



Media policy and guidelines

Approved by:
SLT and version current
at September 2021.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (the Synod) is committed to ensuring that all internal and external communications, including media engagement, are responsible, respectful and lawful.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Synod staff members, contractors and volunteers.

3. OBJECTIVE

To ensure the reputation of UCA VicTas is protected and endorsed in all media engagements.

4. DEFINITIONS

Definitions for the purposes of this policy are as follows:

'Media' refers specifically to external sources, be they radio, television, newspaper or internet-based

'Synod staff' means all persons whether lay or ordained who are appointed to a particular job responsibility within the Synod operations
'Volunteers & contractors' people who are not employed directly by the Synod, but are working for it in either a paid or unpaid capacity

5. ONLY DESIGNATED SYNOD REPRESENTATIVES MAY SPEAK TO THE MEDIA ON BEHALF OF THE UCA VICTAS. THEY ARE:

- Moderator
- General Secretary
- Executive-Directors, Directors of specific units – especially Justice and International Mission unit, Uniting Care, Uniting Aged Care, Communications and Media Services, as authorised by the Moderator or his / her delegated person and have undergone media preparation through Communications and Media Services¹

- Other identified 'specialist speakers' who can address issues from a Uniting Church perspective, and are authorised by the Moderator or his / her delegated person and have undergone media preparation through Communications and Media Services

6. APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

- (a) If you receive direct enquiries from a journalist, be polite but do not be drawn to make 'off the record' comments.
- (b) Take down their name and contact number and immediately contact Communications and Media Services. CoMS will then respond to the enquiry.
- (c) The following dot points are guidelines designed to assist the UCA VicTas network manage all engagements with the media.

7. MEDIA GUIDELINES

- a) The Synod encourages positive interaction with the media and Communications and Media Services (CoMS) is happy to assist with any media enquiries you may encounter.
- b) If you are contacted for a story you have not initiated:
 - i) Please ask for the journalist's name, organisation and contact details.
 - ii) Ask the journalist what information they are seeking.
 - iii) Do not answer questions but respond by saying you will phone them back as soon as possible. (Do not say 'No Comment' just say you or someone from CoMS, will return their call asap)
 - iv) The unit should be considered as the first point of contact if you have been contacted

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- by the media on any enquiry other than a media promotion you or your agency/unit/congregation/Presbytery may have initiated.
- v) Contact Communications Manager **Stephen Acott** on **0433 929 732**.
 - vi) Only certain managers within the Synod have the authority to speak with the media (see above). If you have not undergone media training and you have not been asked to be a media spokesperson by your manager, you can assume that you should not make any comment, either on the record or off the record, to a journalist.
- c) For media responding to events you have initiated Communications and Media Services can also assist:
- i) Such promotions are generally positive events and stories, such as church or Agency events. CoMS is willing to provide advice for more significant promotions, such as agency program developments and larger funding attainments.
 - ii) The unit should also be considered for provision of additional advice, guidelines, clarification, background or support.
 - iii) If a reporter diverts a line of questioning on to another topic, the unit should be referred to for further contact and media comment.
 - iv) There are some key spokespeople who are in the best position to respond to Media Policy and Guidelines updated Oct 2014 relevant media enquiries. The unit can advise of and organise these people for comment.
- d) Remember any comment made to a reporter has the potential to be used as media comment. That is why making comment about anything should be kept to explaining that Communications and Media Services are the people to talk to. At that point you offer to ring the Unit on their behalf as well as providing the Unit contact details.

