charges and church business calls will be provided for one office space - in either the Manse or Church office
- Working smoke alarms, comply with lawful requirements in regard to health and safety standards for the Manse and provide locks and security
- Property insurance
- Providing a Manse Condition Report at start of occupancy (including photos)
- Right to vacant possession and quiet enjoyment

The **minister's** responsibilities regarding the Manse includes:

- Maintaining the Manse and gardens in a clean and tidy manner, including removal of weeds, palm fronds and maintenance, including pruning and watering of grounds.
- Recognising the right of the church council for maintenance inspections
- The cost of electricity and gas connection
- The cost of excess water, electricity and gas usage. Note the electricity should be in the name of the minister.
- Replacing consumables items like bath plugs, light globes, batteries,
- Annual testing of the smoke alarms, and advise if not working (after replacing batteries if not hardwired)
- Leaving the Manse and surrounds in a clean and tidy manner at the conclusion of the placement including carpets freshly cleaned
- Keep clean and sanitary condition and maintain the Manse free from dirt, mould, oils, grease, insects and vermin
- To ensure how to operate all equipment and appliances, including cleaning of air-conditioner filters, pools /spa, dishwasher, oven, etc.
- Content insurance (if desired)
- Approval from Synod Operations Manager to affix or remove fixtures
- Any repairs carried out as a result of misuse of Manse, negligence or removal or installation of a fixture by the Minister (or within their control) must be paid by the Minister.
- Report any issues or concerns for the property immediately to the Operations Manager

A minister, in accepting a call where a Manse is provided by the placement, also accepts responsibility to keep the property in a state of cleanliness and ongoing general maintenance, as would apply if it were a rental situation, for example, gardens tended and lawns mown, pool maintenance (if applicable), windows cleaned, guttering and down pipes cleared, and appliances clean and functional. The minister is also responsible for unreasonable wear and tear or damage, including damage caused by family pets.



## 5.3 Housing Allowance

When the minister has approval to live in their own home, they are entitled to receive a Housing Allowance. The Housing Allowance applies to all placements 50% or greater (including longer term Supply).

Information on the appropriate amount payable is available in the **Stipend and Allowance Table\***.

## 5.4 When Two Ministers (in a Relationship) Share a Manse

### Housing Allowance

Where both members of a couple are ministers in placement, share a home and elect to live in their own home, they shall be entitled to receive one housing allowance equivalent to that applicable to the placement's geographical location (whichever is the greater amount should this vary.)

The housing allowance shall normally be provided in equal amounts by the bodies responsible for the payment of stipend in respect of the two placements.

### Shared Manse

Where both members of a couple are ministers in placement, but with different Appointing Bodies, and both placements require the provision of a residence, the couple may negotiate in which of the residences they will live.

The appointing body whose residence is not required shall pay an amount equivalent to the full applicable housing allowance to the other appointing body, thereby contributing to the maintenance costs of the residence in which the couple are to live.

## 5.5 Provision of an Office

The appointing body shall provide a minister with 'one' office including provision of internet and phone or mobile. This may be located in the Manse/home or at the church/office building. The location and furnishings should be discussed and recorded in the Terms of Placement document.

## 5.6 Provision of Technology, Devices and Internet Services

The placement will provide that which is necessary for one principal working office. This shall include but not be limited to:

- a. Adequate telecommunications facilities, including mobile phone and broadband internet access and a computer. Placement and minister to agree on what proportion of the phone plan is paid by each.
- b. Should the minister elect the provision of a landline instead of a mobile phone, the placement shall meet the standing cost of the phone connections in either the residence or church office and all ministry related costs.
- c. Should the working environment be located at a church/office building, the appointing body may provide a landline connection at the Manse. The cost of connection and maintaining this landline shall be the responsibility of the minister.





## 5.7 Owning a Property

Ministers preferring to live in their own home shall discuss logistics with the appointing body. The appointing body has the right to refuse this request should it disadvantage the placement. It is reasonable for the appointing body to expect the minister to be geographically accessible to the placement. Any time and expense involved in commuting from home to work shall be the responsibility of the minister. The applicable housing allowance shall be paid to the minister.

## 6. TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

A Corporate credit card is recommended for exclusive use for such expenditure with the normal process of receipts and reconciliations required. Please refer to the Synod Credit Card Policy and Delegation of Authority for application.

Please note if this is applicable to the particular Placement it will be included in the Terms of Placement.

## 7. MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAVEL ALLOWANCES

### 7.1 Background

Dependent on the type of placement, ministers are entitled to a range of options and allowances regarding their role-related travel to allow them to serve the direct mission and priorities of the placement.

In line with ATO policy, this does not include travelling to and from manse/home, nor does it include travel serving the wider church where reimbursement is otherwise available. Any allowances of this kind may be paid into the MBA as a tax-free component.

The values of these allowances are reviewed annually and communicated as part of the “Stipend and Allowance Table”.

### 7.2 Motor Vehicle Allowance

A motor vehicle allowance (MVA) is available to ministers in full-time placements and pro rata to those in Part-time placement who will be using their own vehicle. The MVA is payable into the Ministers Benefit Account (MBA) (refer section 10.4 of this document).

The MVA is reviewed annually and is recorded in the “Stipend and Allowance Table”.

Any placement with alternate vehicle requirements can be considered on a case-by-case basis but this must be discussed with the Presbytery in consultation with the Synod Operations Manager and recorded in the Terms of Placement.

### 7.3 Travel Allowances

When a minister is using their own car a travel allowance is applicable.

Applicable rates are recorded in the “Stipend and Allowance Table”.

Travel beyond their normal area, ATO rulings state reimbursement for travel is for placement-related travel only. It is not provided for personal travel, wider-church related travel or travel to and from the minister’s home to their work environment. For example, a minister living in Darwin and working at



Uniting House may not use the travel allowance to cover that travel. ATO Rulings prohibit the travel allowance to be used as a form of incremental tax-free income.

For ease of management for both parties, many placements calculate an estimate of annual kilometres travelled. This figure is then paid as a monthly or fortnightly amount. This is an estimate based on historical placement information. It can be reviewed after a period of serving in a new placement if the new minister can demonstrate they are travelling more than their predecessors on placement related travel.

If the travel allowance, in totality, goes direct to the MBA tax free there is no need for a logbook.

## 7.4 Motor Vehicle Supplied

The appointing body may provide a fully maintained vehicle for the minister's use. Conditions will be consistent with the Synod Policy and included in the Terms of Placement

The vehicle may be used privately in the town or city of residence together with all work use.

Private use outside the city or town of residence must be approved by the minister's supervisor or the Operations Manager and documented in the ministers file including any conditions of use, prior to use.

The minister is to ensure the vehicle is regularly serviced and kept clean and tidy inside and out. Any damage to my vehicle or other vehicles must be reported immediately.

Private use example: I'm based In Darwin I can use my work vehicle for work and private travel in the Greater Darwin Area (this includes Palmerston or rural) however if I want to go on holidays to Alice or interstate, I need approval to use the work vehicle. A condition of use may be that I pay for all fuel and any other cost which are not covered by insurance e.g., tyre damage. If I'm on a long interstate trip it may be approved on the condition, I pay for the vehicle to be serviced on return.

