

Access and Use of Synod Archives Procedure

1 Purpose

The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (**the Synod**) administers and maintains a central repository for archival material relating to The Uniting Church in Australia in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, referred to as the 'Synod Archives'. The Synod Archives is responsible for the assessment, storage, preservation and accessibility of the archival material of the Synod, except those materials that may be archived with the Tasmanian State Government.

The Access and Use of Synod Archives Procedure (the **Procedure**) outlines the required procedures for accessing, retrieving, and returning archival material to and from the Synod Archives. The Procedure also sets out any required fees for the access and use of Synod Archives materials.

2 Scope

This Procedure applies to all archival materials held in the custody of the Synod Archives and relates to all requests for access and use of these materials. The Procedure should be read and interpreted in the context of the related Synod Archive Collection and Access Policy.

Note that within Tasmania only, a majority of materials are archived by councils of the Church with Tasmanian State Archives. Applications for access to these records must be made directly to the Tasmanian State Archives. Use of these records will be determined by the processes and procedures established by the Tasmanian State Archives for records in their custody.

3 Policy statement

The Synod recognises its archives, including archival records and artefacts, as a collective organisational memory and governance asset. The Synod commits to:

- Ensuring adequate record-keeping and archiving to evidence the Synod's governance, mission, ministry and community life.
- Identifying records and artefacts of enduring value in a consistent, transparent and defensible manner.
- Preserving archival materials in ways that respect their evidential, historical, cultural and spiritual significance.
- Ensuring ethical, secure and sustainable custodianship.
- Supporting appropriate access, balanced with privacy, pastoral, cultural and legal responsibilities.

4 Key roles and responsibilities

The Synod Archivist is responsible for the care and custody of all Synod Archives material. Any request for access to and/or use of archival material shall be reviewed and assessed by the Synod Archivist. Where appropriate, the Synod Archivist will support in facilitating required access to materials.

5 Procedures

5.1 Archive storage and access locations

The vast majority of the Synod Archives collection are housed in offsite commercial storage facilities. Where archived items are requested for access and use, these must be located, and requested and retrieved from storage before being able to be made available for access. As such, any requests for access must be arranged with the Synod Archivist in advance.

The below arrangements apply to where material can be accessed:

- Archival materials may only be accessed by external users at the Synod Archives Office located at 54 Serrell Street Malvern East.
- At the discretion of the Archivist, material requested by internal users may be accessed at the Synod Offices located at 130 Lonsdale Street Melbourne, or at the Centre for Theology and Ministry, Parkville. Materials delivered to either of these locations need to be placed in the custody of a staff member primarily based at that location and must not be removed from that location, except to return to Synod Archives.
- In exceptional circumstances, such as a church anniversary or celebration, with approval from the Synod Archivist archival materials may be provided on fixed term loan to the council of the Church the records originally relate to.

5.2 Costs related to the access and use of Synod Archives material

The Synod incurs retrieval and delivery fees for all retrieval of items from, and return to, offsite storage facilities. This is charged on an as used based, in addition to storage facility fees. To support and arrange access, the Synod Archivist may also need to spend time researching each request to locate suitable materials and review and assess if appropriate to share access.

Generally, access to 'internal users' will not incur any fee, except in some limited circumstances for more complex requests requiring additional research time. No charge shall be levied on SMO access to archival material as all costs are paid directly through the Synod budget. All other access requests will be subject to a fee, as per the fee schedule in Appendix A.

A fee is payable by direct bank deposit, with a reference of 'Archives' to be included on the transaction. Synod Archivist will advise the amount and deposit details. Fees must be paid in advance before access is provided.

5.3 Access and use of materials

Material deposited with the Synod Archives shall be under the supervision of the Synod Archivist. The Synod Archivist may withhold any material deemed to be of a confidential nature or deemed likely to be used in a manner prejudicial to the interests of the Church or any of its

members. In any case of doubt, the Synod Archivist shall refer the request to the General Secretary.

Archive records are catalogued at an archive box level, not detailed catalogues of what is within each box. Boxes can be retrieved based on summary information only and users are responsible for searching for specific records within each box.

Archival material shall be accessed and used only within the Synod Archives Office, or alternate Synod office location. The Synod Archivist may grant an exemption to this in limited exceptional circumstances. The Synod Archivist shall make a record of any loan material from the Synod Archives and shall also record the return of the material. The standard access period for archival materials is six weeks, however, longer periods may be approved for internal users requiring extended access to the records.

5.3.1 Access by SMO staff

Synod Ministries and Operations (**SMO**) staff may require access to archival material to support their approved work activities, such as in the case of Legal Services for arising legal matters. Where this access is required, request can be made by email to the Synod Archives and should include detail of below as relevant.

