Resources Report

This report is provided to Synod members to inform them of the key activities undertaken within the Resources Ministry Centre during 2025. The report is provided in lieu of a Synod meeting report.

The Resources Board's mandate is *"To serve the church by maximising financial and property resources available to the Synod for mission and to assist the Synod in allocating such resources efficiently in accordance with the mission priorities of the church whilst managing the risk associated with these decisions".*

This report intends to provide Synod members with an overview of how the Resources Board together with the Resources Ministry Centre (RMC) team have implemented the Resources Board's mandate since it reported to the members of Synod in December 2024.

The report addresses key strategic areas of responsibility including financial accountability obligations and resource governance matters. This report also includes updates from operational areas of responsibility within the Resources Ministry Centre; being Financial Services, Human Resources, Information Communications and Telecommunications (ICT), Insurance and Risk, Investment Services, Property Services, Synergy, Uniting Venues SA, Work Health Safety and Synergy.

The report also recognises the significant contribution of the Resources Board and Property Trust members, members of its sub-committees and task groups and the members of the Resources team.
It is hoped that this report will go some way to assisting Synod members remain connected with the Resources Ministry Centre. Members of Synod are invited to seek clarification from authors on matters covered in the report by contacting resources@sa.uca.org.au or calling the Synod office on 8236 4229.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge Rob Stoner who retires as Chair of the Resources Board. Rob has generously served the Church in this role from a deep missional heart. His contributions will be greatly missed. Deidre Palmer steps into the role of Resources Board Chair. Deidre's passion for the Uniting Church and her leadership experience will be a gift to the Board.

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1. Summary of key activities and outcomes in 2025

1.1 Key Strategic Areas of Focus

During 2025, the Resources Board (or its Executive) has met on 10 occasions. During the first meeting of the year substantial time was set aside for strategic planning and for consideration of priorities for the year ahead. The Board agreed to:

1. **Give attention** to the following strategic priorities:
   - 1.1 Synod Risk Register
   - 1.2 Annual Property Returns
   - 1.3 Manse stewardship
2. **Given attention** to the following significant matters
   - 2.1 Insurance of Congregation Buildings
   - 2.2 Resources Board membership and succession planning
   - 2.3 Clayton Wesley UC – Residential Development proposal
   - 2.4 RH White Settlement (Student Support and Scholarships) Trustee due diligence
   - 2.5 Digital Transformation Project
3. **Be alert to requests** from Synod or its Standing Committee in relation to:
   - 3.1 Synod Strategy & Planning (Mission and Property) Working Group
   - 3.2 The 'Prospective National Redress Liability Agreement' – funding requests
   - 3.3 UCA Assembly Act 2 – (funding) requests

These matters have received the Board's attention during the year. Regarding the strategic priorities, the Synod's Risk Register has moved into an operational phase. At the time of writing, over 60% of Congregations have lodged their 2025 Annual Property Return. The Manse Stewardship project has commenced. A Manse Management Policy was approved by the Synod Standing Committee during the year (more details below). In relation to the identified significant matters, the Resources Board membership and succession planning and the RH White Settlement (Student Support and Scholarships) Trustee due diligence have been completed. The other significant matters are on-going. The Resources Board remains alert to requests from the Synod or its Standing Committee.

The following matters outline strategic items for which the Board has exercised its oversight.

1.1.1 Financial Accountability Obligations

1.1.1.1 Presentation of Additional 2024 Financial Statements

In total, 17 financial statements for various entities within the Uniting Church have been prepared for the financial year ending 31 December 2024. At its meeting in June 2025, the Synod Standing Committee meeting adopted financial statements for the entities within the church. These audited statements had been endorsed by the Resources Board

Many entities within the Property Trust reported a positive financial performance and a stronger financial position for the year ending 31 December 2024. Entities with significant financial assets experienced growth in equity as investment markets increased asset prices. The financial statements are available to members upon request (resources@sa.uca.org.au).

The financial statements have all been audited without qualification and free of misstatements. The Church is well served by its governance structures and the volunteers and staff who execute good financial stewardship.

A schedule of the 2024 financial statements index listing each entity with the 2024 operating result and equity position was previously provided in June.

1.1.1.2 Accountability for Separately Incorporated Bodies

1.1.1.2.1 The Parkin Mission of SA Inc and The Parkin Trust Inc

The Parkin Mission of SA Inc. and The Parkin Trust Inc. report their financial performance to the Synod through the Resources Board. The 2024 Parkin Mission and Trust financial statements were noted by the Synod Standing Committee in June.

Each year the Parkin Mission and Trust Governors advise of the anticipated annual grants to the Mission and Service Fund (MSF) and Uniting College for Leadership and Theology (UCLT). During 2025, the Parkin Mission and Parkin Trust have provided an annual grant of $1.190m and $310k respectively. The grants are distributed as per the terms of the Parkin Mission and Parkin Trust through the Synod’s MSF budget process. Grants from Parkin Trust are directed for the use of Uniting College for Leadership and Theology.

The Governors also provided special grants in 2025 of $102k and $26k from the Mission and Trust respectively in addition to the main contribution. The additional Mission grant was allocated as seed funding for the purchase, transition and ongoing operations of Words for Worship and L3 from MediaCom and the additional Trust grant was forwarded to the UCLT.

These generous grants demonstrate the wise stewardship of these valuable resources and the Governors’ commitment to the mission of the Church.

It should also be noted that in 2025 that the Parkin Governors engaged, via a Memorandum of Understanding, UC Invest to manage Parkin investment activities.

The Synod Standing Committee and the Resources Board expressed their thanks to the Governors of the Parkin Mission and Parkin Trust for their continued commitment to supporting the work of the Uniting Church through grants to the Mission and Service Fund.

1.1.1.2.2 Uniting Church SA Investment Fund Ltd

The Uniting Church SA Investment Fund Ltd (UCSAIF), trading as UC Invest, continues to support the work of the Synod. In 2017 the Church acquired an Australian Financial Service Licence (AFSL) in order that UC Invest could continue to offer investment products to individuals within the Uniting Church community, and in doing so, protect future annual grants to the MSF.

The Uniting Church Investment Committee together with the directors of the Uniting Church SA Investment Fund Ltd agreed to contribute $3.898m in 2026 (compared with $3.72m in 2025, $3.54m in 2024, $3.4m in 2023 and $2.6m during 2022).

This annual grant is separate and in addition to the $500k that UC Invest contributed this year and for the next three years to the Uniting Foundation Grant rounds. In total UC Invest will contribute $2.5m to the Uniting Foundation grants program over five years.

UC Invest acknowledges and thanks its investors for their continued support, which has enabled the Synod to operate strongly over many years.

1.1.2 Resource Governance

1.1.2.1 Finance

1.1.2.1.1 Mission & Service Fund

In 2014 after many years of accumulating deficits, it became clear that the Mission and Service Fund (MSF) would become insolvent if urgent action was not taken. The then Synod and Presbytery agreed to new practices and structures to achieve a balanced budget. The first balance budget was achieved in 2016.

These measures have stabilised the Fund's financial position and have moved it towards providing a sustainable financial future, such that the church can look forward to future years' ministry and mission.

Since 2016 the MSF has achieved modest surpluses, noting the 2020 and 2021 financial years were treated as one 24-month period given the financial impact of COVID-19 on the Fund.

The Fund reported modest operating surpluses in 2023 and 2024. However, the Synod Standing Committee approved a contribution of $1.001m from the SA Synod towards National Redress claims. The payment followed a national conference of Synod leaders held in April 2023, where it was agreed that a 'one-church' approach to meeting Redress claims across the UCA would be taken. The payment was made from the MSF, over exhausting the 2023-2024 surpluses.

