



Synod Ethical Investment Policy

POL-0005

Statement

The Christian tradition asserts that all of life and all of creation begins as an act of the Creator. Our God – Father, Son, and Spirit – lovingly creates the world and it is good. For thousands of years, and starting with the Jewish people, this affirmation has incorporated an understanding of humankind's calling into stewardship (Genesis 2:14, Matthew 25:14-30). History has shown humanity to have enormous power and influence within this created realm, and with such power, the people of God are called to act with love and justice towards all of God's creation. This calling should be reflected in all expressions of the church, including financial management. The church will therefore seek to invest resources in areas that affirm the dignity of human life, a love for God's creation, and a desire for society to reflect the mercy, justice, and equality for all proclaimed in Christ. Recognising the complexities of the global economy, the Church will likewise avoid resourcing sectors that perpetuate injustice and ignore the urgency faced by the current ecological crisis. Living out this calling will require discernment, wisdom, and a commitment to researching and evaluating the often ambiguous investment opportunities available. And yet our tradition calls us to a posture such as this, to be pilgrims on the way to a future in where God's love and justice will truly reign.

The Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod wishes to ensure that all its investment decisions are made having regard to the values expressed above, and the exercise of good financial stewardship.

Scope

This policy applies to all Synod, presbytery and congregational entities that have investment assets and report to the Synod.

Compliance is achieved through adherence to the Principles.

Principles

In examining investments, agencies of the Uniting Church take into account unacceptable levels of social injury that may result from activities which:

- 1 Denigrate or hold up to ridicule, individuals or groups in the community in a manner inconsistent with the dignity of the person as affirmed in the Christian faith; express racist, sexist, or ethnic slurs; or promote discrimination, fear or hatred.
- 2 Contribute to the serious inhibition of human rights (in Australia or overseas).
- 3 Entice people into financial over-commitment.
- 4 Exploit people through unfair housing arrangements.
- 5 Exploit people by providing wages and working conditions, which are significantly below the accepted norms in the society in which the activity is undertaken.
- 6 Are known not to comply with the appropriate Australian Regulations regarding environmental and/or pollution control, or, in the international context, do not comply with accepted international minimum standards for environmental and/or pollution control.



- 7 Where a significant (as defined) activity is dependent upon the destruction or wastage of non-renewable resources, for which viable alternatives exist and are generally accepted as feasible by the community.
- 8 Involves substantial change to the environment that is not, or proposed to be, made good at the conclusion of the activity.
- 9 Create goods or services that will have harmful effects on humans and the environment and such harmful effects cannot be avoided by prudent and practical controls.
- 10 Damage the health of human beings except when used within the guidelines of the producer and/or accepted community standards.
- 11 Result in the discrimination in employment or education, on the basis of race or sex.
- 12 Fraudulently market or deceitfully advertise the products or activities.
- 13 Participate in, enable or encourage the illegal evasion of the payment of taxes.
- 14 Create or perpetuate excessive reliance on militarism.
- 15 Engage in the manufacture of armaments or means of mass destruction, other than those that would reasonably be required in internationally accepted law enforcement.

Classes of Investment

- 1 **Positive Investments:** Investments in entities that promote human welfare, dignity and respect, and for the general good. Examples include companies that produce goods or services that enhance the health and welfare of individuals and communities, companies that produce goods or services that preserve the environment.
- 2 **Neutral Investments:** The majority of investments will be in companies that are considered to be neutral in terms of the positive and negative screens. Such investments will be made on the basis of investment criteria that will assist us to exercise good stewardship and provide a reliable source of income and capital growth to the Church. The wise use of resources is, in itself, an ethical outcome.
- 3 **Negative Investments:** Investments in entities whose products, services or practices cause or perpetuate injustice and suffering, infringe human rights or cause unacceptable damage to the natural environment or any other issues which do not conform with the Principles. Examples include industries involved with armaments, uranium, gambling, alcohol, tobacco and pornography. Investment in entities, which engage in unacceptable practices in areas such as occupational health and safety and environmental management or support oppressive regimes.

It is recognised that there will be occasions when companies inadvertently breach some of the Principles and where genuine efforts are made to rectify the breaches. Investments will not generally be prohibited in an entity where a breach of the Principles, in relation to its products or services, constitutes no more than 5% of the entity's activities; the breach may be balanced by other positive actions. It is acknowledge that decisions will always be complex involving a balance between positive and negative factors.

Compliance and Monitoring

- 1 The Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod will, through the Finance Investment and Property Board, oversight the compliance of all Synod bodies with this policy.



- 2 The Finance Investment and Property Board will report to the Synod in Session on compliance with the policy, detailing companies and other entities that were considered for investment but were excluded on account of the implementation of this policy.

Dictionary

Term	Meaning
Queensland Synod	Means the work and activities of the Uniting Church in Australia performed within the bounds of the Queensland Synod.
Policy	The principles by which decisions are made within the Synod
Guideline	The principles by which decisions may be made within the Synod
Procedure	The actions by which a policy and/or a guideline are carried out or administered.

References & Related Documents

- The Uniting Church in Australia Regulations 2012
- The Uniting Church in Australia Queensland Synod By-laws
- Synod of Queensland Ethical Investment Procedures
- Synod of Queensland Treasury Policy
- Synod of Queensland New Loans Policy
- Synod of New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory Ethical Investment Principles and Procedures
- Synod of New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory Excluded Investment List
- Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Ethical Investment Policy
- Synod of South Australia Ethical Investment Policy

Revisions & Reviews

#	Date	Reason	Author / Reviewer	Approved
1.0	04.09.14	Review of existing Ethical Investments Procedures	R Packer / FIP Board	SSC (#14.191)
DUE	04.09.16	Review cycle – 2 years		