Professional Conduct Policy

Functional Area: Support

Date approved: 24 March 2026

Board Resolution: UWB20260324-8

1 Context

UnitingWorld's standards of professional conduct are based on our identity, values and obligations.

We are an Agency of the Uniting Church in Australia, grounded in the Christian faith. We are a member of the Australian and global development and humanitarian sector. We are accountable to our partners, our donors, and to the regulatory authorities who govern our sector.

Consequently, UnitingWorld affirms the dignity and worth of all people and is committed to relationships that reflect care, respect, and justice. We are committed to work in ways that promote safety, inclusion, and mutual accountability, particularly with and alongside people who experience vulnerability or exclusion.

UnitingWorld operates within a complex regulatory, ethical, and partnership environment. We are a signatory to the Codes of Conduct of the ACT Alliance and the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and we work in line with donor, regulatory, and sector standards that set expectations for professional behaviour including Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) requirements.

This Policy and the accompanying Code of Conduct bring together these values, standards, and obligations. The policy establishes the framework for professional conduct and individual accountability at UnitingWorld, while the Code of Conduct gives practical effect to these expectations by setting out specific behavioural requirements.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all UnitingWorld Representatives (Representatives), defined[1] as any personnel funded by or undertaking tasks on behalf of UnitingWorld or who are publicly perceived to be working 'for' UnitingWorld.

UnitingWorld has a legitimate interest in the conduct of its Representatives outside of working hours where that conduct has a clear and material connection to their engagement with UnitingWorld. This includes circumstances where their conduct may reasonably be expected to undermine trust, safety, compliance obligations, or UnitingWorld's reputation or ability to carry out its work.

In determining whether conduct outside of work falls within the scope of this Policy and the Code of Conduct, UnitingWorld will consider:

- the nature and circumstances of the conduct;
- the role, responsibilities, and level of authority of the Representative;

[1] Governance Framework Introduction.

- the connection between the conduct and the Representative's engagement with UnitingWorld; and
- the impact of the conduct on UnitingWorld's work, relationships, or obligations.

3 Policy Commitments

Principle One: We will align our standards of behaviour with our values and the standards for our sector set by Australian and International best practice.

Principle Two: We will require all Representatives to comply with the behavioural standards set out in this Policy as a condition of their engagement with UnitingWorld and recognise their individual responsibility to meet those standards.

Principle Three: We will maintain a UnitingWorld Code of Conduct that translates the standards in this policy into behavioural requirements for individuals and require all Representatives to read and agree to it on commencement.

Principle Four: We will provide training to help Representatives understand the Code of Conduct.

Principle Five: We will not tolerate any breach of the Code of Conduct and will act immediately to address it through appropriate processes.

4 Policy implementation

4.1 Relevant standards

We will review this Policy, the Code of Conduct (Code), and associated procedures against relevant legal, regulatory, donor, and sector standards as part of scheduled policy reviews, and update them as required to ensure ongoing compliance and good practice.

Relevant standards include, but are not limited to:

- DFAT's Australian NGO Accreditation Guidance Manual
- DFAT's Child Protection Policy and Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy and their respective minimum standards
- Inter-Agency Steering Committee of the United Nations Minimum Operating Standards for Protection from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (PSEA)
- ACFID Code of Conduct
- Fundraising Institute of Australia (FIA) Code

4.2 UnitingWorld Code of Conduct - Standards of Behaviour

UnitingWorld's standards of behaviour are detailed in the Code, based on the principles and expectations set out below.

Values and Behaviour

Representatives must…

1. act in ways consistent with the Christian principles underpinning the work and service of UnitingWorld and act in ways that support UnitingWorld's Vision, Mission and Values.
2. act with integrity, accountability, and care in all aspects of their engagement with UnitingWorld.
3. respect and promote fundamental human rights in all contexts connected to their engagement with UnitingWorld.
4. promote racial equity and inclusion and not engage in racist conduct, discrimination, or behaviour that perpetuates racial harm or exclusion.
5. contribute to fair, equitable, inclusive, and respectful environments in all contexts connected to their engagement with UnitingWorld.
6. comply with lawful and reasonable directions and requirements relevant to their engagement with UnitingWorld.
7. protect confidential, sensitive, and personal information obtained through their engagement with UnitingWorld and not use or disclose it improperly.
8. not engage in behaviour or activities that:
    - cause harm, or pose a risk of harm, to people they work with, support, or encounter through UnitingWorld's work;
    - negatively affect, or have the potential to negatively affect, their own performance or the performance of others;
    - undermine trust in UnitingWorld, including by damaging UnitingWorld's reputation or the reputation of other aid or development organisations;
    - could result in the Representative being charged with or convicted of a criminal offence that, in UnitingWorld's view, calls into question their continued suitability to be engaged by or associated with UnitingWorld.