The Fund is expected to close the 2025 financial year with a modest surplus. This result reflects greater than budgeted contributions to the Fund from Congregations and lower than anticipated placement and salary expenses and restrained administration costs.

As per past practice, the proposed 2026 MSF Budget was endorsed by the Resources Board and was then approved by Synod Standing Committee at its meeting in December. The approved MSF 2026 budget is presented as an addendum to this paper.

1.1.2.1.2 Specific Entities / Funds

The Resources Board has financial governance and oversight responsibilities on behalf of the Synod. Specific entities/funds where the Board has exercised responsibility during this year are outlined below.

R.H. White Settlement

Managed by the Resources Board, the R.H. White Settlement consists of two parts which have the primary purpose of promoting Bible studies and for such other religious or educational purposes as the Synod directs. Funding is directed towards the activities of the UCLT. During 2025 the R.H. White Settlement is budgeted to provide funding of approximately $663k (compared with $635k in 2024 and $610k in 2023).

Uniting Church Loan Fund

Managed by the Uniting Church Investment Committee, the Uniting Church Loan Fund is held to provide loans for Congregations, faith communities and other Uniting Church entities within the Synod of South Australia for the purpose of funding approved projects. Details of the Fund's purpose and operations are contained in Synod By-law 18.7 available on the UCASA website. The Uniting Church Loan Fund had equity of $10.9 million at 31 December 2024.

The Uniting Church in Australia has committed to reducing its carbon footprint to achieve net zero emissions by 2040. To support Congregations to engage with the project and reduce emissions relating to buildings, the Resources Board recently agreed to offer eligible Congregations 'Net Zero Small Concessional Loans' to fund approved Net Zero projects. Net Zero Small Concessional Loans' are loans not exceeding $10,000 with a term not exceeding 10 years with no interest is payable, if repayments are made within the loan terms. More details regarding this initiative will be provided at the 2026 Synod meeting.

Cockrell Bequest

The Cockrell Bequest comprises funds gifted to the church by Bessie Cockrell in 1982. The Property Trust agreed to use the income from the bequest for the benefit of chaplaincy work funded through the MSF. The annual bequest equates to approximately $37,500 and is used to support chaplaincy ministry at the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

Uniting Foundation

The Uniting Foundation accepts bequests, donations and grants from individuals, Congregations and organisations. These gifts are invested and the income earned is used to make grants to further the work of the Uniting Church in SA. The Resources Board is responsible for the financial management, governance and oversight of Uniting Foundation. The Foundation Grants Committee annually allocates funds from the Uniting Foundation to Congregations and individuals for a range of purposes, as outlined in the Uniting Foundation By-laws.

Each year the Resources Board approves the annual allocation amount available for granting and this amount is calculated with reference to the Foundation's prior year's financial results. The Resources Board approved a maximum 2025 distribution of $250,000 (compared with $500,000 in 2024 and $365,000 in 2023). The Resources Board acknowledged that there is no certainty in the amount of funding for future grant rounds.

In addition to these funds as mentioned above, UC Invest contributed an additional $500,000 to the Uniting Foundation for the 2025 Grant Round. At the Renew Conference (in October) $750k in Uniting Foundation grants were awarded to support Congregational projects.

Epworth SA Fund
Managed by the Uniting Church Investment Committee this distinct fund, containing the proceeds from the sale of 33 Pirie Street, is held with its purposes remaining consistent with the constitution of Epworth SA Inc. The Epworth SA Fund is budgeted to grant $565k in 2025 (compared with $548k in 2024 and $527k in 2023). This amount is expected to be approximately the same in 2026 based on income earned during the year while maintaining corpus.

1.1.2.1.3 Uniting Church Investment Committee

The Uniting Church Investment Committee (UCIC), a sub-committee of the Resources Board, has the governance oversight of the policy, strategy and financial sustainability of investments within the Synod. The UCIC meets monthly to assess the performance of the investments and investment strategies, to review policy documents, and to review and approve risk and compliance frameworks. The Committee recognises its responsibility to oversee the Synod's investment portfolios, ensuring investment strategies are in place to enhance the income of the Church, whilst protecting its asset base, and conform to the Synod's Ethical Investment Policy (see below at 1.1.3).

UCIC has governance responsibilities for the investments of the Church under the name 'Uniting Fund SA' together with the investments of other entities within the Church's Property Trust, and other organisations associated with the Church. A report regarding the investment operations is provided below at 1.2.5.

During 2025, the Committee approved and signed the audited Financial Statements for the investment entities under its oversight. It monitors the impact that the economy and investment markets have on the financial assets of the Synod and associated investment entities. The Committee recently approved the 2026 Asset Allocations to be adopted.

The UCIC has monitored the progress of agreed items identified in its Strategic Plan approved in 2023.

Of note is an additional grants program initiated by the UCIC of $500,000 per year, commencing in 2024, for five years. Since 2007 the Uniting Foundation has become the primary vehicle for providing grants to Congregations for missional projects.

This grants program provides a direct connection between investing with UC Invest and the funding of Congregational mission projects. In partnership with Uniting Foundation these grants are to be awarded to eligible projects that will build vibrant church communities, leading the Church into the future. Additionally, UC Invest provided approximately $100,000 in Renew Grants for Congregations who attended the Renew Resourcing Event to host a new event or activity that sparks renewal in their Congregation.

1.1.3 Ethical Investment Working Group

The Ethical Investment Working Group (EIWG), established in 2013, meets regularly to review the ethical issues relating to the investments of the Uniting Church in South Australia. The EIWG seeks to ensure that investments fall within the Church's Ethical Investment policy. The Ethical Investment Policy (EIP) sets the vision of the EIWG as making "*the changes required to investment portfolios to continually improve the Environmental Sustainability, Social responsibility and Governance (ESG) of the Church's investment credentials with reference to the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals."* To achieve this vision the EIWG is required to:

- continually improve the cumulative ESG/SDG ratings of the UCASA investment universe
- provide the necessary ESG leadership to all UCASA investing entities including Congregations
- ensure regular reporting back on the implementation of the EIP.

The EIWG has met twice in 2025. On each occasion the EIWG reviewed the Synod's investments and received a report regarding the work of the Environmental Action Group. The EIWG has established and monitors an Exclusion List which lists companies, products, activities and/or industries in which investment is to be avoided. This list is largely based on companies that would otherwise be investible under the Uniting Church Investment Committee's (UCIC) investment activities and as such it is not an exhaustive list of companies to be avoided. This list is reviewed and updated at each meeting. It should be noted that the EIWG Exclusion List only contains companies from the ASX100, or that have previously been in the ASX100. There are many companies not on the Exclusion List that would not meet the Synod EIP, however because they are not and have not been in the ASX100 they do not appear on the Exclusion List. During 2025 it was agreed that Sigma Healthcare would be removed from the Exclusion list. It was previously excluded as it was rated Significant Negative. Sigma is now rated Limited Positive. Woolworths was also removed from the Exclusion List based on interests in gaming. However, the gaming component of Woolworths has now been transferred to the Endeavour Group.

As advised in the corresponding report last year, the EIP was updated in 2022 with the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) integrated into the policy. Since then, the Synod has engaged a investment analyst and received an overall rating of the Fund's portfolio. The ratings include five categories of relative contribution to the achievement of improved ESG/SDG ratings, being 'significant positive', 'limited positive', 'neutral', 'limited negative' and 'significant negative'. In 2024 it was agreed that to strengthen the Synod's socially responsible investor credentials, a proactive approach would be taken to increasing the cumulative ESG score by intentionally decreasing investments in companies with a negative rating and/or intentionally increasing investments in companies with a positive rating. Using ESG analysis, companies assigned a 'significant negative impact' rating were divested, effectively placing these companies on the Exclusion List. Companies with limited negative impact will be divested by 2028. However, it is expected that companies with a limited negative rating will find themselves graduating to a positive rating as the market pushes them to become more responsible. The consequence of these actions means an increase in investment in companies with 'limited positive impact' and 'significant positive impact' ratings. This would serve to increase the ISS ESG score. This aligns with the Synod Climate Action plan adopted at the Synod meeting 2022.

