

Synod '24



Stipends Committee Report

1. Introduction

The Stipends Committee has responsibility for proposing the level of minimum stipend and allowances to apply to ministerial placements. This generally requires an annual process of review which may result in appropriate recommendations to Synod or Synod Standing Committee. Stipends Committee comprises ministers, members of local congregations, local church treasurers and persons with employment, and financial management expertise. The Committee is acutely aware of the difficulty that some congregations experience in meeting costs of ministry and the pressures facing some stipended families in meeting their financial needs. In bringing any proposed adjustments to stipends and allowances the Committee considers a wide range of relevant aspects.

The Committee, prior to recommending changes to the SA Synod Stipends and allowances investigates the level of stipends and allowances being paid in other Synods. Is informed by other information including policies, By-laws and impacting internal and external factors. Local economic data, community wage movements including average weekly earnings, CPI figures and trends in cost of housing are also considered. In addition, the Committee considers the deliberations and outcomes of the Annual Wage Review conducted by the Fair work Commission.

The Stipends Committee wrestled with the challenge of the current uncertain economic climate, weighing up a number of factors, seeking to discern whether to recommend an increase, and if so, at what time and how much. It was noted that a challenge in not granting an increase is that the gap can never be caught up. The Committee stresses that proposed recommendations are the Minimum rate for Stipends and Allowances.

2. Membership

The Stipends Committee is currently comprised of:

Mr Brian Hern (Chairperson)

Rev Philip Gardner (General Secretary)

Rev Sue Page (Associate General Secretary, Planning and Governance) Secretary

Mr Peter Battersby (EO Resources)

Mr Peter Hampton

Mrs Margaret Davidson

Dr Valerie Aloa

Ms Karen Granger (HR Manager)

Ms Shamela Sternberg (Administrator, Placements)

3. Setting the 2024 & 2025 Minimum Stipend and Allowances

Due to the change in the timing of our Synod meetings it is not practical to present recommendations in relation to the following year's ministerial stipend and allowances to the Synod meeting. The relevant information on which recommendations can be based is not available until later in the calendar year. Accordingly, it is necessary to present any recommendations relating to the ministerial stipend and allowances to Synod Standing Committee. All decisions of approved changes to ministerial stipends and allowances rates are to be reported to the next meeting of the Synod.

Stipends Committee reported the 2023 Stipend changes to the June 2023 Synod. This year's report, due to the Synod being held in October 2024 will contain information on the 2024 Stipends and will also contain the 2025 Stipends information for affirmation. The Synod Standing Committee will approve the 2025 Minimum Stipends and Allowances Schedule at its 26 September meeting.

3.1 2024 Minimum Stipend

A challenge for setting the 2024 stipend and allowances are the continued impacts that the COVID-19 global pandemic has had on the fundamental operation of our economy. The increasing cost of living was another major factor to be addressed. This means we needed to be very careful about relying on historical metrics. These factors have impacted the capacity of some congregation members to contribute and hence, has impacted churches financial position.

Among significant factors considered were that in 2023, CPI and inflation were rising, but it was forecast to moderate. Real wages were decreasing.

The challenge of recommending any increase of stipend and allowances is what level of increase can congregations afford? However, there is also a justice issue - if we don't increase close to or line with inflation and CPI, we contribute towards a difficult financial situation for recipients. It was recommended that the minimum stipend be increased in 2024 to \$66,134.00 per annum. This is an increase of 3.5 % from the 2023 level.

3.2 2025 Minimum Stipend

During 2024 inflation has eased and is lower than 2023. Employment is also high and productivity is poor. Cost of labour remains high. Considering all factors including comparisons with other synods and reflecting on congregations' ability to pay, it was recommended that the minimum stipend be increased in 2025 to \$68,250.00 per annum. This is an increase of 3.2% from the 2024 level.

3.3 Accommodation Allowance

All ministry agents in placement are entitled to provision of accommodation, whether by provision of an appropriate manse or an accommodation allowance. Housing costs including rental have risen sharply in the past few years.

For 2024, it was recommended that the accommodation allowance be increased by 6% to \$19,343.00.