## 8. RESOURCE ALLOWANCE & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAVEL FUND

### 8.1 Background

The Resource Allowance is intended to contribute towards the minister's professional development. This may include training, seminars and other resources.

The Professional Development Travel Fund is intended to contribute to the travel costs associated with minister's professional development.

The amounts are reviewed annually by the FAPS in September and communicated as part of the "Stipend and Allowance Table".

#### 8.2.a Payment of the Resource Allowance

If the placement is .5 or more, the Resource Allowance is payable in full and is paid into the MBA as it is tax free. If the Placement is less than .5 then the Resource Allowance is paid pro rata to the MBA.

A minister may only receive these allowances once in multiple, part-time placements. In this instance multiple placements would share the payment.

A tax deduction cannot be claimed for any items purchased with the Resource Allowance or for travel paid for by the Travel Fund as tax was not paid in the first place.



Ministers serving in short-term supply roles (three months or less) are not entitled to receive these Allowances. Should the supply be extended beyond three months, the resource allowance shall be paid from the beginning of the fourth month. It shall not be back dated to the commencement of the initial supply agreement. For supply roles greater than three months, the Resource Allowance is applied pro rata as above.

## 8.2.b Payment of the Professional Development Travel Fund

It is paid by the appointing body into an account held in that body's name for use by the minister in placement in accordance with the rules associated with the funds use. If the funds are unused at the conclusion of a Minister's placement, then they shall be repaid into the appointing bodies account.

## 9. LEVIES FOR MINISTERS LONG LEAVE

### 9.1 Background

The levy payable in relation to each Minister in placement and is applicable to non-retired ministers only.

The amount is reviewed annually by the FAPS Committee in September and recorded in the "Stipend and Allowance Table.

This levy provides for:

- The accrual of ministers Long Leave entitlements
- Assisting Appointing Bodies with the costs associated with their Minister taking Long Leave or Parental leave
- Benefits to dependents on the death of a minister in placement

### 9.2 Payment

This contribution is made on behalf of the minister and is sent to Synod Finance Team monthly via direct debit. For those in part-time placements, the contribution by the appointing body is equal to the rate of the placement. If the minister wishes, they are able to personally 'top-up' the remaining percentage equal to a full-time placement to maintain a 100% Long Leave entitlement.

For further information and assistance please contact Synod Finance Team.

## 10. SUPERANNUATION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS

### 10.1 Background

Ministers have the choice of paying into either one of:

- An approved superannuation fund of their choice.
- The individual section of the Mercer Super Trust. This is the retail super fund set up by Mercer and is open to all members of the public (i.e., it is a public offer fund).
- Effect from 1 October 2020, Category 6 of the Uniting Church Beneficiary Fund, managed by Mercer is now closed to new ministers.



The amount payable on behalf of the minister is reviewed annually by Mercer and communicated as part of the wider “Stipend and Allowance Table”.

Where a minister chooses the option of personal choice of superannuation fund instead of Mercer, the contributions made by the placement must be equal to that paid to Mercer.

For those in part-time placements, the contribution is pro-rata according to the placement.

Ministers should consult a financial advisor to discuss what type of benefit might best suit their context.

## 10.2 Payment

Approved Super fund of their choice or Mercer Super Trust	Uniting Church Beneficiary Fund (Mercer) Closed to new members
The personal contribution is not required from those paying into their choice of superannuation fund or the Mercer accumulation funds.	Ministers currently in the Beneficiary Fund are required to make a personal contribution. This is made from their post-tax earnings. This amount is also reviewed annually by Mercer and communicated as part of the wider “Stipend and Allowance Table”.
<b>Subject to the rules of their fund, ministers may elect to salary sacrifice into their superannuation fund.</b>	
<b>Any voluntary salary sacrifice to superannuation will be a reportable salary sacrifice and must be reported through Single Touch Payroll and via MyGov.</b>	
<b>Superannuation contributions are made in the usual manner to the minister’s choice of fund via the normal payroll process.</b>	Contributions comprising both the appointing body and personal contributions must be sent to the Synod Finance Team monthly via direct debit. For advice and assistance <a href="https://accounts.uca.org.au">accounts.uca.org.au</a>

## 11. MINISTERS BENEFIT ACCOUNT (MBA)

### 11.1 Background

In line with ATO guidelines the Synod policy allows ministers to elect to place up to 50% of the minimum stipend, plus 100% of their allowances into a “Ministers Benefit Account” (MBA).

It is an account of the appointing body but used to pay authorised expenses incurred by the minister.

Authorised expenses are listed under Section 11.4 below.

There are strict ATO rules around the operation of these accounts which require full compliance.

### 11.2 Creating an MBA

The Synod Finance Team assist appointing bodies with the opening of a Ministers Benefit Account (MBA). You will be required to open a United Financial Services (UFS) bank account with a linked ANZ



credit card. These forms are available from the NS Finance Team. UFS will provide log in details so you can view your MBA balance, all enquires will be handled by UFS staff.

Regular payments (i.e. mortgages, loans, etc) can be set up through a Periodic Payment Application form.

The account is free from any account keeping or transaction fees and the withdrawal of any funds from the MBA must be in accordance with the Synod's policy.

All purchases are made using your ANZ credit card. Statements are issued monthly to allow reconciliation as required by the appointing body. The completed statement with the accompanying invoices must be sent back to the NS Finance Team.

### 11.3 Operation of the MBA

The minister can nominate the amount, up to 50% of the base stipend value. In addition, 100% of all Allowances shall be paid into the MBA.

It is an account of the appointing body, set up in your name and held with Uniting Financial Services.

Cash cannot be withdrawn and used to pay ministers' expenses. There is a small list of exclusions listed in Section 11.4. It can be accrued within reason.

The MBA is audited in the same way as other placement accounts and receipts need to be kept. Either the original or duplicate Tax Invoice must support all payments from your MBA account.

The ATO requires all documentary evidence to be kept for a minimum period of five years.

Because the account is owned by the appointing body any balance at the end of a placement is not transferable. Any remaining balance can be paid to the minister less the appropriate level of taxation.

Should a placement end for any reason, the minister has a grace period of approximately 30 days to finalise the account after which the account will be closed and the balance less tax forwarded to the minister. A minister may only have one MBA at a time.

Any items paid for from the MBA cannot be claimed as a Tax Deduction by the minister as no taxation was paid in the first place.

The MBA amount paid to a minister is classed as an exempt benefit, so no Tax is payable.

Any monies paid into the MBA are not reportable via Single Touch Payroll (STP) however, may be required if applicable to be reported to Centrelink.



## 11.4 Allowable vs Non-Allowable Expenses

Virtually all household and personal expenses can be paid from the MBA including, but not limited to items such as:

- Car expenses such as repayments, fuel and servicing
- Insurance premiums
- Cleaners, gardeners and tradespeople
- School fees, including uniforms and Books.
- Mortgages and rent
- Entertainment
- Holidays, including flights, hire cars and accommodation
- Groceries, clothing and footwear
- 

The expense types listed below cannot be paid from a Minister's Benefit Account:

- Fines or penalties imposed by Federal, State or Local Government such as traffic infringement notices
- Taxation levies, (including payment for the preparation of annual returns)
- Child support or other Centrelink payments
- Offerings and donations to Deductible Gift Recipients
- Tax deductible costs (i.e., payments from these accounts cannot be used as tax deductions)
- Cash withdrawals

If there is uncertainty as to whether a purchase is eligible, please contact Synod Finance Team.

