



PROPOSAL 4

DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION POLICY

Proposal:

That the Synod adopt the Disability Access and Inclusion Policy as attached.

Rationale

At the beginning of the Policy, we outline why it is necessary for the Uniting Church in WA to develop and adopt a Disability Access and Inclusion Policy.

It states:

Theological Statement

...” The Uniting Church in Australia believes everyone is created equal in the image of God. The Church embodies a movement of Christ’s reconciliation among all people, in which “the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole” (Basis of Union para 3) ¹

Introduction

The Uniting Church in Western Australia (UCAWA) is committed to the principle of the welcome, access and inclusion of any person living with a disability in order for each one to participate fully in the life of the Church” ...

The Uniting Church acknowledges that people who live with disability have the same rights as everyone else. We embrace the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability and observe Australian, state and territory laws that uphold those rights.

¹ Assembly Disability Guidelines – updated 2020

This Policy sets out the way each congregation, mission outreach, agency, school and college can respect these rights and respond sensitively and in an inclusive manner to a person with a disability who seeks to be an active participant in the life of the church.

Once the Policy has been adopted (and as outlined in section 3.5) UCAWA will develop a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) that strengthens its impact and implementation, reflects our hope to go above and beyond the predictable, and hopefully informs the hearts and minds of church and community members about people with disability so that accessibility and inclusion become second nature to us all.

The Vic/Tas Synod's [Disability Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2026](#) is a great example of a current workable Plan that can be adapted to suit specific situations. There is also a helpful resource to assist in implementing the Plan:

<https://victasuca.wpenginpowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/How-to-put-this-plan-into-action.pdf>.

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Disability Access and Inclusion Policy

2023

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Theological Statement

The Uniting Church in Australia believes everyone is created equal in the image of God. The Church embodies a movement of Christ's reconciliation among all people, in which "the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole" (Basis of Union para 3)²

1. Introduction

The Uniting Church in Western Australia (UCAWA) is committed to the principle of the welcome, access and inclusion of any person living with a disability in order for each one to participate fully in the life of the Church.

This is in accordance with the Disability Welcome and Access statement which affirmed at the 15th Assembly in 2018 that:

- (a) Christ is most fully present when all people in the Body are unconditionally accepted as people of worth.
- (b) All people are created in the image of God, including people with disability; along with all members, the faith, gifts, hopes and dreams of people with disability are to be valued and honoured; and
- (c) God is a God of justice and peace, who seeks reconciliation amongst all people.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all areas of the Uniting Church in Western Australia's work and activities. It includes the Uniting Church Centre, WA Synod bodies, WA Presbytery bodies, all congregations and faith communities, mission outreach activities, agencies, schools, and colleges.

² Assembly Disability Guidelines – updated 2020

It applies to all Ministry agents, lay leaders, staff, volunteers, and members including people living with a disability providing services, activities, community outreach and support to any other person with a disability.

3. Policy

In seeking to be a community of reconciliation, the Uniting Church acknowledges that for many people with a disability, life and faith have not always borne witness to the vision set out in the Introduction.

We are committed to creating an environment of safety free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation for people with a disability in the Uniting Church and the wider community.

3.1 In accordance with the Assembly Statement the Uniting Church in WA seeks:

- (a) to embody a community life that in its theology and practice is accessible to all people;
- (b) to ensure that within its own life people with disability are treated justly and have their hopes and rights realised;
- (c) to advocate for justice and equity for people with disability in the wider community.

3.2 UCAWA recognises that the more diverse and inclusive the Church community, the richer it will become and that many members will face access and inclusion challenges at some time in their lives.

3.3 UCAWA recognises and aligns with appropriate legislation making disability discrimination unlawful in Australia. It covers areas such as employment, education and access to public spaces and protects against direct discrimination, indirect discrimination and harassment and social injustice.

