



Essential Safety Measures (ESMs) Compliance Update

Over the past 18 months, congregations across our Synod have made remarkable progress towards compliance with their Essential Safety Measures (ESMs), ultimately ensuring the safety of people who make use of our buildings. Thanks to the collective effort of congregations and presbyteries, there is a strong trend towards compliance in ESMs.

The initial phase towards compliance focused largely on collating and recording existing Occupancy Permits (OPs) and Maintenance Determinations (MDs) and supporting congregations to obtain Maintenance Determinations where they did not have the relevant documents. At the outset, 20% of sites were compliant in this area – today, that number has risen to approximately 90%. This represents a significant step forward in ensuring our buildings meet the standards required to protect life and property in the event of an emergency, such as a fire.

But the journey to full compliance is ongoing, and the focus of this project now turns towards understanding the testing arrangements congregations have in place, and that the relevant processes are being followed to obtain a compliant Annual Essential Safety Measures Report (AESMR). Property Services will continue to support congregations in understanding their obligations and assisting where necessary to navigate the ESM landscape.

Essential Safety Measures are building features required in a building to protect occupants in the event of a fire. ESMs include but are not limited to exit doors and pathways, emergency lighting, exit signage, and portable fire extinguishers. All ESMs are determined by a Registered Building Surveyor for a particular building.

ESMs are applicable to all buildings that are not a house or outbuilding. Manses do not require ESMs provided they are being used as a residence.

Church councils should obtain a maintenance determination determined by a registered building surveyor for all church buildings, halls, and commercial tenancies.

Adequate maintenance will ensure ESMs operate reliably in the event of an emergency. ESM maintenance must be carried out to the maintenance schedule and recorded in a logbook. This will then be used to prepare your Annual Essential Safety Measures Report when the time comes. Non-compliance places occupants, passers-by, and adjoining buildings at risk.

In addition to the support offered by Property Services, Statcom is a recommended contractor that can assist in your ESM monitoring and AESMR preparation. Quotes for their services can be arranged by Property Services on behalf of church councils.

For support or further information, contact Property Services at property@victas.uca.org.au or AESMR@victas.uca.org.au

You can also contact **Neville Bion** on **0484 779 351** or Neville.Bion@victas.uca.org.au



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



Mission Resourcing Unit

Property Services