As at 30 September, an independent assessment of Church investments found that:

- there are no 'significant negatives' within the portfolio
- 'limited negatives' have reduced from 22% (June 2024) to 17% (May 2025)
- the overall ESG rating has improved from 67 to 81.

During the year the EIWG saw its membership change. Jenni Hughes (Executive Officer, Mission Resourcing) joined as a Co-Convenor, representing Mission Resourcing, and Cyrus Kung (Mission Activator, Mission Resourcing) was welcomed as a member. Cyrus also attends the Environmental Action Group meetings, which provides a conduit between the EAG and EIWG.

Paul Goh has concluded his time on the EIWG, as he prepares for his appointment as UCA President. Paul's professionalism, dedication and commitment to improving ethical investment practices were commended. Paul Frisby has also concluded his service on the EIWG. At the recent meeting Paul was commended for the thought and care he has taken in his work, together with the integrity he exercises, reflected in his approach to align the Parkin Mission and Parkin Trust share portfolios with the Ethical Investment Policy.

1.1.4 Risk Management Committee

The Risk Management Committee (RMC) was established in 2015 to oversee risk management on behalf of Synod Standing Committee, and to establish and maintain a co-ordinated and systematic process to provide direction to, and controls for, the organisation regarding Synod-wide risk management. The primary aim of the RMC is to enhance UCA SA's capacity to steward its resources responsibly, thereby enabling future missional activity.

The RMC has been reconvened and commenced meeting in March 2025. The RMC welcomed Valerie Aloa and Richard Idzikowski and welcomed back Sue Page, Alice McCleary, Liane Lawton, Astrid Kuivasaari, and Peter Battersby (Chair and Convenor). The Committee has met 6 times during the year.

The key focus of the RMC during 2025 has been to review and harmonise (moderate) the risks identified on the Synod's Risk Register, focussing on the Extreme, High and/or Medium. The first Synod Risk Register report was provided to the Synod Standing Committee in August 2025. The RMC advised the Synod of 3 Extreme and 24 High risks.

Work has commenced on reviewing the Synod's Risk Management Policy, Business Continuity Plan (BCP), Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) and Crisis Management Action Plan (CMAP).

Finally, preparations for a Crisis Simulation Exercise in February 2026 have commenced. Noting a number of changes in Synod Officers since the previous Crisis Simulation Exercise it was agreed that another exercise would be taken to assist the Church and its Officers to be prepared in the event of an actual crisis occurring. Specifically, the exercise will enable the Crisis Management Team to determine the presence of a crisis, rehearse communication protocols, execute agreed procedures and establish an effective decision- making environment in which to act quickly under pressure.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the existence of a CMP will not stop a crisis from occurring, it will assist effective decision-making if and when a crisis does occur, allowing the UCASA to handle the situation as effectively as possible and affecting how the Church is perceived thereafter.

1.1.5 Other Strategic Matters

1.1.5.1 Manse Management Policy

In 2025 the Synod approved a new Manse Management Policy to strengthen stewardship of manse properties across South Australia. The policy, developed by the Resources Board and adopted by the Synod Standing Committee in June, provides a consistent framework for the management, maintenance and leasing of manses owned by the Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (S.A.).

The policy responds to increasing legislative requirements for landlords, the need for consistent standards of housing for Ministers, and the desire to relieve Congregations of complex property management responsibilities. It confirms that manses are held to support the mission and ministry of the Church and sets clear expectations for Responsible Bodies.

Key elements of the policy include:

- Professional property management of all manses to support compliance, regular inspections, and consistent standards of care.
- Mandatory Property Trust execution of all leases, ensuring legal and regulatory requirements are met.
- A minimum Sinking Fund allocation (10% of market rental) to support long-term capital works and reduce financial pressure on Congregations.
- Central receipt of inspection reports to strengthen risk management for the Property Trust.
- Updated lease clauses to safeguard future ministerial use of manses.
- A standard Memorandum of Understanding to clarify roles and responsibilities when a Minister resides in a manse.

During the year, work commenced to support Congregations in transitioning to these new requirements. Guidance materials, templates and communication tools were developed, and Synod Property Services began coordinating new agency agreements, reviewing leases, and preparing for the introduction of Sinking Fund reporting in 2026.

The implementation phase will continue into 2026, with staged transition dates allowing Congregations time to establish professional management arrangements, update leases and incorporate financial provisions into their budgets. Synod Property Services will continue to work closely with Congregations to ensure manses remain safe, functional and well-managed in support of the Church’s ongoing ministry.

1.1.5.2 Annual Property Returns

In line with Regulation 4.11.8 and the decision of the 2024 Synod meeting, the Synod has introduced an Annual Property Return for all Uniting Church SA Congregations, to be completed each year in August/September.

As custodians of publicly accessible buildings, Congregations carry important responsibilities to ensure that all properties are safe, well maintained, and compliant with relevant legislation, including the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and other requirements relating to essential safety provisions, disability access, and public health.

The Annual Property Return collects key information about property use, safety and security, maintenance and compliance. This data supports our collective stewardship of Church properties and provides timely insights to assist Church Councils with planning and budgeting for the year ahead.

During the year, a new online portal was developed and piloted to streamline the process. This portal will replace previous paper-based building safety reports and is designed to make completion easier for Congregations.

At the time of preparing this report, response rates of Congregations by Presbytery were as follows:

Presbytery	Returned	Not Returned	Return Rate
Generate	52	47	53%
PoSSA	32	16	67%
Wimala	35	29	55%
TOTAL	**119**	**92**	**56%**

Congregations are acknowledged and thanked for the time taken to complete the return and for their commitment to ensuring the Church’s buildings remain safe, welcoming and compliant for all who use them.

1.1.5.3 Presbytery Treasurers

The Presbytery Treasurers schedule monthly meetings to meet with key financial leaders within the Synod Office. The purpose of these meetings is to work collaboratively, establish and foster good relationships, adopt practices using agreed policies and systems and to assist Presbytery Treasurers undertake their work such that Presbyteries can achieve their mission and Synod fulfil its executive functions.

During the year, the Presbytery Treasurers have met eight times. These meetings have provided a relational forum to share information, raise queries, workshop issues, inform each other of matters and generally share matters in common, thereby providing support to one another.

Presbytery Treasurers are a vital part of the leadership and governance structure of the church. The Resources Team is grateful for the dedicated contribution of the current Presbytery Treasurers, Karen Taylor (Generate Presbytery), Carolyn Hall (Wimala Presbytery) and Marion Floyd (POSSA). Peter Lane (recent Wimala Presbytery) concluded his service during 2025 and is thanked and recognised for his contribution.

Peter served the Wimala Presbytery well, stewarding its financial resources in good spirit and energy.

The Presbytery Treasurers serve wisely and generously, giving significant volunteer time to their roles, which are mostly unseen. Each Treasurer has represented their Presbytery and member Congregations well.

1.2 Key areas and outcomes with an operational focus

Below is a summary of the activities of the Resources Team during 2025, as it has sought to resource Congregations, Presbyteries and the Synod. These reports are intended to provide an overview of the nature and breadth of the work the team is responsible for and have been prepared by each team manager.

The Resources team understands its purpose is '*to provide exceptional service built on trust, integrity and clear communication'*. The Resources team members recognise the challenges that volunteers, ministers and officers of the Church face as they execute their responsibilities within their Congregations and therefore concentrate on providing services and information to enable people to carry out their responsibilities as easily, safely and as effectively as possible.

