KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE POLICY

Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Keeping Children Safe

1.0 Keeping Children Safe Policy: Preamble

This Keeping Children Safe policy applies throughout the Uniting Church in Australia - Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. Preventing child abuse is both an individual and collective responsibility of the Uniting Church, and all who engage with it. Wherever the policy says "we", it is referring to every entity and every individual connected with the Uniting Church. (See *Scope*, Section 1.3.)

We keep children safe first and foremost because of our understanding of God's will for love and justice. (See *What we believe*, Section 1.2.) We also keep children safe in response to a range of external standards and regulations. In particular, we are responding to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Victorian Government's Child Safe Standards. Appendix 1 is a chart showing how our policy addresses these two government standards and further detail is in Appendix 2. Our policy is based on the Uniting Church in Australia Child Safe Policy Framework.

This policy sets out the Church's clear commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse, and the creation of a safe and just culture. The Church is guided in its operation by a suite of related policies and procedures in addition to this Keeping Children Safe policy.

Definitions of terms used in this policy are set out in Appendix 3. More information explaining child abuse is in Appendix 4.

1.1 The Uniting Church's Commitment: The Policy Statement

- All children who are involved in any of the Uniting Church's activities, services, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Uniting Church in Australia is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.
- We have zero tolerance of all forms of child abuse and will do all in our power to safeguard children from abuse.
- The Church commits itself to the creation and maintenance of a child-safe culture to ensure the care, protection and safety of all children engaging with the Church in any of its entities.
- Abuse thrives on secrecy. To prevent child abuse across the Church, we are committed to providing clear leadership and open and transparent governance to combat secrecy.
- The Church clearly affirms its commitment to upholding the law. This includes the requirement to report abuse to the appropriate authorities.

1.2 What we believe: Theological Imperative

The Uniting Church in Australia believes that all people, including children, are made in the image of God. As a Christian community we believe that God reaches out to us in love and acceptance, and that our relationships with each other should express love, care and respect (*Safe Place Position Statement* developed by the UCA Commission on Women and Men in 1997).

Central to living out the Gospel is to love God and to love others. As a community of faith, we are committed to providing safe environments for all people, including children, so that they may live life in all its fullness. We also acknowledge the rights of children as detailed in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (United Nations, 1990). This states that children shall be protected from physical or mental harm and neglect, including sexual abuse and exploitation (Article 19).

Children are gifts of God to be received, welcomed and cared for responsibly and justly. The Gospel also directs us to listen to and learn from children. *On the Way Together* (1998) affirms that "children in the Uniting Church in Australia are nurtured in Christian faith and discipleship, experiencing relationships which promote trust, cooperation, honesty, positive valuing of persons, responsibility and Christian service." It adds that the Church "affirms the value and the rights of children as human beings as it listens to, guides, protects, advocates for, and empowers children within its own communities and the wider community."

Unfortunately, not all children are protected from harm. Abuse occurs across all areas of society. Some adults will seek opportunities to form relationships with children which may become exploitative. Whilst children, parents and the Church should be aware of 'stranger danger', most people who sexually abuse children are known to the victim through family, friends, school, sports groups, church and other community based activities.

The Uniting Church abhors the crime of child abuse. The Church is devoted to the care, protection and wellbeing of the most vulnerable. To know that innocent and trusting children have been preyed upon within the Church is deeply distressing. We are committed to do everything we can to achieve justice for those who have been abused and to create an environment where children are safe.

1.3 Scope: Who must adhere to this policy

All individuals and entities related to the Uniting Church will adhere to this policy. By having a shared understanding of and commitment to an environment of safety, we all have an active role in keeping children safe.

Individuals of the Church include but are not limited to:
- Board and/or council members of any entity
- Church council members, elders and other appointed leaders
- Employees and volunteers
- Congregational members and adherents
- Presbytery and synod members
- Children, parents and carers
- People in specified ministries of the Church including those from other denominations who are serving in Uniting Church placements.