3.4 UCAWA also recognises and upholds all outcomes required under the *WA Disability Services Act 1993*, however, will endeavour to go above and beyond the minimum standards for accessibility and inclusion. This will involve constantly aiming for best practices and involving people with a disability at every step of the way to ensure as far as is practicable each person is empowered to be a fully contributing and significant member of UCAWA.

UCAWA's commitment to create an environment of safety and opportunity for all people in the Church includes these outcomes:

- (a) People with a disability have equitable opportunities as other people to access and be supported in their employment at UCAWA.
- (b) People with disabilities have equitable opportunities to access the services of, and any events organised by UCAWA.
- (c) People with disabilities have equitable opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of UCAWA.
- (d) People with disabilities receive information from UCAWA in a format that will enable them to access it as readily as other people.
- (e) People with disabilities have equitable opportunities as other people to make complaints to UCAWA.
- (f) People with disabilities must have similar opportunities as other people in regard to representation in co-designing, participating in and contributing to any public forum or consultation held by UCAWA.
- (g) People with disabilities must be able to contribute and participate as fully as possible in the life of the Church

3.5 To strengthen the impact and implementation of this Disability Access and Inclusion Policy, UCAWA will develop a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) that reflects our hope to go above and beyond the predictable and to change the hearts and minds of church and community members about people with a disability so that accessibility and inclusion become second nature to us all.

3.6 As a successful strategy to achieve both economic and social outcomes in a procurement decision, the Uniting Church and its agencies to prioritise procuring services from its own agencies capable of delivering them.

This policy also encourages all congregations, mission outreach, agencies, schools and colleges to develop aspirational Disability Access and Inclusion Plans (DAIPs) specific to their situations and legislative requirements which make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities wherever they are within UCAWA.

4. Glossary of Terms/Definitions

UCAWA In this Policy Uniting Church Western Australia (UCAWA) includes the Uniting Church Centre, WA Synod bodies, WA Presbytery bodies, all

congregations and faith communities, mission outreach activities, agencies, schools, and colleges.

Disability

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability does not include a definition of “disability” or “persons with disability” but recognises that:

1. The notion of disability is not fixed and can alter, depending on the prevailing environment from society to society.
2. Disability is not considered as a medical condition, but rather as a result of the interaction between negative attitudes or an unwelcoming environment with the condition of particular persons. By dismantling attitudinal and environmental barriers – as opposed to treating persons with disabilities as problems to be fixed – those persons can participate as active members of society and enjoy the full range of their rights.
3. The Convention does not restrict coverage to particular persons; rather, the Convention identifies persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual and sensory disabilities as beneficiaries under the Convention. The reference to “includes” assures that this need not restrict the application of the Convention and States parties could also ensure protection to others, for example, persons with short-term disabilities or who are perceived to be part of such groups.³

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 defines ‘disability’ in relation to a person means:

- (a) total or partial loss of the person’s bodily or mental functions; or
- (b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- (c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness;
or
- (d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or

³ Uniting Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability

- (e) the malfunction, malformation, or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
- (f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
- (g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;

and includes a disability that:

- (h) presently exists; or
- (i) previously existed but no longer exists; or
- (j) may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or
- (k) is imputed to a person.

To avoid doubt, a disability that is otherwise covered by this definition includes behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of the disability.

5. Variations

5.1 UCAWA reserves the right to vary or change this policy from time to time.

6. Related documents

6.1 UCA Assembly Disability Access Guidelines March 2020

6.2 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability CRPD

The CRPD entered into force for Australia on 16 August 2008

6.3 Disability Discrimination Act 1992

6.4 WA Disability Services Act 1993

6.5 Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)

6.6 Equal Opportunities Act 1984

6.7 Sex Discrimination Act 1984

6.8 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986

6.9 Fair Work 2009

6.10 Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999

7. Version Control

Version #	Developed by	Adopted by	Date	Review Date
1	Disability Commission Royal Synod Task Group	Royal Synod	10 September 2023	10 September 2025