1.2.1 Financial Services (Kathy Neale, Manager Financial Services)

The Financial Services Team (including the Payroll Bureau Service and the Congregational Bookkeeping Unit) oversees the accounting and finance operations of the Synod of South Australia. The Finance Team functions to provide the financial stewardship, oversight, and accountability that underpin the Church's financial mission and long-term sustainability. The team develops and monitors annual budgets, analyses financial performance against budget expectations, and provides financial statements to support informed decision- making by Synod and Presbytery leadership. In addition, the Finance Team manages complex compliance obligations, including GST and Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) requirements, ensuring that the Church meets all its legislative and regulatory standards. Through this work, the team safeguards the Church's financial integrity, supports responsible resource allocation, and enables ministries across the Synod to operate with confidence and transparency.

As a component of the above general function, the team also provides accounts payable, accounts receivable, accounting, budgeting and financial reporting services for the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, Generate Presbytery, Presbytery of Southern SA and Wimala Presbytery along with other Uniting Church entities.

Within the Financial Services Team, the Synod Payroll Bureau Service supports Congregations, affiliated organisations and Synod Ministry Centres (including UCLT and UAICC). The Payroll Team of 1.2 FTE currently administers payroll for more than 370 ministers and employees across 122 Congregations and organisations. Delivering accurate and timely payroll services remains critical, particularly in light of recent high-profile payroll failures across Australia that have demonstrated the financial and reputational risks arising from legislative complexity or administrative error. Salaries and wages represent the Church's largest expenditure.

The Synod's Payroll Bureau Service is committed to full compliance with relevant awards, national employment and taxation obligations, and the unique stipend and fringe benefit arrangements applicable to ministers and Church employees. Each payroll cycle involves a significant number of employee changes and movements, all of which are reviewed and processed by Payroll staff. The team also maintains payroll system integrity, applying updates such as Fair Work minimum wage adjustments, Superannuation Guarantee increases, and any relevant tax related updates.

While most Uniting Church entities currently utilise the Synod Payroll Service, full adoption across all entities would further improve efficiency and mitigate payroll-related risks.

1.2.1.1 *Congregational Bookkeeping Unit (CBU)*

The Congregational Bookkeeping Unit (CBU) provides bookkeeping services to 29 Congregations, faith communities and Church entities, assisting with good financial governance. CBU's team of qualified accountants offer support, ensuring transparency, accuracy, and consistency in financial reporting, enabling accurate and informed decision-making.

CBU operates using efficient, paperless practices which reduce errors and streamline processes. CBU's reports meet audit requirements, simplifying the auditing process and ensuring compliance with tax regulations and accounting standards.

Through its bookkeeping and limited consulting service, CBU ensures clients adhere to tax regulations, accounting standards, and financial reporting requirements. The team monitors changing requirements, helping to minimise compliance risks and promoting the Church's financial credibility. Support is also offered to Congregations to complete their Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) reporting requirements, especially the Annual Information Statement which is essential to maintaining charitable status.

CBU also facilitates access to auditing services for numerous Congregations, supplementing those already utilising CBU's bookkeeping services, in addition to running a fortnightly payroll for Uniting Venues staff of approximately 90 people.

The Synod Auditing Panel, comprising Stephen Bray, Barry Atwell and Janine Lynch, is acknowledged and thanked for its dedicated and invaluable service to the wider church.

1.2.2 **Human Resources (Karen Granger, Manager Human Resources)**

The Human Resources team contributes to a positive workplace culture, fostering growth and community within Uniting Church SA. The team supports the Synod, Presbyteries and Church Councils in fostering good Human Resources practices and compliance and managing employment and industrial risk within our mission and ministry context.

The Human Resources management continues to provide leadership and support on a statewide basis, to Synod Leaders, Congregation Church Councils and Presbytery Leaders in many aspects of specialised advice and facilitation of complex matters. This year has seen several difficult employee relations matters in the context of lay employees.

Following the employee *Pulse Survey* conducted in 2024, the Synod has made a commitment to conduct a repeat survey in 2026 for all staff at the Brooklyn Park campus, Pirie Street office and

Uniting Venues SA. The 2024 survey yielded a high response rate and positive outcomes from staff engagement with the survey.

Human Resource management remains abreast of the constant changes of legislation and regulations pertaining to the industrial and employment frameworks, with a specific focus on how the changes relate to employment activities within and across the Synod of South Australia.

1.2.2.1 Workplace Compliance and Policy Development

To ensure legislative compliance and to foster effective management processes, this year has seen an intentional in-depth review of many of the Human Resources suite of policies. In addition, new policies are also being developed including Psychosocial Policy, Family & Domestic Violence Policy, Right to Disconnect Policy and AI Policy. The process of online policy awareness training each quarter for staff and management of the Synod (Pirie Street Office and Brooklyn Park Campus), has continued throughout 2024 and 2025, for a selected group of 3-4 policies. This will continue into 2026.

Presbyteries and Congregations can access all policies and related information via the Uniting Church SA Synod website and are encouraged to tailor these policies to their work environment. Presbyteries, Congregations, and Synod ministry centres have opportunities to provide feedback on draft policies before finalisation.

1.2.2.2 Recruitment and Appointments of Key Positions

Several positions were filled across the Synod Pirie Street Office, Uniting College-Brooklyn Park Campus, and Uniting Venues SA during the year, responding to natural attrition, growth, retirements, and career movements. This included the positions of:

- Manager, Investment Services
- Engagement Manager
- Director Pastoral Theology and Ministry Practice
- CBU Team Leader
- Financial Accountant
- Executive Assistant to Principal
- Disability Advocate & Social Inclusion Officer
- MAPPSA (Wimala) Project Officer
- CBU Officer x 2
- Relief Centre Officer
- Administration Officer (Mission Resourcing)
- Insurance Officer
- Administration Officer (Resources)
- Librarian
- Events Coordinator (Engagement)
- Content & Social Media Officer
- Property Administration Assistant and
- Administrator Human Resources (Ministry Placements).

Uniting Venues SA has recruited the following roles:

- Program Manager (Beyond Limits)
- Adare Centre Manger
- Tarooki Centre Manger (vacancy)
- Customer Service Officer Residential
- Head Cooks (Nunyara and Adare)
- Maintenance Officer (Nunyara)
- Maintenance Hand (Nunyara)
- Lead Activity Facilitator (Beyond Limits)
- casual Activity Facilitators, Kitchen Hands/Cooks and Housekeepers.

1.2.2.3 *Professional, Education & Development*

Ongoing education and development of staff, management and leaders remains a priority. Each team member participates in developing their individual annual development plan. The HR team assists team members arrange coaching, specialised training, upskilling, compliance training, industry benchmarking, conference attendance, and various other learning opportunities, such as webinars, video conferences, and in-house Uniting Church programs

1.2.2.4 *Challenges*

The HR team continues to navigate the challenges and complexity of employee relations, employment law, volunteer engagement, and workplace health and safety, all within the complex Church governance context. The contributions of volunteer Church Council members, Presbytery Office Bearers, ministry teams, and other Church officers are greatly appreciated, as together this complex regulatory environment is considered. This requires Human Resources' careful interpretation and implementation of the Fair Work Act and associated amendments by the Federal Government.

1.2.3 Information, Communications and Telecommunications (Mat Booy, Manager ICT)

The Information, Communications and Telecommunications (ICT) team maintains high quality IT services for the Synod Campus and Office, Presbyteries, UAICC and UVSA. The past year has seen substantial accomplishments.

1.2.3.1 *Completed Projects*

This year delivered several major outcomes as ICT continued to advance the organisation's digital transformation agenda. A series of new Power Apps were successfully developed and deployed, including the Annual Property Return (APR) Power App and the UC Invest Customer Onboarding Portal, both now actively supporting operational teams with modern, streamlined processes.

