

Ministry Handbook

For Ordained Ministry

uniting church
in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

MINISTRY HANDBOOK

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MINISTRY HANDBOOK

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1994 the Uniting Church Assembly determined that all who serve in ordained ministries would be treated equally regarding their remuneration and entitlements.

The Uniting Church in Australia Synod of NSW and ACT (the Synod) Ministry Handbook (Handbook) is provided as a guide and reference for matters relating to placements and entitlements for those in ministry within the Synod of NSW and ACT.

It is intended for use by Ministers of the Word and Deacons in ministry placements as well as for those responsible for the pastoral and administrative oversight such as representatives of Church Councils, Presbyteries and Synod Boards.

The use of the title 'minister' in this document refers to the ordained Minister of the Word and Deacon, acknowledging that the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practiced defines the term minister more broadly.

Whilst this handbook is intended as a summary of key policies, guidelines and procedures relating to the remuneration and entitlements of the Synod's ministers, it may not cover every possible scenario.

It should not be used for matters relating to Ministry of Pastor or Lay Employment. Information on these two categories can be found in the Ministry of Pastor Handbook**.**

All interpretation shall be determined by the Synod.

MINISTERS REMUNERATION

2. TERMS OF PLACEMENT

As the minister and the appointing body discern a placement match, the arrangements are documented in the Terms of Placement (ToP). This is not a contract of employment as Ministers are not employees, but a covenant which sets forth the expectations of both parties. As the overseeing body, Presbytery PRC need to approve all ToP documents. Synod also needs to ensure that all arrangements are in line with ATO Rulings and church procedure.

The Terms of Placement is a Synod document authorised by SNRC and the Synod Standing Committee. The wording may not be changed or adapted in any way.

Once a ToP is drafted, it should be sent (in draft form) to ACOMP at acomp@nswact.uca.org.au for assessing: When it has been affirmed, ACOMP return it for final approval and signing.

The document requires the formal approval of PRC or equivalent committee. The Terms of Placement shall be signed by the following parties:

- Minister
- Church Council Secretary / Presbytery Secretary
- PRC Chair / Secretary
- Associate Secretary

PRC Chairperson, the appointing body and the minister keep a signed copy of the ToP with a copy being sent to the Secretariat for filing in the minister's folder.

Link to Terms of Placement Template.

Link to Terms of Placement - Exit Candidate Phase 3 Template.

Please refer Synod of NSW/ACT Ministers Placement Entitlement Guide for further details.

2.1 Conclusion of a Minister Placement

The appointing body determines the end date for a placement in consultation with the Minister.

For Ministers paid by the Synod Payroll, a Termination Form is completed by the appointing body and sent to Synod Payroll one month prior to the end date (or earlier where possible) to avoid the minister being overpaid. In the event this form is not received in time, and the minister is overpaid, Synod Payroll shall contact the Appointing body to recover the funds. Should this not be possible, the appointing body shall bear the overpayment cost.

2.2 Variation to Placement Forms

For Ministers paid by Synod Payroll, a Terms of Placement - Variation - Extension Agreement Form is required one month before the variation can take effect. In the event that the form is not received in time and the minister is overpaid, Payroll shall contact the Appointing body to recover funds. Should this not be possible, the appointing body shall bear the overpayment cost.

3. MINISTER PROFILE

3.1 Background

The minister's profile provides an opportunity for Ministers to share their sense of identity, the context in which they work best, their areas of giftedness, and their priorities for ministry over the next five to ten years.

As part of the Church discerning God's call to ministry, the Placements Committee will align a minister's profile with a placement profile to determine which context a minister might best serve in.

A Minister is invited to share such information as will enable the Placements Committee and JNC to begin to discern a matching of gifts, education, experience and passion for specific styles and/or settings for ministry.

This is not a public document but will be available to share with members of JNCs or other appointing bodies. Every effort will be made to restrict its circulation to those who need to have access to it. A copy will be retained in the Minister's personal file within the Pastoral Relations office of the Presbytery and the Synod of NSW.ACT. It may be sent to other Synods at a Minister's request or with their permission.

Profiles shall be sent to Presbytery PRC for their comments before being submitted to the Placements Committee. This provides confirmation of a minister's gifts and skills and enables Presbytery to exercise their oversight responsibilities.

Exiting Candidates use a slightly different form, and the Formation Co-ordinator acts in place of Presbytery PRC.

Once the profile is complete and signed by all parties, it is emailed to acomp@nswact.uca.org.au

3.2 Maintaining an up-to-date Minister Profile

Profiles have a finite life. As Ministers grow and change, so do understandings, priorities and skillsets.

An updated **Ministers Profile** shall be submitted every five years (three years for Ministers in their first placement), regardless of whether a Minister is seeking a new placement. This is part of a Minister's accountability to the church.

Minister Profile Form

Minister Profile Form - Exit Candidate

4. THE STIPEND

4.1 Background

Ordained ministers are not employees but are servants of God and as such do not receive salary or wages. Ministers are provided with a stipend and associated benefits, known as 'the Stipend Package'.

A useful paper about the underpinnings of the basis of stipends is the 'Theology of Stipends'.

Each Synod is authorised to determine stipends [Regulation 2.7.1 (a)], provisions and benefits [Regulation 2.7.1(c)]. In the Synod of NSW and the ACT, the Synod Standing Committee Nomination & Remuneration Committee (SSCNRC) is responsible for this. The Stipend and benefit figures are reviewed each financial year by the SSCNRC, who then make their recommendation to the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) prior to the end of the financial year.

The changes are then published and communicated prior to the start of each new financial year. The Stipend and Benefit Table is circulated to the wider Synod including Treasurers or equivalent of all appointing bodies and ministers by the Secretariat.

For the payment of the base stipend amount refer **section 4.3** of this handbook.

4.2 Religious Practitioner (RP) Tax Exemption Benefit

The full base stipend amount (100% of the base stipend amount whether full-time or part-time equivalent) can be broken down for taxation purposes as a result of the ministers' eligibility for the Australian Tax Office (ATO) Religious Practitioners Tax Exemption Benefit.

A. 70% of the Minimum Stipend amount:
   - Is taxable at the prevailing rate
   - Pay the personal Beneficiary Fund contribution from this amount if applicable
   = *The ministers 'take home/after tax' portion.*

B. 30% of the Minimum Stipend amount remaining:
   - Is not taxable
   - Is to be paid into the Ministers Benefit Facility (MBF) along with 100% of all Benefits
   = *The minister's 'tax free' portion which falls into the category of Non-Reportable Fringe Benefits for the purposes of income tax.*

The minister can elect the tax-free percentage **up to a maximum of 30%** of the base stipend.

It is the minister's responsibility to factor in their personal financial circumstances in electing the level of tax-free stipend.

4.3 Payment of the Base Stipend Amount

Ministers may not be paid less than the minimum stipend figure (with the exception of a part-time placement where the full-time stipend is pro-rated on the percentage of placement). Should a minister request less than the minimum stipend for personal reasons then, special arrangements would need to be recorded in the Terms of Placement accompanied by the rationale.

In certain instances, Ministers may be paid above the minimum stipend (referred to as a stipend uplift).

All proposals regarding uplift shall be considered by the Presbytery PRC and sent to the Associate Secretary for approval under Synod Standing Committee Nomination and Remuneration Committee (SSCNRC). (minute 36/19SC.

No Placement or Presbytery has discretion to approve an uplift on its own recognisance.

Remuneration should be paid to the minister through the specific payroll arrangements of the appointing body. Payments shall be paid by direct transfer. Cash payments of any kind are not permitted.

4.4 Documentation of the Stipend Package

A Terms of Placement document will be prepared and agreed to **before** the minister commences. It is then recommended that the minister, congregation and presbytery discuss and agree on the level of the stipend package annually and note any special conditions in the Terms of Placement document. This is usually done by the appointed JNC, a draft version of which should be sent to the Associate Secretary for checking before the Terms of Placement are signed. A signed copy should be sent to minister, placement, Presbytery and Associate Secretary

As the stipend amount can change from time to time it may be helpful for the Treasurer to provide a letter confirming the current stipend amount and benefits on an annual basis.

Minister Annual Stipend Letter template.

4.5 Utilities

The appointing body shall take responsibility for paying all fixed costs for gas, electricity and water connections. The minister shall pay all usage costs.

This is consistent with current rental/lease agreements and shall be recorded in the Terms of Placement.

5. MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAVEL (MILEAGE) BENEFIT

5.1 Background

Dependent on the type of placement, the various options and benefits for the Minister's **role-related** travel should be discussed and recorded in the Terms of Placement (ToP). This does not include travelling to and from manse/home, nor does it include travel serving the wider church where reimbursement is available. It is paid into the Ministers Benefit Facility (MBF) as a tax-free component.

The value of relevant benefits is reviewed annually and communicated as part of the Stipend and Benefit Table as approved by The Synod Standing Committee. The Synod aligns with the Australian Taxation Office in determining the mileage rate.

5.2 Vehicle Standing Costs

From 1 July 2024 Vehicle Standing Costs (VSC) is no longer included in the Stipend package. For all new placements, the VSC and Travel Benefit are combined in line with the current ATO rate per kilometre. Prior arrangements will be honoured until the conclusion of the placement.

The new mileage rate includes general wear and tear; tyre replacement and servicing of the Ministers personal vehicle used for role-related travel.

5.3 Travel (Mileage) Benefit

When a minister is using their own car for placement related travel, a travel benefit is applicable to cover vehicle mileage and running expenses. Applicable rates are recorded in the Stipend and Benefit Table and are aligned to the rates set by the Australian Tax Office.

For ease of management for both parties, many placements calculate an estimate of annual kilometres travelled. This figure is then paid as a monthly benefit into the Ministers Benefit Facility (MBF). This is an estimate based on historical placement information. It can be reviewed after a period of serving in a new placement should the new minister be travelling more or less than estimated in their Terms of Placement.

As the travel benefit is paid into the MBF, there is no need for a logbook.

5.4 Supplied Motor Vehicle

The appointing body may provide a fully maintained vehicle for the minister's use. Conditions will be consistent with Synod Policy.

For all fleet, and vehicle-related matters and enquiries including permission requests for other family members to drive a Synod car, please contact: Fleet@nswact.uca.org.au

6. RESOURCE BENEFIT

6.1 Background

The Resource Benefit is intended to contribute towards the minister's professional development. This may include training, seminars, and other resources.

The amount is reviewed annually by the Synod Standing Committee Nomination & Remuneration Committee (SSCNRC) and communicated as part of the Stipend and Benefit Table.

6.2 Payment of the Resource Benefit

Regardless of whether the placement is full-time, part-time or Long Supply, the Resource Benefit is payable in full and is paid into the MBF.

A minister may only receive the benefit once if in multiple part-time placements. In this instance the multiple placements would share the payment.

The Resource Benefit per annum is the fixed amount, it is not pro-rated with the Placement %.

A tax deduction cannot be claimed for any items purchased with the Resource Benefit as tax was not paid in the first place.

Ministers serving in Short Supply roles (three months or less) are not entitled to receive the Resource Benefit. Should the supply be extended beyond three months, the resource benefit shall be paid from the beginning of the fourth month. It shall not be back dated to the commencement of the initial supply agreement.