Entities of the Church include but are not limited to:
- All congregations, parish missions and presbyteries within the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
- All agencies, programs, services, events and employees in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
- All camping activities related to the Uniting Church
- Uniting (Synod of Victoria and Tasmania)
- Associated Uniting Church schools
- Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congresses (Victoria and Tasmania)
- University colleges

2.0   What we will do: Policy Actions

We will provide a just and safe culture and environment for children. We will heed our beliefs as outlined in the theological imperative. We will ensure that the expectations outlined in the Royal Commission's elements of child-safe organisations and the Victorian Government's Child Safe Standards are incorporated into our programs and practice.

Resources to assist with the implementation of the following actions are outlined in Appendix 5 and can be found on the Culture of Safety www.ucavictas.org.au/keepingchildrensafe/

We commit to the following actions to keep children safe:

2.1   Promote strong leadership and governance and a culture of child safety
a) We do not tolerate harm to children.
b) We endorse the Keeping Children Safe policy and we make the policy accessible to all who must adhere to it.
c) Our leaders promote individual and collective responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of children.
d) We embed a culture of child safety and ensure that policies and procedures are implemented.
e) Our leaders publicly commit to child safety. They model and champion child-safe policies, practices and culture.
f) We communicate openly and honestly. We are open to external feedback and advice.
g) We allocate roles and responsibilities for achieving the strategies and monitor our progress to ensure we are child-safe.

This action addresses the following requirements:

UCA National Framework	✓ Governance facilitates implementation of child-safe policies ✓ Adopt clear evidence based policies and procedures ✓ Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
Victorian Child Safe Standards	✓ A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety ✓ Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety ✓ Promote strong leadership and governance and a culture of child safety
Royal Commission Elements	✓ Child safe policy and procedures ✓ Child safety embedded in leadership, governance and culture

2.2   Promote access, equity and diversity
a) We recognise that some children are more vulnerable to abuse based on various factors including age, gender, ethnicity, disability and prior abuse or neglect.
b) We welcome children and families from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. We recognise that cultural identity and safety is fundamental to a child's overall wellbeing and sense of safety.
c) We embrace diversity and demonstrate a zero tolerance to discrimination.
d) We respond to the needs of those who are most vulnerable.
e) We respect and value people's diverse beliefs.
f) We are committed to responsive and culturally aware relationships.
g) We seek to communicate openly and inclusively with people of various cultural backgrounds.
h) We are sensitive to the differences in child-rearing practices due to a family's personal or cultural belief.
i) We recognise that every Aboriginal child, in particular, needs to feel that their sense of self and identity is valued.
j) Children with a disability can be vulnerable to abuse because they may have communication difficulties or increased personal care requirements. We work with families and children to ensure children with disabilities are cared for and included in ways that best meet their needs.

This action addresses the following requirements:

UCA National Framework	✓ Respect diversity and promote equity
Victorian Child Safe Standards	✓ Cultural Safety for Aboriginal and CALD children and safety for children with disabilities.
Royal Commission Elements	✓ Equity is promoted and diversity respected

2.3   Promote appropriate behaviour

a)   We adopt and implement a clear Code of Conduct to guide interaction with children and set clear boundaries of behaviour between adults and children.

b)   We provide clear guidance to children about how we expect them to interact with other children and what is unacceptable behaviour.

This action addresses the following requirements:

UCA National Framework	✓ Have clear codes of conduct
Victorian Child Safe Standards	✓ A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
Royal Commission Elements	✓ Child-safe policy and procedures ✓ Staff and volunteers comply with a Code of Conduct that sets clear behavioural standards

2.4   Recruit, train and supervise workers well

Recruiting and screening employees and volunteers

a)   We adopt and implement evidence-based standards to recruit and screen employees and to engage volunteers and others who work with children.

b)   Our recruitment practice for any employee or appointed leader working with children includes the use of position descriptions, formal interviews and referee checks. All appointed leaders and staff must have a Working with Children Check/Registration. Where appropriate, National Criminal History Checks are also completed.

c)   We keep up-to-date and accurate records. These help us identify areas for change, monitor continuous improvement, identify and manage risks and improve child-safe practices.

d)   We use the recruitment and interview process to determine the suitability of a potential employee or volunteer who wishes to work with children. We explore the person's motivation to work with children, relevant experience and their understanding of boundaries. We also review their communication skills, understanding of children's emotional and physical needs and attitudes to children's rights. We check references thoroughly.

e)   We observe legislative requirements regarding privacy and confidentiality.