Alongside these new platforms, ICT completed a refresh of the IT Five-Year Strategic Plan, ensuring alignment with emerging organisational needs, contemporary technology trends, and future capability requirements.

The team also delivered a new test and staging Learning Management System (LMS) environment, providing a safe and scalable space for evaluating learning content and system changes ahead of next year's major LMS rollout.

1.2.3.2 In Progress

Development continued across several key systems, with significant enhancements made to existing solutions. The HR Power App received additional functionality as part of ongoing improvements, with further Phase 2 and Phase 3 upgrades planned for delivery next year.

Following the successful Property Power App proof-of-concept, the project has now moved into the data migration stage. Work is underway to consolidate and clean data ahead of a full transition to the new platform, with go-live scheduled for early in the new year.

ICT also completed a cyber security audit focused on the newly launched Power Apps and the UC Invest systems. The findings from this assessment are informing strengthened controls, ensuring that new solutions are secure, compliant, and resilient from the outset.

In addition, planning commenced for the splitting of the CRM environment, which will support improved system performance, clearer separation of workloads, and stronger long-term governance.

1.2.3.3 Futures

Looking ahead, ICT will progress several major initiatives that further modernise and strengthen the Synod's digital ecosystem.

A key focus will be the launch of the Property Power App, marking the completion of a major multi-year project and unlocking modernised workflows for property management. Work will also begin on the Investments Power App, including a full proof-of-concept to validate requirements and architecture.

Enhancements will continue for the UC Invest Onboarding Portal, with new features planned to improve user experience, streamline verification processes, and support operational efficiency.

ICT will also undertake the development of a prototype replacement for the Uniting Church Portal, laying the foundations for a modern and integrated hub for organisational information and resources.

Next year will also see the launch of the new Learning Management Platform, following the successful build-out of its test and staging environment.

A significant uplift of the CRM environment is planned, including the execution of the environment split, platform modernisation, and improvements to structure, governance, and long-term maintainability.

Finally, a planned desktop environment refresh with the rollout of new devices to replace our current VDI (Virtual Desktop Infrastructure) that is in use across the Synod.

1.2.4 Insurance Services & Risk Management (Liane Lawton, Manager Insurance & Risk)

Insurance Services provides insurance protection for the Uniting Church Synod of SA, including public liability, property, travel, personal accident, cyber (non-Congregational), and other risks. This is possible through the strong purchasing and negotiating power of the Uniting Church Insurance Group (UCIG), encompassing organisations associated with the church, such as schools, community groups, aged care organisations, and St. Andrew's Hospital.

1.2.4.1 Insurance Renewal

Insurer growth ambitions and recent strong performance, together with a period of benign natural catastrophe losses, are helping drive competitive market conditions. As a result, the UCIG's Industrial Special Risks (building and contents cover) rate decreased by approximately 20% with no changes to scope of cover or excesses. This position is reflective of market conditions, the leverage created by the buying group, and Allianz's strong determination to continue to partner with UCIG. It was also negotiated by Marsh as part of broader discussions across several high value placements it manages within its Faith practice.

Liability insurance market conditions continued to ease in the first half of 2025 for the Australian casualty/liability insurance market. However, due to the various risks covered by the UCIG (and the requirement for SMA cover) there is still a limited number of insurers prepared to insure all entities within the group.

Marsh reviewed the potential to place the UCIG program into the London market with our broking colleagues in Bowring Marsh, however, while the London underwriting market has become more competitive from a pricing perspective, this shift has not been material enough to challenge Ansvar.

Marsh successfully negotiated with Ansvar to secure a 10% premium reduction across the group portfolio of policies. Individual entity outcomes varied slightly due to the policies being individually rated (so, individual factors such as acquisitions, individual technical rating factors, increases in exposure and claims notifications have been accounted for).

The liability policies for the Synod were renewed at current terms and conditions with a 20% premium decrease with no change in policy conditions or excesses, which was an excellent result. All other insurances were renewed at either expiring premium or a decrease of up to 10%.

As a result of the excellent renewal result, the base rate of insurance charged to Congregations has decreased by approximately 22% for the 2025-2026 insurance period.

1.2.4.2 Claims

Once again, South Australia experienced minimal natural catastrophe activity over the last year.

The most common claims over the last 12 months have been water damage claims, impact damage and break- ins.

The most significant claim was for vehicle impact damage at the Athelstone Uniting Church which caused damage to a wall. Fortunately, no one was injured, the driver was insured, and a full recovery should be made.

1.2.4.3 Achievements in 2025

In 2025, Insurance Services and Risk Management achieved:

- Recommenced meetings of the Risk Management Committee which has reviewed all Extreme, High and Medium claims.
- Arranged and coordinated with Lockton and Herron Todd White SE to undertake valuations of 31 properties.
- Arranged Expressions of Interest for and undertaking of actuarial review of retained insurance liabilities.

1.2.4.4 Priorities for 2026

In 2026, Insurance Services and Risk Management will focus on:

- Managing UCIG tender process for insurance broking services.
- Collaborating with ICT and Property Services on system migration.
- Continue partnering with Property Services and the Work Health and Safety Coordinator to promote. proactive and preventative property maintenance by Congregations.
- Continue with the rolling program of progressively revaluing UCSA buildings

1.2.5 Investment Services (Troy Hampton, Manager Investment Services)

The Investment Services team covers the investment activities of the Synod under the oversight of the Uniting Church Investment Committee and the directors of Uniting Church SA Investment Fund Ltd (trading as UC Invest).

The Uniting Church Investment Committee (UCIC) oversees the Synod's investing and treasury functions, including Uniting Fund SA (formerly UC Invest pre-31 March 2018), UCI Share Fund, UCI Direct Property Fund, Uniting Foundation, and Mission and Service Fund.

Additionally, it oversees portfolio management of other investment entities which report through the Resources Board. UCIC crafts annual investment plans based on factors like investment objectives, market conditions, expected returns, and portfolio diversification.

Uniting Church entities are encouraged to utilise the services and skills provided by the Investment Services Team, including the various investment options available to Congregations and affiliated entities. As previously noted, in 2025 The Parkin Mission of SA Inc and The Parkin Trust Inc engaged Investment Services to provide the portfolio management function of their activities. This year Clayton Wesley Uniting Church and Broadview Uniting Church were welcomed as new unit holders in the UCI

Share Fund, as both Congregations consolidated externally managed share portfolios into the Share Fund.

The Directors of Uniting Church SA Investment Fund Ltd are responsible for the activities and investment products that are issued to retail and wholesale investors under an Australian Financial Services Licence.

During 2025 the UC Invest brand was refreshed and relaunched in conjunction with a new public website aimed at providing investors with a modern user experience. A new feature of the website is a digital onboarding portal which allows retail clients to open UC Invest accounts within 5 minutes (including ID verification steps). New investors can now open an account online. Church members are encouraged to consider UC Invest as a personal investment option.

Audited financial statements for all managed entities, along with their investment portfolios, are accessible on the UC Invest website ucinvest.com.au.

1.2.5.1 *Asset Allocation*

Annually, UCIC assesses the ideal financial asset blend for each Property Trust investment entity. This involves considering their purpose, corpus needs, and the existing investment climate. Regular performance reviews against set benchmarks occur throughout the year to address any issues that arise. UCIC weighs both short and medium-term outcomes to decide on suitable asset allocations.

1.2.5.2 *Ethical Investing*

UCIC adheres to the Synod's Ethical Investment Policy. Synod investments, managed by the Investment Services Team, undergo review by the Ethical Investment Working Group in its meetings. Troy Hampton, Manager Investment Services, attends and resources these meetings

1.2.5.3 *Capital Adequacy*

Within the corporate structure of Investment Services, the activities of UC Invest and Uniting Fund SA are directly linked. The financial capacity of UC Invest is underpinned by the capital adequacy of Uniting Fund SA. The UCIC has adopted a model of calculating capital adequacy which aligns with the APRA Prudential Standard. This standard considers a calculation of equity relative to risk weighted assets. Within the policy for capital adequacy the minimum level of capital is 12% of risk weighted assets. The current capital adequacy position of Uniting Fund SA as of 31 October 2025 is 17.2%.