7. HOUSING BENEFIT

7.1 Background

From 1 July 2024, the Housing Benefit shall be pro-rated to the percentage of the placement, e.g., a 50% placement shall receive 50% of the housing benefit. The appropriate housing benefit amount is determined by the location of the placement, rather than the address of the ministers' residence.

For Congregational placements, a Manse may be more than a family home. As each ministers' requirements may be different, a fit for purpose accommodation can be negotiated.

Where practical, the Manse will be within the Congregational bounds. The advice of the Synod Property Team should be sought on each of these matters very early in the planning stages of acquiring or renovating a Manse.

Some exemptions apply. Where two UCA ministers share a home, the cost of the provision of housing is split between the appointing bodies. If one appointing body provides the Manse, the other pays the full applicable housing benefit to them. This will enable expenses and maintenance of property to be shared fairly.

If there is no Manse available the appointing body may request that the minister live within the area of the placement and provide accommodation which is considered by the minister, appointing body and Presbytery to be appropriate for the minister and their personal situation.

This may be a rented property and will be rented by the appointing body in consultation with the Synod Property team on behalf of the Property Trust. Where a property is rented, the appointing body will meet all costs associated with the lease agreement.

No rental payments/reimbursements will be made to any minister. The property should be considered as available for rental long term so that the minister and their family are not disrupted with continual moves. Where a move must occur as a result of the lease ending, the appointing body is to meet the removal costs, not the Synod.

Links to Statement of Mutual Expectations (Manse), Manse Premises Condition Report.

Visit the Synod Property Services website or contact them via email Property@nswact.uca.org.au.

7.2 Manse Inclusions

The Manse, all furnishings, fixtures and appliances provided are to be in good and working order. All inclusions and condition should be agreed between minister and the appointing body then recorded in the Terms of Placement.

Please direct any enquiries to Synod Secretariat: sec@nswact.uca.org.au.

7.3 Responsibilities of Each Party

Maintaining the Manse or rented accommodation is the responsibility of the appointing body and / or presbytery. A high standard of repair is required for good stewardship of the property. If any party has unresolved concerns, please contact the PRC Chair and/or the Head of Property Services.

The arrangement in terms of the responsibilities of both parties, can be considered similar to a person renting a home.

The **Congregation/Appointing Bodies** to ensure that the condition of the manse is clean and fit for purpose and is in a reasonable state of repair at the commencement, throughout the placement and when the minister vacates the manse. Responsibilities regarding the manse includes:

- Ensuring the manse meets Work Health and Safety requirements
- Ensuring the Manse property and surrounds are clean and habitable.
- Undertaking any repairs and maintenance required.
- Payment of water connection fee, sewage and garbage rates.
- The cost of telephone installation, internet, phone rental charges and church business calls will be provided for one office space - in either the Manse or Church office.
- A working smoke alarm/s.
- Property insurance.

The **minister's** responsibilities regarding the Manse includes:

- Maintaining the manse and surrounds in a clean and tidy manner.
- Notify the appointing body as soon as practical of any damage to the Manse.
- Recognising the right of the church council for maintenance inspections.
- The cost of electricity and gas usage.
- The cost of water, electricity and gas usage.
- Replacing basic items like bath plugs, light globes and batteries.
- Leaving the Manse and surrounds in a clean and tidy manner at the conclusion of the placement including carpets freshly cleaned.
- Content insurance (if desired).

A minister, in accepting a call where a Manse is provided by the placement, also accepts responsibility to keep the property in a state of cleanliness and ongoing general maintenance, as would apply if it were a rental situation, for example, gardens tended and lawns mown, pool maintenance (if applicable), windows cleaned, guttering and down pipes cleared, and appliances clean and functional. The minister is also responsible for unreasonable wear and tear or damage, including damage caused by family pets.

7.4 Housing Benefit

When the minister has approval from the appointing body/Church Council to live in their own home, they are entitled to receive a housing benefit. It is not payable in any other circumstances, for example, as a rental contribution.

Ministers seeking approval to live in their own home shall discuss logistics with the appointing body. The appointing body has the right to refuse this request should it disadvantage the placement. It is reasonable for the appointing body to expect the minister to be geographically accessible to the placement. Any time and expense involved in commuting from home to work shall be the responsibility of the minister. The applicable housing benefit shall be paid to the minister.

The housing benefit is determined by Presbytery bounds. The amount paid is determined by the location of the placement, and not the location of the residence. Information on the appropriate amount payable is available in the Stipend and Benefit Table.

7.5 When Two Ministers (in a Relationship) Share a Manse

Housing Benefit

Where both members of a couple are ministers in placement, and elect to live together in their own home, they shall be entitled to receive one housing benefit equivalent to that applicable to the placement's geographical location (whichever is the greater amount should this vary.)

The housing benefit shall normally be provided in equal amounts by the bodies responsible for the payment of stipend in respect of the two placements.

Shared Manse

Where both members of a couple are ministers in placement, but in different appointing bodies, and both placements require the provision of a residence, the couple may negotiate in which of the residences they will live.

The appointing body whose residence is not required shall pay the other appointing body an amount equivalent to 50% of the applicable housing benefit, thereby contributing to the maintenance costs of the residence in which the couple are to live.

7.6 Provision of an Office

The appointing body shall provide a minister with one office including provision of internet and phone.

This may be located in the Manse/home or at the church/office building. The location and furnishings should be agreed prior to the call being issued and recorded in the Terms of Placement document.

7.7 Provision of Technology, Devices, and Internet Services

The placement shall make provision for one principal working office. This shall include, but not be limited to:

- Adequate telecommunications facilities, including mobile phone and broadband internet access. This shall include hardware and ISP. The appointing body and minister should agree on what proportion of the phone plan is paid by each prior to the issue of a call.
- Should the minister elect the provision of a landline instead of a mobile phone, the appointing body shall meet the standing cost of the phone connections in either the residence or church office and all ministry related costs.
- Should the working environment be located at a church/office building, the appointing body may provide a landline connection at the Manse. The cost of connection and maintaining the manse landline shall be the responsibility of the minister.

The appointing body may provide a computer/laptop or include an allocation of an agreed amount for the minister to provide their own. This is recorded in the Terms of Placement. Provision of any device is at the discretion of the appointing body in negotiation with the minister.

A minister shall not maintain placement relevant documents on their personal computer or laptop unless they are copies of originals held by appointing bodies. This would include minutes; membership rolls and relevant records. At the end of the placement all such copies shall be deleted.

7.8 Ministers not in Placement or Supply

Stipend and benefits including accommodation or housing benefit is not provided for ministers not in a placement or in supply.

8. SUPPLY ARRANGEMENTS

8.1 Background

Supply ministry is used to describe a ministry of short duration, supply will be used most when the placement is vacant, or the Minister is on extended leave. Supply ministry is never intended to be used as a substitute for a placed Minister.

8.2 Supply

Supply ministry is a specific ministry provided by ordained ministers. It can be full time or part-time and should not exceed twelve months. At twelve months it is to be reviewed by the Presbytery before a new Supply Agreement can be put in place.

It may be provided by a Minister in active ministry, including awaiting a placement, or undertaking supply ministry by choice, or by a retired Minister, including a Minister whose health precludes a placement but not supply ministry.

Tasks for Supply Ministry

A great deal of common sense and collaboration is required to set up the supply requirements clearly. The tasks of a supply minister are determined by the Church Council in collaboration with the Presbytery. The purpose of supply is to maintain the ministry rather than to initiate changes or begin new initiatives.

Exceptional Circumstances: Strategic Supply

An exception may be made should a new initiative have been planned before the incumbent Minister closed the placement or went on leave. This would also require the support of Presbytery/PRC.

In specific circumstances requiring specialist skills, **Strategic Supply** could be employed to respond to a complex situation. This may also apply for Presbytery and Synod contexts where general supply is not enough.

Guidelines for Supply Ministry

Those serving in supply ministries should refrain from becoming involved in stewardship and financial matters.

The Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice mandates that no criticism or adverse comment should be made regarding the Minister who is on leave, or the ministry offered - particularly if there have been tensions in the Congregation(s).

The supply minister shall be respectful of local leadership, Church Council's missional priorities, and heed Presbytery's guidance. The personal agenda of the supply minister does not have priority.

Supply Agreement

Supply arrangements should be documented in the Supply Agreement Form for either Non-Retired or Retired Ministers.

8.3 Variation or Extension to Supply

For ministers paid by Synod Payroll, a Supply - Variation - Extension Agreement Form is required one month before the variation can take effect. In the event that the form is not received in time and the minister is overpaid, Payroll shall contact the Appointing body to recover funds. Should this not be possible, the appointing body shall bear the overpayment cost.

Please refer Synod of NSW/ACT Placement Entitlement Guide for further details.

8.4 Types of Supply

Supply ministry situations are often tailored to each need; however, two broad descriptors exist.

Short Supply: A continuous period of ministry lasting for not more than three months. Generally, seeks to provide ministry when the placed Minister is on extended leave, or between the closure of one placement and the beginning of the next.

Long Supply: A continuous period of ministry lasting for more than three months and not more than 12-months. This is usual in situations where one placement has concluded and the next is yet unclear.

Strategic Supply: The Synod of NSW/ACT recognises that Strategic Supply may enable the Supply Minister to progress set projects or goals. For example, a Presbytery may wish to join several congregations as one.

Calling a new Minister is premature. Strategic Supply could enable the relational and practical work to be done in anticipation of a unified congregation.

Strategic Supply should not be used for Intentional Interim Ministry, and the position is not designed to enable proactive personal ministry and/or development of the role or appointing body outside of the agreed parameters.

Part time Supply: receive a pro-rata amount of the full-time stipend based on the percentage of supply.

Extensions

Supply Agreements can be extended in advance of the most recent agreement lapsing. Should any category of supply be extended beyond its described time limit, a new Supply Agreement shall be completed as differing benefits and entitlements will apply. For example, a short-term supply of two months may not be extended for a further two months. In this scenario, the supply moves from short term to long term.

Note: Retrospective changes or extensions are not envisaged.

Supply transitioning to Placement

The National Handbook of Procedures for the Placement of Ministers, 8.1. states that:

> *Persons providing ministry in a supply capacity will not normally be considered for permanent call to that placement. Should such persons consider themselves suitable for call to the placement, they should either not allow their names to be considered for supply ministry in that placement or if already engaged in supply ministry withdraw from that arrangement.*

The Synod of NSW.ACT recognise there are times when a Minister needing to step out of supply could be detrimental to the Minister and/or the placement. In such cases there shall be no need to withdraw from supply. The Minister in supply should engage with the placement process of discernment as transparently as possible. Presbytery and ACOMP shall be involved in establishing a clear process, which shall include the placement and the Minister submitting an Expression of Interest to ACOMP.

8.5 Non-Retired Ministers Undertaking Supply

- Stipend and Benefits are as listed in the Stipend and Benefit Table
- Access to the Ministers Benefit Facility (MBF)

The MBF is only available for supply arrangements longer than three months. The reason is practical as they take a long time to set up and a new MBF account is required for each supply agreement.

The MBF would operate in line with section 12. of the Ministry Handbook.