Child Protection

Representatives must…

9. conduct themselves in ways that protect children from abuse and exploitation.
10. recognise and uphold the right of children to live free from abuse and exploitation.
11. act in ways that reduce the risk of child abuse and exploitation in connection with their engagement with UnitingWorld, including by identifying, avoiding, and reporting child protection risks relevant to their role and context.
12. respect confidentiality when reporting or responding to child protection concerns and must not share information with unauthorised persons or use it for purposes unrelated to safeguarding and reporting obligations.

13. hold each other accountable and share responsibility for protecting children, including by acting on concerns and upholding child protection standards relevant to their role and engagement.
14. never engage in sexual activity with any person under the age of 18. It is strictly prohibited regardless of local age of consent or age of majority. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.
15. contribute to a safe and protective environment for children and support the prevention of child abuse and exploitation in connection with UnitingWorld's work.
16. treat children with dignity and respect, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Representatives must…

17. share responsibility for contributing to a safe, respectful environment that prevents sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, including by raising and acting on concerns and upholding these standards, with expectations proportionate to their role and leadership responsibilities.
18. recognise sexual exploitation and abuse as forms of gender-based violence and act in ways that prevent and respond appropriately to such conduct.
19. not engage in sexual exploitation or sexual abuse in any context connected to their engagement with UnitingWorld.
20. not exchange money, employment, goods, services, assistance, or other benefits for sex, sexual favours, or any form of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behaviour, including transactional sex.
21. not engage in sexual relationships with beneficiaries or participants in UnitingWorld-supported activities where there is, or may reasonably be perceived to be, a power imbalance, including where a Representative is deployed short-term to work alongside a beneficiary population.
22. not engage in sexual harassment, including unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other conduct of a sexual nature, whether in-person or online.
23. not engage in relationships or conduct that involve, or may reasonably be perceived to involve, misuse of power, authority, influence, or position for personal or sexual gain.
24. disclose any pre-existing or new intimate or close personal relationships with beneficiaries or members of communities connected to UnitingWorld-supported activities that may give rise to an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest, power imbalance, or fraternisation.
25. act in ways that uphold respectful, professional boundaries and do not undermine trust, safety, or confidence in UnitingWorld's work.
26. report concerns or suspicions of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment by any aid worker encountered through their engagement with UnitingWorld, regardless of whether the individual is employed by UnitingWorld or another organisation.

Public/Media Comment

Representatives must…

27. not make public statements, including via social media, that they know or ought reasonably to know could undermine trust in UnitingWorld, compromise its integrity, or unfairly damage the reputation of UnitingWorld, its partners, or its staff.
28. not speak to the media about UnitingWorld or its activities, or represent or imply that they are authorised to speak on behalf of UnitingWorld, unless explicitly authorised to do so.
29. refer media enquiries and requests for public comment about UnitingWorld or its work to an authorised representative.
30. raise concerns, complaints, or grievances through appropriate internal channels and act in good faith in doing so.
31. only express personal views in their private capacity and ensure these do not imply official representation of UnitingWorld or compromise its confidentiality, integrity, or relationships.

Photography and Video

Representatives must…

32. respect the dignity, safety, privacy, and agency of individuals when photographing, filming, recording, generating, or altering images, video, or other media in connection with their engagement with UnitingWorld.
33. ensure that images, video, and other media are captured, created, used, and shared in a manner that is respectful, accurate, and does not place individuals at risk of harm, exploitation, or misrepresentation.
34. obtain informed and appropriate consent before photographing, filming, or recording individuals, and take care to protect their identity and personal information where there may be risks associated with identification.
35. apply these standards to all media they capture, generate, or alter in the context of UnitingWorld's work and relationships, regardless of whether the material is intended for publication, internal use, or personal use.