Training and supervising employees and volunteers

f)   Building a child-safe culture requires informed and supported individuals who understand their role in ensuring a safe environment for children.

g)   Through induction we communicate to newly appointed leaders and volunteers the Church's values and expectations, including those about child safety. All appointed leaders and employees are required to attend training to:
   • Ensure understanding of the requirements of a child safe environment.
   • Raise awareness of appropriate/inappropriate behaviour.
   • Raise awareness of child sexual abuse, grooming and reporting.
   • Raise awareness of how to speak to children about their concerns.
   • Ensure understanding of the process for handling complaints and/or allegations.
   • Ensure cultural awareness.

h)   We provide each newly appointed leader or employee with Safe Church Training and renew this every two years for employees and volunteers alike.

i)   We carefully plan and supervise programs and activities involving children and supervise the employees and volunteers involved.

j) We document suspicious behaviour and adhere to a procedure for addressing complaints and concerns expressed by children or other adults.

k) We do not tolerate harm to children. Our supervision of staff and volunteers includes disciplinary action when they do not adhere to codes of conduct, policies and practices.

l) We support anyone who raises concerns about the safety of children and/or is affected by child abuse within the Church.

This action addresses the following requirements:

UCA National Framework	✓ Recruit well including appropriate screening ✓ Provide child safe focused orientation and training ✓ Undertake strong planning and supervision ✓ Provide support
Victorian Child Safe Standards	✓ Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel ✓ Effective leadership arrangements
Royal Commission Elements	✓ Human resources management ✓ Education and training ✓ People working with children are suitable and supported ✓ Staff and volunteers are equipped with knowledge and skills through education and training

2.5 Manage risk, promote safety and respond to concerns

a) We monitor and evaluate risk to ensure child safety. We use risk management strategies to identify and reduce risks, taking into account the nature of each environment, the activities planned and the characteristics and needs of all children.

b) We promote safe places for children. We ensure a safe physical environment by undertaking site audits and ensuring children are adequately supervised.

c) We recognise that children are particularly vulnerable in the online environment. We recognise that online grooming is illegal and ensure this risk is identified and reduced. We use the online environment in accordance with the Keeping Children Safe Code of Conduct.

d) We have a clear procedure for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse. This procedure enables individuals to take the appropriate action to protect children and promote safety. Any person who is aware of or suspects child abuse is to report it to the authorities. This is true whether or not the situation involves Church staff or volunteers. If a complaint of child abuse becomes known it is immediately reported to the police and child protection services, and steps are taken immediately to minimise any further harm. Ongoing support is provided to all parties.

e) We clearly document all instances of abuse and any action taken. Records of suspected child abuse are kept securely and retained indefinitely. We understand that, in Victoria, if a legal claim of child abuse is made, a Church entity must be able to show that it did all it could to prevent and report abuse. (See The Wrongs Amendment Act 2017 in Appendix 2.)

f) We respond to breaches of the Code of Conduct, ensuring that all those responsible for children are aware of the appropriate behaviour and boundaries for keeping children safe.

g) We recognise the many types of child safety concerns that must be brought to the attention of the Synod via the Culture of Safety Unit. They include (but are not limited to) the following:
- Children's disclosures of abuse or harm
- Any concerns that children are at risk of harm
- Inappropriate or exclusive relationships developing between any adult and a child
- Breaches of the Keeping Children Safe Code of Conduct
- Concerns about a physical environment that may pose a risk to children

h) We support relevant authorities' investigations into any concerns about children and/or allegations of abuse or harm towards children. While investigations are underway, we ensure child protection measures continue to be in place.

i) In consultation with police and other authorities, and subject to their approval, we conduct our own inquiries in order to identify opportunities for child safe practice improvements.

j) We keep consistent, full, accurate and up-to-date records. We observe legislative requirements for records management and access, privacy and confidentiality.

k) We keep records relating to child safety concerns indefinitely and ensure staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping.