Non-retired ministers in supply accrue long leave. All supply agreements involving non-retired ministers must include payment of the Ministers Support Fund (MSF) Levy.

8.6 Retired Ministers Undertaking Supply

Retired Ministers may contact their Presbytery and the Associate Secretary, requesting their names and availability be placed on the Available-for-Supply-list.

Note for Ministers willing to undertake supply: Please notify Presbytery and the Placements Committee of your availability and restrictions.

Retired Ministers serving in supply have three options regarding remuneration. The preferred option shall be identified by the supply minister in line with their personal financial circumstances and professional advice:

1. Elect to receive a stipend and allowance package commensurate with the length of supply (short or long term).
2. Elect not to receive any payment.
3. Elect to receive reimbursement for travel and/or negotiated costs only.

Whether the supply minister requires the Ministers Benefit Facility (MBF) should also be determined.

Superannuation

The Appointing Body is required to pay Superannuation at the required rate. Each supply minister is responsible for seeking financial advice as to how this should be paid.

Ministers Support Fund Contribution does not apply, as Long Leave may not be accrued by retired ministers in supply.

Contribution to Cover Workers Compensation

Although the MSF contribution does not apply, to ensure retired Ministers serving in supply are covered for Workers Compensation insurance purposes, the appointing body is required to pay a flat fee per month (contained within the Stipend and Benefit Table).

This can be arranged via Synod Finance by contacting msf@nswact.uca.org.au.

Housing

Manse accommodation or the Housing Benefit may apply for all supply. The appointing body and Supply Minister shall make appropriate arrangements.

Resource Allowance

Applicable for long-term and strategic supply only.

Study Leave

Short Supply does not attract Study Leave.

Long Supply and Strategic Supply may attract Study Leave if agreed by all parties.

Annual Leave Entitlements

Standard pro-rated annual leave entitlements apply for all retired ministers in supply.

9. CASUAL PREACHING

A minister may be invited to preach on a casual basis. This would be determined by availability and willingness. Should any minister preach as part of their regular ministry duties, they shall not benefit from the casual preaching fee, as they are already receiving the stipend. Should the preaching fee be paid to Ministers in full-time placements, it should be given to the appointing body. Ministers in part-time placements, awaiting placement, or retired may receive the casual preaching fee.

According to government legislation all financial benefits are required to be paid via a Payroll process. The receipt of any cash payment is considered tax avoidance by the Australian Tax Office and is not in line with UCA practice and ethos.

The fees for casual preaching on a per service basis are outlined on the Stipend and Benefit Table.

Refer the Casual Preaching Payment Matrix and Casual Preaching Payment FAQs that may be useful as a guideline - includes ATO compliance, payment type, amounts etc.

10. MINISTERS SUPPORT FUND CONTRIBUTIONS

10.1 Background

The Ministers Support Fund (MSF) Levy is paid in relation to each Minister in placement and is applicable to **non-retired ministers** only.

The amount is reviewed annually and recorded in the Stipend and Benefit Table.

It provides for:

- The accrual for ministers Long Leave entitlements.
- Assisting appointing bodies with costs associated with their minister taking.

  maternity/adoption leave.
- Workers Compensation premiums.
- Benefits to dependents on the death of a minister in placement.
- The provision of Financial Planning and Advice Seminars.

10.2 Payment

MSF contributions made on behalf of ministers are remitted monthly via direct debit to the Synod Finance Team quoting the ministers reference number (obtainable from Synod Finance msf@nswact.uca.org.au OR Secretariat sec@nswact.uca.org.au).

For those in part-time placements, the contribution by the appointing body is equal to the rate of the placement.

For further information and assistance please contact msf@nswact.uca.org.au.

11. MERCER BENEFICIARY AND SUPERANNUATION FUNDS

Mercer Beneficiary Fund

11.1 Background

Please note that with **effect from 1 October 2020**, **Category 6** of the **Uniting Church Beneficiary Fund, managed by Mercer has been closed to new ministers**.

For those ministers that have a Mercer Beneficiary Fund, the amount payable on behalf of the minister is reviewed annually by Mercer and communicated as part of the wider Stipend and Benefit Table.

Ministers currently in the Beneficiary Fund are required to make a personal contribution. This is made from their post-tax earnings. This amount is also reviewed annually by Mercer and communicated as part of the wider Stipend and Benefit Table.

11.2 Payment

The Beneficiary Funds contributions (closed to new members since 01 October 2020), comprising both the appointing body and personal contributions shall be sent to the Synod Finance Team monthly via direct debit. These monies are also collected by the Synod Payroll Bureau if the appointing body utilises their payroll services.

Please contact Synod Finance - msf@nswact.uca.org.au for advice and assistance.

Superannuation Fund

Ministers have the choice of paying into:

- An approved superannuation fund of their choice.
- The individual section of the Mercer Super Trust[1].

Where a minister chooses the option of personal (post-tax) choice of superannuation fund. The contributions shall be determined by the mandated Superannuation Contribution Guarantee. This shall apply for full-time and part-time placements.

Please ensure any uplift amount is included in the before tax earnings calculations.

Personal contribution is not required from those paying into their choice of superannuation fund.

Subject to the rules of their fund, ministers may elect to salary-sacrifice into their superannuation fund.

Any voluntary salary sacrifice to superannuation will be a reportable salary sacrifice and will be reported through Single Touch Payroll and via myGov.

Ministers should consult a financial advisor to discuss what type of benefit might best suit their context.

[1] *This is the retail super fund managed by Mercer and is open to all members of the public i.e., it is a public offer fund. It is not linked to the Beneficiary Fund.*

12. MINISTERS BENEFIT FACILITY (MBF)

12.1 Background

Under Australian Taxation Office (ATO) Religious Practitioners guidelines and Synod policy, ministers may choose to allocate **up to 30%** of their stipend, plus 100% of their benefits, to a **Ministers Benefit Facility (MBF)**. The 30% limit is set by the UCA National Assembly.

Uniting Financial Services (UFS) provides the Ministers Benefit Facility to help ministers manage their tax-free funds and to assist appointing bodies in meeting their tax obligations. Uniting Online (UOL) can be used to make payments and track expenses.

It is important that the MBF is used correctly to ensure the Church meets its obligations and can continue offering this arrangement to ministers.

12.2 Centrelink and Personal Income Accountability

Non-cash benefits provided to Religious Practitioners are exempt from tax and payment summary reporting, social security legislation takes the value of fringe benefits into account when assessing eligibility for various social security payments. It is the ministers' responsibility to ensure accurate information is reported.

12.3 Expenses - Allowable vs Non-Allowable

12.3.1 Allowable Expenses:

Ministers can use the MBF to pay most household and personal expenses, including but not limited to:

- Groceries, including alcohol
- Car expenses (repayments, fuel, servicing)
- Insurance premiums
- Utilities (electricity, phone/internet, water)
- Cleaners, gardeners, tradespeople
- School, university, or TAFE fees
- Mortgages without redraw capacity (statutory declaration required if there's a redraw)
- Rent
- Clothing and footwear
- Entertainment, gifts, holidays

12.3.2 Non-Allowable Expenses:

The following **cannot** be paid from the MBF:

- Fines or penalties (e.g., traffic fines)
- Taxation levies (including annual return fees)
- Child support / Centrelink payments
- Offerings or donations to Deductible Gift Recipients
- Tax-deductible costs
- Home deposits
- Cash withdrawals

General enquiries about allowable expenses should be referred to Synod Secretariat: sec@nswact.uca.org.au.

12.4 Setting up a Ministers Benefit Facility

New ministers or ministers that have not previously had their identification confirmed by UFS, must complete an UFS Identification Form and submit it with certified identification document to contactus@unitingfinancial.com.au.

MBF funds are held by the appointing body:

Ministers - appointing body treasurer to contact UFS Partner Solutions and Support Team for setup:

- Phone: 1300 133 673
- Email: contactus@unitingfinancial.com.au

Synod Appointed Ministers - contact Synod Finance Team for setup:

- Phone: 02 9159 9772
- Email: mbfwithdrawal@nswact.uca.org.au

The facility shall by operated by a minimum of two signatories as per Synod policy relating to the signing of financial transactions. The minister cannot be a signatory.

A minister should generally have only one MBF account at a time, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any interest earned on these funds is transferred to the congregation/appointing body's operating facility.

12.5 Options to accessing MBF Funds

12.5.1 Ministers

1. **UFS MBF-Linked Credit Card**
   - Ministers are urged to apply for a co-branded UFS/ANZ Corporate Card to be linked to their MBF facility.
   - The monthly limit is based on the minister's MBF stipend.
   - The limit resets on the 29th of each month.
   - Outstanding balances are automatically debited from the MBF on the 15th of the following month.
   - No annual fee
   - Monthly limit can be adjusted if stipend rates change.
   - To setup a UFS MBF linked Credit Card, the appointing body needs to contact contactus@unitingfinancial.com.au.
2. **Personal Credit Card**
   - Recurring payments to a minister's personal credit card can be arranged monthly via Uniting Online by the appointing body.
   - The recurring amount is based on available MBF funds.
3. **Recurring Payments (Direct Debit/Scheduled Payments)**
   - Regular payments can be set up as Direct Debits or Scheduled Payments through Uniting Online by the appointing body.
   - For mortgages with a redraw facility, the minister must complete a Statutory Declaration confirming the funds will not be redrawn.

4. Ad-hoc Expenses

- Funds can be transferred from the MBF electronically via Uniting Online by using BPay or Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).
- A request to transfer funds can be made to the appointing body treasurer. The request shall contain the BSB and account details for the destination of the fund. The request needs to be approved by two authorised signatories.

12.5.2 Synod Appointed Ministers

1. UFS MBF-Linked Credit Card

- Apply for a co-branded UFS/ANZ Corporate Card to be linked to their MBF facility.
- The monthly limit is based on the minister's MBF stipend.
- The limit resets on the 29th of each month.
- Outstanding balances are automatically debited from the MBF on the 15th of the following month.
- No annual fee.
- Monthly limit can be adjusted if stipend rates change.
- Synod ministers should request to apply a credit card via email: mbfwithdrawal@nswact.uca.org.au.

2. Personal Credit Card

- Recurring payments to a minister's personal credit card can be arranged monthly.
- The recurring amount is based on available MBF funds.
- Submit MBF Withdrawal Form with credit card statement as supporting documentation to: mbfwithdrawal@nswact.uca.org.au.

3. Recurring Payments (Direct Debit/Scheduled Payments)

- Regular payments can be set up as Direct Debits or Scheduled Payments through Uniting Online by the Synod.
- For mortgages with redraw facilities, a **Statutory Declaration Form - for MBF Minister - Home Load Redraw Form** is required confirming funds will not be redrawn. To obtain a copy of this form please send a request to mbfwithdrawal@nswact.uca.org.au.
- Submit MBF Withdrawal Form with supporting documentation to: mbfwithdrawal@nswact.uca.org.au.

4. One-Off or Exceptional Payments

- Exceptional circumstances may include:
  - Payment amounts exceeding the approved credit limit.
  - Final payments required before the end of a placement.
- Submit a Minister Benefit Facility Withdrawal Request Form with invoices or supporting documents to: mbfwithdrawal@nswact.uca.org.au.