Information, Data and Confidentiality

Representatives must…

36. protect the confidentiality, privacy, and security of information accessed through their engagement with UnitingWorld, including personal, sensitive, and confidential information.
37. not misuse, improperly disclose, alter, or compromise information, including through inappropriate access, sharing, storage, or use of digital tools or artificial intelligence.
38. handle information in accordance with their role and authorised access and comply with applicable UnitingWorld policies, agreements, and requirements relating to privacy, data protection, information security, and acceptable use of technology.

Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment

Representatives must…

39. treat others with dignity and respect and not engage in bullying, discrimination, or harassment, including sexual, gender-based, disability-based or racial harassment, or any other behaviour that may undermine the dignity of an individual.
40. not misuse authority, position, or influence to impose unreasonable demands, exert undue pressure, or otherwise treat others unfairly.
41. contribute to a safe, respectful, and inclusive work environment and not engage in behaviour that creates an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or offensive environment.
42. raise and act on concerns relating to bullying, discrimination, or harassment, and support a culture in which such behaviour is not tolerated.
43. understand that these standards apply to conduct in any work-related context, including interactions with colleagues, partners, donors, and any others connected to UnitingWorld's work.

Ethical Business Practices and Financial Wrongdoing

Representatives must…

44. act honestly, ethically, and in good faith in all financial and business dealings connected to their engagement with UnitingWorld.
45. act in ways that reduce the risk of financial wrongdoing, including by complying with financial controls, protecting UnitingWorld's resources, and using funds, assets, resources, and information only for legitimate purposes.
46. not engage in fraud, corruption, theft, bribery, misuse of funds or resources, or any other form of financial wrongdoing.
47. not misuse their position, authority, access to information, or organisational resources for personal gain or to improperly benefit others.
48. declare actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest and take steps to manage them appropriately.
49. report suspected or actual financial wrongdoing and cooperate with any review or investigation.
50. contribute to a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability in their work and interactions.

4.3 Commitment to the Code of Conduct

- UnitingWorld requires all Representatives to sign the Code as a condition of their engagement with UnitingWorld.
- Where partner organisations have their own codes of conduct that are equivalent to or exceed the standards of the Code, UnitingWorld may agree to the use and application of those codes, provided the intent and substance of the Code are met.

- In instances where UnitingWorld is engaging with third parties, but they do not fit the definition of Representative, we may still require them to sign the Code, or a version appropriately modified, if it is an appropriate risk management approach.
- UnitingWorld will maintain procedures to support the implementation of this policy, including processes for Representatives to read and agree to the Code, and for ongoing training, refresher activities, and the communication and management of partner obligations, appropriate to their roles and engagement.

4.4 Understanding and Reinforcement of the Code of Conduct

- UnitingWorld will take reasonable steps to ensure that Representatives understand the standards and expectations set out in the Code, including through induction, briefing, and refresher activities appropriate to the nature of their engagement.
- We will make our Code and our commitment to it accessible to communities and stakeholders, including through appropriate communication and translation where relevant. We will invite them to hold us accountable to our Code.
- Staff, Board members, long-term volunteers, and partner staff will complete annual refresher training on the Code.
- We will maintain documented records of Code acknowledgement and completion of required training.
- UnitingWorld will support Representatives to understand how this Policy applies in different contexts, including work-related conduct outside of traditional workplace settings.
- We will establish and maintain a procedure to ensure Code signing and required training are completed, recorded, and monitored.

4.5 Breaches of the Code of Conduct

- Representatives must report suspected or actual breaches of this Policy or the Code, whether involving themselves or others, as soon as practicable. Concerns can be reported directly with UnitingWorld using the contact details below.

  Phone (Australia): 1800 998 122

  Phone (International): +61 2 8267 9735

  Email: complaints@unitingworld.org.au

  Further information about how to report concerns, including safeguarding concerns, is available at: https://unitingworld.org.au/complaints

- Concerns may also be reported in accordance with UnitingWorld's Whistleblower Policy, which provides protections for individuals who report concerns in good faith.
- Representatives must disclose conduct, activities, allegations, charges, or convictions that may reasonably affect their ability to meet the expectations of this Policy or the Code, or their suitability for continued engagement with UnitingWorld. Failure to disclose relevant matters may itself constitute a breach of this Policy and may result in disciplinary action.

