



**THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA**

PROPERTY BOARD

THE DESIGN, EQUIPPING AND FURNISHING OF MANSES

FOREWORD:

In planning the construction or purchase of a new manse, it is essential that serious consideration be given to a number of fundamentals affecting the construction, design, layout and equipping of the building. This document seeks to give guidance in assessing these fundamentals in order to provide the basic and minimum requirements necessary for an acceptable standard of accommodation.

The standards mentioned herein are not intended to be absolute or restrictive. Where dimensions are quoted as “minimum”, they are subject to discretionary variations to suit special cases, particularly those involving purchase of existing dwellings. However it is expected that no particular dwelling should be considered suitable unless a very large percentage of the specified basic requirements and dimensions are complied with. The standards themselves are intended to be updated periodically.

Although this document has been prepared primarily to assist parishes, the criteria which it contains should be considered applicable also to Synod staff residences.

Congregations should consult with the Property Board at the preliminary stages of design, or when planning to purchase or alter a manse.

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1. PLANNING GUIDELINES

1.1 Introduction

The manse is different from a normal house and must be capable of performing the dual functions:

- i) of accommodating for the normal needs of an average family; and,
- ii) providing for the administrative and pastoral needs of the minister.

1.2 Function

In providing this dual function, care must be taken to protect the privacy of both the minister's family and that of the visitor to the minister.

This principle can be obtained by providing the study with either:

- i) its own clearly marked direct external entry or,
- ii) access through the main entry in a way that is separated from the family.

Ideally the entry from the street needs to be visually distinct from the entrance used by the family.

Whilst study privacy is important, the need for its occupant to be able to oversee the family at times, especially young families, should not be overlooked.

1.3 Manse Family

Manse families will vary in size. It is important that the home be sufficient in size to accommodate large families and be adaptable to the varying needs of successive occupants, including the need to provide hospitality for visitors and emergency accommodation.

1.4 Location

A manse should be situated in a location convenient to the Church complex.

If it is adjacent, there is the danger the minister and their family may be placed in the position of custodians or caretakers of the property. In which case a sensitive arrangement needs to be made to protect the privacy and freedom of the manse family.

A site chosen away from the Church complex should be within easy walking distance of the Church and where possible, convenient to shops, schools, public transport, and other services.

1.5 Services

It should be capable of simple connection to all essential services, water supply, power, and sewerage, or where these are not be available, economical alternatives should be made available.

1.6 Site

In planning the site, the positioning of the house, the shape of the garden and surrounds all need to be designed and taken as an interacting whole.

Site analysis needs to consider the direction of the sun, the prevailing winds and the view. Privacy considerations need to be considered as well as problems associated with overshadowing adjoining buildings or trees.

The siting of the building needs to take into consideration *passive solar efficiency*. This will provide better quality of life and long term economics for manse families. (Further information on passive solar principles can be obtained from the Property Services Unit).

It needs to be well drained and checked with the local authorities for any known disabilities, such as unstable foundations, susceptibility to flooding, contamination, etc.

1.7 Aspect

To ensure maximum comfort and conditions, manses should be planned (or chosen) with major rooms orientated to the north to take advantage of winter sun and to preclude excessive summer sun penetration. In such cases it may be advantageous to have the frontage facing west, so that the garage/car entry may act as a protection from cold westerly winds.

The passive solar principles including effective cross ventilation need to be considered.

1.8 Materials

Materials of construction should be chosen as far as possible, to ensure thermal efficiency. This may be obtained either through lightweight framing with adequate insulation, or heavy masonry with high thermal mass. Significant economies are possible when consideration is given to how the sun is made use of in winter and shaded in summer.

Thought needs to be given to how finishing costs can be reduced and maintenance minimised in the long term.

1.9 Universal Access

All entrances and doorways need to provide for the possibility of wheelchairs, pram/strollers, including appropriately positioned handrails, especially in bathrooms and entrances. This is for the benefit of both members of the manse family and visitors.

It is to be noted that universal access not only focuses on people with permanent disabilities, but also applies to people who are suffering temporary disabilities, such as ankle, leg, arm or back injuries. Older people who have no obvious disability, but who are unsteady on their feet need also to be considered.