12.6 GST on Accounts Paid via the MBF

- All payments made from the MBF include the GST component where applicable.
- The appointing body can claim the GST paid on these expenses through its BAS (Business Activity Statement) return.
- It is essential that a valid tax invoice is obtained and kept before any GST is claimed.
- The GST refund is retained by the appointing body and cannot be claimed or used by the minister.
- This ensures proper compliance with tax regulations and maintains transparency in MBF account management.

12.7 General Operations of the MBF

- **No cash withdrawals:** All payments must go to a third, non-related party.
- **Authorised approvals only:** All MBF payments require to be approved by authorised signatory. Ministers cannot make payments directly from the MBF account or share account details. Ministers can set up Direct Debit payments through the MBF-linked credit card.
- **Documentation required:** Tax invoices and statements must be kept for at least five years in line with ATO requirements.
- **Statement access:** UFS can grant direct access to MBF accounts and MBF-linked credit cards to ministers.
- **End-of-placement balance:** Ministers have 30 days to finalise the account after a placement ends.
- **Tax treatment:** Funds are tax-free; items paid from the MBF cannot be claimed as a tax deduction. No Fringe Benefit Tax applies. MBF deposits are not reported via Single Touch Payroll (STP) but may need to be reported to Centrelink.
- **Sufficient funds required:** The appointing body must ensure enough funds are in the MBF for payments, including monthly credit card clearance. Overdrawing may result in:
  - Payments being returned with possible charges
  - Fees for overdrawing the MBF-linked credit card

12.8 End-of-Placement Actions

12.8.1 Minister Responsibilities

- Appointing body must notify about the end of placement:
  - **For ministers**, please contact appointing body treasurer
  - **For Synod ministers**. Please email Synod Finance Team: mbfwithdrawal@nswact.uca.org.au.

12.8.2 Appointing Body Responsibilities

- Cancel all Direct Debits / Scheduled Payments on MBF-linked card.
- Ensure all outstanding card transactions are debited to MBF.
- Once all transactions have been brought to account then, ensure any funds remaining in the MBF are returned to the Minister after deducting the appropriate taxation.
- Request UFS to close MBF account and credit card linked to MBF account, signed by 2 authorised signatories and email request to contactus@unitingfinancial.com.au.
- Post-closure transactions remain the appointing body's responsibility.

13. ANCILLARY PAYMENTS IN ADDITION TO THE STIPEND

From time to time there may be additional payments offered to the minister for example funerals, weddings or lectures.

No minister in a full-time placement is automatically entitled to keep additional remuneration from any source beyond the agreed stipend package. Arrangements can be made between the minister and appointing body/Church Council as to extra payments from weddings and funerals. Without such agreement any additional funds should be redirected to the placement/appointing body.

In the case of events such as weddings, funerals and casual lecturing, in a full-time placement, the donation should be forwarded to the appointing body unless other arrangements have been made between the minister and the appointing body.

In a part-time placement, should the event fall within the minister's normal hours, it would usually be forwarded to the appointing body unless other arrangements had been agreed. If the placement is part-time and the event falls outside agreed working hours, then the minister is entitled to receive the payment as reportable income.

In 2019 the Australian Taxation Office determined that all wages, payments and stipends are required to be paid through a payroll system. The Australian Tax Office considers cash payments as tax avoidance and is not in alignment with the UCA ethos.

Common sense should apply for cultural gifts with the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice **(Section 5-Gifts and Fees)** providing guidelines. If the minister is in doubt it should be discussed with Church Council for transparency.

14. TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Some placements may require a 'Travel and Hospitality Benefit' to facilitate the proper functioning of the role. Such arrangements should be negotiated between the appointing body and minister.

A Corporate credit card is recommended for exclusive use for such expenditure with the normal process of receipts and reconciliations required.

15. PART-TIME PLACEMENTS

15.1 Background

The rules around part-time ministers should be read in conjunction with those relating to full-time ministers, and the conditions specifically applicable to part-time placements outlined below.

15.2 Payment of the Base Stipend

The base Stipend should be paid in the same manner as for a full-time placement, pro-rated to the percentage placement. For example, a minister in a 50% placement would be paid 50% of the minimum stipend.

15.3 Motor Vehicles

Mileage Benefit (inclusive of former Vehicle Standing Costs (VSC)) shall be paid for all part-time placements.

The Mileage benefit component for a part-time placement is outlined in the Stipend and Benefit Table.

15.4 Housing

Where a placement is 50% or greater, a Manse may be provided on the same basis as for a full-time placement as outlined in **section 7.** of this handbook. Should a Housing Benefit be appropriate, this should be pro-rated to the percentage of the placement.

15.5 Resource Benefit

The Resource Benefit is paid in full except where a placement is shared by appointing bodies. In this case the benefit is equally shared. Ministers in multiple part-time placements receive this benefit only once. Ministers in supply do not receive the resource benefit unless the duration of supply is greater than three months as outlined in **section 6.2** of this handbook.

15.6 Ministers Support, Beneficiary and/or Superannuation Fund Contributions

MSF, Superannuation and Beneficiary Fund contributions are to be made on a pro-rata basis.

15.7 Calculating Part-Time Placements

In a part-time placement, the expected ministry responsibilities shall reflect the agreed placement percentage. Balancing ministry demand against placement percentage can be challenging. The appointing body and minister should negotiate the specific responsibilities and typical pattern of work and record them in an agreement.

ACCOUNTABILITY

16. ACCOUNTABILITY OF MINISTERS

Over time, guidelines, policies and practices change. It is the responsibility of each minister to be aware of their responsibilities in serving the church – found in the Regulations, Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice, Ordination Vows, Terms of Placement, Induction Service and this Handbook.

- Ministers shall be accountable and responsible in matters of faith and discipline to the Presbytery in which their name is listed on the Presbytery roll (Regulation 2.9.1).
- Ministers vow to commit and re-commit to being accountable and responsible to the Presbytery through services of ordination and induction.
- Responsibilities of the Presbytery for the oversight of ministers are outlined in Regulation 3.1.3.
- The counselling and discipline of ministers shall be the responsibility of Presbytery and in the exercise of its responsibility it shall:

  a) Help them to discern and fulfil their vocations.

  b) Assist them in nurturing their gifts.

  c) Provide encouragement for the enrichment of their ministry.

  d) Advise, admonish, correct, and assist them when they appear to require guidance and support.

  e) Assist and encourage observance of the Code of Ethics.

  f) Advise and discipline ministers in relation to breaches of the Code of Ethics; and

  g) Deal with complaints made against them (Regulation 5.4.2).

17. PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION

17.1 Background

Professional supervision is defined in the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice (3.9(c)) as a relationship with a supervisor to assist in enhancing the quality of ministry by enabling the minister to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship, and to intentionally reflect on their ministry practice and context.

As part of their self-care and their responsibility to others, the Code of Ethics for Ministry Conduct requires all ministers to receive regular professional supervision. (3.8(b) and 3.9(c)(d)).

Supervision for ordained ministers is mandatory and is included in the stipend package. The appointing body is responsible for up to $1,500 p.a. This arrangement should be agreed prior to the call being issued and recorded in the Terms of Placement document.

This is not a compulsory benefit and would only apply for appropriately qualified Supervisors, paid to the Supervisor on provision of a tax invoice or reimbursed to the Minister on provision of a receipt.

Professional Supervision for ordained ministers in placement is compulsory. It allows for the Synod to:

- Have a consistent practice and expectation of informed ethical ministry practice.
- Ensure a high standard of supervision by requiring professional supervision from a qualified supervisor, or a supervisor trained and authorised by the Synod.
- Enable Presbytery to record the name and qualification of supervisor.
- Receive a signed certification from the Supervisor as to the number of sessions attended each year, which would also be added to the ministers' presbytery records.

Eight (8) supervised sessions per year is the minimum expectation. Minister-to-minister supervision or peer group supervision is no longer considered professional in its delivery.

Selection of a Supervisor

Ministers may select their own professional supervisor. It is the responsibility of all ministers to ensure their supervisor has a copy of the Basis of Union and the Code of Ethics for Ministry Practice, to ensure they are able to understand the ethos of the Uniting Church and the role and responsibility of the minister. Ministers are encouraged to develop a Supervision Covenant with their supervisor.

The Supervisors listed in Register - Supervisors have been recommended as appropriately qualified by the Synod of NSW and the ACT. Ministers and leaders who are looking for supervision may contact a potential Supervisor directly for more information and to negotiate an initial meeting.

Confidentiality and Accountability

All ministers who come under the oversight of the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice are required to have regular supervision. The content of supervision sessions remains confidential and stays between minister and supervisor excluding legal obligation to report reportable matters. Any concerns with this should be discussed with the Supervisor.

The appointing body and presbytery shall request an annual certificate from the Supervisor, documenting the supervisors name, relevant qualifications and the total number of sessions attended that year. This should be included in the minister's annual accountability report which is submitted to the Church Council or Appointing Body and Presbytery.

Supervision Guidelines for Retired Ministers

To provide guidance regarding supervision for retired ministers acting in supply or other forms of ministry:

- Those in 50% or more supply - full supervision requirements apply.
- Those offering consistent pastoral care at less than 50% supply - supervision quarterly.
- Those preaching regularly in one or more location/s - supervision quarterly.
- Those casually preaching every now and then - supervision is not required.

This should be agreed and recorded in the Supply agreement and funded by the supply location/s.

18. CONTINUING EDUCATION

At the 1997 Assembly, the Uniting Church affirmed the importance of continuing education and requested all ministers to enter into continuing education learning agreements with Presbytery in order to enhance professional development and skills required for ministry (Regulation 2.2.1 (xi)).

Due to the changing nature of society and the role, purpose, and value of the Church within it, it is vital for those in ministry to be able to respond to, and minister effectively. All ordained ministers in placements, those awaiting placement and those in ministry serving in an approved placement are expected to engage in continuing education (CoEMP 1.7; 3.4a).

Some suggested webpages for Continuing Education:

Vital Leadership

Lifelong Learning for Public Ministry

United Theological College

19. MANDATORY PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS TRAINING

In response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and considering developments in other Synods, the Synod of NSW/ACT established new requirements in terms of Professional Standards training for all those in active ministry.

These requirements for Professional Standards Training apply to everyone in active ministry including the following:

- Candidates for ordained ministries.
- Deacons and Ministers of the Word in placement, supply or awaiting placement.
- Ministry of Pastor positions.
- Lay people employed in ministry positions, even if these are not recognised as Ministry of Pastor positions.
- Ministers with permission to serve as minister in another denomination serving in an approved Uniting Church placement.
- Ministers seeking admission as ministers of the UCA.
- Retired ministers who are still in active ministry (this means anything from conducting a regular service through to providing supply).

It is a requirement that all those in active ministry will participate in the following training:

19.1 Ethical Ministry Foundation Course

This 2-day course is provided by Uniting Mission and Education (UME). Ministers are expected to attend this course once every 5 years as per recommendations from the Placements Committee and Synod Standing Committee.

19.2 Ethical Ministry Refresher Course

These 3-hour workshops provide opportunity for a group of peers to explore in depth a particular aspect of the Code of Ethics or an associated issue. These came as recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Two are required each year and will be hosted by Presbytery facilitators who are trained and authorised by Uniting Mission and Education (UME). Each Presbytery generally offers multiple sessions.