For 2025, it was recommended that the accommodation allowance be increased by 5% to \$20,310.00.

3.4 Professional Development Allowance

Professional Development Allowance is payable to ministry agents in placement.

For 2024, it was recommended that the professional development allowance be increased by 3.5%.

For 2025, it was recommended that the professional development allowance be increased by 5.0%.

3.5 Candidates Resource Allowance

A resource allowance is payable to each candidate in full-time training for the ministry, with a pro-rata allowance to be paid to candidates studying part-time.

For 2024, it was recommended that the Candidates Resource allowance be increased by 3.5%.

For 2025, it was recommended that the Candidates Resource allowance be increased by 5.0%.

3.6 Motor Vehicle Allowances (Depreciation and Standing Charges)

The Motor Vehicle allowances, including fuel prices and travel, were considered by Stipends Committee. Purchase costs and availability of motor vehicles are contributing to higher associated costs.

For 2024, it was recommended that motor vehicle allowances (depreciation and standing charges) be increased by 3.5% and 4.5% respectively.

For 2025, it was recommended that motor vehicle allowances (depreciation and standing charges) be increased by 3.2% and 4.6% respectively.

3.7 Preaching Fees

In respect of preaching fees, there will be a payment of preaching fees to retired ministers, ministers who are in receipt of an annual income which is less than the minimum stipend and theological students (other than students on placement for field education) for one service or an increased amount for two or more services in one day. There will be reimbursement of travelling expenses to all preachers (including Lay Preachers) at the minimum rate of cents per kilometre plus or minus local adjustments, if any.

For 2024, it was recommended that Preaching Fees remain at \$90.00 for one service and \$150.00 for two or more services.

For 2025, it was recommended that Preaching Fees increase to \$100.00 for one service and \$150.00 for two or more services.

3.8 Travelling Fees

Motor vehicle running costs are set at the minimum rate of cents per kilometre to reimburse those ministers retired, or other persons serving the church part-time as chaplains or in other capacities for travel on church business.

For 2024, the minimum retail petrol price was recommended to be increased to \$2.00 per litre.

For 2025, it was recommended that the minimum retail petrol price remain at \$2.00 per litre.

Where the minimum retail price of petrol in the locality, varies from that set per litre, the minimum base rates are to be increased or decreased by 0.12 cents per kilometre for every 1 cent per litre that the local price exceeds or is less than that set per litre.

For 2024, it was recommended that travelling costs when using own vehicle and receiving depreciation and standing charges be increased to 25.83 cents per kilometre and for leased vehicles the rate be 16.18 cents per kilometre. For persons using own vehicle and NOT receiving depreciation and standing charges it was recommended that the travelling rate be 65.21 cents per kilometre. This is an increase in the order of 5% above 2023 rates.

For 2025, it was recommended that these rates do not change.

3.9 Ministers Benefit Fund

There will be an annual contribution, paid monthly by the respective body, to the Ministers Benefit Fund for each minister in a Congregation(s), Presbytery, Synod, Assembly or other approved placement. The Ministers Benefit Fund continues to provide assistance to Ministers, congregations and other appointing bodies for Ministers impacted by sickness, work place injury and/or compassionate grounds. The contribution has for the past several years remained constant in the order of 4% of the minimum stipend. This level of contribution is recommended for 2024 and 2025.

3.10 Remote Ministry Allowance

A remote/rural ministry allowance is payable to ministers and Frontier Services patrols residing in a location defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS Review on Remoteness 2001) as 'moderately accessible', 'remote' or 'very remote'.

For 2024, it was recommended that remote ministry allowances be increased by 3.5%

For 2025, it was recommended that remote ministry allowances be increased by 3.2%

3.11 Travel Equalisation

There will be a set payment per annum by the Congregation(s) or other Appointing Body to the Motor Vehicle Travel Equalisation Scheme in respect of each ministry agent. The funds held in the Travel Equalisation Fund have been shared across the three presbyteries and the synod to reimburse ministers and members travelling to presbytery and synod meetings, including JNCs, Placements, PRC, Presbytery or Synod Standing Committee, or other synod or presbytery committees. Due to the

high balance in the fund, payments into the fund from congregations were suspended in 2024 and it is recommended that payments again been suspended in 2025.