It is wise to consider universal standards at the planning stage. Many standard fittings, such as doors, already meet such standards and hence do not increase costs.

Consideration needs to be given to how all weather access can be obtained between the car and the house.

2. BASIC ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS

2.1 The following spaces and areas are considered the desirable minimum basic requirements for manses. This applies whether the homes are to be designed and constructed or purchased and adapted.

2.2 Main Entry

Should be weatherproofed. See 1.2. above for the details regarding distinctive entrances.

All entrances need to minimise steps and provide appropriate handrails for universal access, including wheelchair access.

Letterbox and street numbers need to be clearly visible.

2.3 Study

Preferably not less than 14 sq. m (150 sq. ft.). Fitted with bookshelves not less than 20 lin. metres preferably adjustable in height.

The study needs to be accessed from the hall or passage and where possible, direct access to entry. Consideration could be given for a waiting area in the hallway or lounge, to ensure a degree of privacy for the family and visitors to the study. This may require another entry/exit to the study.

It needs to be sound proofed including the ceiling and provide acoustic and visual privacy for the family and visitors.

Ready access to the lounge as a venue for larger meetings.

The telephone needs an extension to the main part of the house. An additional line may be advisable to cater for fax and e-mail.

Desk or bench space needs to be large enough for a computer, fax, telephone (including sufficient power outlets) and writing area. Sufficient space needs to be given for a four-drawer filing cabinet.

The study may be used for small meetings, so additional chair space needs to be available.

Provide for instant warmth.

Natural lighting a must.

2.4 Additional Toilet Facility for the Study

W.C. & small basin in separate compartment.

Ideally one toilet to be readily available from entry and/or study for visitors without invading the privacy of the family.

2.5 Lounge Room/Dining Room

Preferably not less than 20 sq.m (215 sq. ft.) measured clear of space for dining.

Conveniently located relative to front entry, dining and kitchen areas. Access to an outdoor living area is favoured.

20 sq.m is an absolute minimum, providing adequate space for large families and the occasional meeting area. Aspect should be north or north east, at the western end of the building, but avoiding west facing windows, unless extra expense for shading is contemplated.

2.6 Dining Room

An area not less than 10 sq. m (110 sq. ft.). This is optional and maybe an extension of the Lounge Room. Direct access should be provided to the kitchen.

Planning should ensure that the required number of people can be seated, with adequate room for movement behind the diners. Realistic storage space will also be needed.

Dining rooms normally face north, though they may be regarded as essentially night living areas.

2.7 Family Room

Not less than 15 sq. m.

With access to the garden or private outdoor area and direct access to kitchen. Aspect to north to get maximum winter sun. It may benefit from access to a southerly shade area in hot summer. This may offer cross ventilation if it occupies the whole width of the house.

It may need to be larger, if it is also to accommodate through traffic. Avoid having too many doors opening on to the space as this will limit the placement of furniture.

2.8 Kitchen

Preferably not less than 10 sq. m. (110 sq. ft.). Ample built-in bench cupboards with laminated plastic or similar top surfaces and splashbacks with stainless steel sink (preferably double bowl). Sufficient overhead cupboards and preferably a pantry type food storage cupboard. Sufficient space to accept a refrigerator, deep freeze (could be in the laundry), dishwasher and microwave. Stove to be provided. (ref.3.3) Hygienic provision for the handling of recycling and disposal of garbage.

The room should not be an extension of living and dining areas; but may open to family room. It should not face west, unless effectively screened.

It should be well ventilated. An exhaust fan, with effective fly proofing should be provided, preferably above the stove area.

Good lighting below cupboards is essential over benches and stoves. Fluorescent fittings are recommended. Plenty of power points, at least two double outlets for each run of bench.

It is recommended that taps be of the ceramic disc type, either lever operated mixers or quarter turn taps.

Where garbage, compost material and recycling are stored in a cupboard, it needs ventilation.

Ready access should be provided to laundry area and to alternative entry.

It is advised that kitchen colour patterns be neutral, with repaintable surfaces.