Should any minister be unable to participate in their home Presbytery, they are responsible to locate and attend a session in another Presbytery at their own expense. For ministers who fail to fulfil this requirement, a formal warning may be issued by the Associate Secretary. Should two consecutive sessions be missed with no supporting rationale from Presbytery a range of consequences may apply, including the Moderator formally standing the minister aside pending a discipline process or withdrawing the Ministers Benefit Facility from the Stipend package until requirements have been met.

For Information, Dates and to Register: Ethical Ministry Refresher & Foundation Courses

19.3 Ministry Accountability Report for Specified Ministers

Presbyteries should conduct an annual Ministry Accountability Report for each minister under their oversight. Presbyteries may create their own Accountability report form or use the Specified Minister Annual Report Pro-forma provided by Synod.

Each minister is required to submit this report as part of their accountability under Reg 2.2.1(c). Presbytery has the authorisation to manage this process and determine any potential consequences for failure to be accountable.

19.4 Professional Supervision

It is a requirement of the Code of Ethics that all those in active ministry meet regularly with a Professional Supervisor. Refer to **section 16**. of this handbook for further information in relation to supervision.

Link to Register - Supervisors

19.5 Culture of Safety (Safe Church) Training

Ministers are required to undertake Culture of Safety training. While School Chaplains may undertake similar training within their schools, it is important to complete training that focuses on the different responsibilities and processes that apply in a congregational context.

Uniting Church Culture of Safety training is the preferred option. Should anyone wish to utilise training from another recognised denomination, permission should be sought from a member of the Culture of Safety team cultureofsafety@nswact.uca.org.au to ensure it meets Uniting Church requirements.

For information including dates and to register for training visit the Culture of Safety Training.

For information on the Culture of Safety team.

20. MINISTERS OBLIGATIONS IN RELATION TO GOVERNMENT BODIES

20.1 Background

As part of the Church's commitment to working with Government, the following obligations are part of any ordained minister's legal and ethical responsibility:

- National Police Check (if required)
- Working with Children and/or Working with Vulnerable Persons Check
- Marriage Celebrant Requirements
- Mandatory Reporting

Police Check:
Certain parts of the church or roles may require a police check. Should this be required, guidance will be provided as to the required process.

Working with Children and/or Vulnerable Persons Check:
NSW Requirements: **The Working with Children Check (WWCC)** is a legal requirement for every specified minister of a religious body within NSW, regardless of whether they are directly engaged with children in ministry. Retired ministers, that held a full WWCC, may have expired during their retirement require a volunteer WWCC as long as they are not in supply or other paid forms of ministry.

The outcome of a check is either a clearance to work with children or a bar against working with children. If the minister is cleared, the check will be valid for five years, however applicants are continuously monitored. For information and to apply for a Working with Children Check.

It is the responsibility of the appointing body, Presbytery and/or Synod to verify the WWCC/WWVP and record details.

ACT Requirements: The Working with Vulnerable People Check (WWVP) is a legal requirement for for every ordained minister of a religious body within the ACT, regardless of whether they are directly engaged with vulnerable people in ministry.

The outcome of a check is either a clearance to work with vulnerable people or a bar against working with vulnerable people. If cleared, the check will be valid for three years, however applicants are continuously monitored. For information and to apply for a Working with Vulnerable People check.

NSW and ACT: Some ministers will need to obtain both WWCC and WWVP due to their geographical location. For example, a minister placed at Goulburn or Queanbeyan may minister in NSW and ACT, and so would be required to obtain both checks. A person ministering in NSW may rely on a ACT WWVP check for up to five (5) calendar days per year. A person ministering in NSW may rely on a NSW WWCC for up to three (3) days in a four-week period, but no more than 7 days in twelve months.

Responsibilities: It is not permissible to engage in any form of ministry without holding a current WWCC/WWVP. This includes retired ministers seeking to serve locally or in supply (including leading the occasional worship service) and ordained ministers who may be employed under alternate arrangements (i.e., outside of, but seeking recognition from the church).

Failure to hold a valid check is an offence. Penalties range from fines to imprisonment. It is the responsibility for each minister to pay for and maintain a current WWCC/WWVP.

It is the responsibility of each minister to lodge and maintain their WWCC/WWVP number and expiry date with both Presbytery and Secretariat, and to advise the Presbytery and Secretariat of any changes to their WWCC/WWVP status.

In NSW, WWCC holders must inform the Office of the Children's Guardian if they change their name, address or contact details.

In the ACT, WWVP holders must inform Access Canberra if they change their name, address or contact details.

Any minister within the Synod of NSW and the ACT with an expired or suspended WWCC/WWVP will immediately be stood aside from all ministry duties until the renewed check has been updated and validated. Should this not be immediately rectified, discipline processes may ensue, and the appointing body and/or Presbytery may move to terminate the placement.

Should any minister move interstate, they will need to attend to the requirements of that state prior to commencing ministry.

While this is the responsibility of each minister, it is also part of the appointing body and Presbytery oversight to ensure proper records are kept and communicated to the Secretariat.

Any Minister unable to obtain a WWCC/WWVP will be unable to practice ministry in any form, and the church shall withdraw recognition.

Please contact the Associate Secretary in such an instance.

Marriage Celebrant Requirements:

Following ordination, a minister is able to register as a religious celebrant with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM). BDM allocate a registration number which shall be quoted on all subsequent marriage paperwork. Unless a minister is duly registered, he/she will be unable to conduct any marriage ceremony. Please complete a Nomination for Registration of Minister of Religion **Form** and an Additional Information to accompany Nomination of Minister of Religion **(Form 10/11).**

Please send both forms to the Synod Secretariat sec@nswact.uca.org.au for processing.

An ordained minister is only able to conduct weddings according to the Uniting Church liturgy. No specified UCA minister, or any minister from another denomination in a Uniting Church placement is authorised to conduct any wedding outside of the Uniting Church framework.

Should any paperwork be lodged incorrectly or inadequately, BDM will inform the registered minister directly. It will the responsibility of the authorised minister to ensure the legal process is correctly followed. Should a negative pattern emerge, the General Secretary may request the minister to retrain as a marriage celebrant within the church, or request BDM to withdraw authorisation.

For information on the legal requirements for religious celebrants and/or to order stationary, please visit the NSW Government Marriage Celebrants website.

Mandatory Reporting Obligations:

Mandatory reporting is the legislative requirement for selected groups of people to report harm or risk of harm to children and young people. Mandatory reporting laws vary according to State or Territory legislation.

NSW Government Communities & Justice Mandatory Reporter Guide.

ACT Government Mandatory Reporting Website.

Contact Culture of Safety team for information on Synod Procedures.

As mandatory reporters, it is the responsibility of every ordained minister to be aware of the Mandatory Reporting Requirements within their State, Territory and the Synod procedures.

Reportable Conduct Allegations Scheme:

Reportable conduct involves the legal obligation to report allegations made against certain workers if the allegations relate to conduct that may be reportable conduct. This includes conduct or allegations in the course of work and conduct or allegations outside the course of work.

The Uniting Church ensures that appropriate systems and processes are in place for preventing behaviour that causes harm to a child from occurring and ensures that allegations are reported. If you become aware of any allegations of reportable conduct, then you must report these to the General Secretary generalsecretary@nswact.uca.org.au as soon as possible. Do not commence any investigation before reporting the allegations. The General Secretary has a legal responsibility to report the allegations – to the Office of the Children's Guardian in NSW or the Ombudsman in the ACT.

It is the responsibility of every minister to understand The Uniting Church in Australia Assembly and The Uniting Church Synod of NSW & ACT policies and guidelines.

Both NSW and ACT have Reportable Conduct Schemes which are legislated under the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW) and the Ombudsman Act 1989 (ACT).

For more information, please visit Reportable Conduct and Culture of Safety.

DISCIPLINE IN THE UNITING CHURCH

21. DISCIPLINE

21.1 Background

'Discipline in the church is the exercise of spiritual authority with a view to honouring Christ the Head of the Church and ensuring the spiritual well-being of its members.' Reg 5.1.2

As part of the ordination vows, all ministers pledge to submit to the discipline and authority of the church.

The expectations of how a minister should behave are recounted in the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice (CoEMP).

Any breach of the CoEMP can become grounds for a disciplinary process against a minister.

Please note: Church processes shall defer to legal processes.

There are three Synod discipline committees, and each have regulations to guide the process.

- Committee for Counselling (C4C)
- Synod Sexual Misconduct Complaints Committee (SSMCC)
- Committee for Discipline (C4D)

Any breach of the CoEMP should initially go to the Chairperson of the Presbytery for resolution.

Should this be unsatisfactory or unsuccessful, a complaint can be sent to the C4C or SSMCC via the Associate Secretary. Both committees seek reconciliation and healing.

In certain circumstances, a matter may be referred to the C4D. This is a more formal process and can involve legal representation.

For more information, please contact the Associate Secretary: associatesecretary@nswact.uca.org.au

21.2 Lodging an Appeal

Assembly hosts the Appeals Panel, enabling Synods to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

Grounds of Appeal are recounted in Regulation 6.4.

Process for Lodging Appeals is found in Regulation 6.5.

SUPPORT FOR MINISTERS

22. RELOCATION

22.1 Background

The Synod shall take responsibility for 90% of the cost of relocation to a maximum amount of $5,000.

The receiving placement shall contribute 10%. Placements involving multiple congregations shall equally share the 10% contribution.

This arrangement shall provide for ministers moving:

- Into their first placement
- Between placements
- After their final placement to their place of retirement (within NSW and ACT)

The Synod is not responsible to move Ministers from one placement to a private location while they await another placement. In such instances, conversation should take place with the appointing body and/or Presbytery.

The relocation process is coordinated by the Secretariat Office who will provide the minister with information regarding obtaining quotes, preferred removalist and what is covered.

When a minister moves from one Synod to another, the cost is generally shared equally between the two. This should never be an assumption and falls to the Minister concerned to clarify prior to accepting the call.

The Synod will pay for one move for each placement. All other moves will be the responsibility of the Minister and/or the appointing body. The Synod is not responsible to provide storage while awaiting a move.

22.2 Pre-Move

Ministers shall allow for reasonable consideration of time (e.g. six weeks) when organising a removal, particularly if it is close to the Christmas and January period. If sufficient notice is not given, the Synod will not guarantee the move or be responsible for additional costs that may result.

A Removal Inventory is required to be completed. Attention should be paid to the completion of the inventory as it forms the basis for all subsequent quotes. Should an inventory prove to be significantly inaccurate, any increased cost may be at the minister's expense.

On receipt of the Inventory, the Secretariat will organise quotes and advise the minister of the allocated removalist. A minister may request a particular supplier to be considered but may not obtain quotes directly.

Ministers are responsible to source packing boxes and the packing process. Professional packing is the responsibility of the minister. The Synod shall not bear the cost for providing boxes or packing goods.

Any proposed change to the agreed inventory shall be reported to Secretariat for sign off. The Synod shall not be responsible for extra costs incurred by changes to the agreed inventory.

It is the minister's responsibility to be **fully** packed and ready to move on the agreed day. The Synod shall not be responsible for extra costs incurred through failure to meet this responsibility.