- Church council
- Period of records required
- Example type of records required
- Intended purpose/use of requested records

Based on the request, the Synod Archivist will review archive catalogue information available and retrieve any suitable boxes of materials, or advise if no material meets request purposes. The Synod Archivist will arrange materials to be delivered to the staff member's Synod Office location and material will be in the custody of that staff member until returned. Materials delivered to these locations must not be removed from the delivery address.

The staff member will be responsible for ensuring the return of material to the Synod Archives. To return material, staff member should contact the Synod Archivist who will advise on best process and arrange for the collection of archive boxes from the staff member.

Delivery and collection of archive boxes is arranged through a third part contractor, Grace, the company that the Synod uses for offsite storage.

5.3.2 Access by councils of the Church

Material deposited in the Synod Archives by a council of the Church shall be made available on request by an authorised representative of that council with approval from relevant office-bearer, such as the Chairperson. Material will be made available for access at the Synod Archives Office, or, at discretion of the Synod Archivist, at an alternate Synod Office location where records shall be placed in the custody of a SMO staff member at that location. Materials delivered to these locations must not be removed from the delivery address.

Request can be made by email to the Synod Archives and should include detail of below as relevant.

- Church council
- Specific types of records desired
- Period of records required

- Intended purpose/use of requested records

Costs will not be levied to councils of the Church to access their own archival items. However, where a loan of items is approved, the Council of the Church shall be responsible for the cost of courier / postage of items from, and for returning to, Synod Archives. The Synod Archivist may provide scanned digital copy of records on request, however if this exceeds more than a small number of specific records, then costs may be charged at research fee rates.

5.3.3 Access by the Uniting Vic.Tas Heritage Service

Records relating to out-of-home care held by the Synod Archives may be accessed via the Uniting Vic. Tas. Heritage Service. Requests for confidential materials should be made by the Manager Uniting Vic. Tas. Heritage Service to the Synod Archivist. No fee is charged for the records provided.

No information relating to adoptions, foster care or children's homes will be provided directly to external users by the Synod Archives. All queries relating to out-of-home care will be re-directed to the Uniting Vic. Tas. Heritage Service.

5.3.4 Record of baptism

Where baptism registers have been submitted to Synod Archives, the Synod Archivist may assist in providing a 'Record of Baptism' upon request. The requester will be charged a fee for this service which must be paid before a record is provided in accordance with the fee schedule in Appendix A. No fee will be charged if a 'Record of Baptism' cannot be provided.

5.3.5 Record of marriage

The church does not have copies of marriage certificates. Copies of marriage certificates must be requested directly from the relevant State Births, Deaths and Marriages (**BDM**).

If BDM do not have a record of the marriage occurring then best next contact is the Synod's Governance and Administration Team (governance.admin@victas.uca.org.au) with details of the congregation, bride/groom names, date etc and we can contact the congregation and see if any details can be located in the congregation records.

5.3.6 Access by external users

External users include all potential users that may request access to Synod Archive materials other than the councils of the Church that deposited the material. This may include other related bodies of the Church, historians, researchers, past ministers, past or current church members and their family and other such users.

While the Synod is not a 'public archives' office, the access and use of Synod archive material for the purpose of historical research is supported where appropriate, balanced with privacy, pastoral, cultural and legal responsibilities. The Synod will consider any such request and assess what materials have been requested the intended use of materials to determine if access is appropriate. The Synod reserves the right to deny any request without explanation.

Request can be made by email to the Synod Archives and should include detail of below as relevant.

- What church council / congregation records are being requested in relation to
- Specific types of records desired
- Period of records required

- Intended purpose/use of requested records

The Synod Archivist will assess each request and, if appropriate, will investigate what materials may be suitable. The Synod Archivist will advise the requester of the relevant boxes available to request, and the fee for this access in accordance with the fee schedule in Appendix A.

- Access will only be available by arranging a visit to the Synod Archives Office at Malvern East.
- Due to limited space, boxes retrieved will be kept on site at the Synod Archives Office for a maximum of 4 weeks before being returned.
- The Synod Archivist will not investigate and research materials within retrieved boxes on behalf of external users.
- No replication of records (scans/photographs etc) shall be allowed without the express approval from the Synod Archivist.
- In some limited circumstances where there is no risk associated with replication and sharing of records, scans or photographs of records may be provided with explicit approval of the Synod Archivist.
- Any access fees must be paid upfront before materials are retrieved from storage and made available to the requester to access at the Synod Archives Office. Further fees may be charged if research time of the Synod Archives Team is required to support the access request.

5.3.7 Publishing of archive material

At the discretion of the Synod Archivist, some limited archival material such as photographs may be published online via 'Victorian Collections'. This supports the Synod's intent to make materials reasonably available and to share the history and story of the Church.

Link: <https://victoriancollections.net.au/organisations/uniting-church-archives-synod-victoria>

Those pictured in photographs published in this way, or their family members, may request these be removed from public access by request to the Synod Archives.

6 Definition of key terms

The table below provides definitions for key terms specific to this policy to support consistent interpretation and application.

Term	Definition
Appraisal	The process of evaluating business activities to determine which records need to be captured and how long the records need to be kept, to meet business needs, the requirements of organisational accountability and community expectations.
Artefact	An artefact is a physical object that is not primarily a documentary record, but which has been assessed as having enduring value because it materially evidences, symbolises or is directly associated with significant aspects of the Synod's life, ministry, identity or history.

Term	Definition
Disposal / Deaccessioning	A range of processes associated with implementing appraisal decisions. These include the retention, deletion, or destruction of records in or from recordkeeping systems. They may also include the migration or transmission of records between recordkeeping systems, and the transfer of custody or ownership of records.
External users	External users include all potential users that may request access to Synod Archive materials other than the councils of the Church that deposited the material. This may include other related bodies of the Church, historians, researchers, past ministers, past or current church members and their family and other such users.
Internal users	Internal users of Synod Archives material include authorised representatives of the councils of the Church that deposited the material and staff from the Synod office.
Record	<p>A record is information created, received and maintained as evidence of decisions, activities or transactions undertaken regardless of format or medium. This may include digital or physical documents as well as photographic records.</p> <p>An archival record is a record that has been formally assessed as having enduring value and is preserved permanently because of its continuing legal, governance, evidential, historical, cultural or accountability significance.</p>

7 Related documents

This section provides a summary of key related documents as at the time of writing.

- How to Obtain a Record of Baptism
- Synod Archives Collection and Access Policy
- Synod Archives Transfer Procedure
- Data breach Policy and Procedure
- UCAVT Privacy Policy

Appendix A | Archives Fee Schedule

The table below provides the fee schedule for standard requests and services as at the time of writing. Fees may be subject to change at discretion of Synod Archives.

Additional fees may apply for requests/services that fall outside the standard services specified below.

Item	Fee / rate
Record of Baptism	<p>A flat fee of \$50 will apply for the Synod Archivist to provide a Record of Baptism for the baptised individual.</p> <p>No fee applies for initial research to identify if relevant records are held within Synod Archives to be able to issue a Record of Baptism.</p>
Research and archive support activities conducted by Synod Archives	<p>A rate of \$50 per hour, charged in 30min increments, will be applied for research conducted by Synod Archives to investigate, retrieve and review and locate files.</p> <p><i>Research fees are applied in addition to retrieval fees.</i></p>
Retrieval of material held off-site	<p>A rate of \$50 will be charged for the retrieval of items from offsite storage per retrieval request. This will cover retrieval of up to 6 boxes. Additional boxes requested in single order will incur a charge of \$10 per box.</p> <p><i>This covers fees associated with both retrieval and return delivery.</i></p>
Delivery fees	<p>Any delivery fee for material to be made available at a location other than a Synod Office, such as where material is provided on loan, will be charged at cost.</p>
Copy of architecture plan or drawing	<p>A flat minimum fee of \$50 will apply for the Synod Archivist to provide a scanned copy of an architectural plan or drawing larger than A3. Additional drawing copies requested at the same time will be provided for an additional \$10 per drawings.</p>
Photocopying or printing	<p>Small batches (<25 pages) of photocopying or printing of materials is available at no extra cost at the Archives Office, provided Synod Archivist has approved for copies of material to be taken. Users will be responsible for photocopying / scanning items themselves using equipment provided at the Synod Archives Office.</p> <p>For greater quantities of scans and photocopies, a charge will apply at a rate of \$10 per batch of up to 25 pages.</p> <p>If the Synod Archivist is required to make copies on behalf of users, then a rate of \$50 per hour charged at 15min increments will also apply.</p>

Document control

Document Owner:	The Synod Archivist is responsible for the management and maintenance of this document.			
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1.0	May 2026	Jennifer Bars – Synod Archivist Tamika McLaren – Dir. Audit, Risk and Records Management	New procedure to supersede previous mix of policy, procedure and by-laws.	04/06/2026

Document management:

- Any minor changes made between review periods should be reflected in the above table. Only changes of a material nature will require approval by the nominated approver between formal review periods.
- **Note:** when reviewing this document, the reviewer should ensure the template used is still the most current template for Synod policies and procedures, as found on the Synod intranet. This document is based on the **November 2025** template as approved by the Senior Leadership Team.