This level of capital provides Uniting Fund SA and by association UC Invest with the financial capacity to withstand market events and allows the pursuit of long-term investment objectives. This is a critical measure of financial strength and is constantly monitored by the UCIC.

1.2.6 **Property Services (Matt Wilson, Manager Property & Projects)**

The Property Committee, a sub-committee of the Resources Board, has a defined charter as follows:

“To make property decisions under delegation from the Resources Board and to assist Congregations and the Resources Board to make strategic property-related decisions which optimise the contribution of property towards the achievement of pre-determined missional goals.”

The Property Committee meets every two months to make decisions and provide advice on the sale and purchase of real property transactions, leasing, property management, risk management, and property development and improvement. The Committee consists of property and related industry experts and a representative from each Presbytery.

Key 2025 matters considered by the Property Committee and Property Services Team included real estate transactions, various property management matters and strategic property projects. The following Congregations had property matters that were considered by the Committee in 2025:

- Adelaide West UC – Telecommunications Infrastructure
- Gully UC – Stormwater Management
- Journey UC – Café & Refurbishment Project
- Mt Gambier UC – Spire Repairs
- Pt Adelaide UC – Subdivision and Ground Lease Proposal
- Woodville UC – Development Proposal

Dameon Roy was nominated for membership of the Property Committee and endorsed via email by the membership. Dameon brings a wealth of experience in engineering and stormwater management. A recommendation will be presented to the Resources Board in February that Dameon be appointed for a 3-year term. Unfortunately, Michael Vullings has resigned from the Committee as the timing of the meetings didn’t align with his work commitments. The Property Committee is grateful for Michael’s contribution.

Throughout the year, the Property Services team diligently oversaw the Church's real estate assets, managing property sales, acquisitions, and property upgrades. The team addressed property concerns within Presbyteries and the Synod and also managed transactions and leases. The Property Risk Management Committee has continued to report property-related risks to the Property Trust.

The Property Services team has actively supported the implementation of the ‘Managing Properties Transferred to Synod’ Framework, which seeks to steward properties that may be suitable for church planting or other missional activities that have been handed back to Synod.

Several property transactions were successfully completed from December 2024 to November 2025 as follows:

Sale of churches (8)

- Beachport
- Coonalpyn
- Iron Knob
- Mypolonga
- Myponga

- Melrose
- Port Germein
- Streaky Bay (church & manse)

Sale of other property (2)

- Myponga - Cemetery
- Port Adelaide – Cottage Kitchen

Sale of manses (2)

- Hawthorn (shared Malvern UC & Unley UC)
- Malvern (Malvern UC)

Purchase of manse (1)

- Kensington (Malvern UC)

The Property Services team has assisted many locations in property matters including:

- Adare Campsite – Master planning
- Burnside UC – Outdoor Recreation Hub
- Brougham Place UC – Wall Stabilisation of a State Heritage Building and Stormwater Management
- Balaklava - Playground
- Delamere UC – New Wastewater System
- Clayton Wesley UC – Stained Glass Window Repair
- Cherry Gardens UC – Damp and Other Repairs
- Encounter Enfield – Exterior Painting
- Gardens UC – Good Neighbour Centre Upgrade and Partial Reroof, Fencing and Egress.
- Gartrell UC Rose Park – Paving and Stormwater
- Gawler UC – Air Conditioning within a State Heritage Building and Power Upgrade
- Glenunga – Stormwater Management
- Gully UC – Stormwater Management
- Gulnare UC – Building Demolition
- Seeds Hallet Cove UC - Safety and Maintenance
- Historical Society – Internal Refurbishment and Disability Access
- Houghton UC – Fence Construction & Stormwater Management
- Journey UC – Café/Foyer Development Project
- Kent Town – Stonework Repairs
- Kingscote – Kitchen Extension
- Moonta – Kitchen Upgrade
- Mt Gambier UC – Spire Repair Design Work of a State Heritage Building
- Mt Barker – Asset Management Plan and Playground
- Maitland – Kitchen Upgrades, Electronic Sign and Acoustic Treatment

- Murray Bridge - Safety Upgrades
- Noarlunga UC – Build Project to join existing buildings and relocate kitchen, insurance claim work and maintenance
- Nunyara - Masterplanning
- Nuriootpa UC – Hall Roof Replacement
- Para Vista UC – Asbestos Management
- Pt Broughton UC – Kitchen and Meeting Room Upgrade
- Oodnadatta (UAICC) – New Worship Complex
- One Tree Hill – Building Additions Proposals
- Sandy Creek UC – Security System
- Semaphore – Air Conditioning and Solar Panels Installation
- Salisbury North UAICC – Essential Safety Provisions
- St Andrews by the Sea Glenelg – Roofing and Gutters, Food Pantry Upgrade
- Strathalbyn – Heritage Repairs, Accessibility Ramp and Kitchen Upgrade
- Tarooki UV, Robe – Veranda and Future Site Upgrades
- Westbourne Park – Solar Installation
- Willunga UC – Bush Chapel
- Woodside – Heritage matters
- Numerous – Form 3 Essential Safety Provisions.

1.2.7 Uniting Venues SA (Mark Lee, Group Manager Uniting Venues SA)

The mission of Uniting Venue SA (UVSA) is to provide opportunities for exploring faith, fostering community, encouraging creative learning, and developing leadership skills, all through the delivery of outstanding Christian hospitality.

Overall, 2025 was a successful year for UVSA, with noteworthy achievements across its venues and programs. Despite lower than anticipated occupancy rates at Adare and Thuruna, Beyond Limits recorded impressive participation in both expedition and base camp programs.

The UVSA Committee continued its oversight of the 2021-2024 Ministry and Business Plan, which was extended to 2025 due to earlier disruptions caused by COVID-19. The Committee met quarterly to address strategic matters, including the development of the 2026-2029 Ministry and Business Plan. During the year, the Committee farewelled Bronte Wilson (Presbytery of Southern SA) and looks forward to welcoming back Neil Brown in 2026, who previously served on the committee from 2015 to 2023.

Adare’s occupancy improved compared to 2024 but remained slightly below expectations. Factors influencing this included cost of living pressures. The Adare Manager, Paul Fairlie, resigned mid-year for family reasons, with a new manager, Brett Rollings, appointed in early December. Guest feedback has been consistently positive, reflecting recent enhancements in food and customer service, as well as the successful completion of the paving and pathway project at the end of 2024. This project included the replacement of paving at the rear of Adare House, new paving at the marquee location, and improved pathway access from the carpark. Plans for 2026 will build on these improvements.

Nunyara maintained a solid occupancy level throughout 2025. The venue welcomed back its Bookings Coordinator to full-time employment and onboarded a new Maintenance Officer and Customer Service Officer (Residential).

Guests have continued to provide complimentary feedback, often noting the flexibility of staff, quality of food, and the well-presented grounds. Early in the year, the Nunyara kitchen project was completed, which included the construction of a walk-in cool room and freezer. Plans for 2026 are in development to further enhance the venue.

Tarooki has enjoyed another prosperous year, benefitting from additional staff and recent building improvements. The Tarooki Manager, Karen Parker, concluded in the role late in the year after twelve years of dedicated service. The UVSA Committee and the Resources Board acknowledged Karen for her excellent contribution to the Tarooki campsite. Karen was also awarded life membership with the Christian Venues Association for her contribution to Christian camping across Australia. Despite two rounds of advertising, a suitable replacement has not yet been appointed. Interim leadership and management oversight are being provided by the Group Manager, Uniting Venues SA, in collaboration with local casual staff and contractors. Tarooki continues to work closely with Beyond Limits to expand its program offerings and will be a particular focus in 2026.