22.3 Insurance

Synod provides insurance for a standard move. Ministers will need to make their own arrangements for specific items of value.

22.4 Exclusions

The removal of the following items will be at the minister's expense:

- Excessive hobby equipment, for example canoes, camping goods.
- Lathes.
- Timber & Bricks.
- Large bird aviaries or garden sheds.
- Livestock or pets and their housing.
- Motor vehicles, boats, caravans, trailers, horse floats and ride on mowers.
- Outdoor spas.
- Pianos and organs.
- Any other non-standard, heavy, bulky, or fragile items.

Note: Pot plants may be moved should there be enough space in the removal van.

22.5 Travel / Costs

If own vehicle is used for relocation travel, reimbursement for mileage shall be at the current travel benefit amount listed on the Stipend and Benefit Table. Required accommodation shall be negotiated with the Secretariat on a case-by-case basis. The Synod will reimburse travel for one vehicle and provide accommodation for immediate family only.

22.6 Post Move

When a Manse/property is vacated, it is the responsibility of the minister to leave the premises in a clean state, including carpets professionally cleaned gardens and lawns tidy, pools clean. No rubbish or unwanted items should be left at the property.

If an appointing body needs to call in cleaners/gardeners/rubbish removal, negotiation should take place with the vacating minister prior to work being done. A final inspection should be conducted with the minister and placement representative present to agree on handover. All keys / remotes should be returned.

The Manse Agreement (Statement of Mutual Expectations) and Manse Premises Condition Report are available on the Synod Property Services website to assist ministers and appointing bodies in their inspection and maintenance of property under their stewardship.

22.7 Relocation Time

When a minister is moving from one placement to another, they may be offered up to two weeks to relocate according to circumstance. If a new placement does not involve relocating, relocation time does not apply. This shall be negotiated between the minister and the appointing body. Should a dispute arise, the Presbytery PRC shall decide.

Should a new placement commence before the relocation takes place, the relocation time should be delayed until the move takes place. Relocation time is not an entitlement, but a concession to be used for the sole purpose of relocating. It is not to be used as holiday time, nor can it be accrued to be later used in conjunction with other leave entitlements.

22.8 Removals of Ministers retiring to another State

Where the minister is retiring to another state, the Synod shall cover the cost to the NSW border. The minister shall be responsible for the remaining cost.

22.9 Removals for International Appointees

Synod shall not be responsible for any relocation overseas.

For Ministers moving from overseas to a placement within the Synod, the Synod may cover the cost from the border. The Synod body and/or the minister shall be responsible for the remaining amount. This may be determined on a case-by-case basis.

23. WELL-BEING SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO MINISTERS

The health, safety and wellbeing of our ministers are key priorities for the Synod.

In addition to UCA pastoral support and supervision, all ministers in placement are able to access TELUS Health (formally BENESTAR), the Synod's Employee Assistance Provider (known as EAP).

The EAP is a confidential, voluntary counselling service available to our ministers and their immediate family members. It is independent and aims to support physical, mental health and wellbeing, resolve challenges and to reach set goals.

The main features include:

- Confidential counselling, coaching and support with an experienced Psychologist.
- Appointments via face-to-face meeting, telephone, video or e-Counselling.
- Short term assistance with the resolution of personal and/or work-related challenges.
- Access to other services such as legal advice, financial counselling and nutrition advice.

To arrange an appointment or for further information about the EAP and your entitlements, visit the TELUS Health Synod website to:

- Download the TELUS Health Information Flyer
- Download the TULUS Health FAQ Sheet
- Download the TELUS Health App

Or visit the TELUS Health One website or call them on 1300 360 364

24. WORKERS COMPENSATION

Treasurers are reminded that all ministers are covered by the Synod for Workers Compensation. The premium is paid from contributions received through the sickness and accident component of the Ministers Support Fund Levy.

If a minister is injured or experiences a work-related illness, it should be reported as soon as possible, regardless of the seriousness. Send an email to Willis Towers Watson (WTW) the Synod Workers Compensation Advisor UCASynod.RTW@willistowerswatson.com within 48 hours to satisfy legislated reporting requirement, and you will have access to support for the workers compensation and injury management process if needed. The minister should not be included in any declarations submitted to the Insurer.

If the congregation employs other staff, including lay persons in ministerial roles, separate arrangements need to be made for Workers Compensation insurance.

Refer Workers Compensation Policies and Forms and Workers Compensation Policy Needs.

For further information and assistance please contact the Synod Work Health and Safety team.

25. WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

Work health and safety (WHS) responsibilities apply to ministry even though the relationship between an ordained Minister and the Church is different from a conventional employment relationship. When carrying out ministry, a Minister may be considered a worker for the purposes of WHS legislation and has responsibilities to take reasonable care for their own health and safety, ensure that their actions or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of others, and cooperate with reasonable WHS policies, procedures, and instructions.

Depending on the nature of their role and the extent to which they make or participate in significant decisions affecting a Congregation, Presbytery or other Church body, a Minister may also be an officer for WHS purposes and therefore have an additional personal duty to exercise due diligence.

WHS responsibilities are not limited to activities undertaken on Church property and can apply wherever ministry work is being carried out.

MINISTERS LEAVE AND RETIREMENT

26. LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS

There are various types of leave available for ordained ministers in placement. As ministers are not employees, the entitlements under the National Employment Standards do not apply and the following guidelines and processes should be followed.

Ministers are able to take their leave entitlements at a time negotiated with, and mutually agreeable to, their appointing body. Ministers may not take leave without consulting their appointing body.

As part of being accountable, all ministers shall complete the necessary leave forms and follow the required approval processes.

Please refer the Synod of NSW/ACT Ministers Leave Entitlements Matrix for further details.

27. RECREATION LEAVE

27.1 Background

Rest and recreation are essential for effective ministry. Ministers are expected to regularly use their annual entitlement.

Recreation Leave was previously known as Annual Leave.

27.2 Entitlement to, and Remuneration whilst on Recreation Leave

Ordained ministers in 100% ACOMP placements are entitled to thirty (30) days (210 hours) Recreational Leave per annum.

The 30-day period includes Saturdays and Sundays but excludes public holidays, on average this is based on 7 hours of work per day (includes 6 days per week).

Should the minister take part of their annual leave they cannot include any more than 5 weekends in total. This provides the minister with five weekends as part of their recreation leave.

All normal remuneration arrangements apply during Recreation Leave. There is no entitlement to any form of leave loading.

A part-time time minister will accrue and be paid recreation leave in direct accordance with their placement percentage.

27.3 Process for Application and Approval of Recreation Leave

To apply for recreation leave, the Minister shall complete a Minister Leave Application Form. Approval from the appointing body is required in line with these guidelines.

Recreation leave should be taken during the year in which it falls due unless there are extenuating circumstances. Ministers shall consult both appointing body and Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) (or equivalent) to obtain approval to accrue recreation leave.

Recreation leave is to be pre-approved by the church council or appointing body equivalent. Recreation leave records are to be kept by the appointing body.

A copy should be sent to the Presbytery PRC.

If the minister is paid by the Synod's Payroll Bureau Service (PBS), Recreational Leave entitlements and processing will be managed by the PBS on receipt of the approved leave form.

27.4 Deferring Recreation Leave

Recreation leave entitlements are cumulative, but it is expected that the minister shall regularly use their annual entitlement each year from a refreshment and self-care perspective.

Accrual of Recreation Leave beyond 8 weeks will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and with the prior approval of the appointing body and Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) (or equivalent).

After 6 weeks have been accumulated, approval shall be sought including the reasons, from the Presbytery who will consult the appointing body. This springs from the Synod's duty of care for ministers.

Where a Presbytery is unable to persuade a minister to take Recreation Leave then the Presbytery, in conjunction with the appointing body, may direct the minister to take Recreation Leave for a specific period. To apply for accrued leave please complete a Minister Leave Application Form.

27.5 Untaken Recreation Leave at End of Placement

Recreation leave should not be carried into a new placement/supply, as Ministers are expected to use all recreational leave before the conclusion of their placement.

In rare and extenuating circumstances, the Minister may request unused recreational leave be carried forward. All parties (i.e. the former appointing body, the new appointing body, and the Presbytery PRC) would need to consent. The full remuneration value of this period of leave calculated at the current rate should be transferred to the new placement. Leave cannot be paid out to the minister.

Where a minister resigns due to extreme ill-health, any recreational leave balances can be paid out as part of the termination process.

28. STUDY LEAVE

28.1 Background

The purpose of Study Leave is to provide for continuing education and professional development for ministry. It is not an automatic entitlement and should only be used to enhance skills for ministry-related development.

Study Leave is intended for **agreed courses, programs, or forms of learning agreed between minister, appointing body and presbytery**, taken at a time negotiated with the appointing body.

The presbytery annual Accountability report should request:

- an account of what was studied, key learnings, and ministry benefits.
- An outline of the proposed study plan for the coming year.

28.2 Entitlement to and Remuneration whilst on Study Leave

Ministers in full-time placement are provided with 14 calendar days of Study Leave each placement year inclusive of Saturday and Sunday but excluding public holidays.

14 Calendar days ensures that the minister has the benefit of 2 weekends. Study Leave can be taken as required with no more than 2 weekends included.

Public holidays do not form part of the Study Leave.

Normal remuneration arrangements apply during Study Leave.

Part-time ministers are entitled to pro-rata Study Leave per year dependent on the percentage of placement. Normal remuneration applies. For example, a 50% placement shall receive 50% of the study leave benefit = seven calendar days.

Ministers who are retiring, considering retirement, or concluding their placement are not automatically entitled to unused Study Leave. This would only be granted at the discretion of the appointing body and PRC after consultation with the Associate Secretary. A clear rationale should be provided as to how study leave will benefit the placement, church, or Minister.

28.3 Process for Application and Approval of Study Leave

To apply for study leave, the Minister shall complete a Minister Leave Application Form. Approval from the appointing body is required in line with these guidelines.

Ministers shall seek approval from their appointing body and Presbytery PRC for all study leave.

An account of all Study Leave taken shall be included in the Minister's annual Ministry Accountability report which is submitted to Presbytery PRC.

28.4 Accumulation of Study Leave

Accumulation of study leave is not encouraged. In exceptional circumstances where a longer-term study program is anticipated, study leave may be accumulated for up to no more than **three years** with the approval of the appointing body.

All accumulated Study Leave shall be approved by the appointing body and the PRC. Should approval be denied, the accumulated study leave shall be forfeited.

28.5 Untaken Study Leave at End of Placement

Study leave is not transferable between placements unless there are truly exceptional circumstances.

In this instance, approval should be given by both the current and new appointing bodies, and the PRC after consultation with the Associate Secretary. The outcome of agreement is to be recorded in the new Terms of Placement. A full rationale of the request should be included.

In the event this is approved, the full remuneration value of this period of leave at the current rates is transferred to the new placement by the former placement.

29. PERSONAL, SICK AND CARERS LEAVE

29.1 Background

A minister in full-time or part-time placement who becomes ill and is unable to carry out their normal duties, is entitled to sick leave.

From time to time, ministers in placement may also need to take leave to care for a sick dependent, known as Carers Leave.

29.2 Entitlement and Remuneration for Sick Leave

A minister in full-time placement is entitled to 30 days sick leave per annum. This includes compassionate and carers leave.

Pro-rata entitlement would apply in a part-time placement and for varying lengths of supply.

Please note that any unused sick leave may not be accumulated, transferred, or paid out at the conclusion of the placement, as determined by the Synod Standing Committee.

Ministers may be considered for extra sick leave on a case-by-case basis as approved by the Associate Secretary.

To apply for extended sick leave please send a written request to: associatesecretary@nswact.uca.org.au.

29.3 Application and Approval of Sick Leave

Any minister wishing to obtain sick leave shall complete a Minister Leave Application Form**.**

Where the minister has been unwell for more than 2 days concurrently, the minister should obtain a medical certificate and forward it to their appointing body as soon as practical. Without the appropriate sick leave form and (if required) valid doctor's certificate, sick leave may not be approved and/or financially supported by the appointing body.

Where the illness is extreme and/or protracted, the minister should advise the church council chairperson or appointing body, and PRC (or equivalent) so that appropriate pastoral care may be provided for the minister, and suitable arrangements made for the placement. Any condition or illness which prevents a minister from carrying out their ministerial responsibilities should be communicated to the congregation in an appropriate and sensitive manner. This shall be decided by the Chairperson or Convener of the appointing body in conversation with the minister.

Where there is repeated need for sick leave causing a significant impact on the placement, there should be a discussion between the minister, appointing body and Presbytery PRC as to the ongoing viability of the ministry.

29.4 Entitlement and Remuneration for Carers Leave

A minister who seeks to take leave to care for a dependent who is unwell and is unable to undertake their ministry duties is able to access paid Carers Leave.

Carers Leave will be granted where the minister is primarily responsible for the care of the person concerned. It would not apply where another person has also taken leave to care for the same person.

Carers leave will be deducted from the 30-day entitlement for sickness and carers leave. Carers Leave shall be pro-rated for part-time placements.

- Where the absence of the minister is expected to be more than 2 days, the minister shall advise the church council/appointing body.

- The written request should include:
    - The name of the person requiring care.
    - Their relationship to the minister.
    - Reasons for taking such leave.
    - The estimated length of absence.

The minister may be requested to provide suitable written evidence to support the leave such as a doctor's letter or certificate.

29.5 Application and Approval of Carers Leave

By the return from Carers Leave, the minister shall have submitted a Minister Leave Application Form.

Where Carers Leave is protracted, the minister shall advise the Church Council Chairperson and PRC so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Where repeated periods of absence negatively impact on the placement, a discussion shall be initiated between the minister, appointing body, and PRC.

30. COMPASSIONATE LEAVE

30.1 Entitlement and Remuneration for Compassionate Leave

Up to 7 Compassionate Leave days can be taken when a member of an employee's immediate family or household dies or develops a life-threatening illness or injury. Compassionate Leave is non-cumulative.

Immediate family refers to:

- Spouse.
- De-facto partner.
- Child.
- Parent.
- Grandparent.
- Grandchild.
- Sibling, or
- Child, parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling of the employee's spouse or de-facto partner.

This definition includes step relations (e.g. stepparents and stepchildren) as well as adoptive relations.

30.2 Application and Approval of Compassionate Leave

Coping in situations involving death and or illness/injury usually involves a range of strong emotions which may make it difficult for a minister to deal with practicalities. However, informing your appointing body is necessary in order to make the necessary arrangements regarding the placement.

On their return from Compassionate Leave the minister shall complete a Minister Leave Application Form and submit a copy to their appointing body and Presbytery PRC.

Compassionate Leave is non-cumulative.

31. PARENTAL LEAVE

31.1 Background

Welcoming a new family member is a special time, whether your new addition is by birth or adoption, Parental Leave provides for time away from work and financial support for a minister as primary carer to prepare for the arrival of their child/children and welcoming their new addition.

Ministers may also be eligible for additional support from the Government, for further information click on Services Australia Parental Leave Pay.

31.2 Synod Paid Parental Leave

Paid Parental Leave for Ministers aligns with the Synod Parental Leave Policy that was updated to align with the Legislation changes made in 2023.

Ministers with more than 12 months service and who are the primary care giver for the child are able to access up to 12 weeks on full stipend (to be taken at the commencement of their Parental Leave).

Paid Parental Leave can be taken in addition to other accrued leave entitlements, however each leave type must be specified separately on the Parental Leave Application Form and taken consecutively. Public holidays are included in the period of paid parental leave and are not paid in addition to parental leave (they do not extend the period of paid parental leave).

Paid Parental Leave forms part of the total period of parental leave up to 52 weeks. Should a minister wish to take extended leave, beyond 52 weeks they should contact their Presbytery or the Associate Secretary.

The stipend shall be paid for the first 12 weeks. The remaining 40 weeks are un-stipended, however where applicable the Services Australia Parental Leave Pay program may apply. This is the ministers responsibility to check eligibility and arrange.

Housing

Where applicable, the minister shall continue to occupy the Manse or receive the Housing Benefit, for the entire period of leave up to 12 months.

Vehicle and Travel

Vehicle Standing Costs shall be included in paid parental leave if the minister is full-time, and the Terms of Placement so specifies. For all placements commencing after 1 July 2024, VSC shall not apply to Parental Leave. No mileage shall be paid regardless of full-time or part-time ministry.

Benefits

Other benefits shall be paid as part of the period of Parental Leave.

Various Support Funds

The Congregation or appointing bodies shall continue to pay the Minister Support Fund and Beneficiary Fund levies for the period of **paid Parental Leave** only. To do so they need to contact the Ministers Support Fund Financial Accountant msf@nswact.uca.org.au for advice on how to do this.

31.3 The Services Australia Parental Leave Pay

Ministers may be entitled to access Services Australia Parental Leave Pay. To check eligibility and discuss their particular situation, the minister should seek advice from Services Australia. This is the responsibility of the minister to arrange and provide advice to the body responsible for their Payroll.

From 1 July 2026, the Services Australia Parental Leave Pay is up to 26 weeks based on a 5-day work week per family (in total between a couple). Previous Dad and Partner Pay is now rolled into the Services Australia Parental Leave Pay.

31.4 Application and Approval of Parental Leave

Ministers shall cease work 6-weeks prior to the due date of delivery. Should a minister wish to work within the 6-weeks, medical clearance is required. All applications for Parental Leave shall be submitted to the appointing body with at least 10-weeks' notice, using the Parental Leave Application Form, with appropriate documentation such as doctor's letters etc. attached.

The signed application is then sent to the Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee for their review of the arrangements to cover the ministerial duties whilst the minister is on Leave.

Presbytery then sends a copy of the signed application to the minister and the appointing body for processing by the relevant Payroll.

31.5 Reimbursement/Support to the Appointing Body

The Synod, via the Ministers Support Fund, on application from the appointing body, can provide financial assistance for the full costs of supply for the period of Parental Leave. The appointing body should contact Synod Payroll for more information and process - payroll@nswact.uca.org.au.

31.6 Returning to Work After Parental Leave

The return-to-work date should be negotiated with the appointing body allowing for at least 4-weeks' notice.

For further information on Minister Parental Leave please contact:

Synod Mission Services - People & Culture Team people@nswact.uca.org.au or
Associate Secretary associatesecretary@nswact.uca.org.au

32. DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE LEAVE

32.1 Background

The Synod recognises the devastating impact Domestic, and Family Violence (DFV) can have on the lives of those who experience it, including their work and financial security. Ministers who are experiencing or escaping DFV are encouraged to advise their presbytery minister or the synod Associate Secretary so that appropriate support is provided wherever possible.

32.2 Entitlement and Remuneration for Domestic Violence Leave

The Synod is committed to providing leave and other support to ministers who experience domestic and family violence (DFV).

Ministers personally experiencing DFV may access up to five (5) days paid leave per annum of Domestic Violence Leave for the purposes of attending to:

- Medical appointments.
- Legal proceedings.
- Accommodation matters including relocation.
- Childcare and education matters.
- Counselling; and/or
- To make other safety arrangements which are related to domestic and family violence.

Leave may be taken in units of one hour, half days, and full days. Full-time ministers are eligible for up to 5 days per annum, with part-time placements eligible for up to 3 days per annum.

In addition to Domestic Violence Leave, ministers can make an application for additional leave. The amount and type of leave provided will be determined by the individual's situation through consulting Presbytery Minister and the Synod Associate Secretary.

Domestic Violence Leave is noncumulative.

Ministers will need to talk to their Presbytery Minister or Associate Secretary should they need to negotiate temporary flexible arrangements or face ongoing DFV issues.

Ministers who provide support to a family member experiencing DFV may access allocated Domestic Violence leave for the purpose of:

- Accompanying that person to legal proceedings, counselling, appointments with a medical or legal practitioner
- Assisting with relocations or other safety arrangements; or
- Other activities associated with the family and domestic violence including caring for children

Notice and Notification

While notice is not strictly required prior to taking the leave, the minister should notify their presbytery minister or the Synod Associate Secretary of their intention to take or remain on DFV or other leave for this purpose as soon as possible. Proof of DFV may be required and can be a document issued by the Police Service, a Court, a Doctor, a Domestic and Family Violence Support Service or Lawyer, or a statutory declaration.

The minister should apply for leave using the Minister Leave Application Form. All personal information concerning DFV will be kept as confidential as possible.

Please refer the Synod Domestic and Family Violence Support Policy.

33. OTHER LEAVE

33.1 Background

There are a range of less common leave scenarios relating to ministers outlined below:

- Public Holidays
- Sundays Free from ministerial responsibilities
- Jury Duty
- Defense Reservist or Emergency Services Leave

33.2 Public Holidays

Public holidays are as per the NSW/ACT government's gazetted holidays.

Public holidays are not included in periods of Recreation Leave; Study Leave or un-Stipended leave but are included in all other forms of Leave. Ministers in congregational placements generally work through public holidays such as Christmas and Easter. It is the responsibility of the minister and appointing body to agree on how this should be addressed.

33.3 Sundays Free from Ministerial Responsibilities

A minister in full-time or part-time congregational placement may be entitled to a certain number of Sundays per annum free of ministerial duties. This is at the discretion of the appointing body and Presbytery. Such non-preaching Sundays may not be accumulated. Where such time is not taken in any year, it is automatically forgone. Any agreed outcomes should be documented in the Terms of Placement.

33.4 Jury Duty

UCA ordained ministers may exercise their entitlement to be exempted from Jury Duty. Please contact the Synod Secretariat sec@nswact.uca.org.au for letters of exemption.

33.5 Community Service Leave (Defense Reservist/Emergency Services)

UCA ordained ministers may apply for Community Service leave which is subject to their appointing body's approval.

33.6 Leave of Absence without Stipend

In extraordinary circumstances, a minister may request un-stipended leave of absence. This is at the discretion of the appointing body and PRC and would depend on the reason and implications for the placement. Presbytery and the Associate Secretary should be informed of such arrangements. A change of ministry designation may be required.

The stipend package including housing benefit (if applicable) is not paid during this period. Any public holidays that fall within this period are not paid. Should a car be provided, arrangements should be made with the appointing body. It is expected the minister would retain manse arrangements.