## 11.5 GST on Accounts Payable through the MBA

The congregation/appointing body is entitled to claim the GST expense through its BAS Return. It is essential a valid tax invoice is held prior to claiming any GST.

The refund of GST is for the benefit of the congregation/appointing body. This must not be refunded to the MBA account. Still under consideration

## 11.6 Interest Credit

As all MBA's are to be in the name of the congregation/appointing body, the funds set aside in these accounts remain the notional property of the congregation/appointing body.

Any interest earned on these funds is to be transferred to the congregation/appointing body's accounts.

## 11.7 Centrelink and Personal Income Accountability

It is important to note that, while non-cash benefits provided to Religious Practitioners are exempt from tax and payment summary reporting, social security legislation takes the value of benefits into account when assessing eligibility for various social security payments. It is the ministers' responsibility to ensure accurate information is reported.



## 12. REQUIREMENTS FOR SUPERVISION

### 12.1 Background

Professional supervision is defined in the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice (3.9(c)) as a relationship with a supervisor to assist in enhancing the quality of ministry by enabling the minister to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship, and to intentionally reflect on their ministry practice and context.

As part of their self-care, ministers have a responsibility to ensure they receive regular professional supervision. (3.8(b) and 3.9(c)(d)). It is also a requirement of the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice (COEMP) that all those in active ministry meet regularly with a Professional Supervisor. The appointing body may meet the cost of professional Supervision for ministers up to an amount determined jointly by the FAPS and Placement Committee. This should not be paid directly to the Minister, but to the Supervisor on presentation of an invoice. It could be reimbursed to the Minister on presentation of the appropriate tax receipt.

Professional Supervision for ministers in placement is compulsory. It allows for the Synod to:

- Have a consistent practice and expectation of informed ethical ministry practice
- Ensure a high standard of supervision by requiring professional supervision from a qualified supervisor, or a supervisor trained and authorised by the Synod
- Have a Presbytery record of the name and qualification of supervisor
- Receive a signed certification from the Supervisor as to the number of sessions attended each year, which would also be added to the ministers' presbytery records.

Eight supervised sessions per year is the normal minimum expectation. It is acknowledged that those in a rural and/or isolated communities may experience difficulty in accessing supervision and may have to look at different options. Ideally supervision will take the form of face-to-face contact with supervisors, however a number of different models exist that may involve phone or videoconference supervision. Minister-to-minister supervision or peer group supervision is no longer considered professional in its delivery. Supervision should be a regular commitment – ideally every month to six weeks.

#### Selection of a Supervisor

Ministers may select their own professional supervisor. As ministry has different contexts; differs from placement to placement; and ministers have different needs and requirements; supervisors should be chosen carefully. Supervisors should be people trained for the role of supervision; have good communication skills; understand the ethos of the Uniting Church and the role and responsibility of the minister; and can engage a person in reflecting and critiquing their ministry.

Ministers are encouraged to develop a Supervision Covenant with their supervisor. (Refer to 11.2A Sample Supervision Covenant). The presbyteries are available to offer assistance in choosing a suitable supervisor. There is a list of UCA Supervisors available from the PPNA Admin Officer.

#### Confidentiality and Accountability

All ministry agents who come under the oversight of the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice are required to have regular supervision. Ministers are also required to provide their supervisor with a





copy of the Basis of Union and the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice (CoEMP) in order to orient them to the requirements, values and ethos of the Uniting Church.

The content of supervision sessions remains confidential and stays between minister and supervisor.

The appointing body and presbytery shall request a certificate from the Supervisor, documenting the supervisors name, relevant qualifications and the total number of sessions attended that year. This should be included in the minister's annual report which is submitted to the Church Council or Appointing Body and also Presbytery.

## 13. ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIREMENTS

### 13.1 Background

At the 1997 Assembly, the Uniting Church affirmed the importance of continuing education and requested all ministers to enter into continuing education learning agreements with Presbytery in order to enhance professional development and skills required for ministry (Regulation 2.2.1 (xi)).

Due to the changing nature of society and the role, purpose and value of the Church within it, it is vital for those in ministry to be able to respond to, and minister effectively. All ministers in placements, those awaiting placement and those in ministry serving in an approved placement are expected to engage in continuing education (CoEMP 1.7; 3.4a).

### 13.2 Professional Standards Training

The requirements for Professional Standards Training apply to everyone in active ministry including the following:

- Candidates for ordained ministries
- Deacons and Ministers of the Word in placement, supply or awaiting placement
- Ministry of Pastor positions
- Lay people employed in ministry positions, even if these are not designated as pastor positions
- Ministers from other churches serving in an approved placement
- Ministers seeking admission as ministers of the UCA
- Retired ministers who are still in active ministry (this means anything involving conducting a regular service through to providing supply).

It is a requirement that all those in active ministry participate in the following training:

**Code of Ethics for Ministry Practice** an annually half day refresher should be undertaken by all in persons placement. It may be possible to undertake this as a unit within a wider course; for example, the theology, history, code of ethics and sacraments course run by Rev Dr Michelle Cook. Online courses may also be available.

**Covenant Relationship** a minimum of a 1-day workshop or course should be completed. This may be available through completing part of the Theology, History, Code of Ethics and Sacraments Course run by Rev Dr Michelle Cook. An online workshop may be available.





**Safe Church Awareness Training:** Ministers are required to undertake Safe Church Awareness training. This includes a Refresher Course every three years. However, those who are employed in chaplaincy positions, (such as in schools, prisons, hospitals, aged care), will be exempt from Safe Church Awareness training, if the institutions in which they work provide similar training which is compulsory for all staff. This should be reported and updated in their annual report to Presbytery

**Professional Supervision:** it is a requirement of the Code of Ethics that all those in active ministry meet regularly with a Professional Supervisor.

The name and qualifications of the Supervisor and the number of sessions attended should be included in the annual report conducted by Presbytery (see section 11).

### Annual Reports:

Each minister is required to submit an annual report by March each year for the previous calendar year as part of their accountability to the PPNA PRC Chairperson or the NRCC Chairperson. The report should include details of professional development undertaken, and it will be included in the minister’s personnel file. Presbytery has the authorisation to manage this process and determine any potential consequences for failure to be accountable.

## 14. A Guide for Calculating Part-Time Placements

In a part-time placement, the expected ministry responsibilities must reflect the agreed placement percentage.

Balancing ministry demand against placement percentage can be challenging. It will be helpful if the appointing body and minister negotiate the specific responsibilities and record them in an agreement.

A range of time management tools may be used by the minister and appointing body. An example is the 21 units per week model included below.

This is based on ‘chunking’ the week’s demands into units. One unit approximates 3 hours. A full-time placement is based on the expectation of 14 units equaling a 42-hour working week. A minister would select the 14 units that best cater to the demands of that week.

