



4 April 2023

Responsible Body Officer
Cc Presbytery Secretary
Via email

Dear Responsible Body Officer

RE: Mission Development Fund (MDF) Policy – Implications update

Firstly, let me thank you for your continued commitment to the Uniting Church through your important efforts to manage the Church's assets. Without your ongoing work the Church simply can't function. I am writing to you because the Office of the Synod administers the Mission Development Fund (MDF) Policy and Fund on behalf of the whole church.

The purpose of this letter is to alert you to a number of matters that are likely to require your attention in relation to the balance in the MDF that is to the benefit of your responsible body.

The following is an extract from the MDF policy as a reminder as to the purpose and scope of the MDF:

Purpose

The Mission Development Fund (MDF) will be a sustainable resource for long term church growth and development. It will be used for capital and development opportunities which provide growth in Congregations, Presbyteries, and the Synod in order to promote the mission of the church. (Reg 4.8.1(c)(i)).

Scope

The intent is to ensure that the funds collected and managed in this Fund are properly aligned to contemporary mission strategy and priorities across all Presbyteries in the Queensland Synod (but not agencies and schools).

This letter is a follow up from the significant 'pack of information' that your responsible body received in June 2022. The Synod Website contains a template copy of that letter and material that was sent out in 2022 at [Mission Development Fund \(MDF\) - Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod \(ucaqld.com.au\)](https://ucaqld.com.au)

You will recall that at the last Synod in Session a change was made to the MDF policy which includes a transition period of 18 months from when the Policy was approved which means the transition period expires at Synod October 2023. It is likely you will need to act soon if you haven't already done so!

What does this mean for you?

As a responsible body with an MDF balance you have until end October 2023 to write a missional plan that covers what you are planning to do with the funds in the MDF (in line with the policy). This plan will need to be approved by your Presbytery, if you are a congregation, or approved by the Synod (FIP Board) if you are a Presbytery.



Extract from the MDF Policy

9. Transitional provisions

Upon the adoption of this policy, the Synod Property Board will advise the Presbytery or relevant entity of any funds that has been or will have been held in the MDF for a period of 7 years in the next 18 months.

This was advised in the June 2022 letter. More than half of the funds in the MDF will be greater than 7 years in the Fund by end October 2023 - so if you haven't taken any action since June 2022, assume that a missional plan is required, unless you know that property sold was sold less than 7 years ago.

That Presbytery or relevant entity shall consult with the responsible body to determine if a missional plan exists. If at the conclusion of a period of 18 months after the adoption of this policy, no missional plan exists for those funds, then the Synod Property Board shall transfer the relevant funds, within the MDF, to the Presbytery or relevant entity for their use as the responsible body.

What if a responsible body does not complete a missional plan or it is not approved by end October 2023?

- The funds remain in the MDF, but the responsible body for the funds change. If the previous responsible body was a congregation, the new responsible body will be the relevant Presbytery. If the previous responsible body was a Presbytery, the new responsible body will be the Synod.

What if a responsible body doesn't want to complete a missional plan?

There are a number of options:

- Clause 8 of the policy states:
Any responsible body may transfer the funds held in the MDF on its behalf, to any other responsible body at any time - i.e. gift the balance;

Please make sure you send the appropriate minute to pres.accounts@ucaqld.com.au and to your Presbytery so the change can be made

- Refer to the first point in this section - if a plan is not completed - the responsible body change will be made in late 2023
- Apply to use the funds now - refer to the website link above for the templates to complete. Remember that the MDF is a capital fund (funded by previous sale of property) and can only be spent on specific uses.

What should a missional plan look like?

We are not going to be prescriptive about this, but make the following points:

- Ideally, each responsible body should have a missional plan overall, and the plan around using the MDF funds form part of the overall plan;
- Depending on the amount involved, some Presbyteries may accept a plan that is focussed on the use of MDF (as long as the use complies with the policy). Talk to your Presbytery to understand what is appropriate;
- Please bear in mind that the funds only need a compliant and approved plan by the end of October 2023 - they don't need to be spent by October 2023;
- Also note that congregations can work with other congregations and/or the Presbytery to develop plans and maybe even pool MDF accounts. We are all stewards of the funds and property so the best use maybe to allow some other responsible body to plan / use the funds

What is definitely not acceptable under the policy? (i.e. won't be approved as a plan)

One of the reasons that the Synod in Session was asked to approve a new policy is that some responsible bodies were selling property, earning an interest return and withdrawing the interest for operational purposes. This is considered reasonable for a period of time to allow the responsible body to plan for the use of capital funds,



but it was never intended that this should be the 'end use'. Therefore, a period of 7 years was set as a reasonable time for developing a plan.

To be clear, if the funds from previous sale of property have been in the MDF for more than 7 years (at October 2023) the proposed missional use cannot be – 'leave the funds in UCIS so the responsible body can benefit from the interest earned on an ongoing basis'.

Where can I go for help?

If you are a congregational representative, you are always encouraged to discuss matters with your Presbytery first.

If you wish to discuss matters with someone at Synod please send an email to property@ucaqld.com.au and the relevant staff member will get back to you.

The staff that may be able to assist you are:

Karin Wiedemann - Strategic Property Manager

- Property advice – across the Synod
- Property Development – especially process and external experts that you should consider using
- Heritage matters

Justin Greenway - Property and Assets officer

- Property advice
- Property operations matters
- Property acquisitions and disposals
- Leasing

Rachelle Hynds - Synod Records Registrar

- Property Registry and database - we maintain records that the Property Trust (legal entity) is required to maintain
- Property advice - across the Synod
- Rachelle can also help you with the 1-page agreement to document your wish to gift/transfer your MDF balance to another responsible body

Steve Drinkall – Mission Engagement Manager

- Advice about missional planning

If you wish to explore potential enterprises or businesses, please contact Stuart Dempster (Executive Director Business Enterprises and Innovation) in the first instance - stuart.dempster@ucaqld.com.au

If you have been approved to spend MDF funds and wish to understand the process more or have queries on the finance aspects, please contact Rachael Galland or Maria Naumann at pres.accounts@ucaqld.com.au

Yours sincerely

Peter Cranna
Secretary - The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (Q.)