This action addresses the following requirements:

UCA National Framework	*Adopt clear evidence based policies and procedures* *Comprehensive investigation and reporting* *Review and continuous improvement*
Victorian Child Safe Standards	*Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse* *Keep good records* *Strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risk of abuse*
Royal Commission Elements	*Physical and online environment* *Review and continuous improvement* *Processes for responding to complaints are child focussed*

2.6 Promote child, family and community participation

a) We give children opportunities to provide feedback about their involvement in the Church's life and we respond to their feedback.

b) We ensure that children know how to report any allegations of abuse or concerns they have. We make sure they feel safe and are supported in doing so.

c) We provide training to employees and appointed leaders that will assist them to:
   - respond to any concerns children express
   - listen to, empower and communicate with children
   - enable children to participate in decision making that affects them

d) We recognise that families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing of their children.

e) We engage in open communication with families and communities regarding child safety.

f) We provide accessible information about our policies and procedures in keeping children safe.

g) We recognise that friendships and peer support are important in helping children feel safe and connected.

h) We ensure that families have opportunities to provide feedback and are comfortable to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of their child(ren).

This action addresses the following requirements:

UCA National Framework	✓ Enable children and families to participate in decision making ✓ Provide an open environment
Victorian Child Safe Standards	✓ Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children
Royal Commission Elements	✓ children's participation and empowerment ✓ family and community involvement

3.   Review

This policy will be formally reviewed and updated at least every two years to continuously improve our child-safe policies and procedures. When new research, guidelines or standards are introduced by the Uniting Church or relevant government, we will ensure documentation is updated and education provided. We will monitor the implementation of our child-safe policies and procedures. We will critically review incidents and reports to identify trends, identify and manage risks, identify systemic issues and improve our child-safe policies and practices.

APPENDIX ONE

Keeping Children Safe Policy and compliance with Victorian Child Safe Standards and Royal Commission Key Elements

The KSC logo (KSC) indicates which sections of the UCA policy are relevant to each standard and element.

UCA Vic/ Tas Keeping Children Safe Policy	Victorian Child Safe Standards							Royal Commission 10 Key Elements									
	Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including effective leadership	A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety	A clear code of conduct for appropriate behaviour with children	Human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel	Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse	Strategies to identify and reduce or remove the risk of abuse	Strategies for children's participation, empowerment	Organisational leadership, governance and culture	Children's participation and empowerment	Family and community involvement	Equity is promoted and diversity respected	Human resources management	Child-focused complaint process	Education and training	Physical and online environment	Review and continuous improvement	Child safe policy and procedures
The Policy Statement – Section 1.1: Zero tolerance of child abuse		KSC	KSC														KSC
Scope – Section 1.3: Applies to all people involved with UCA			KSC					KSC				KSC					
Policy Action 2.1: Promote strong leadership and governance and a culture of child safety.	KSC	KSC						KSC									KSC
Policy Action 2.2: Promote access, equity and diversity							KSC				KSC						
Policy Action 2.3: Promote appropriate behaviour			KSC	KSC					KSC			KSC					KSC
Policy action 2.4: Recruit, train and supervise workers well	KSC		KSC	KSC				KSC				KSC		KSC		KSC	KSC
Policy action 2.5: Manage risk, promote safety and respond to concerns	KSC	KSC	KSC	KSC	KSC	KSC							KSC		KSC	KSC	
Policy Action 2.6: Promote child, family and community participation	KSC	KSC	KSC				KSC		KSC	KSC			KSC				
Review – Section 3: Monitor and review policies and procedures	KSC							KSC								KSC	

APPENDIX TWO
Guiding Documentation

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990
The rights outlined in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child are fundamental to the development of universal child-safe procedures. The Convention specifically recognises that children have a right to be protected from physical and mental harm, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has investigated how institutions such as churches, schools, agencies, camping and recreational clubs have responded to allegations of child sexual abuse. Following the release of the Royal Commission final recommendations in December 2017, the Keeping Children Safe policy will be reviewed and amended as appropriate.

Uniting Church National Child Safe Policy Framework
Child-safe policies of Uniting Church entities will be developed in accordance with the National Child Safe Policy Framework. The Framework has been used in the development of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Keeping Children Safe policy.

The Charter of Human Rights (Victoria)
Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities outlines the basic human rights of all people and was introduced through the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. It states that children have the same rights as adults with added protection according to their best interests.