Part-time is pro-rated according to the placement percentage. This also enables the minister and appointing body to assess the placement ministry demands according to the allocated percentage of placement.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning	One unit	One unit	One unit	One unit	One unit	One unit	One unit
Afternoon	One unit	One unit	One unit	One unit	One unit	One unit	One unit
Evening	One unit	One unit	One unit	One unit	One unit	One unit	One unit

To assist in determining how many units might be expected for a particular percentage of placement, refer the table below:



Number of Units per week	Proportion of Full Stipend
1	10%
2	15%
3	20%
4	30%
5	35%
6	45%
7	50%
8	55%
9	65%
10	70%
11	80%
12	85%
13	90%
14+	100%

*Note: this is offered as an option/example and is not compulsory.*

## 15. RELOCATION

### 15.1 Background

If the minister is moving interstate the Synod will negotiate with the receiving Synod to share the costs of the move.

This arrangement shall provide for ministers moving:

- into their first placement
- between placements
- after their final placement to their place of retirement.

The process is coordinated by the PPNA PRC or NRCC Executive with the Synod Operations Manager who will provide the minister with information about obtaining quotes, preferred removalist and what is covered.

When a minister moves from one Synod to another, the cost is shared equally between the two.

### 15.2 Pre-Move

Ministers must allow for reasonable consideration of time (e.g., eight weeks) when organising a removal, particularly if it is between Christmas and the first two weeks of January. If moves are left until the last moment (without adequate explanation), the Synod cannot guarantee it will cover any additional costs that result.

A Removal Inventory is required to be completed. Attention should be paid to the completion of the inventory as it forms the basis for all subsequent quotes. Should an inventory prove to be significantly inaccurate, any increased cost may be at the minister's expense.

In the Northern Synod because of the geographic location one vehicle is usually allowable in the quote. This should be discussed with the Operations Manager.



Once the inventory is prepared the minister should obtain two quotes, these with the details should be forwarded to the Operations Manager. The Operations Manager will discuss the quotes with the minister, determine any necessary variation or if a third quote is required and give final approval to go ahead with a particular quote.

## 15.3 Exclusions

The removal of the following items would be at the minister's expense:

- Excessive hobby equipment, for example canoes, camping goods
- Lathes
- Timber & Bricks
- Large bird aviaries or garden sheds
- Livestock or pets and their housing, Motor vehicles, boats, caravans, trailers, horse floats and ride on mowers
- Outdoor spas
- Pianos and organs
- Any other non-standard, heavy, bulky or fragile items

Note: Pot plants may be moved should there be enough space in the removal van.

## 15.4 Insurance

Synod provides insurance for a standard move. Ministers will need to make their own arrangements for specific items of value.

## 15.5 Travel Costs

If own vehicle is used for travel, reimbursement for mileage shall be at the current travel allowance amount listed on the Stipend and Allowance Table. Should accommodation be required this shall be negotiated with Synod Operations Manager on a case-by-case basis.

## 15.6 Post Move

When a Manse/property is vacated, it is the responsibility of the minister to leave the premises in a clean state, including carpets professionally cleaned, gardens and lawns tidy, pools clean. No rubbish or unwanted items should be left on the property.

If an appointing body needs to call in cleaners/gardeners/rubbish removal, this is to be expensed to the vacating minister. A final inspection should be conducted with the minister and placement representative present to agree on handover. All keys / remotes should be returned.

## 15.7 Relocation Time

In accordance with Reg ... 2.7.2 (c) when a minister is moving from one placement to another, they are offered up to two weeks to relocate according to circumstance. This provides the minister time to not only unpack and set up their home and work environment, but also ensure the family's needs are met in regard to orienting to a new community. If a new placement does not involve relocating, Relocation Time does not apply. This shall be negotiated between the minister and the appointing body. Should a dispute arise, the PPNA PRC or NRCC Executive shall decide.



Should a new placement commence before the relocation takes place, the relocation time should be delayed until the move takes place. Relocation time is not an entitlement, but a concession to be used for the sole purpose of relocating. It is not to be used as holiday time, nor can it be accrued to be later used in conjunction with other leave entitlements.

## 16. SUPPLY AND CASUAL PREACHING ARRANGEMENTS

### 16.1 Background

A variety of ministry needs exist with the Church. Each serves a specific context and may be used only in appropriate circumstances. These may not be used as a substitute for a placed minister.

#### Supply

Supply Ministry is a specific ministry normally provided by ordained ministers. It can range from a single Sunday service to a longer-term ongoing ministry, full-time or part-time. It usually only exceeds a twelve-month period in exceptional circumstances. It may be provided by a minister in active ministry, including awaiting a placement, or undertaking supply ministry by choice, or by a retired minister, including a minister whose health precludes a placement but not supply ministry.

Supply is mostly used in situations involving 'cover' for Long Service Leave, extended Sick or Parental leave, or between placements.

Supply arrangements should be documented in the relevant Supply Agreement for either Non-Retired or Retired Ministers.

Supply ministry situations are often tailored to each need; however, two broad descriptors exist.

**Short term supply:** A continuous period of ministry lasting for not more than three months.

**Long term supply:** A continuous period of ministry lasting for more than three months.

#### Extensions

Supply agreements can be extended in advance of the most recent agreement lapsing. Should any category of supply be extended beyond its described time limit, a new supply agreement shall be completed as differing allowances and entitlements will apply. For example, a short-term supply of two months may not be extended for a further two months. In this scenario, the supply moves from short term to long term.

Note: Retrospective changes or extensions are not envisaged.

#### Non-Retired Ministers Undertaking Supply

- Stipend and allowances are as listed in the Stipend and Allowance Table
- Access to the Ministers Benefit Account (MBA)  
The MBA is only available for long-term supply arrangements.  
The MBA would operate in line with Section 11 of this Handbook.

#### Retired Ministers Undertaking Supply

Retired ministers may contact their Presbytery, requesting their names and availability be placed on the Available-for-Supply-list.

**Note:** Please do not assume Presbytery or the Placements Committee will be aware of any potential willingness and availability without being duly informed.



- **Remuneration**

Retired ministers serving in supply have three options in regard to remuneration. The preferred option shall be identified by the supply minister in line with their personal financial circumstances and professional advice:

  1. Elect to receive a stipend and allowance package commensurate with the length of supply (short or long term)
  2. Elect not to receive any payment
  3. Elect to receive reimbursement for travel and/or negotiated costs only
- **Access to the Ministers Benefit Account (MBA)**

The MBA would normally only apply in long term placements. This would be at the discretion of the appointing body in consultation with the supply minister. The MBA would operate in line with Section 11 of this Handbook.
- **Superannuation**

The Congregation will be required to pay Superannuation at the required rate (Superannuation Guarantee Contribution) unless the agreed taxable remuneration is less than \$450 per month. It will be up to each minister to obtain financial advice as to how this should be paid.
- **Ministers Support Levies**

These levies do not apply
- **Contribution to Cover Workers Compensation**

Although the MSF contribution does not apply, to ensure retired ministers serving in supply are covered for Workers Compensation insurance purposes, the appointing body is required to pay a flat fee per month (contained within the Stipend and Allowance Table). This can be arranged via Synod Finance Team.
- **Housing**

Accommodation or the Housing Allowance may apply for long supply only. The appointing body and supply minister may make their own appropriate arrangements for short term supply
- **Resource Allowance**

Applicable for long term supply only
- **Leave Entitlements**

Standard pro-rated leave entitlements except Long Service Leave apply for long term supply only

## Casual Preaching

A minister may be invited to preach on a casual basis. This would be determined by availability and willingness. Should any minister preach as part of their regular ministry duties, they shall not benefit from the casual preaching fee as they are already receiving the stipend.