34. MINISTERS LONG LEAVE

34.1 Background

The purpose of Long Leave is to refresh a minister after extended service.

34.2 Entitlement and Remuneration for Long Leave

Ministers are entitled to two calendar months after 10 years' service, and 1 month for each 5 years thereafter, up to the date of retirement.

One (1) year's credit is given for the 3 years study undertaken at United Theological College (Bachelor of Theology Program or above). This becomes available only after the full 10 years of service has been completed. This means after 10 years' service a minister may take long leave consistent with 11 years.

Ministers are remunerated at their regular rate whilst on Long Leave.

34.3 Application and Approval of Long Leave

Ministers in Placement - All applications for Long Leave shall be approved by the relevant church council or appointing body and the Presbytery Pastoral Relations (PRC) using the Minister Long Leave Application Form.

34.4 Untaken Long Leave at the conclusion of a Placement/Retirement

When a minister retires, any untaken long leave can be paid out, at the minimum stipend rate, less the appropriate taxation. It is the minister's responsibility to obtain appropriate financial advice.

Long leave shall be concluded before the closure of placement service and /or date of retirement.

Any untaken long leave will be paid out as a lump sum less tax. For further information on Ministers Retirement please refer **section 36**. of this handbook.

34.5 Reimbursement/Support to the Appointing Body

The appointing body will continue to pay the stipend package to the minister while on long leave. The Synod will reimburse the appointing body the value of the minimum stipend and benefits.

This reimbursement excludes Ministers Support Fund contributions and after tax (personal) superannuation contributions, where appliable.

All reimbursements will be in line with the by-laws and policies contained within this handbook in regard to the approved rates in the Stipend and Benefit Table and as evidenced by a copy of a recent payslip. This support enables the appointing body to make provisions for their supply should they wish.

The reimbursement is intended to cover the cost of supply while a minister is on long leave. Supply arrangements are between the appointing body and presbytery.

34.6 Payment of Long Leave to a Minister in Placement

Ministers in placement are paid by their appointing body as usual. The appointing body may discuss removing the travel component for the period of long leave as no role-related travel should take place. This does not relate to or include vehicle standing cost.

34.7 Payment of Long Leave to a Minister not in Placement

At the time of taking long leave, ministers not in placement are paid at the prevailing minimum stipend rate, less the appropriate taxation.

34.8 Payment of Long Leave when a Minister Transfers between Synods

With the exception of the Northern Synod, a minister's long leave balance has portability between Synods and will transfer with the Minister upon their placement to/from an interstate Synod.

Please note that long leave accrual rates can differ between Synods. Long Leave shall accrue for each placement in direct proportion to the rate of each overseeing Synod. The overall long leave balance for the minister will be apportioned in direct accordance with these varying Synod accrual rates where applicable.

34.9 Checking your Eligibility and Long Leave Balance

In March 2023, all minister Long Leave balances were transferred to the Synod Preceda Self Service Platform to allow ministers to view online their long leave balance, placement/supply history and long leave eligibility.

Please note that the Preceda system currently only allows ministers to view their details but not apply for Long Leave. Ministers applying for Long Leave are still required to complete a Minister Long Leave Application Form, please refer S**ection 33.3** in this handbook.

34.10 Contact

For assistance with Synod Preceda Self Service login please email Synod Office Payroll: payroll@nswact.uca.org.au

For further information and assistance regarding any long leave balance, application and payment please email Synod Secretariat: longleave@nswact.uca.org.au

35. MINISTERS RETIREMENT

Regulation 2.6.1(d)
Retirement

(d) A Minister may retire

(i) permanently

(1) after reaching the age of 55;

(2) on the issue of a medical certificate by the Synod's Medical Advisers that the Minister is unfit for active service and the Beneficiary Fund has determined a pension will be paid, or

(3) for any other reason which the Placements Committee after consultation with the Presbytery considers sufficient.

(ii) temporarily for a defined period with the approval of the Placements Committee on the recommendation of or with the concurrence of the Presbytery on the issue of a medical certificate by the Synod's Medical Advisers that the Minister is temporarily unfit for active service and the Beneficiary Fund has determined a pension will be paid. Such temporary retirement may be extended or varied by the Placements Committee and at the end of the period of temporary retirement the Minister shall be available for active service or seek permanent retirement.

35.1 When a Minister Retires

Retiring Ministers should advise their Congregation, Presbytery or appointing body of their intention to retire. The ministers' retirement is received by Presbytery PRC. When retirement date is agreed:

- Presbytery and/or the minister should notify the Associate Secretary and/or Synod Secretariat of the ministers' retirement including the agreed retirement date.
- If the minister is paid by Synod Payroll the congregation, presbytery or appointing body shall notify Synod Payroll of the minister's retirement and send a completed Synod Payroll Termination Form to payroll@nswact.uca.org.au
- Synod Secretariat arrange for the minister's retirement to be noted at the next ACOMP and Synod Standing Committee meetings.

The Secretariat sends the retiring minister a letter acknowledging their retirement includes the following information:

- Relocation assistance (if applicable) is only available if a retiring minister is moving from a manse or the equivalent rental accommodation into their own home and has not used the retirement relocation assistance in an alternate way. It is not available for Ministers receiving the housing benefit and wishing to relocate in retirement.
- Beneficiary Fund or Mercer Super Trust (if applicable).
- Long Leave balance and a Payment of any Long Leave Balance owing on Retirement form. (to complete and return if applicable).
- Retired Supply Ministry (is offered as optional).
- Housing and Car Loan (if applicable).
- Synod Directory update form.

35.2 Payment of Long Leave to a Retiring Minister

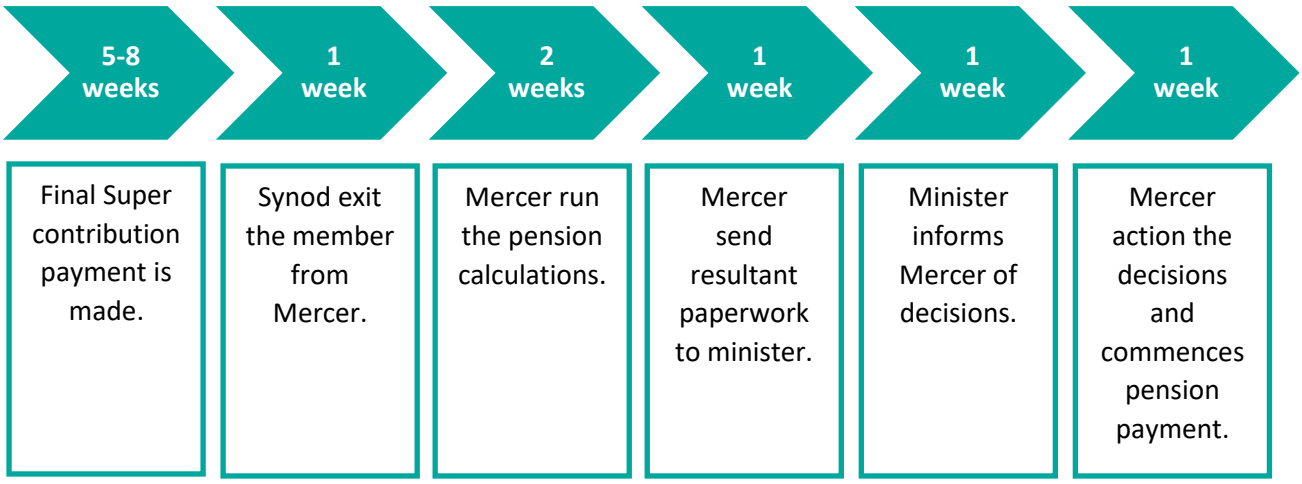
At the time of retirement, a minister (in placement, not in placement, or in supply) is paid any remaining long leave entitlement balance at the minimum stipend rate only less the appropriate taxation.

35.3 Indicative Timeline for Mercer Processes

The Mercer process can take up to 14 weeks. Provision for this period may need consideration as part of your retirement planning.

Please note that the Synod has no control over Mercer or their timeline.

Mercer Indicative Timeline:



The Synod is unable to contact Mercer on behalf of any minister due to privacy laws.

Please call Mercer regarding any enquiries relating to Mercer Beneficiary Fund or Mercer Super on: **1800 682 525** or visit the Mercer Super website**.**

35.4 Superannuation Fund of Choice

Should a letter confirming retirement be required by their superannuation fund of choice, Minister to request from the Associate Secretary - associatesecretary@nswact.uca.org.au

35.5 On the Ministers' Retirement Date

Synod Secretariat updates the minister's classification in UCA database and notes the minister's retirement in the Synod recognition register.

36. LINKS WITHIN THE MINISTRY HANDBOOK

Ministry of Pastor Handbook
Ministry Matters Contact List
Terms of Placement
Terms of Placement - Exit Candidate Phase 3
Termination Form
Terms of Placement - Variation - Extension Agreement Form
Minister Profile Form
Minister Profile Form - Exit Candidate
'Theology of Stipends'
Stipend and Benefit Table
Stipend - VSC Removal and Revised Housing Benefit Guidelines - 2024
Minister Annual Stipend Letter template
Synod Property Services
Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice
Supply Agreement Form
Supply - Variation - Extension Agreement Form
Placement Entitlement Guide
Casual Preaching Payments Matrix
Casual Preaching Payments FAQs
Mercer
Australian Government myGov
ATO Religious Practitioners
Setting up a Minister Benefit Fund Guideline

36. LINKS WITHIN THE MINISTRY HANDBOOK (Continued)

Ethical Ministry Refresher & Foundation Courses
Specified Minister Annual Report Pro-forma
Culture of Safety Training
Service NSW Working with Children Check
Access Canberra Working with Vulnerable People
Nomination for Registration of Minister of Religion
Additional Information to accompany Nomination of Minister of Religion
NSW Government Marriage Celebrants
Culture of Safety Team
NSW Government Communities & Justice Mandatory Reporter Guide.
ACT Government Mandatory Reporting Website.
Reportable Conduct
Removal Inventory
Employee Assistance Program - TELUS Health
Ministers Leave Entitlements Matrix
Minister Leave Application Form
Minister Long Leave Application Form
Synod Payroll Termination Form

37. OTHER USEFUL LINKS

The Uniting Church in Australia NSW ACT Synod
Uniting Church in Australia Assembly
UCA NSW ACT Synod - Speak Out in Confidence
UCA NSW ACT Synod - Contact Us
Services Australia
Centrelink
Medicare
Australian Tax Office (ATO)
Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
Office of the Children's Guardian
Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages

38. ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

ABN	Australian Business Number
Appointing Body	The placement to which the minister has been called
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
BAS	Business Activity Statement
CoEMP	Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice
DFV	Domestic Family Violence
FBT	Fringe Benefits Tax
GST	Goods and Services Tax
MBF	Ministers Benefit Facility (previously called "Ministers Expense Facility or Benefit Account")
MSF	Ministers Support Fund
PAYG	Pay As You Go Withholding Tax
Payment Summary	The terminology for what used to be called a Group Certificate
PRC	Pastoral Relations Committee
TOP	Terms of Placement
UCTAL	Trading as Uniting Church (NSW) Trust Association Limited (Uniting Financial Services)
VSC	Vehicle Standing Costs

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uniting church
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