The Betrayal of Trust Report (Victoria)
In 2012 the Victorian Government initiated an inquiry into the handling of child abuse allegations by religious and other organisations. The inquiry's report, *Betrayal of Trust*, made a number of recommendations that have been acted on including:
- criminal law reform: Created offences related to grooming, failure to protect and failure to disclose (see below)
- creating Child Safe Organisations: Created mandatory minimum standards and a reportable conduct scheme.

The three new criminal offences (all of which carry maximum penalties of imprisonment) introduced as amendments to the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) are:
- **Grooming offence**: this offence requires any adult to report predatory conduct designed to facilitate sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.
- **Failure to protect offence**: an adult person in a position of authority or responsibility will be guilty of an offence if they negligently fail to reduce or remove a substantial risk to a child under the age of 16 years who may come under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation, and who may become the victim of sexual abuse committed by an adult associated with the organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit an offense if they know of the risk but negligently fail to reduce or remove it.
- **Failure to disclose offence**: any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 years of age has an obligation to report that information to the police.

Victorian Government Child Safe Standards

The Victorian Government introduced compulsory child safe standards to improve the way organisations such as the Uniting Church prevent and respond to child abuse within their organisation. Complying with the standards is compulsory. They aim to drive positive cultural change so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of leaders, staff and volunteers. This will assist organisations to:

- o prevent child abuse
- o encourage reporting of any abuse that does occur
- o improve responses to any allegations of child abuse.

This policy recognises that all children are vulnerable due to their developmental status. Some children are particularly vulnerable – particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background and children with a disability.

The Keeping Children Safe Policy of the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania complies with the Victorian Government Child Safe Standards and is mandatory for all Church entities in this synod.

Reportable Conduct Scheme (Victoria)

The *Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct)* Act 2017 amends the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 to establish a reportable conduct scheme (the **Scheme)**. From 1 July 2017, the Commission for Children and Young People (**Commissioner**) administers the Scheme in Victoria.

Five types of 'reportable conduct' are covered by the Scheme:

- a. sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child;
- b. sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child;
- c. physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child;
- d. any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child; and
- e. significant neglect of a child.

Under the Scheme, any reportable conduct must be reported promptly by the "head of the organisation". For the Uniting Church Vic/Tas:

- a. the General Secretary is "head of the organisation" for congregations, presbyteries, Synod departments and non-Uniting agencies; UCA-related camping activities; and UAICC;
- b. Uniting's CEO is "head of the organisation" for Uniting agencies; and
- c. the relevant school Principal or Master is "head of the organisation" for each individual school or university college.

Every individual or part of the Church who becomes aware of reportable conduct is required to notify their relevant "head of the organisation" immediately after securing the safety of the child(ren) involved. The head of the organisation will decide whether an investigation is to be conducted by staff of the organisation, an independent investigator or a Government authority.

Every individual and part of the Church is responsible to maintain adequate records about child safety issues and allegations. All individuals and Church entities must comply with requests made by Synod, the Commissioner or an independent third party as part of an investigation.

> **If you are concerned about the safety of a child call 000.**
> **If you are concerned a serious criminal offence or child sexual offence**
> **has occurred call 000 or your closest police station** (depending upon circumstances)
> **Contact your relevant 'head of the organisation' immediately.**

Wrongs Amendment Act 2017

The Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2017 amends the Wrongs Act 1958. From 1 July 2017, the "onus of proof" is reversed in child abuse incidents.

Thus, if a legal claim of child abuse is made against any part of the Church, the Church must prove it took all reasonable steps to prevent the child from being abused. Reasonable steps may include ensuring all laws, policies and procedures were understood and complied with.

This change in law relates to all individuals and institutions of the Church, including congregations, and requires more attention to record-keeping because:

1. All parts of the Church must keep detailed records of steps taken to prevent abuse, such as records of training and education and audits of compliance with law, policy and procedure; and
2. Where relevant, inappropriate conduct must be investigated in compliance with Child Safe Standard and Reportable Conduct requirements (see Reportable Conduct Scheme).

Working With Children Check / Registration Policy and Protocols

The Policy outlines the requirement for appointed leader and employees to have a Working with Children Check/Registration. The Synod's Working With Children Check/Registration policy will assist individuals with the application process and help the congregation or entity to document all checks/registrations, to know what to do if an appointed leader refuses to apply for a WWCC/R and what action is required in the event a Negative Notice or refusal is received.