All financial benefits must be paid via a payroll process. The receipt of any cash payment is considered tax avoidance and not in line with UCA ethos.

The fees for casual preaching on a per service basis are outlined on the “Stipend and Allowance Table”.



## 17. WELL-BEING SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO MINISTERS

The health, safety and wellbeing of our ministers are key priorities for the Synod. In addition to UCA pastoral support and supervision, all ministers in placement are able to access BENESTAR, the Northern Synod's Employee Assistance Provider (known as EAP).

The EAP is a confidential, voluntary counselling service available to our ministers and their immediate family members. It is independent and aims to help support physical, mental health and wellbeing, resolve challenges and to reach set goals.

The main features include:

- Confidential counselling, coaching and support with an experienced Psychologist
- Appointments via face-to-face meeting, telephone, video or eCounselling
- Short term assistance with the resolution of personal and/or work-related challenges
- Access to other services such as legal advice, financial counselling, nutrition advice

To arrange an appointment or for further information about the EAP and your entitlements:

- Contact Benestar on 1300 360 364
- Download the **Benestar Brochure\***
- Download the **Benestar Hub User Guide\***
- Visit the website [www.Benestar.com](http://www.Benestar.com)
- Download the Benestar App on the App Store (Apple) or Google Play Store (Android)

## 18. LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS

There are various types of leave available for ministers in placement. As ministers are not employees, the entitlements under the National Employment Standards do not apply and the following guidelines and processes should be followed.

Ministers are able to take their leave entitlements at a time negotiated with, and mutually agreeable to, their appointing body. Ministers may not take leave without consulting their appointing body.

As part of being accountable, all ministers must complete the necessary leave forms and follow the required approval processes.

### ANNUAL LEAVE

#### 18.1 Background

Rest and recreation are essential for an effective ministry. Ministers should be and may not accrue more than 2 years entitlement and are encouraged to regularly use their annual entitlement.

#### 18.2 Entitlement to, and Remuneration whilst on, Annual Leave

Ministers are entitled to 6 weeks' leave per annum. Annual leave excludes public holidays.

All normal remuneration arrangements apply during Annual Leave. There is no entitlement to any form of leave loading.



All leave entitlements are pro-rated to the percentage of the placement if less than 100%. For example, a minister in a 50% placement would be entitled to a period of 6 weeks of annual leave but accrued and paid at the 50% stipend rate.

## 18.3 Process for Application and Approval of Annual Leave

To apply for recreation leave, the Minister shall complete a **Ministers Leave Form**. The approval of the appointing body is required in line with these guidelines.

Annual Leave should be taken during the year in which it falls due unless there are extenuating circumstances. Ministers must consult both appointing body and PPNA Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) or the NRCC Executive (or equivalent) to obtain approval to accrue Annual Leave.

Annual leave is to be pre-approved by the church council or appointing body equivalent. Annual Leave records are to be kept by the appointing body, the payroll office and the PPNA PRC or NRCC Executive.

## 18.4 Deferring Annual Leave

Annual leave entitlements are cumulative, but it is desirable that the minister regularly use their annual entitlement each year from a refreshment and self-care perspective.

After 8 weeks have been accumulated, approval must be sought including the reasons, from the Presbytery who will consult the appointing body. This springs from Synod's desire for ministers to be refreshed and renewed regularly.

Where a Presbytery is unable to persuade a minister to take Annual Leave then the Presbytery, in conjunction with the appointing body, they may declare and require that the minister be on Annual Leave for a specific period.

## 18.5 Untaken Annual Leave at End of Placement

For intra-Synod placements, a maximum of half a year three (3) untaken Annual Leave may be carried forward to the next placement if all parties are in agreement. The full remuneration value of this period of leave calculated at the current rate should be transferred to the new placement. It is not paid out to the minister. If the amount of untaken leave exceeds 3 weeks then an agreement between the Minister, Presbytery and the appointing body to use the excess before commencing the new placement shall be arranged and noted in the ToP.

Any remaining unused recreational leave is forfeited in line with the policy of the Synod policy.

Where a minister retires or resigns as a result of extreme ill-health, any annual leave balances should be paid out as part of the termination process.

## STUDY LEAVE

### 18.6 Background

The purpose of Study Leave is to provide an opportunity for continuing education and professional development for ministry. It is not an automatic entitlement and must be used to enhance skills for ministry related development.

Study Leave is intended for agreed courses or programs only, taken at a time negotiated with the appointing body.



The presbytery annual report should request:

- an account of what was studied, key learnings, and ministry benefits
- An outline of the proposed study plan for the coming year.

## 18.7 Entitlement to and Remuneration whilst on Study Leave

Ministers in full-time placement are entitled to 2 weeks of Study Leave each placement year inclusive of Saturday and Sunday but excluding public holidays.

2 weeks shall include the benefit of 2 weekends. Study Leave can be taken as required with no more than 2 weekends included.

Public holidays do not form part of Study Leave.

Normal remuneration arrangements apply during Study Leave.

Part-time ministers are entitled to pro-rata Study Leave per year dependent on the percentage of placement. Normal remuneration applies. For example, a 50% placement shall receive 50% of the study leave allowance = seven calendar days.

Ministers who have indicated they are considering retirement, are retiring, or are concluding their placement are not automatically entitled to unused Study Leave. This would be granted at the discretion of the appointing body and PPNA PRC or NRCC Executive after consultation with the and a clear rationale provided as to how it will benefit the placement or contribute development.

## 18.8 Process for Application and Approval of Study Leave

To apply for study leave, the Minister shall complete a **Ministers Leave Form**. The approval of the appointing body is required in line with these guidelines.

Ministers shall seek approval from their appointing body and PPNA PRC or NRCC Executive for consecutive study leave of 7 days or more.

An account of all Study Leave taken shall be included in the minister's annual appraisal which is submitted to Presbytery.

## 18.9 Accumulation of Study Leave

In exceptional circumstances, Study Leave may be accumulated for up to no more than three years.

This would generally apply where a specific longer program or course of study is desired and has been discussed and approved by the presbytery in consultation with the appointing body. Study leave is not transferable between placements.

## PERSONAL SICK AND CARERS LEAVE

### 18.10 Background

A minister in full-time or part-time placement who becomes ill and is unable to carry out their normal duties is entitled to sick leave.

From time to time, ministers in placement may also need to take leave to care for a sick dependent, known as carers, leave.





## 18.11 Entitlement and Remuneration for Sick Leave

A minister who is ill and unable to undertake their ministry duties is able to take paid sick leave.

A minister in full-time placement is entitled to 30 days per annum inclusive of weekends. This includes carers leave.

Please note that any unused sick leave may not be transferred or paid out at the conclusion of the placement.

Sick leave can be accrued for up to 2 years entitlement. Ministers may be considered for extra sick leave on a case-by-case basis as approved by the Presbytery or General Secretary (see also 18.12 and 18.13). The minister is to be remunerated as normal whilst on sick leave up to 30 days inclusive of weekends per annum. Pro-rata entitlement would apply in a part-time placement and for varying lengths of supply.

## 18.12 Application and Approval of Sick Leave

Any minister wishing to obtain sick leave must complete a **Ministers Leave Form**.

Where the minister has been unwell for more than 7 days concurrently, the minister should obtain a medical certificate and forward it to their appointing body as soon as is practical. Without the appropriate sick leave form and (if required) valid doctor's certificate, sick leave may not be approved and/or financially supported by the appointing body.

