



Handling Disclosures and Reporting Protocols

The Final Report and Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse highlights the many incidences of child sexual abuse which have happened in our churches and institutions over many years. For people who have been abused this may help them to speak out for the first time, whether the incident occurred in the past or more recently. If a disclosure or an abuse incident happens within your congregation, school and/or agency you may find the following information helpful.

Handling Disclosures

Listen...do not add anything to what the person says

Reassure... and acknowledge the large step forward they have taken in speaking to you

Inform...the person that there are people who can help them (See below for contact details)

Ensure...the person is in a safe state of mind, before they leave you

Act...by walking beside them when and if they decide to report the matter to the authorities

How to Report

When adults disclose historical child sexual abuse they should be encouraged to report the alleged abuse to Police or a counsellor. If the alleged abuser was a minister or member of the Uniting Church, this must be reported to the General Secretary.

All disclosures from children and young people alleging harm, abuse or neglect should be reported to both Child Protection Services and local Police. Please also inform the General Secretary of the allegation and the proposed plan of support in your congregation, school and/or agency.

Reporting Contacts & Counselling and Support Services

Uniting Church Contacts

General Secretary

Rev Dr Andrew Williams

Ph: (08) 9260 9800 or 1300 736 692

Email: general.secretary@wa.uca.org.au

Executive Officer: Culture of Safety

Cindy Gorton

Ph: (08) 9260 9800

Email: cindy.gorton@wa.uca.org.au

[/cultureofsafety@wa.uca.org.au](mailto:cultureofsafety@wa.uca.org.au)

Culture of Safety Research Officer

Margaret Johnston

Ph: 08 9260 9800

Email: margaret.johnston@wa.uca.org.au

Counselling and Support Services

Relationships Australia WA

Provides services to support people affected by violence, relationship difficulties and abuse.

Ph: 6164 0100 or 1300 364 277

<https://relationshipsaustralia.org.au/services>

Department for Communities Child Protection & Family Support

The Department provides a range of child safety and family support services to Western Australian families and communities.

Disclosures:

<https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/ChildProtection/Pages/ChildDisclosingAbuse.aspx>

Reporting Concerns:

<https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/ChildProtection/Pages/Ifyouareconcernedaboutachild.aspx>

SARC – Sexual Assault Resource Centre
SARC provides services to people, male or female, aged 13 years and over who have been sexually assaulted or sexually abused both recently and in the past.

Ph: (08) 6458 1828 or 1800 199 888 (24 hour service)

https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/S_T/Sexual-Assault-Resource-Centre-SARC

Reporting Reportable Conduct Guidelines

The protection of children and young people is the responsibility of all individuals who are employed or engaged by the Uniting Church in Australia, Western Australia to provide them with services, care, education and other activities.

The Uniting Church is also subject to the laws protecting the safety of children including the Reportable Conduct Scheme (the Scheme) in Western Australia administered by the Ombudsman Western Australia office (OWA).

The Uniting Church has an obligation to report to the Ombudsman any allegations of reportable conduct or misconduct committed by individuals (including staff, officers, ministers, other religious leaders, contractors and volunteers) who are employed or engaged by the Uniting Church.

What are the types of Reportable Conduct?

The types of conduct that are reportable:

- a Sexual Offence committed against, with or in the presence of, a Child; or
- Sexual Misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of, a Child; or
- Physical Violence committed against, with or in the presence of, a Child; or
- any behaviour that causes Significant Emotional or Psychological Harm to a Child; or
- significant neglect of a Child.

Who are Employees?

Employees include the following persons over 18 years of age:

- paid employees
- volunteers
- contractors
- ministers of religion
- certain types of carers

In the Uniting Church this includes staff, officers, ministers, lay leaders, contractors and volunteers.

How do I report?

If you are concerned or have any information that leads you to form a reasonable belief that an employee of the Uniting Church has committed: (a) reportable conduct; or (b) misconduct that may involve reportable conduct, you are encouraged to speak to and/or report such information to the General Secretary or the Executive Officer Culture of Safety – see contact details over page. If the person has information of a reportable allegation involving the General Secretary of the Uniting Church, the person may directly notify the Ombudsman.

We all share the responsibility for promoting the wellbeing and safety of children and we will do whatever is in our power to safeguard them from all forms of abuse.