Safe Church Training Program

The Safe Church Training has been developed to ensure our leaders are informed and supported individuals who understand their role in ensuring a safe environment for children as they participate in the life of the Church. The material covers topics such as implementing the Synod's Keeping Children Safe policy, ministering to children and vulnerable adults, information for Church Councils and resources for congregational leaders.

Designed to be presented to groups, the format of the training allows for facilitated discussion which offers opportunities to develop relationships, foster discussion, encourage questions and provide a feedback loop. All ministers, appointed leaders, helpers and volunteers are required to attend Safe Church Training at least every two years.

APPENDIX THREE
Definitions

Aboriginal child	*A person under the age of 18 who:* o *is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent* o *identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and* o *is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.*
Appointed Leader	*Appointed leaders are people who are in a position of trust, influence or authority because of their leadership role within the Church. This would include, but not be limited to, lay preachers, elders, church councillors, worship leaders, anyone involved in children and youth events/programs/activities, anyone commissioned by the Church Council to perform a leadership role, music leaders, organists, Bible study leaders, and 'home group' or 'cell group' leaders.*
Child Abuse	*This refers to both adult-to-child abuse and child-to-child abuse. Abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to;* o *Physical abuse – when a person purposely injures or threatens to injure a child or young person.* o *Emotional abuse – an attack on a child or young person's self-esteem such as bullying, name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, harassing, intimidating or isolating the child or young person.* o *Family violence – when a family member, partner or ex-partner attempts to physically or psychologically dominate the other.* o *Sexual abuse – any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child.* o *Grooming – predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity.* o *Neglect – where a child is harmed by the failure to provide the basic physical and emotional necessities.* *Further explanation of these types of abuse is provided in Appendix 4.*
Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds	*A child or young person who identifies as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis.[1]*
Child	*A person who is under the age of 18 years.*
Child safety	*In the context of the Victorian Child Safe Standards, child safety means measures to protect children from abuse.*
Child safe organisation	*In the context of the Child Safe Standards, a child-safe organisation is one that meets the Child Safe Standards by proactively taking measures to protect children from abuse.*
Cultural abuse	*Actions and attitudes that deliberately ignore, denigrate or attack the culture of a person or community.[2]*
Cultural safety for Aboriginal children	*The positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination, and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity.* *A culturally safe environment does not ignore, challenge or deny cultural identity. Cultural safety upholds the rights of Aboriginal children to:* o *identify as Aboriginal without fear of retribution or questioning* o *have an education that strengthens their culture and identity* o *maintain connections to their land and country* o *maintain their strong kinship ties and social obligations* o *be taught their cultural heritage by their Elders* o *receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner* o *be involved in services that are culturally respectful.[3]*

[1] Victorian Government, *Cultural Responsiveness: Guidelines for Victorian Health Services* (2009)
[2] Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework 2008
[3] Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, 2010, *Building Respectful Partnerships*

Cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds	*An environment which is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their cultural or linguistic identity, of who they are and what they need.[4] Efforts need to be made to ensure the culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and their families receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner, including in relevant community languages.*
Children with a disability	*A disability can be any physical, sensory, neurological disability, acquired brain injury or intellectual disability or developmental delay that affects a child's ability to undertake everyday activities.[5] A disability can occur at any time in life. Children can be born with a disability or acquire a disability suddenly through an injury or illness. Some disabilities may be obvious while others are not.[6]*
Evidence Based Standards of recruitment	*Evidence based standards of recruitment require the use of processes that have been proven by both research and practice, in this instance, to be appropriate for recruitment of people working with children. This will include, but is not limited to, the use of open-ended behavioural-based questioning though which both the applicant and any referees give insight into the applicant's values, attitudes and understanding of professional boundaries and accountability.* *Some useful questions may include:* • *'Tell us about why you want to work with children?'* • *'Describe a time when you had to manage a child whose behaviour you found challenging?' or* • *'What did the applicant do when…[for example, they had to comfort a distressed child]?'*
Grooming	*Grooming* *Grooming is a process by which a person develops a relationship, friendship and/or emotional connection with a child, adults significant to the child and the environment in order to gain the trust of child and parent(s) to facilitate later sexual abuse or gratification. Specific goals include gaining access to the child, desensitising the child in order to increasingly violate boundaries, gaining the child's silence, compliance and agreement to secrecy. This kind of predatory conduct is an offence. The offence applies where an adult communicates in this way in any form, including in person or by electronic means (online), with a child under the age of 16 years in Victoria, under the age of 17 years in Tasmania or under the age of 17 years if the person grooming the child has care, supervision or authority for the child. Grooming is an offence under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), the Criminal Code 1924 (Tas) and the Criminal Code 1995 (Cwlth). In Victoria, the crime of grooming may be committed without sexual abuse occurring.*
Organisation	*The Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005 (the Act) will provide that the Child Safe Standards apply to 'applicable entities', which are defined in the Act as:* o *an incorporated body or association* o *an unincorporated body or association (however structured)* o *an individual who carries on a business and engages contractors, employees or volunteers to assist in the business in providing services or facilities.* *Therefore, the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania is an organisation.*
Specified Ministries	*The UCA Regulations define specified ministries as including Ministers (of the Word and Deacons); Pastors; Lay Pastors; Lay Preachers; Youth Workers and Community Ministers. (Reg. 2.2)*
Staff and Volunteers	*'Staff and volunteers' refers to all relevant (according to context) persons and may include, but not be limited to, board/council members, employees, volunteers, parents, carers, presbytery members, church council members, elders, congregation members, people in the specified ministries of the Church, and any other person with responsibility for the care of children.*

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[4] Williams, R. 1999, 'Cultural Safety – what does it mean for our work practice?', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public* Health, Vol 23, Issue 2, p213-214.

[5] s 3 *Disability Act 2006*.

[6] Department of Health and Human Services, About disability

Legislation & Regulations

- o *Child, Youth & Families Act (Vic)*
- o *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015*
- o *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997 (Tas)*
- o *Crimes Act 1914 (Cwlth)*
- o *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)*
- o *Disability Act 2006 (Vic)*
- o *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)*
- o *Personal Information Protection Act 2009 (Tas)*
- o *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cwlth)*
- o *Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 (Tas)*
- o *Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)*
- o *Working with Children's Regulations Act 2006 (Vic)*

APPENDIX FOUR
Child Abuse Explained

What is child abuse?

The Child Safe Standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisations. Under the Act, child abuse includes four categories of abuse as outlined below.[7] While the standards apply specifically to child abuse, organisations should look to promote children's health and wellbeing in a broader sense.

Physical violence

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from non-accidental injury inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways, including beating, shaking, burning or use of weapons (such as belts and paddles).

Possible physical indicators:
- Unexplained bruises
- Burns and/or fractured bones

Possible behavioural indicators:
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Wearing long- sleeved clothes on hot days (to hide bruising or other injury)
- Fear of specific people
- Unexplained absences
- Academic problems

Sexual offences

Sexual offences occur when a person involves the child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to his/her age and development. Child sexual abuse can involve a range of sexual activity including fondling, masturbation, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exposure to or exploitation through pornography or prostitution, as well as grooming behaviour.[8]

Possible physical indicators:
- Presence of sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy
- Vaginal or anal bleeding or discharge

Possible behavioural indicators:
- Displaying sexual behaviour or knowledge that is unusual for the child's age
- Difficulty sleeping
- Being withdrawn
- Complaining of headaches or stomach pains
- Fear of specific people
- Showing wariness or distrust of adults
- Displaying aggressive behaviour

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[7] These definitions are based on the Victorian *Child Protection Practice Manual*: <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/practice-context/child-protection-program-overview/1008-abuse-and-harm-legal-and-practice-definitions>

[8] A new grooming offence commenced in Victoria on 9 April 2014. Further information is available on the Department of Justice website <www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/grooming+offence>

Emotional or psychological abuse

Serious emotional or psychological abuse occurs when harm is inflicted on a child through repeated rejection, isolation, or by threats or violence. It can include derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent and deliberate coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological abuse could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Possible physical indicators:
- Delays in emotional, mental, or even physical development
- Physical signs of self-harming

Possible behavioural indicators:
- Exhibiting low self-esteem
- Exhibiting high anxiety
- Displaying aggressive or demanding behaviour
- Being withdrawn, passive and/or tearful
- Self-harming

Neglect

Serious neglect is the continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child's health, safety and/or development is, or is likely to be, jeopardised. Serious neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life threatening situations.