2.9 Main Bedroom

Preferably not less than 14 sq. m (150 sq. ft.) inclusive of built-in robes or areas for same. Built-in robes to be provided not less than 2m. long x 600 mm. deep.

The bedroom to be capable of accommodating one king/queen size or two single beds and a dressing table. In the case of single beds, there needs to be sufficient space for them to be placed centrally with access on both sides.

Conveniently located relative to bathroom and toilet facilities, or adjoining bathroom (ensuite).

Preferably at the eastern end of the building for a north facing building. A western aspect should be avoided, but if unavoidable, planting of appropriate trees and shrubs needs to be considered. Sun blinds are costly and expensive to maintain.

There may be a conflict when the front of the house faces east. Bedrooms should not be at the front for privacy reasons. However, creative design should be able to solve the dilemma.

2.10 Second & Two other Bedrooms

Second bedroom preferably not less than 14 sq. m (150 sq. ft.). Other bedrooms preferably not less than 11 sq. m. (120 sq. ft.). Areas stated inclusive of built-in robes or area for same.

Preferably they need to be at the eastern end of the house to obtain morning sun and avoid late afternoon sun in the summer.

Each room needs to be capable of accommodating two single beds, built in robes, a chest of drawers and a study table or bench.

Conveniently located relative to main bedroom and to bathroom and toilet facilities. If possible avoid using the family room as the means of access to toilet/bathroom.

Remember that these may also be guest rooms.

2.11 Main Bathroom and Toilet

Separate compartments for bath/basin, Toilet, Shower. Sufficient in size to contain full size bath, shower facilities (at least over bath, but preferably as a separate room), and a wash basin. Storage cabinet, mirror and power outlet. Towel rails min. 3 metres total length.

Bathroom to take a full sized bath with basin, (preferably vanity type) storage cabinet, mirror and power outlet. A shower over the bath is an added advantage where there is a large family. Shower compartments to be fitted with a suitable glass screen door.

Toilet to have windows or louvres to give a free flow of air. Floors to be covered with impervious material (preferable ceramic tiles), and walls to a height of 1.8 metres. Walls around bath at least 450 mm and behind basin 300 mm to be lined with similar materials.

These compartments to be in close proximity to the bedrooms.

It is recommended that taps be of ceramic disc mixture types, especially helpful for people with restricted movement.

Bathrooms and toilets require strategically placed hand rails to cater for people with disabilities.

Exhaust fans are needed in toilet and bathroom and maybe some form of heating.

2.12 Laundry Facilities

Sufficient size to take washing machine and dryer, single trough, and if possible, ironing space and storage cupboard.

2.13 Storage Facilities

Provide for coats, linen cupboard, brooms and storage for bulk items such as suitcases, sewing machines, vacuum cleaners, floor polishers, etc.

2.14 Car Accommodation

Provide garage/carport with covered space to take at least one car but preferably two.

Highly desirable for access under cover between house and garage. Single garage and single carport have proved satisfactory.

Provide workbench and power outlet in enclosed area.

It is advisable to soundproof the house from the garage area.

Security doors (roller or tilt doors) are recommended for the car parking area. Similar security is required at the rear as well.

Consideration needs to be given for a secure access/storage of a caravan and/or trailer of average size on the property. This can be achieved through a drive through carport.

2.15 Storage Shed

Provide lock-up shed. This could be associated with the garage, provided it is secure.

To take mower, barrow, garden tools, etc. and needs a power outlet.

2.16 Outdoor Living

Where possible, outdoor living areas should be planned as an integral part of the design concept, with ready access provided from indoors. The effectiveness of the outdoor areas should be extended by providing roofed areas and privacy screens as far as possible. Areas should be sited in sheltered locations favourably oriented to summer shade and winter sun. This can be achieved by the discreet use of trees and shrubs, making use of trees to allow for winter sun.

Verandahs and patios can be used to advantage as extensions of lounge and dining room areas. Adequate fencing to protect children is necessary, especially where there are swimming pools.

Some weatherproofed external power outlets are useful.

2.17 Water Service

Water service to be extended to standpipes for connection to taps for hose in front garden, rear of house, garage/carport and rear garden where required.

Taps in remote areas away from house.