A positive COVID notification shall be registered with the relevant government body and a copy of the registration supplied to payroll to authorise sick leave instead of a doctor's certificate.

Where the illness is extreme and/or protracted, the minister should advise the church council chairperson or appointing body, and PPNA PRC or NRCC Executive (or equivalent) so that appropriate pastoral care may be provided for the minister, and suitable arrangements made for the placement. Any condition or illness which prevents a minister from carrying out their ministerial responsibilities should be communicated to the presbytery and in consultation with the appointing body the necessary communication and determinations shall be handled with sensitivity.

Where there is repeated need for sick leave causing a significant impact on the placement, there should be a discussion between the minister, appointing body and PPNA PRC or NRCC Executive as to the ongoing viability of the placement.

## 18.13 Extended Sick Leave

Should the minister be unable to resume ministry after the allocated sick leave has been exhausted, the minister may contact the presbytery and in consultation with the appointing body discuss what actions are necessary including the possible need for supply ministry.

## 18.14 Entitlement and Remuneration for Carers Leave

A minister who seeks to take leave to care for a dependent who is unwell and is unable to undertake their ministry duties is able to access paid carers leave.

Carers leave will be granted where the minister is primarily responsible for the care of the person concerned and would not apply where another person has taken leave to care for the same person.



Carers leave will be deducted from the 30-day entitlement for sickness and carers leave. Carers leave shall be pro-rated for part-time placements.

Where the absence of the minister is expected to be more than 2 days then the minister must advise the church council/appointing body of their intention to take leave in a request including:

- the name of the person requiring care
- their relationship to the minister
- reasons for taking such leave; and
- the estimated length of absence

The minister may be requested to provide suitable written evidence to support the leave such as a doctor's letter or certificate.

## 18.15 Application and Approval of Carers Leave

On their return from carers leave, the minister must complete a **Ministers Leave Form**.

Where carers leave is protracted then the minister shall advise the church council chairperson and PPNA PRC or the NRCC Executive so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Where repeated periods of absence negatively impact on the viability of the placement, a discussion shall be initiated between the minister, appointing body and PPNA PRC or NRCC Executive.

## COMPASSIONATE LEAVE

### 18.16 Entitlement and Remuneration for Compassionate Leave

Up to 14 days paid compassionate leave can be taken when a member of an employee's family dies or develops a life-threatening illness or injury. Compassionate leave is non-cumulative.

In the Synod we understand that for First Nations Peoples and other diverse cultures 'family' carries a much broader definition. Accordingly, the minister should discuss with the appointing body and the presbytery to gain prior approval for the leave.

### 18.17 Application and Approval of Compassionate Leave

Coping in situations involving death and or illness/injury usually involves a range of strong emotions which may make it difficult for a minister to deal with practicalities. However, informing your appointing body and the presbytery is necessary in order to make the necessary arrangements regarding the placement.

On their return from compassionate leave the minister must complete a **Ministers Leave Form** and submit a copy to their appointing body and PPNA PRC or NRCC Executive.

Compassionate leave is non-cumulative.

## MATERNITY LEAVE

### 18.18 Background

The purpose of Maternity Leave is to provide the opportunity for a minister as primary care giver to prepare for the birth of their child/ren and provide care during the initial period following the birth.



## 18.19 Entitlement and Remuneration for Maternity Leave

Leave may commence 4 weeks before the anticipated birth.

The total leave entitlement is up to 52 weeks for the birth of the child/ren.

The remuneration arrangements that apply are as follows:

### Stipend Payment

- First 13 weeks on full stipend; then
- Following 13 weeks on half stipend; then
- Remaining 26 weeks unpaid

### Housing

Where applicable, the minister shall continue to occupy the Manse or receive the Housing Allowance, for the entire period of leave.

### Vehicle and Travel

MVA shall be included in paid maternity leave if the minister is full-time.

### Allowances

Other allowances shall not be paid as part of the period of maternity leave.

### Various Support Funds

The Congregation or appointing bodies shall continue to pay the Support Fund contributions and Beneficiary Fund/Superannuation levies for the period of paid leave only. The minister may make up the difference for the period of unpaid leave if they so desire. To do so they need to contact the Synod Payroll for advice on how to do this.

## 18.20 Application and Approval of Maternity Leave

All applications for Maternity Leave must be submitted to the appointing body using the **Ministers Leave Form**, with appropriate documentation such as doctor's letters etc. attached.

The signed application is then sent to the Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee or NRCC Executive for their review of the arrangements to cover the ministerial duties whilst the minister is on Leave.

Presbytery then sends a copy of the signed application to the minister and the appointing body for processing by the relevant Payroll.

## 18.21 Access to Government Payments

Ministers may be entitled to access government schemes. They should contact the Department of Human Services (formerly Centrelink) to discuss their particular situation. This is the responsibility of the minister to arrange and provide advice to the body responsible for their Payroll.

## 18.22 Reimbursement/Support to the Appointing Body

The Synod, via the Ministers Support Fund, on application from the appointing body, can provide financial assistance for the full costs of supply for the period of leave. The appointing body should contact the Synod Operations Manager for more information and process.



## DAD AND PARTNER LEAVE

A government-funded Dad and Partner Pay initiative is available to those who meet the eligibility requirements. This initiative provides two weeks paid leave at the national minimum wage for parents who are not the primary carer of their children. Dad and Partner Pay can be received at any time in the first year after the child's birth or adoption, as long as the dad or partner is on unpaid leave. This means that Dad and Partner Pay must start within 50 weeks of the child's birth or adoption to ensure that payments are made in time. To be eligible for this federal government entitlement, the Dad or Partner must meet the Department of Human Services eligibility criteria and must either be on unpaid leave from their role or not working. For further details, please contact the Department of Human Services.

### 18.23 Entitlement and Remuneration for Partner Leave

For all ministers in placement, the appointing body will "top up" the difference between the government funded Dad and Partner Pay and their normal remuneration, if it is taken within 6 weeks of the birth of the child. This is to allow them to spend some quality time with their family without a financial burden or dipping into their recreation leave.

## ADOPTION LEAVE

Directly following the adoption of a child up to pre-school age, the general conditions are those that apply as with maternity leave, including the Synod meeting the cost of supply during the period of paid leave. Leave may be extended beyond the paid period up to 52 weeks in total, on an unpaid basis.

Again, the provisions applicable are those which apply in respect of extension of maternity leave and applies to male and female ministers.

## LONG SERVICE LEAVE

### 18.25 Background

The purpose of Long Service Leave is to refresh a minister after extended service.

### 18.26 Entitlement and Remuneration for Long Leave

Ministers are entitled to 13 weeks after 10 years' service, and then pro rata for each 5 years thereafter, up to the date of retirement.

Given the purpose of Long Service Leave is to refresh the minister, the full Long Leave entitlement should be taken as soon as possible after the date at which it is reached (i.e., 10 years of service).

### 18.27 Application and Approval of Long Leave

All applications for Long Leave must be approved by the relevant church council or appointing body using the **Ministers Long Leave Form**.

Long Leave should be taken in a minimum of one week lots. The signed application is then sent to the Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee or NRCC Executive for their review and approval.

