

GRP – Policy for Property and Assets

Title	GRP – Policy for Property
Creation Date	May 2024
Version	V1.0
Approved by	Georges River Presbytery
Approval date	18 May 2024
Last Revised	
Next Review due	18 May 2025



Rationale

This outlines the policy Georges River Presbytery holds in relation to property, its use and its disposal or transference.¹

Objective

To ensure that all church buildings have a missional purpose to support the Congregation's or Presbytery's Mission Plan. This may be,

1. direct use, for example a church or church hall is directly used for worship, or programs such as study or fellowship groups.
2. missional use in outreach to the community, for example leasing the hall on an hourly basis to community groups with values similar to the UCA at a lesser rate² than for commercial use.
3. for financial gain where this income will be used to fund the Congregation's or Presbytery's missional purpose or for the mission of the wider church. In this case the property must be leased at competitive market rates.

Assumptions

- The Presbytery is Georges River Presbytery.
- The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (NSW) has ownership of all church properties.
- The Presbytery and some Congregations have beneficial stewardship of some properties (known as the responsible Presbytery or Congregation).
- This policy applies to all property whether it is Presbytery or a Congregation that has beneficial stewardship over it.

Manses

The primary purpose for a manse is to house a minister. This purpose will always take priority over any other.

The Minister or Deacon³ in placement for the responsible Congregation, will have priority for its use. The Presbytery may request the use of a manse which is not used for this primary purpose, to house another Minister or Deacon. In this case the Congregation using the Manse will pay the Responsible Congregation the value of the current housing allowance. The responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the Manse will remain with the Congregation which has the official responsibility. If

¹ Synod is currently reviewing its direction regarding usage of property and this document may be updated to align with this new direction.

² This rate must be similar to that charged for the use of a local council community hall

³ Other Ministry Agents eg Pastors do not qualify for living accommodation to be part of their remuneration



a major expense is required, eg to replace the roof, the Responsible Congregation and the Congregation whose Ministry agent is living in it will negotiate a fair arrangement.

In the following circumstances, the manse may be leased out:

- If there is no Minister or Deacon in placement for the responsible Congregation or if the Minister or Deacon in placement chooses to live in their own house,

and

- if the Presbytery has no use for it in the foreseeable future.

Any proposed leasing of a Manse needs to be arranged in consultation with Presbytery and with its approval via the Property Committee. Synod Property Services also needs to give approval. Such leases will be at market rates. The Presbytery may request that the manse be made available for another Minister. (Separate procedure TBA)

Churches, Church Halls, and other Church Buildings

Congregations are encouraged to engage with Presbytery via the Property Committee on all aspects of church property usage, and are required to, if any of the following is proposed:

- sale of property,
- purchase of property
- rental of houses
- rental of all or part of a church building for exclusive use to a third-party including *Uniting*.

If a Congregation closes, then the beneficial stewardship of the buildings and all assets, including financial assets, will revert to the Presbytery.

Use of Church Buildings by Third Party Organisations

Church buildings are available for hire by third party organisations with the following arrangements in place (see Procedure):

- all third-party organisations must hold current Public Liability Insurance
- for one-off use, insurance can be organised through Synod⁴. It is recommended to charge a fee of \$50 for this, which is kept by the Congregation or Presbytery
- the User Agreement, issued by Property Services, is completed and signed⁵

⁴ See procedure

⁵ See procedure



- the main consideration, when setting the fee structure, is to maximise funds to facilitate the Congregation's or Presbytery's own mission, rather than to subsidise other organisations' mission by providing cheap accommodation
 - the agreed hourly rate is to be on par with other community hall rates when it is for community use and at competitive rates if the use is commercial. Lower rates are not acceptable unless the activity undertaken **directly** supports or enhances the Mission of the Presbytery or Congregation.
 - small discounts may be considered to encourage the retention of hall-hirers
- Presbytery is to be consulted through the Property Committee if exclusive use of a building or part of a building for a third party (including *Uniting*) is being considered by a Congregation or if an agreement requires renewal.

Under Utilised Property Assets

If a Church building of any kind ceases to be well used for the mission of the church, then an alternative use will need to be considered. This should be discussed with the Presbytery in relation to the Mission Plan of the Congregation.

Signage

Presbytery is currently reviewing all signage with the intention of enhancing the presence of Uniting Churches in the Georges River Presbytery and developing a recognisable brand across the region.

Selling Property

If a Congregation is considering selling a Church building, the Presbytery should be consulted. (see **Procedure for Consideration of Selling Property** and **Procedure for Selling Property**)

Presbytery will consider selling a property in some or all of the following situations:

- there is little or no local Uniting Church presence.
- an alternative building is intended be purchased with the proceeds of the sale.
- the Mission Plan of the Presbytery or Congregation will be enhanced by the sale.

Keys to Property

All Congregations and the Presbytery will maintain a Key Register which records the name and contact details of all those who hold keys to church property. It is



reasonable and desirable to request a refundable deposit from the keyholder when keys are issued.

Portable Assets

Examples of portable assets are: data projectors, sound equipment, musical instruments, cameras etc. Church Councils may determine their own policy in regard to portable items but are encouraged to adopt a similar policy to this one.

Assets Register

An Assets Register is kept which details the:

- Item identification
- Serial number
- purchase price
- date of purchase
- warranty expiry date
- depreciation schedule⁶
- name of the person who will take responsibility for storing and lending

Lending Portable Items

Items which are delicate and / or require instructions in handling and operations require borrowers to have a "licence". The Presbytery may decide that a usage fee is required and will determine the amount. The Presbytery will also determine the extent of the recompense required if an item is damaged while being borrowed. The Presbytery will authorise a person to be responsible for monitoring the use of and issuing the licence for each item. This licence will be assigned to those who have:

- been trained in the safe operation and handling of the item
- agreed to take responsibility for the item whilst in their care
- understood the potential impact of non-adherence to the proper care of the item
- agreed to the terms of borrowing

The Presbytery will maintain a lending register which records:

- the name, contact details and signature of the authorised borrower
- event / location where the item will be used
- date borrowed
- expected date of return
- actual date returned
- name of the (Presbytery) person accepting the return of the item

⁶ Note the cut-off value for being depreciated within 12 months