3.12 Beneficiary Fund

This fund has for several years been managed by Mercer Super Trust. Ordained Ministers can elect to be members of this fund or another superannuation fund of their choice. Contributions are based as percentages of the notional stipend. Employing bodies and Ministers both contribute.

As advised at the 2015 annual meeting the Notional Stipend is now declared to align with the fiscal year. The SA Synod meeting approved that the Notional Stipend and accompanying Beneficiary Fund contribution levels declared by 1 July each year not be applied until 1 January the following year.

Based on full time employment the 2024 superannuation contribution by employing bodies is \$9,816.00 with a minister's annual contribution being \$3,924.00.

Please see:

- **ATTACHMENT 1 2024 Minimum Stipends & Allowances Schedule A**
- **ATTACHMENT 2 2025 Minimum Stipends & Allowances Schedule A**

4. Recommendations

The above recommendations for 2024 were incorporated into Schedule A 2024 and presented to Synod Standing Committee on 22nd September 2023.

The Synod Standing Committee (by consensus) RESOLVED to:

1. APPROVE the 2024 minimum Stipend and Allowances as detailed in Schedule A 2024.
SSC23.197

The above recommendations for 2025 were incorporated into Schedule A 2025 and presented to Synod Standing Committee on 26th September 2024.

The Synod Standing Committee resolved to:

2. APPROVE 2025 Schedule A Minimum Ministerial Stipend, Allowances and Charges as detailed in Schedule A 2025.

Whilst the time has passed to affirm the 2024 Stipends schedule, it is appropriate for the Synod to affirm the 2025 Stipends Schedule.

PROPOSAL:

That the Synod resolves to:

AFFIRM the decision of Synod Standing Committee on 26 September 2024 to APPROVE the 2025 minimum Stipends and Allowances Schedule A as found in Attachment 2.

.

5. Summary Remarks

South Australia has adopted a more “flexible” approach to the use of stipend packaging for tax purposes in that persons can elect to have up to **50% of the minimum stipend** plus 100% of allowances to be paid into a Minister’s Fringe Benefit Account (FBA). This can mean that Minister’s filling placements of up to .5FTE stipend can have the entire stipend they receive plus 100% of all allowances paid into an FBA. This has the capacity for both full and part-time placements, to result in the real difference in “usable” (post-tax) stipend and allowances between the SA Synod and others is much less. It should be noted that this is based upon existing FBT laws and the practices adopted in other Synods. These may change and caution should be exercised in placing longer term reliance upon the FBT arrangements in this context.

Brian Hern

Chairperson, on behalf of SA Synod Stipends Committee

20 September 2024



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

Ministers Stipend, Allowances & Charges
SCHEDULE A commencing 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

	<i>Item</i>	<i>\$ per year</i>	<i>\$ per quarter</i>	<i>\$ per month</i>	<i>\$ per f/night</i>	<i>\$ per week</i>
	Contributions					
A.1	Minimum Stipend	\$66,134.00	\$16,533.50	\$5,511.17	\$2,543.62	\$1,271.81
A.2	Accommodation Allowance	\$19,343.00	\$4,835.75	\$1,611.92	\$743.96	\$371.98
A.3	Professional Development	\$2,146.00	\$536.50	\$178.83	\$82.54	\$41.27
A.4	Candidates Resources Allowance	\$2,490.00	\$622.50	\$207.50	\$95.77	\$47.88
A.5	Beneficiary Fund or Superannuation	\$9,816.00	\$2,454.00	\$818.00	\$377.54	\$188.77
A.6	MV Depreciation	\$6,956.00	\$1,739.00	\$579.67	\$267.54	\$133.77
A.7	MV Standing Charges	\$3,827.00	\$956.75	\$318.92	\$147.19	\$73.60
A.8	MV Leasing Charges	As specified - depending on vehicle choice etc.				
A.9	Travelling Own vehicle	25.83 cents per kilometre				
A.10	Travelling Leased Vehicle	16.18 cents per kilometre				
A.11	Travelling Retired Ministers / Part Time / Lay Persons / Lay Preachers	65.21 cents per kilometre				
A.12	Set Minimum Retail Petrol Price	\$2.00 per litre				
A.13	Preaching Fees One Service	\$90.00				
A.14	Preaching Fees two or more services	\$150.00				
A.15	MV Travel Equalisation	suspended	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
A.16	Ministers Benefit Fund	\$2,645.00	\$661.25	\$220.42	\$101.73	\$50.87
A.17	Long Service Leave	\$2,166.00	\$541.50	\$180.50	\$83.31	\$41.65
A.18	Remote Allowance / Moderately Accessible	\$1,823.00	\$455.75	\$151.92	\$70.12	\$35.06
A.19	Remote Allowance/Remote	\$2,733.00	\$683.25	\$227.75	\$105.12	\$52.56
A.20	Remote Allowance/Very Remote	\$3,647.00	\$911.75	\$303.92	\$140.27	\$70.13
	Ministers Contributions					
A.21	MV Leasing Charges	As specified - depending on vehicle choice etc.				
A.22	Beneficiary Fund / Superannuation	\$3,924.00	\$981.00	\$327.00	\$150.92	\$75.46

The fortnightly rates are based on 26 pays per year. If there are 27 pays in the year, revised pay rates will need to be calculated.

Ministers Stipend, Allowances & Charges
SCHEDULE A commencing 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025

	<i>Item</i>	<i>\$ per year</i>	<i>\$ per quarter</i>	<i>\$ per month</i>	<i>\$ per f/night</i>	<i>\$ per week</i>
	Contributions					
A.1	Minimum Stipend	\$68,250.00	\$17,062.50	\$5,687.50	\$2,625.00	\$1,312.50
A.2	Accommodation Allowance	\$20,310.00	\$5,077.50	\$1,692.50	\$781.15	\$390.58
A.3	Professional Development	\$2,253.00	\$563.25	\$187.75	\$86.65	\$43.33
A.4	Candidates Resources Allowance	\$2,615.00	\$653.75	\$217.92	\$100.58	\$50.29
A.5	Beneficiary Fund or Superannuation	\$10,188.00	\$2,547.00	\$818.00	\$391.85	\$195.92
A.6	MV Depreciation	\$7,179.00	\$1,794.75	\$598.25	\$276.12	\$138.06
A.7	MV Standing Charges	\$4,003.00	\$1,000.75	\$333.58	\$153.96	\$76.98
A.8	MV Leasing Charges	As specified - depending on vehicle choice etc.				
A.9	Travelling Own vehicle	25.83 cents per kilometre				
A.10	Travelling Leased Vehicle	16.18 cents per kilometre				
A.11	Travelling Retired Ministers / Part Time / Lay Persons / Lay Preachers	65.21 cents per kilometre				
A.12	Set Minimum Retail Petrol Price	\$2.00 per litre				
A.13	Preaching Fees One Service	\$100.00				
A.14	Preaching Fees two or more services	\$150.00				
A.15	MV Travel Equalisation	suspended	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
A.16	Ministers Benefit Fund	\$2,730.00	\$682.50	\$227.50	\$105.00	\$52.50
A.17	Long Service Leave	\$2,235.00	\$558.75	\$186.25	\$85.96	\$42.98
A.18	Remote Allowance / Moderately Accessible	\$1,881.00	\$470.25	\$156.75	\$72.35	\$36.17
A.19	Remote Allowance/Remote	\$2,820.00	\$705.00	\$235.00	\$108.46	\$54.23
A.20	Remote Allowance/Very Remote	\$3,764.00	\$941.00	\$313.67	\$144.77	\$72.38
	Ministers Contributions					
A.21	MV Leasing Charges	As specified - depending on vehicle choice etc.				
A.22	Beneficiary Fund / Superannuation	\$4,080.00	\$1,020.00	\$340.00	\$156.92	\$78.46

??Travel adjustment of 0.12 cents per km for every 1 cent variation in fuel price.

The fortnightly rates are based on 26 pays per year. If there are 27 pays in the year, revised pay rates will need to be calculated.