Thuruna achieved reasonable occupancy in 2025, including hosting the Easter Camp for various Uniting Church Congregations from the Eyre Peninsula. Guests appreciated upgrades in the Main Complex and Hamilton Cottage. Recent wet weather conditions have improved rainwater tank levels, and a contract gardener continues to support grounds maintenance.

Emmaus has continued to operate under the dedicated management of volunteers, ensuring ongoing service delivery.

Beyond Limits maintained an engaging program of activities throughout the year, despite some beach activities being suspended due to the algal bloom which is affecting parts of the South Australian coastline. Notably, two new expedition and base camp programs were successfully introduced at Argadell's Homestead (near Quorn) and Little Dip Conservation Park (near Robe). Tenille Chambers, Beyond Limits Program Manager commenced mid- year and has brought fresh enthusiasm and passion to the role. Although some activity facilitation staff were transitioned from casual to permanent part-time positions, recruitment and retention of casual staff remain challenging due to the appeal of permanent work elsewhere and ongoing labour shortages. Plans for 2025 include further expansion of expedition and base camp style programs.

Despite lower-than-expected occupancy at Adare and Thuruna, UVSA remains optimistic about prospects for 2026. Schools constituted the majority of group bookings in 2025, with steady attendance from church and community groups. For those considering a church or youth camp in 2026, up-to-date information about the venues and Beyond Limits can be found at http://www.uvsa.org.au on Facebook and Instagram.

1.2.8 Work Health Safety (Wayne Booth, WHS Coordinator)

Work Health Safety (WHS) within the Uniting Church in South Australia during 2024/5 saw an ongoing focus on workplace wellbeing and psychosocial safety as workplace priorities, alongside changes in WHS and employment provisions requiring employers to provide greater flexibility, support and better work-life balance options to personnel. Workloads across the Synod remain high and the WHS Coordinator has played an important role in navigating changes in legislation and supporting personnel as Synod seeks to meet its legal and moral duties.

The WHS Coordinator has provided specialised support to the Human Resources, Property Services, and Insurance Services teams. Over the past year, this included:

- coordinating complex Return to Work (RTW) matters and implementing improvements in the management of non-work-related illness and injury
- leading and advising on workplace safety matters, incident investigations, WHS, RTW and relevant employment compliance requirements
- providing support to Congregations following incidents and minimising the legal and financial impacts from SafeWork SA action and RTW claims
- collaborating on policy reviews and continuing development and implementation of the online Policy Training & Education Program for Synod staff
- leading the property compliance implications of the *Automated External Defibrillator (Public Access) Act 2022 (SA),* including submitting a successful Preventive Health SA Grant application and developing and implementing the Synod AED procurement and ordering process.

Recognising the ever-increasing compliance requirements that apply, Congregations are acknowledged and thanked for their commitment to navigating new challenges and meeting obligations.

1.2.8.1 Incidents

Incident rates across Synod Councils remain consistent and within expected levels. In 2024/25, there were 110 reported incidents compared to 132 in the previous year, with no SafeWork SA notifiable incidents during this period.

Congregational incidents reported to Synod stayed consistently low, with 14 incidents registered. One of these was a dangerous incident notifiable to SafeWork SA due to a large ceiling fan becoming unsecured and falling to the ground from significant height. Whilst the area was in use at the time, thankfully no one was injured.

The importance of investigation, reporting and learning from ‘near-miss’ incidents such as these should not be underestimated. Near-misses serve as a reminder of the types of potential serious accidents that can occur, and in this instance, the importance of regular inspection and maintenance of our aging properties and facilities.

1.2.8.2 Compliance

Whilst the Resources team has a specific responsibility and focus on ensuring church buildings are safe and fit for mission, the WHS Co-ordinator continues to provide guidance to Congregations to help ensure that the activities and work that takes place in, around these buildings are undertaken safely and compliantly.

Church Council members have a specific duty as 'WHS Officers' for safety matters within their Congregations. As modern methods and equipment evolve, so do our duties, responsibilities and the expectations applied to us.

Congregations are urged to seek professional advice early in WHS matters. Delaying guidance often complicates issues, significantly increasing risks for the Church. Contacting WHS promptly when a health and safety issue arises is strongly encouraged to mitigate risks and allow matters to be resolved efficiently.

1.2.8.3 Compliance (Defibrillators)

The introduction of the *Automated External Defibrillator (Public Access) Act 2022 (SA)* brought about the requirement for all places of worship and some other church-held property to have an AED installed in accordance with the Act by 1 January 2026.

Thankfully, to ease the financial impact on not-for-profit and charitable organisations, Preventive Health SA released grant funding of up to $1,000 for each eligible location towards the cost. To minimise the administrative burden and compliance implications of all Congregations submitting individual grant applications, the Synod was requested to submit a single ‘joint’ application on behalf of the Uniting Church. The Synod was successful in its application and was awarded grant funding for up to 198 eligible Congregations.

At the time of writing, the Synod has received 154 AED orders from Congregations directly, with a further 19 ineligible due to already having an AED but not ‘opting out’ of the original grant application, and 10 orders for eligible Synod managed property. 15 Congregations did not respond to either the grant opt out or the order program. These Congregations will need to ensure they meet the requirements of *the Act* in order to be compliant and able to continue using their property for worship from 1 January 2026.

Whilst the purchase program has been significantly impacted by unexpected import and supply issues, at the time of writing the majority of Congregation orders have now been fulfilled and the small number of remaining orders will be fulfilled shortly. Thank you to everyone who submitted their AED grant ‘opt out’ response or AED order and payment promptly, despite the delays, which has greatly helped the process.

1.2.9 Synergy (Bruce Wright, Synergy Procurement & Relationships Manager)

Synergy exists to leverage the collective buying power of its member groups to optimise pricing from suppliers. Moreover, it adds value by hosting specialized seminars and networking events. Synergy operations sit within the Synod's Mission and Service Fund, operating on a cost-recovery basis. It is fully funded by contributions from 17 Uniting Church entities across various sectors—aged care, health care, community, schools, and churches.

1.2.9.1 Synergy Activity 2025

Synergy currently manages 12 Head Contracts worth over $28 million across 4 main categories on behalf of 17 member organisations associated with the Uniting Church in South Australia.

Head Contracts	Category	Annual $ Expenditure
Agency Nursing	Health & Community Services	14,000,000
Laundry & Linen Services	Health & Community Services	2,600,000
South East Laundry (Resthaven Mt G)	Health & Community Services	105,000
Electricity	Energy	10,355,000
Energy Procurement & Management Services	Energy	80,000
Meter Reading	Energy	50,000
Medical Assessments (pre-employment)	Business Services	500,000
Records Management (archive service)	Business Services	150,000
Lift Maintenance	Facilities Maintenance	250,000
Pest Control	Facilities Maintenance	100,000
Automatic Doors	Facilities Maintenance	30,000
TOTAL		**28,220,000**

In 2025 Synergy continued to provide value for money procurement solutions that align with the ethos and strategic goals of its primarily Not for Profit membership group.

1.2.9.2 Energy Contracts

Synergy has extended its relationship with World Kinect Energy Services to 31 December 2028, securing reduced fees and expanded services including carbon accounting, market updates, bill validation and sustainability project advice. Kinect's tender for large electricity sites (>160 MWh) in 2025 recommended Snowy Hydro, with members accepting a three-year 100% Green Energy contract (2026–2028). This agreement delivers fixed pricing and estimated savings of $360,000 per year.

