

Disability Advisory Committee By-law



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

27.1 At the meeting of the Synod in 2024, the Disability Advisory Committee was established.

27.2 KEY PRINCIPLES AND AIMS

The Disability Advisory Committee was established in order to uphold the following key principles and aims:

- a) That people with disabilities are actively included in God's mission and congregational life across the Church through the adoption of the Disability Access and Inclusion Policy (2024).
- b) That the Church actively participates in areas of advocacy which effect people with disabilities in terms of access and inclusion.
- c) That governing bodies, staff and volunteers within congregations develop "Access and Inclusion Plans: Disability" and are able to articulate how their programs and services are congruent with the values and ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia.
- d) That timely and relevant advice and support is given to the Graduate Disability Advocacy Officer in relation to their priorities and the implementation of their work.
- e) That the People with Disabilities Overarching Principles (Assembly 17 July 2024) and The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations are kept at the forefront of the Committee's deliberations
- f) That current research informs the advice given by the Committee

27.3 OVERALL MANDATE

The mandate of the Disability Advisory Committee is to:

- a) Oversee the implementation across the Uniting Church in South Australia of the Disability Access and Inclusion Policy.
- b) Provide advice, resources and support to the Graduate Disability Advocacy Officer relevant to the work that is required in that role.
- c) Provide advice to relevant bodies both within and outside the church on other disability policy issues referred to it by the Assembly, Synod or the Synod Standing Committee.
- d) More current definitions relating to people with disabilities also include all social determinants that limit access and inclusion and prevent full participation in society.

27.4 DEFINITIONS

Appointing Authority” means The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia Standing Committee.

“Committee” means Disability Advisory Committee

“Church” means The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia and its Standing Committee.

“Disability”:

The UCA(SA) adopts an inclusive definition of disability, in accordance with the approach taken by the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (2008)* which recognises the fluidity inherent in the nature of disability.

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments. Disability is an evolving concept that results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

In addition, as a starting point, "disability" in these by-laws has the same meaning as in section 4 of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) as detailed below:

- (a) total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
- (b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- (c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- (d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- (e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
- (f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
- (g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;

and includes a disability that:

- (h) presently exists; or
- (i) previously existed but no longer exists; or
- (j) may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or
- (k) is imputed to a person.

It also includes behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of the disability.

27.5 RELATIONSHIPS

In order to promote the policy, the Disability Advisory Committee will work cooperatively with:

- a) the Graduate Disability Advocacy Officer
- b) local Congregations
- c) relevant Presbyteries
- d) Uniting Church in Australia Synod of South Australia
- e) Placements and Safe Church Ministry Centre
- f) Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress
- g) UnitingCare SA,
- h) other UnitingCare agencies, and organisations associated with the Uniting Church and
- i) other bodies relevant to achieving the overall mandate.

27.6 MEMBERSHIP

27.6.1 The Disability Advisory Committee shall comprise of no more than twelve (12) members who together are to meet the following criteria:

- At least one third (1/3) of the Committee shall be made up of people with different types of disability,
- carer of a person with disability, whether formal or informal,
- involved in service delivery (e.g. NDIS support or other forms of support to people with disabilities including employment, housing, transportation and activities of daily living),
- skills in training / education that relate to the Disability Sector,
- expertise in policy development and implementation,
- experience in Disability Advocacy,
- understanding of the Disability Royal Commission and its key principles regarding rights, self-determination and hearing and responding to people's voices,
- Uniting Church member with an understanding of congregational life and the work of presbyteries and synod.

27.6.2 The Committee shall be appointed by the Synod Standing Committee as the Appointing Authority and constituted in the following way,

- Independent Chairperson
- Associate General Secretary Placements and Safe Church
- Graduate Disability Advocacy Officer

- Called to Care Training and Development Officer
- Director of UnitingCare SA
- Up to seven other members of the Committee

27.6.3 The Appointing Authority will appoint the Independent Chairperson on the recommendation of the Committee.

27.6.4 A representative of UnitingCare SA shall provide executive assistance to the Committee, prepare papers as needed and attend meetings with no voting rights.

27.6.5 Committee members shall be appointed for a term of up to three years, concluding on 30 June in any given year. Retiring members shall be eligible for re-election and may serve for a maximum of three consecutive terms, or for any number of non-consecutive terms provided they have a break of one three-year term.

27.6.6 Members who retire before the expiration of their term may be replaced by the Disability Advisory Committee through the election of a person to complete the unexpired term, with such appointment to be approved by the Appointing Authority.

27.6.7 Members of the Disability Advisory Committee will operate in the best interests of the Committee to advance the work of disability advice, advocacy and information sharing across the church.

As with all Committees of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of South Australia, Committee members are bound by the policies of the church as they relate to Code of Conduct, raising of complaints or grievances and Conflict of Interest (see below). It is also expected that members will attend, in person or online, a sufficient number of meetings to be able to contribute meaningfully to the direction of the Committee.

Whilst it is always anticipated that members will act with good intent, in the event that there are issues with compliance with the policies or attendance expectations above, matters can be referred to the General Secretary for resolution.

27.6.8 Members shall demonstrate a commitment to the UCA ethos, structure and ethics

27.6.9 The majority of the Disability Advisory Committee will be members of the Uniting Church in Australia.

27.7 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are times when a Member may have a (real or perceived) conflict of interest. When a Member believes they may have a conflict of interest, they are to notify the Chairperson and detail the conflict. The Chairperson will then declare the conflict for the Committee to decide what actions are required.

27.8 DECISION MAKING

27.8.1 The Disability Advisory Committee may establish any sub-committees, task groups, consultancies or other instruments by which it may most effectively fulfil its mandate.

27.8.2 The quorum for each meeting of the Committee shall be half the current membership plus one.

27.8.3 The Committee shall meet at least four (4) times in a calendar year.

27.9 POLICY SETTING AND REPORTING

27.9.1 The Disability Advisory Committee may determine its policies and priorities for its work, consistent with the strategic plan, goals and priorities of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of SA, but the Committee must ensure that it deals with any matters referred to it by the Synod Standing Committee or the Synod within timeframes specified by those bodies.

27.9.2 The Committee shall report to the Synod or the Synod Standing Committee at least annually on outcomes achieved and, on any objectives or priorities referred to it by the Presbyteries, Synod or Synod Standing Committee.

27.10 REVIEW

These by-laws and the workings of the Disability Advisory Committee will be reviewed as needed with a structured review to be held in 2028 as part of a regular three-year review.

The Synod or its Standing Committee shall approve any changes to this By-law.

*Approved by Synod Standing Committee
10 September (SSC26.158))*