- Breaches of this Policy or the Code will be managed and investigated in accordance with UnitingWorld's complaints and incident management processes and may result in disciplinary action in line with relevant policies and procedures.
- Where a breach is substantiated, action will be taken proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the breach. This may include disciplinary action, termination of employment or other forms of engagement, and referral to external authorities where required by law. Breaches involving sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment, child protection violations, or financial wrongdoing constitute serious misconduct and will be addressed accordingly.
- Where the alleged breach involves personnel of a partner organisation, UnitingWorld will require the partner to take appropriate action in connection with UnitingWorld-funded activities, consistent with partnership agreements and applicable policies.
- In determining whether conduct constitutes a breach, UnitingWorld will consider the scope provisions set out in this Policy, including the connection between the conduct and the Representative's engagement with UnitingWorld and its impact on UnitingWorld's work, relationships, or obligations.

5 Related Policies

- Acceptable Use of AI Policy (Adopted-Synod)
- Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Policy (Adopted-Assembly)
- Communication and Transparency Policy
- Complaints and Incident Handling Policy
- Financial Wrongdoing Policy
- Governance Framework
- Information Technology and Cyber Security Policy
- People and Culture Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Safeguarding and Protection Policy (including Child Protection)
- Whistleblower Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy (Adopted-Assembly)

6 Glossary of Terms

Abuse: Any action or inaction that causes harm to another person. It can include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. It also includes abuse online and/or through mobile technology.

Bullying: Repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person that humiliates, intimidates, undermines or isolates them.

Child: Anyone under the age of 18. This is irrespective of local country definitions, including legal definitions, of when a child reaches adulthood, in line with the DFAT PSEAH Policy.

Child Abuse: All forms of physical or mental (especially emotional) violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, is child abuse. Child abuse occurs when adults or other children hurt children either physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically or in some other way.

Child exploitation and abuse: One or more of:

- committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of abuse against a child.
- possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining or transmitting child exploitation material.
- committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of grooming or online grooming.

Child abuse material: Material that depicts, expressly or implicitly, a child under 18 years of age as a victim of torture, cruelty or physical abuse

Child exploitation material: Material, irrespective of its form, which is classified as child abuse material or child pornography material.

Child pornography material: Material that depicts a person, or is a representation of a person, who is, or appears to be, under 18 years of age and is engaged in, or appears to be engaged in, a sexual pose or sexual activity, or is in the presence of a person who is engaged in, or appears to be engaged in, a sexual pose or activity, and does this in a way that a reasonable person would regard as offensive.

Discrimination: Unfair or unequal treatment of a person based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or other personal attributes.

Exploitation: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust to profit monetarily, socially or politically. It includes sexual exploitation.

Fraternisation: A relationship that involves, or appears to involve, partiality, preferential treatment or improper use of position or power, including where a personal or sexual relationship creates, or is perceived to create, a conflict of interest or power imbalance.

Fraud: Dishonestly obtaining (including attempting to obtain) a gain or benefit, or causing a loss, by deception or other means. (Commonwealth Fraud and Corruption Control Framework 2024).

Grooming: When someone builds an emotional connection with a child or vulnerable adult to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking.

Harassment: Unwelcome comment or behaviour that is offensive, demeaning, humiliating, derogatory, or any other inappropriate behaviour that fails to respect the dignity of an individual.

Online grooming: The act of sending an electronic message to a recipient who the sender believes to be under 16 years of age, with the intention of procuring the recipient to engage in, or submit to, sexual activity with another person.

Sexual abuse: The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Sexual exploitation: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including but not limited to, profiting monetarily, sexually or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

Sexual harassment: Unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours, or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, in circumstances where a reasonable person would anticipate that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Transactional sex: The exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, including where assistance due to beneficiaries is exchanged for sexual conduct.

Whistleblowing: A disclosure by a person about serious malpractice carried out by UnitingWorld or our Representatives.

Terms not included in the above glossary have the meanings given to them in relevant UnitingWorld policies or related documents, where applicable.

7 Review Schedule

Date of next review: March 2031