For small electricity sites (<160 MWh), Synergy compared multiple offers and identified the Local Government Association Procurement (LGAP) contract with Origin as the most cost-effective option. Savings vary by site but average 16.5% compared with Procurement Australia, totalling more than $57,000 annually. A total of 197 sites have joined the LGAP contract. Synergy also secured an 18% discount on small-market natural gas through Origin, saving an estimated $200,000 per year across 50 sites. Yurika Metering was appointed for large-site metering services until 2028.

1.2.9.3 Health & Community Services

The Linen Services Australia contract runs to September 2026, with potential future opportunities arising from recent industry acquisitions. The Nursing Agency panel contract (commenced October 2024) continues to be supported by Synergy, which also facilitates evaluation of productivity platforms such as Staff Central, already delivering significant efficiencies for Helping Hand.

1.2.9.4 Business Services & Facilities

Medical assessments are provided through Jobfit and CHG under a 3+2-year contract. Records management with Grace was renegotiated on favourable terms. AED procurement support has helped more than 200 sites comply with new legislation, delivering over $100,000 in savings. Contracts for lifts, pest control and automatic doors remain in place to 2026–2027.

1.2.9.5 Net Zero Initiatives

Synergy is working with the Environmental Action Group to support Synod decarbonisation targets, including green energy procurement and exploring solar and battery installation contracts

1.2.9.6 Synergy Committee

The Synergy Committee operates under the oversight of the Resources Board. The primary responsibility of the Synergy Committee is to provide guidance to and share expertise with the Synergy Procurement and Relationships Manager in relation to the strategic aspects of Synergy operations. The Committee comprises key Uniting Church SA staff, representatives from the Synergy membership group and external specialists in the fields of procurement, business development and finance. This year, the committee welcomed three new members; Nicole Cox, General Manager Finance, Eldercare, Simon Mills, Senior Manager, Hotel Services Uniting SA and Craig Tasborski, Director of Finance, Prince Alfred College. Each Synergy Committee member is acknowledged and thanked for serving the church in this way.

2. Recognition of Service

2.1.1 Recognition of Resources Board members

It is appropriate to thank the Resources Board and Property Trust members and the members of sub-committees who have generously shared their experience, skills and expertise across the wide range of Resources Board responsibilities. The Church is served most capably by these people, who dedicate many hours during the year to fulfil their roles with professionalism and a keen sense of stewardship. Thank you to those people who have faithfully served the Church in the following committees and associated task groups.

- Property Trust
- Resources Board
- Property Committee
- Risk Management Committee

- Synergy Committee
- Uniting Church Investment Committee and Uniting Church Investment Fund Ltd Committee
- Uniting Venues SA Committee
- Ethical Investment Working Group

The table below indicates the range of skills offered to the Church by the Resources Board members over the past year:

Board Member	**Area of Specialisation**
Rev Rob Stoner (Chairperson)	Mission Resourcing, Uniting Church Ethos & Polity
General Secretary Rev Philip Gardner	Mission Planning, Uniting Church Ethos & Polity
Moderator Rev Peter Morel	Mission Planning, Uniting Church Ethos & Polity
Executive Officer, Resources Peter Battersby	Financial Management, Human Resources, Corporate Governance, Uniting Church Ethos & Polity
Executive Officer, Placements and Safe Church Rev Andrew Robertson	Mission Planning, Uniting Church Ethos & Polity
Michael McClaren	Investment, Financial Management, Corporate Governance
Alice McCleary	Financial Management, Corporate Governance
Robyn Caldicott	Uniting Church Ethos and Polity, Mission Planning,
Mark Elford	Uniting Church Ethos & Polity, Property
Anton van Bavel	Law, Uniting Church Ethos and Polity
Resourcing Officers (non-voting)	
Astrid Kuivasaari - General Manager, Operations and Services	
Andrew Fechner – General Manager, Investments and Finance	
Administration - Leah Hopton	

At the rise of the Synod Standing Committee meeting on 4 December 2025, the terms of Rob Stoner and Robyn Caldicott conclude. Rob has faithfully served the Resources Board as its Chair for six years and concurrently served as a Property Trust member. Rob’s deep faith, wisdom and knowledge of church polity and ethos together with his experiences in rural and urban Congregation and Synod placement settings have been a tremendous gift. His desire to see the Church prosper and his willingness to take on additional tasks, many of which weren’t easy or comfortable, have been a hallmark of his leadership.

Robyn Caldicott has faithfully served as a member of the Property Trust and Resources Board for four years. Robyn’s committed and diligent service, together with her thoughtful questioning have marked her valuable contribution. Robyn’s preparedness for, and diligent contributions to meetings will be missed.

Aware of Rob's approaching retirement the Synod Standing Committee at the recommendation of the Property Trust, appointed Dr Deidre Palmer as a member of the Property Trust and as Chair of the Resources Board. Many would know that Deidre has generously and capably served the Church in a variety of capacities. Deidre is an accomplished Chair and has a deep heart for the mission of God through the work of the Uniting Church in SA.

Following an Expression of Interest process at its December meeting, the Synod Standing Committee resolved to appoint Rev Diane Bury as a member of the Property Trust, therefore filling the vacancy left by Rev Robyn Caldicott. Applications were received from a number of suitably qualified people within the church. Each application showed that the church is blessed with skilled and gifted people. Diane brings an extensive range of skills, experience and qualities which meet the necessary skill and experience requirements and completes the inherent governance composition required by the Property Trust and Resources Board.

2.1.2 Recognition of Resources Team

The Resources Ministry Centre team is commended for its exceptional service to the Church. This team, based in the Synod office and at the Uniting Venues SA sites, strives to provide exceptional service built on trust, integrity and clear communication. Whilst covering a vast array of activities within the life of the church, each team member is dedicated to serving the Church. The contribution of each team member is recognised, as is the way in which each of these people has approached their work throughout the year.

During the year, there have been several changes within the Ministry Centre. In particular, Troy Hampton is welcomed to the role of Manager, Investment Services. Troy carries significant responsibilities with the Investment Services Team and brings expertise and experience that will a great asset to the team. As mentioned earlier, Karen Parker, Tarooki Camp Manager, has recently concluded and was recognised for her 12 years of dedicated service.

The contribution of each team leader (as named against each operational sub-report) and Leah Hopton, the Executive Assistant, are acknowledged with gratitude. The team is thankful for the support across the Synod, Presbyteries, and Congregations, aiming to strengthen the Church together.

3. Forward Thinking

It is expected that during 2026, the Resources Board and Resources Ministry Centre will focus on:

1. Supporting Congregational growth opportunities
2. Advocating for the Synod's Mission and Property Strategy Working Group and for enhanced Congregational property stewardship
3. Cultivating relationships to partner with Presbytery leaders
4. Reviewing Annual Property Review Returns and engaging with Congregation leaders to help address safety matters identified
5. Operationalising the Synod-wide risk register and reporting systems
6. Overseeing the implementation of the 2026 Mission and Service Fund budget

7. Implementing the Investment Services Strategic Plan
8. Finalising and implementing the 2026-2029 Uniting Venues SA Business Plan
9. Developing a Synod-wide manse strategy.

In addition to these, the Resources Ministry Centre will continue to focus on strengthening its service to Congregations and Presbyteries and will look forward to working alongside volunteers and Church Officers as together we seek to grow God's Church.

Thank you for reading this report. It is provided to Synod members to help keep you informed and connected with matters relating to the Uniting Church in SA. The Resources Managers hope the report offers useful insight into how the Resources Ministry Centre, through the Resources Board, its sub-committees, task groups and the Resources Team, has exercised responsible stewardship of the property and financial resources entrusted to it. If you require further information or clarification on any aspect of the report, please contact resources@sa.uca.org.au or call the Synod office on 8236 4229.

Peter Battersby
Executive Officer, Resources
10 May 2026

The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia