

Media Communication / Engagement Policy and Guidelines

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy and guidelines is to help ensure clarity about principles and processes used in communicating and engaging with media outlets.

2 Scope

This policy and guidelines applies to all Synod staff members, Presbyteries, Congregations, members, volunteers, and contractors involved with any of the councils of the Church within the bounds of the Synod. The policy applies to interacting with journalists/reporters from media outlets and agencies.

3 Policy statement

The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (the Synod) is committed to accurate and respectful media engagement and communication that is undertaken by the Synod and/or other councils and members of the Church.

4 Policy requirements

4.1 Policy requirement: only the Moderator and authorised representatives may speak to the media on behalf of the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

The Moderator has the responsibility of speaking on behalf of the Synod (Regulation 3.6.3.2(g)). In the light of this responsibility, the Moderator may authorise others (such as Synod staff, subject matter experts, etc) to speak on behalf of the Church to assist in communicating the Synod's policies, decisions, activities, and related matters.

It is also important to note that no person from the Synod is authorised to speak on behalf of the Uniting Church regarding national matters without authorisation from the President of the UCA Assembly.

4.2 Policy guidelines

The following guidelines are provided to assist the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania SMO staff, Congregations, Presbyteries, members, volunteers, and contractors to engage and communicate effectively with the media.

- (a) The Synod encourages positive interaction with the Synod Marketing and Communications Team who are happy to assist with any media enquiries SMO staff, Congregations and Presbyteries may encounter.

- (b) Congregations and Presbyteries are encouraged to engage with local media to promote positive engagement with the activities of the Congregation or Presbytery and to share 'good news' stories of the work of congregations and their members.
- (c) For media responding to events initiated by a council of the Church, the Synod Marketing and Communications Team can also assist in areas including:
 - i) Promotion of generally positive events and stories, such as Congregation events, milestones, or missional activities;
 - ii) Providing advice for more significant promotions if required;
 - ii) The provision of additional advice, guidelines, clarification, background or support.

Note: If a reporter diverts a line of questioning about a story to another topic, politely advise that you cannot comment on that topic but that you are happy to refer any questions on that matter to the Synod Marketing and Communications Team.

- (d) Whenever any party referred to in the Scope of this Policy and these Guidelines (see section 2 above) is contacted about a story that has broader community or Uniting Church policy implications, such as property transactions, the below process should be followed
 - i) Ask for the journalist's name, their media outlet/organisation and the journalist's contact details;
 - ii) Ask the journalist what information they are seeking and whether there is a deadline for any response to be made. Where possible, ask for this information to be provided via email;
 - iii) Do not answer questions. Respond by saying that someone will phone them back as soon as possible. Do not say 'No comment';
 - iv) Contact the Marketing and Communications Team through the Synod's Director Marketing and Communications as soon as possible (see contact details below). Note: Journalists usually work to strict deadlines. If they do not receive a response within their timeframe are likely to publish the story anyway, including a note that they 'approached the Uniting Church for comment but did not receive a response'. The sooner the Marketing and Communications Team is contacted, the better;
 - v) The Moderator and/or those authorised by the Moderator may speak with the media on behalf of the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. The Marketing and Communications Team will contact the Moderator and/or an authorised subject matter expert and assist in developing responses where appropriate to do so;
 - vi) SMO staff, Congregations, Presbyteries, members, volunteers, and contractors should always be mindful that any comment made to the media from a personal perspective may not necessarily be reported as such. They may be quoted as "...from the Uniting Church" suggesting that your comments represent the views of the wider Church. Therefore, it is best to politely decline to answer, either "on" or "off the record" and refer the journalist to the Marketing and Communications Team.

4.3 Conclusion

Any comment made to a journalist/reporter has the potential to be published. The discussion of any matter with broader implications for the Church must be referred to the Marketing and Communications Team, to assist in fulfilling the commitment to accurate and respectful media engagement and communication.

All those referred to in the Scope (Section 2) and Key roles and responsibilities section (Section 5) of this Policy and these Guidelines should contact the Marketing and Communications Team immediately if contacted by any media making enquiries about any Church matter.

4.4 Synod Marketing and Communications Team: contact details

Director Marketing and Communications

Sophie Marcard

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The Synod Communications Team: communications@victas.uca.org.au

The above contact details are also available on the Synod’s website (www.victas.uca.com.au) under the “Contact Us” tab.

5 Key roles and responsibilities

The table below summarises the key roles and responsibilities in relation to this Policy.

Role	Responsibilities
Synod Standing Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy and guidelines oversight / compliance
Synod Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General management and resourcing for meeting policy requirements
Director Marketing and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document owner Key position for providing advice on media enquiries and interactions Monitoring and reporting on adherence
All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complying with the policy and guidelines

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
‘Media’	Any external media outlets or agencies, be they radio, television, newspaper or internet based.
Synod Ministries and Operations (SMO) staff	All persons, whether lay or ordained, who are appointed to a particular role within Synod Ministries and Operations

Term	Definition
Marketing and Communications Team	The Marketing and Communications Team of Synod Ministries and Operations
Presbyteries	All persons, whether lay or ordained, who have any position of responsibility within any Presbytery within the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
Congregations	All persons, whether lay or ordained, in leadership roles, including all members of Church Councils
Members, volunteers and contractors'	All people who are not employed directly by the Church, but are working for it in either a paid or unpaid capacity
Synod/VicTas Synod	the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.
Subject Matter Expert	Any member of staff or member of the Church recognised by the Moderator as having specialist knowledge or expertise in relation to a particular matter

7 Related documents

Not applicable

7.1 Internal Synod documents

Not applicable

7.2 External documents and regulations

Not applicable

Document control

Document Owner:	The Director Marketing and Communications is responsible for the management and maintenance of this document.			
Review cycle:	This document will be subject to formal review every 2 years .	Next review date:	February 2028	
Endorsers:	Review and endorsement is required from the following bodies: - Media Forum	Approver:	Synod Standing Committee	
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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.*