



Right to Disconnect Policy

March 2026

Our Values

The United Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia values each of its employees and recognises that all interactions should be approached through a lens of justice and fairness, care and safety, intentional growth and encouragement and accountability. In this way, the United Church strives for excellence in its stewardship of its people and seeks to value each individual and the unique skills, gifts and talents they possess.

Overview

This policy affirms the lawful right of UCASA employees to refuse to monitor, read or respond to contact (or attempted contact) outside their working hours, unless doing so is unreasonable. This includes contact (or attempted contact) from an employer or a third party.

This policy aligns with the new provision under the Fair Work Act (2009) legislation and workplace standards in Australia, and demonstrates UCASA's commitment to a safe, healthy, and respectful work environment. The main objective of the legislation, supported by this policy, is to protect employees work-life balance, support of mental and physical health, and prevention of undue work-related stress and burnout by generally reducing the expectation of being available outside of working hours

Scope

This policy and procedure apply to all UCASA employees, including Ministry of Pastor positions. Presbyteries, Congregations and other Church Body employers are encouraged to adopt this policy and procedure for their workplace employees.

Personnel in ministerial roles, where there is an expectation of flexible working hours are expected to exercise self-care and manage the demands on their time. They should also be aware of the UCA Code of Conduct, which provides a framework for self-care.

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Church Body	As per the definition of Body in the Uniting Church's Constitution, includes council, committee, department, college, board, agency or other institution within the bounds of UCASA: • Synod (Pirie St Office), Synod (Brooklyn Park) College Campus - Yarthu Apinhi, Uniting Venues SA, Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), • Presbyteries, Congregations and Faith Communities.
Employee	People directly employed by the UCASA, or employed by a Church Body on behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia, and are remunerated for the work they undertake for their employer. <i>An employment contract, an agreement between an employer and employee in accordance with the Fair Work Act 2009, is provided setting out the terms and conditions of employment, which includes minimum legal entitlements under the National Employment Standards (NES) and complies with any applicable industrial award, enterprise agreement or other registered agreement.</i>
Executive Officer	An individual who is appointed to lead a UCASA ministry centre by the Synod or its Standing Committee, usually a person who has been delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the UCASA, and is accountable for the delivery of outcomes for a department, function or program within their ministry centre, and reports to the General Secretary.
Manager (Leader/Supervisor)	An individual appointed by an employer or governing council of a Church Body, temporarily or permanently, to a supervisory role i.e. has work performance and workplace behaviour oversight of other personnel.
Ordinary Hours of Work	The employee's contracted or rostered hours of work.
Personnel	Any person commissioned, employed and or engaged in, or contributes towards the planning/management/delivery of, and or are involved or participates in any functions, programs or activities associated with a Church body (includes Ministry Agent, Employee, Volunteer, Contractor, Member, Visitor, and Guest).
Right to Disconnect	The right of employees not to monitor, read or respond to contact or attempted contact from their employer or another person if the contact or attempted contact is work-related, unless the employee's refusal is unreasonable.
UCASA (the Synod)	Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia
Uniting Church (the Church)	The Uniting Church in Australia
Workplace	A workplace is a place where work is carried out for the Church Body and includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to be, while at work. Generally this means in the context of the Church Body, but may not be restricted to: • any place of worship within the bounds of UCASA • any UCASA property used by the Church Body • any other property owned by The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (S.A.)

Term	Meaning
	any other location or workplace (as defined by Section 8 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 – SA) where approved Church Body work, activities or functions are being conducted.

Policy Principles

Right to Disconnect

Employees are not required to engage in work-related communications outside their contracted or agreed ordinary hours of work. Employees may elect not to monitor, read, or respond to such communications outside these hours. This includes communication by phone, email, messaging, and other digital platforms.

Protection from Adverse Consequences

Employees will not be subject to penalty, disadvantage, or other adverse consequences for exercising their right to disconnect, provided that any refusal to engage is not unreasonable in the circumstances.

Managerial Obligations

Managers are required to respect employee boundaries and to plan workloads and communication practices so as to minimise unnecessary out-of-hours contact.

Flexible Working Arrangements

Any flexible working arrangements that may involve out-of-hours communication must be expressly defined, mutually agreed, and appropriately documented.