Presbytery shall send a copy of the signed application to the minister, appointing body and the Synod Finance team for processing.



## 18.28 Untaken Long Service Leave at the conclusion of a Placement/Retirement

Long Leave is centrally managed by Synod's Finance Team. Accordingly, Long Leave is not lost between placements, or when moving between Presbyteries/Synods.

When a minister retires, any untaken Long Leave can be paid out less the appropriate taxation. It is the minister's responsibility to obtain appropriate financial advice.

The former practice of taking Long Leave immediately before retirement is no longer an option.

## 18.29 Reimbursement/Support to the Appointing Body

The Synod will reimburse the Congregation/Appointing Body for the value of the stipend package and allowances less the Ministers Support Fund contribution, and personal beneficiary contribution if applicable. All reimbursements will be in line with the by-laws and policies contained within this handbook in regard to the approved stipend and allowances.

Itemised documentation as to the Minister's regular remuneration for the period of Long Leave will be requested by Synod closer to the commencement of the Long Leave to allow the reimbursement to be calculated and processed into the appointing bodies account.

## DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE LEAVE

### 18.30 Background

The Synod recognises the devastating impact Domestic, and Family Violence (DFV) can have on the lives of those who experience it, including their work and financial security. Ministers who are experiencing or escaping DFV are encouraged to advise their Presbytery so that appropriate support is provided wherever possible.

### 18.31 Entitlement and Remuneration for Domestic Violence Leave

The Synod is committed to providing leave and other support to ministers who experience domestic and family violence (DFV).

Minsters personally experiencing DFV may access up to five (5) days paid leave per annum of Domestic Violence Leave for the purposes of attending to:

- Medical appointments
- Legal proceedings
- Accommodation matters including relocation
- Childcare and education matters
- Counselling; or
- To make other safety arrangements which are related to domestic and family violence

Leave may be taken in units of one hour, half days, and full days. Full-time ministers are eligible for up to 5 days per annum, with part-time placements eligible for up to 3 days per annum.



In addition to Domestic Violence Leave, ministers can make an application for additional leave. The amount and type of leave provided will be determined by the individual's situation through consulting the Presbytery.

Domestic Violence Leave is noncumulative.

Ministers will need to talk to Presbytery should they need to negotiate temporary flexible arrangements, and when returning after leave due to DFV related issues, are encouraged to talk to their Presbytery regarding any ongoing safety concerns they may have.

Ministers who provide support to a family member experiencing DFV may access allocated Domestic Violence leave for the purpose of:

- accompanying that person to legal proceedings, counselling, appointments with a medical or legal practitioner
- assisting with relocations or other safety arrangements; or
- other activities associated with the family and domestic violence including caring for children

### **Notice and Notification**

While notice is not strictly required prior to taking the leave, the minister should notify their Presbytery of their intention to take or remain on DFV or other leave for this purpose as soon as possible. Proof of DFV may be required and can be a document issued by the Police Service, a Court, a Doctor, a Domestic and Family Violence Support Service or Lawyer, or a statutory declaration.

The Presbytery will advise Payroll of a period of 'Special Leave' in order to ensure privacy of the Minister concerned.

The Synod takes the safety and well-being of all ministers and staff seriously and will act accordingly.

## **MISCELLANEOUS OTHER LEAVE**

### **18.32 Background**

There are a range of less common leave scenarios relating to ministers outlined below:

- Public Holidays
- Sundays Free from ministerial responsibilities
- Jury Duty
- Defense Reservist or Emergency Services Leave

### **18.33 Public Holidays**

Public holidays are as per the NT government's gazetted holidays.

Public holidays are not included in periods of Recreation or Study Leave but are included in all other forms of Leave. Ministers in congregational placements generally work through public holidays such as Christmas and Easter. It is the responsibility of the minister and appointing body to agree on how this should be addressed.

### **18.35 Sundays Free from Ministerial Responsibilities**

Some Congregations have the practice of releasing their Minister when there is a month with a fifth Sunday. This would be at the discretion of the Church Council.



Where the minister in a part-time placement is expected to preach every Sunday, then the same practice could apply.

## 18.36 Jury Duty

UCA ordained ministers may exercise their entitlement to be exempted from Jury Duty. Please contact the Synod Office if you require a letter of exemption.

## 18.37 Community Service Leave (Defense Reservist/Emergency Services)

UCA ministers may apply for Community Service leave which is subject to their appointing body's approval. Such approval would not be unreasonably withheld.

## 18.38 Unpaid leave

In extraordinary circumstances, a minister may request a period of unpaid leave. This is at the discretion of the appointing body and PPNA PRC or NRCC Executive and would depend on the reason and implications for the placement.

## 19. WORKERS COMPENSATION

Treasurers are reminded that all ministers are covered by the Synod for workers compensation insurance purposes. The premium is paid from contributions received through the sickness and accident component of the Ministers Support Fund Levy.

If the congregation employs other staff, including lay persons in ordained minister's roles, separate arrangements need to be made for Workers Compensation insurance. The minister should not be included in any declarations submitted to the insurer.

Guidance on obtaining workers compensation insurance cover should be sought from the Operations Manager.

## 20. MINISTERS OBLIGATIONS IN RELATION TO GOVERNMENT BODIES

### 20.1 Background

As part of the Church's commitment to working with Government, the following obligations are part of any minister's legal and ethical responsibility:

- National Police Check (if required)
- Working with Children and/or Working with Vulnerable Persons Check
- Marriage Celebrant Requirements
- Mandatory Reporting

### Police Check

Certain parts of the church may require a police check. Should this be required, guidance will be provided as to the required process.





## 20.2 OCHRE CARD or WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK

The Ochre Card in the NT or the Working with Children Check in SA and WA are legal requirements for every minister within the Northern Synod, regardless of whether they are directly engaged with children in ministry. Retired ministers, whose full WWCC may have expired during their retirement require a volunteer WWCC as long as they are not in supply or other paid forms of ministry.

The outcome of a check is either a clearance to work with children or a bar against working with children. If cleared, the check will be valid according to the entity granting the 'Card' or WWCC, however applicants are continuously monitored.

**NT, SA, WA:** Some ministers will need to obtain multiple checks due to their geographical location.

**Responsibilities:** It is not possible to engage in any form of ministry without holding a current WWCC/WWVP. This includes retired ministers seeking to serve locally or in supply (even leading the occasional worship service) including ministers who may be employed under alternate arrangements (i.e., outside of, but seeking recognition from the church).

Failure to hold a valid check is an offence. Penalties range from fines to imprisonment.

It is the responsibility for each minister to pay for and maintain a current WWCC.

It is the responsibility of each minister to lodge and maintain their WWCC number and expiry date with both Presbytery and payroll office. The Annual Report for a minister should also include this information with a 'valid to' date recorded.

Any minister within the Northern Synod with an expired WWCC will be immediately stood aside from all ministry duties until the renewed check has been updated and validated. Should this not be immediately rectified, discipline processes may ensue, and the appointing body and/or Presbytery may move to the termination of placement.

While this is the responsibility of each minister, it is also part of the appointing body and Presbytery oversight responsibility to ensure proper records are kept and communicated to the General Secretary.