Possible physical indicators:
- Frequent hunger
- Malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing

Possible behavioural indicators:
- Stealing food
- Staying at school outside of school hours
- Aggressive behaviour
- Misusing alcohol or drugs
- Academic issues

APPENDIX FIVE
Resources available to assist with implementing the Policy Actions

The resources listed below can assist the Church in its safe church practices and in implementing the various actions in the Keeping Children Safe policy and are available at
www.ucavictas.org.au/keepingchildrensafe/

Note: From time to time further resources will be available via the website and will be listed on document CC3 - *Resources available to assist with implementing the Keeping Children Safe Policy Actions.*

Resources listed according to Policy Actions they support

2.1   Promote strong leadership and governance and a culture of child safety

Keeping Children Safe Policy (v3)	KCS1
Guide for Church Councils for Implementing KCS	CC1
Resources Available to Assist with Implementing the Policy Actions	CC3
Our Statement of Commitment	KCS3
Model Minute for Church Councils	CC2
Guide for the prevention of grooming	CC10
Person of Concern Information	POC1
Victoria's Child Safe Standards – an overview	CSS1

2.2   Promote access, equity and diversity

Safety of Children from Culturally & Linguistically Diverse backgrounds	CSS4
Cultural Safety for Aboriginal Children	CSS2
Safety of Children with a Disability	CSS3

2.3   Promote appropriate behaviour

Keeping Children Safe Code of Conduct	KCS4
A Children's Code of Conduct	KCS7

2.4   Recruit, train and supervise workers well

Guide to Selecting Volunteer Leaders	CC4
Responding to and reporting child abuse	CC5
Reporting Abuse – Notification Form for Congregations	CC6
System for Handling Concerns	CC8
Statement of commitment to induction and training	KCS5
Working With Children Check/Registration policy	WWC1
Working with Children Check/Registration FAQs	WWC2
Guide to Adding the UCA to a WWCC Application	WWC3
Guide for Information to be Added by Contact Person	WWC4
Becoming a WWCC/R contact person	WWC5
Refusal to obtain a Working with Children Check/Registration Flowchart	WWC6
Recruitment, Screening and Selection	SSL1
Application Form and Declaration	SSL2
Volunteer Leader Interview Guide	SSL3
Volunteer Referee Check	SSL4
Letter of Appointment – Volunteer	SSL5
Volunteer Annual Review – Feedback and Declaration	SSL6
Volunteer Development Plan	SSL7
Safe Church Training Attendance Record	SCT2
Disclosure Reporting Process – Flowchart	SCT3
Safe Church Training – Resource Manual	SCT5
Safe Church Training – Booklet	SCT6

2.5   Manage risk, promote safety, and handle concerns

Disclosure Reporting Process	SCT3
Responding to and reporting child abuse	CC5
Reporting Abuse - Notification Form for Congregations	CC6
Risk Assessment	CC7
System of Handling concerns	CC8
Occupational Health and Safety Manual	SPSP1
Attendance Record	SPSP2
Attendee Information Form	SPSP3
Driver information form	SPSP4
"Called to Preach" Lay Preachers Association Guide	SPSP5
Image Release Form	SPSP6

2.6   Child, Family & Community Participation

Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians	SPSP7
Child Feedback Form	SPSP8
Youth Feedback Form	SPSP9
Culture of Safety Contact Person Role Description	SCT1
Culture of Safety Contact Person Poster	SCT7

Policy Version Control

Document Review History

Version Number	Date	Reason	Resolution Number	Approved
KCSV1	24.06.2015		SSC 15.23.5	Synod Standing Committee
KCSV2	15.02.2017	Amended to incorporate the Victorian Government's Child Safe Standards.		General Secretary
KCSV3	24.05.2017	Amended to align with the UCA National Child Safe Policy Framework.		General Secretary
		Review cycle – annually		