Urgent or Exceptional Circumstances

Contact outside ordinary hours may be warranted in urgent or exceptional circumstances. In such cases, communications should be limited to what is necessary, and conducted with due respect for the employee's personal time. Urgent or exceptional circumstances are those that require immediate attention, typically involving health, safety, or critical business continuity.

Reasonableness of Refusal

The reasonableness of an employee's refusal to engage in work-related communication outside of ordinary hours will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with regard to the following, but not limited to:

- the urgency and importance of the matter
- the nature of the employee's role and level of responsibility; and
- the employee's personal circumstances, and,
- any compensation for being on call.

UCASA Contact

This policy does not prohibit the UCASA from initiating contact outside of ordinary hours. However, employees retain the right to reasonably decline engagement in accordance with this policy.

Establishment of Boundaries

Managers and employees are encouraged to engage in proactive discussions to set clear, shared expectations regarding out-of-hours communication.

Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for

- Exercising their right to disconnect from work outside agreed hours.
- Communicating their availability if flexible arrangements apply.
- Avoiding contacting other employees about work-related matters, outside normal working hours, unless the matter is urgent or exceptional circumstances exist.
- Reporting concerns to Human Resources or an Executive Officer if they feel pressured to stay connected.

Managers are responsible for

- Modelling respectful communication practices.
- Avoiding contacting employees outside standard hours unless the matter is urgent or exceptional circumstances exist.
- Supporting staff who exercise their right to disconnect.

The **Executive Officer, Resources** is responsible for

- Approval of, and amending, this policy and procedure, in consultation with the Manager, Human Resources and Executive Officers
- Ensuring that this policy and procedure will be constantly reviewed to maintain their relevance and integrity in line with appropriate legislation and best practice, and
- Ensuring that the contents of this policy and procedure are communicated to, and accessible to all personnel.

Failure to comply with the policy:

Employees should be aware that a failure to comply with the policy, including any arrangements which are put in place under it, will be investigated and may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Issue Resolution

Refer to the UCASA Grievance Policy procedures for further information.

- [UCASA Grievance Policy](#)

Dissemination of Policy and Procedure

A copy of this policy will be made available to all personnel. The intent of this policy will be explained to each new personnel at their induction.

Monitoring and Review

This policy and procedure will be reviewed every three years or earlier if required by legislative changes.

Related Legislation and Documents

- *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)* – National Employment Standards
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)*
- UCASA Grievance Policy and Procedures
- UCASA Workplace Health and Safety Policy
- *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes) Act 2023 - Federal Register of Legislation*
- *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes No. 2) Act 2024 - Federal Register of Legislation*

Procedure

#	Action	Accountable	Timeframe
1	Managers plan workflows to avoid unnecessary after-hours requests.	Manager	Ongoing
2	Employees may elect to set work devices and notifications to “Do Not Disturb” outside hours, unless otherwise agreed. Refer message below*	Employees	Ongoing
3	Any after-hours communications must be clearly identified as urgent or exceptional.	Manager	As required
4	Raise concerns or advise of breaches with HR or through grievance procedures.	Employees	As soon as reasonably practicable

* Email Automatic Reply - It would be anticipated that the response would be activated within an email in a time-sensitive way, for example, before 8:00am and after 6:00pm. It could also be applied when personnel are on leave or for a part-timer, outside of their normal working hours.

Thank you for your email. The Uniting Church Synod of SA [Brooklyn Park Campus Yarthu-Apinthi and/or Pirie St Office], strives to support our management and staff, ministry agents and faculty, in maintaining a healthy work/life balance. Your email/message has [most likely] been received out of regular office/working hours and as such you may not receive a response. Your email/message is important to us, and we will make every effort to respond in a timely manner, generally within [1 - 2 business days]. Your empathy, patience and understanding are greatly appreciated.

Approval Authority

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Executive Officer, Resources
Advisory Committee to Approval Authority	Human Resources and Remuneration Committee
Administrator	Manager, Human Resources
Next Review Date	2029 (or within 3 years)

Feedback

Employees may provide feedback about this policy and procedure by emailing resources@sa.uca.org.au or humanresources@sa.uca.org.au

Current Policy Approved: March 2026

Replaces: N/A

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