The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia
Resources Board

MANSE MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Policy Owner: Resources Board
Adopted by Synod Standing Committee on 10 September 2026

1. Purpose

This policy establishes the framework for the management and oversight of manses within the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of South Australia (UCASA). This policy has been enacted to support UCASA to exercise good stewardship, act as a responsible landlord and provide safe and functional spaces for external tenants and Ministers in Placement. Additionally, in an environment of increasing legislative requirements being imposed on landlords by the SA Government, this policy will facilitate ongoing compliance with regulatory requirements.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all manses and residential properties owned by the Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (S.A.) ("Property Trust") and encompasses leasing arrangements, ongoing management and maintenance, and financial planning.

3. Definitions

Capital Expenditure	Significant investment made to acquire, improve or expand properties. Expenditure on building upgrades, non-routine major maintenance and new building work including routinely associated furniture, fittings and equipment. (Refer to the *Capital Expenditure vs Repairs & Maintenance* brochure on the Synod website).
Manse	A residential property used by a Responsible Body to provide accommodation for a minister or pastor in placement or is able to be used for such purposes in the future, or any property subject to the Residential Tenancies Act
Property Trust	The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (S.A.), which is the legal entity of the Uniting Church in South Australia.
Repairs & Maintenance Expenditure	Day to day recurring expenses incurred in property management and operations, essential for maintaining existing property. For example: minor property repairs, regular and recurring maintenance costs. (Refer to the *Capital Expenditure vs Repairs & Maintenance* brochure on the Synod website).
Responsible Body	A body that is responsible for the management and administration of property, and which either itself carries out those responsibilities or appoints another body to undertake them either in whole or in part (UCA Regulation 4.1)
Sinking Fund	A financial reserve set aside for Capital Expenditure. The purpose of the fund is to ensure that money is available to keep the property in good condition without placing sudden financial strain on the Responsible Body.

4. Policy Principles

1. UCASA is committed to responsible stewardship of property assets and to act as a responsible landlord; as such, property must be adequately maintained and include a provision for long term maintenance requirements.

2. UCASA is committed to providing safe and functional manses for its Ministers in Placement, now and into the foreseeable future.

3. UCASA compliance with legislative requirements is essential. These legislative requirements are becoming increasingly complex, and beyond the reasonable ability of volunteers.

4. UCASA is committed to complying with the Uniting Church in Australia Regulations.

5. Manses are owned to support missional activity of a Responsible Body and are not primarily a financial investment.

6. The Property Trust is the legal owner of all church-owned property within South Australia including manses, which are predominantly administered by Congregations. UCASA is committed to a consistent approach to the management of manses by Congregations.

7. Professional property oversight of manses (whether occupied by a Minister in Placement or externally rented) provides expert and specialist management of manses and will relieve the burden of responsibility from Congregations.

5. Requirements of the Responsible Body (including Congregations)

To ensure consistency in manse management and governance, the following requirements apply:

1. <u>Professional Oversight</u>

   Policy Statement:

   All manses shall be overseen by a professional property agent (whether it is occupied by a Minister in Placement or an external tenant), unless otherwise agreed by the Resources Board.

   Where a property is externally leased, a property agent must be engaged to manage the property in an ongoing capacity, with at least 6-monthly inspections.

   Where a property is occupied by a Minister in Placement, a property agent must be engaged to undertake annual inspections but is not required to manage the property in an ongoing capacity.

   Rationale:

   Externally Tenanted Residential Properties

   Utilising a professional property agent to manage external tenanting and maintenance assists the Responsible Body to maximise their rental income, ensure manses are maintained and regularly inspected and that minimum legislative compliance requirements are met. A professional property agent removes the burden from the Responsible Body in relation to how the manse is managed, allowing their focus to be on ministry and mission.

Manses that are allowed to deteriorate results in a negative impact on rental income (and on future sales price should the property be eventually sold). A professional property agent can assist in ensuring manses are not allowed to deteriorate or be undervalued.

A professional property agent for manses that are externally leased will ensure that minimum legislative requirements are met. Some of the functions of the agent may include:

- regular property inspections
- lease variations and extensions
- ongoing negotiations with tenants regarding the lease
- invoicing the lessee for rental and outgoings
- collection of rental and outgoings
- collection of rental and outgoings in arrears, including letters of demand
- lease increases
- market review of the lease amount
- managing maintenance and repairs
- advising the lessor regarding their responsibilities as per the lease (e.g. which matters are of a capital nature and therefore the lessor's responsibility unless specified otherwise in the lease)
- following up lessee's and lessor's obligations
- provide professional representation at the SA Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT)

While Residential Agency Agreements are in the name of the Property Trust, a local congregational member can be the primary contact for ongoing communication with the managing agent.

Ministers in Placement in a Manse

Responsible Bodies may have differing interpretations of what is a reasonable standard of housing, and it is equitable to ensure that consistent standards of housing and management are provided to our Ministerial pool. Annual, independent inspections by a professional property agent enables this to occur without the ongoing expense of a fully managed property.

2. <u>Mandatory Lease Signatures</u>

Policy Statement:

All legally binding contracts are in the name of the Property Trust and required to be executed by an authorised delegate of the Property Trust.

Rationale:

The Uniting Church Regulations (4.6 & 4.7) require that all leases be taken in the name of the Property Trust, and that a Property Trust member/delegate shall sign all lease agreements.

Congregational staff and/or volunteers do not have delegation to sign legal documentation on behalf of the Property Trust but can approve annual lease extensions through the property agent.

A copy of the lease extension should be sent to property@sa.uca.org.au

3. <u>Sinking Fund Allocation</u>:

   Policy Statement:

   The Responsible Body must allocate an annual amount to a Sinking Fund for Capital Expenditure no less than 10% of the *gross market[1] rental* rate of the property unless otherwise agreed by the Resources Board.

   Rationale:

   <u>Creation of a Sinking Fund for Capital Expenditure</u>:

   Raising funds for significant building works can divert focus from the core purpose of a church community and distract from its mission.

   Planning for Capital Expenditure, such as roof replacements, structural upgrades, or major system overhauls, ensures that manses remain functional and safe. Establishing a Sinking Fund for these larger projects helps prevent financial strain and allows work to be undertaken in a timely and strategic manner.

   A minimum of 10% of gross market income shall be set aside by the Responsible Body towards a Sinking Fund for Capital Expenditure. A Responsible Body is requested to consider increasing the 10% allocation if the property is older or has numerous identified required improvements.

   <u>Repairs and Maintenance Expenditure:</u>

   By including basic maintenance allowances in the annual operational budget, repairs can be managed proactively, reducing the need for urgent fundraising appeals. Neglecting routine maintenance often leads to higher costs over time, as secondary damage compounds the problem. For example, regular gutter cleaning prevents water overflow into the ceiling space, which could otherwise damage ceilings, walls, and flooring. Such damage may not be claimable under insurance cover.

   The expenses associated with property maintenance are real and unavoidable, and as such should be included in the annual congregational budget. This should be reported as part of the annual financial returns to Synod.

[1] While a Responsible Body may elect to provide a discounted rental rate, the sinking fund percentage will be calculated on market rental rates and will therefore be higher than 10%.

4. Inspection Reports:

Policy Statement:

Synod Property Services, on behalf of the Property Trust, will receive all manse inspection reports for risk management purposes.

Where a property is externally leased, a property agent must be engaged in an ongoing capacity, with at least 6-monthly inspections.

Where a property is utilised by a Minister, a property agent must undertake at least annual inspections

Rationale:

As the legal owner of properties, the Property Trust requires an understanding of any property risks associated with manses and how they are being managed.

Managing agents can undertake property inspections up to 4 times a year, and inspection reports can usually be received electronically. These reports include a summary of what building matters need to be addressed.

A copy of the report should be forwarded via email to property@sa.uca.org.au

5. Lease Agreement "Landlords own Use" Clause:

Policy Statement:

All new leases will include a statement that "when possession is required for occupation by the landlord, the landlord is the Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (S.A.), which includes all Ministers and Ministry of Pastors."

Rationale:

The new SA Government Residential Tenancies Act makes it very difficult to terminate a lease to allow a minister back into a manse after it has been externally leased. This clause will strengthen UCASA's position that manses exist to house ministry agents as their primary purpose.

6. Memorandum of Understanding:

Policy Statement:

The Minister in Placement and the Responsible Body shall have clearly documented agreements in place when a Minister in Placement is residing in a manse. The Synod shall provide standard MOU templates for use.

Rationale:

The roles and responsibilities of the Responsible Body and the Minister in Placement in relation to manses are varied and can change over time. The provision of a written agreement will provide clarity to both parties and provide a useful record of the rights and obligations including, but not limited to, repairs, utilities, furniture provision and inspections.

6. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with regulatory requirements UCASA's ongoing property management strategy.

The Resources Board has the authority to approve updates and changes to this policy as required.

7. Reference Documents

- Manse Guidelines
- Manse Occupancy Memorandum of Understanding
- Ministers Terms of Placement
- Ministerial Stipends and Related Conditions of Placement Handbook
- South Australia Residential Tenancy Act & Regulations
- Uniting Church Regulations

8. Key contacts

For further information, please contact Synod Property Services: property@sa.uca.org.au or (08) 8236 4200.