## 20.3 MARRIAGE CELEBRANT REQUIREMENTS

The Synod provides an annual list of Religious Practitioners who are eligible celebrants, to the NT

Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM). BDM allocate a registration number which must be quoted on all subsequent marriage paperwork. Unless a minister is duly registered, they will be unable to conduct any marriage ceremony. Please refer to your presbytery if you require further information.

A minister is only able to conduct weddings according to the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia. No minister is authorised to conduct, and no wedding is legal, if conducted, outside of the Uniting Church authorised liturgy (rite).

Should any paperwork be lodged incorrectly or inadequately, BDM will inform the registered minister directly. It will be the responsibility of the authorised minister to ensure the legal process is correctly followed. Should a negative pattern emerge, the General Secretary may request the minister to retrain as a marriage celebrant within the church, or request BDM to withdraw authorisation.





For information on the legal requirements for religious celebrants and/or to order stationary, please visit the NT Registry of Births Deaths – Marriage Celebrants website.

## 20.4 Mandatory Reporting Obligations

Mandatory reporting is a term used to describe the legislative requirement for selected groups of people to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to government authorities. Parliaments in all Australian states and territories have enacted mandatory reporting laws.

However, the laws are not the same across all jurisdictions. The main differences concern who must report and what types of abuse and neglect must be reported. Synod ministers are obligated to report.

For more information, please visit in NT - [Protect your child from sexual abuse | NT.GOV.AU](https://www.nt.gov.au/child-protection/),

in WA - [Mandatory Reporting Information and Training in Western Australia \(dcp.wa.gov.au\)](https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/),

In SA - [mandatory-reporting-guide.pdf \(childprotection.sa.gov.au\)](https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/mandatory-reporting-guide.pdf)

As mandatory reporters, it is the responsibility of every minister to be aware of the Mandatory Reporting requirements within their State, Territory and Synod.

A range of church policies and guidelines exist to support safe church practice. It is the responsibility of every minister to be informed of such resources as may exist from Assembly and the Synod.

## 21. DISCIPLINE

### 21.1 Background

‘Discipline in the church is the exercise of spiritual authority with a view to honouring Christ the Head of the Church and ensuring the spiritual well-being of its members.’ Reg 5.1.2

The expectations of how a minister should behave are recounted in the **Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice (CoEMP)**.

Any breach of the CoEMP can become grounds for a complaint against a minister.

Participating in a discipline process can range from uncomfortable to deeply painful and each of the discipline committees have different regulations to guide assist in the process.

There are three relevant discipline committees, as per the Regulations, which are delegated in the Northern Synod:

- Committee for Counselling (C4C)
- Synod Sexual Misconduct Complaints Committee (SSMCC)
- Committee for Discipline (C4D)

Any complaint made against an ordained minister of The Uniting Church in Australia, or a lay person commissioned into the Ministry of Pastor, and which is unable to be resolved at a local or Presbytery level, in accordance with Section 5 of the UCA Regulations will be sent to the C4C or SSMCC. Both committees seek reconciliation and healing, enabling all parties to move forward in positive ways.

This is not always possible and so, should it be necessary, a matter may be referred to the C4D. This is a more formal process which often means the standing aside of a minister and can involve legal representation.



## 21.2 Lodging an Appeal

Section 6 of the regulations includes the ability to appeal a decision of the C4D.

Grounds for an Appeal are recounted in Regulation 6.4.

The process for lodging an appeal is found in Regulation 6.5.

## 21.3 Accountability of Ministers

Over time guidelines, policies and practices change. It is the responsibility of each minister to be aware of their responsibilities in serving the church – found in the regulations, their ordination vows, any terms of Placement, and induction and commissioning services.

- Ministers shall be accountable and responsible to Presbytery in matters of faith and discipline to the Presbytery in which their name is listed on the Presbytery roll (Regulation 2.9.1).
- Ministers commit and re-commit to being accountable and responsible to the Presbytery through services of ordination and induction.
- Responsibilities of the Presbytery for the oversight of ministers are outlined in Regulation 3.1.3
- the counselling and discipline of ministers shall be the responsibility of Presbytery and in the exercise of its responsibility it shall:
  - a) Help them to discern and fulfil their vocations
  - b) Assist them in nurturing their gifts
  - c) Provide encouragement for the enrichment of their ministry
  - d) Advise, admonish, correct and assist them when they appear to require guidance and support
  - e) Assist and encourage observance of the Code of Ethics
  - f) Advise and discipline ministers in relation to breaches of the Code of Ethics; and
  - g) Deal with complaints made against them (Regulation 5.4.2).

## 22. GLOSSARY

Lay Specified Minister of Pastor Handbook
Stipend and Allowance Table
Regulations UCA Constitution Regulations
Synod By Laws - Section 12
Ministry Matters Contact List
Terms of Placement (Template)
Minister Placement Entitlement Guide
The Theology of Ministerial Stipends, Rev Dr Chris Walker <a href="#">Theology-of-Stipends.pdf</a>
Minister Annual Stipend Letter (Template)
Code of Ethics - Section 5
Synod's Property Services
Housing Allowance Guidelines (section in the Stipend and Allowance Table)
Employment Manual Section 2. (Refer page 7. Motor Vehicle)



The Uniting Church Beneficiary Fund, managed by Mercer
UCA Supervision List
Specified Minister Annual Report (Template)
Removal Inventory
Manse Agreement (Statement of Mutual Expectations)
Supply Agreement (Template)
Benestar Brochure
Benestar Hub User Guide
Ministers Leave Application Form <b>Note:</b> Please use this form to apply for the following leave by ticking the relevant leave type box or tick 'other' and note the leave type in the comments box:
Recreation Leave
Study Leave
Personal (Sick) Leave
Personal (Carers) Leave
Compassionate Leave
Maternity Leave
Domestic Family Violence Leave
Ministers Application to Accrue Leave Form
Minister Long Service Leave Application Form
Ministers Leave Entitlements Guide
Working with Children Check (WWCC)
Nomination for Registration of Minister of Religion Form
Form 10/11 (Additional Information Form)
Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages - Marriage Celebrants
Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice (CoEMP)

## 23. OTHER USEFUL LINKS

[NS Website link](#)

[The Northern Synod By-Laws](#)

[The Uniting Church in Australia Regulations Edition # \(online edition will be most current\)](#)

[Uniting Church in Australia Assembly website](#)

[Services Australia](#)

[Centrelink](#)

[Medicare](#)

[Australian Tax Office \(ATO\)](#)

[Religious Practitioners](#)

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[Royal Commission - Religious Institutions](#)

Northern Synod Ochre Card NT Safe Link <https://forms.pfes.nt.gov.au/safent/>

Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriage <https://nt.gov.au/law/bdm/births-deaths-and-marriages/office-contacts>



## 24. ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

ABN	Australian Business Number
Appointing Body	The placement to which the minister has been called
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
BAS	Business Activity Statement
CoEMP	Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice
DFV	Domestic Family Violence
GST	Goods and Services Tax
MBA	Ministers Benefit Account
MSF	Ministers Support Fund
MVA	Motor Vehicle Allowance
PAYG	Pay As You Go Withholding Tax
Payment Summary	The terminology for what used to be called a Group Certificate
PRC	Pastoral Relations Committee
STP	Single Touch Payroll
TOP	Terms of Placement
Treasurer	To mean equivalent in Appointing Bodies
UFS	Trading as Uniting Church (NSW) Trust Association Limited (Uniting Financial Services)

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