The positioning of taps needs to consider a combination drip/fixed sprinkler system using a timer.

In some areas a supplementary water tank taking water from the roof would be useful.

3. BASIC EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

3.1 The following items of equipment are the minimum requirements for manses. All equipment shall be maintained in good operating condition. Note: Solar power options.

3.2 Hot Water System

A Solar powered system with a booster should be the first consideration. Gas, electric, slow-combustion should be considered only if there are valid reasons. Systems to be mains pressure if at all possible and connected to kitchen, bathroom and laundry (including washing machine).

Consideration needs to be given to purchasing systems that last a long time and which are suitable to the type of water in the area, so as to avoid corrosion.

The system needs to be of sufficient size to accommodate six people.

The positioning of the system is important to avoid wasting water and power. Some engineering advice may be necessary, if the distance between the system and outlets is too long. For instance it may be possible to arrange the hot water line in a continuous loop.

3.3 Stove

For safety and access, wall ovens are preferred with separate provision for grilling at a reasonable level.

3.4 Telephone

A telephone outlet and handset located in an appropriate position in the study. A parallel outlet and additional handset located in a position convenient for family use, such as the kitchen, with a further outlet and handset in the main bedroom.

At least two, maybe three phone lines are needed to cater for phone, fax and Internet. Some manses have separate private and church lines.

3.5 IT and Computer Facilities

In the age of IT, consideration needs to be given to wiring the house with coaxial cables, so computers can be networked between the study and children's bedrooms.

3.6 Clothes Drying

Rotary clothes hoist or foldaway drying lines built into external area suitable for clothes drying.

3.7 Television Antenna

Antenna installation sufficient to provide good quality reception, with outlets in appropriate locations.

Additional outlets for FM radio would be desirable in living areas. Wiring should be coaxial and properly installed.

3.8 Cooling Systems

Provision of a cooling system should be determined on the basis of what is generally accepted in the community. However, some consideration needs to be given to the fact that the manse, and in particular the study, is a workplace. Nevertheless air conditioning or cooling systems need to be considered only where it is absolutely necessary and where finance permits.

Ceiling fans are more environmentally friendly and should be considered before more expensive systems are considered. Well designed manses will limit the need for cooling systems.

When an air conditioning system is absolutely necessary, roof mounted/ducted evaporative cooling systems are effective, subject to an adequate water supply. Portable air conditioners are not suitable in areas of high humidity, such as near the coast, but are good inland.

3.9 Heating

Provision for heating in lounge, family room and study. Ducted heating should be seriously considered if finance permits. Ducted heating is more cost effective than the use of several small units. It also provides quick heat and diverse temperatures for different parts of the house.

(If it is intended to add refrigerated cooling, then ducts need to be adjusted.)

Given the problems that can arise with gas/electricity supplies, consideration needs to be given to making sure a variety of energy sources are used in the manse.

3.10 Ventilation

Exhaust fans are needed for kitchen (over the range), shower, and bathroom. One maybe necessary in the laundry for the tumble dryer.

All fans must have external outlets. Never discharge into roof space.

3.11 Insulation

Provision for wall and ceiling insulation is essential. 75 mm batts in the ceiling. Reflective insulation is needed in walls below the roofing material.

Pelmets over the curtains are recommended to stop convection currents and loss of heat in Winter.

3.12 Waste Disposal

Provide adequate space for rubbish bin, recycling bins and compost.

3.13 Fire Prevention

Building regulations require smoke detectors. A fire extinguisher and fire blanket should be provided in the kitchen.

3.14 Security

Manse families have special security needs, especially when the manse adjoins the church. . Sometimes the minister's family is at risk from the public, when the manse is isolated from other residential properties.

Steel security doors with one way mesh and dead locks are recommended on all entrances. Security lighting, possibly motion sensor lights are recommended at all entrances.

Depending on the location, a security system needs to be installed.

4. BASIC FURNISHINGS

4.1 In all manses the following basic furnishings shall be provided.

4.2 Floor Coverings

All floor surfaces are to be provided with appropriate floor coverings. Timber floors not otherwise covered shall be fine sanded, sealed and polished.

All floor coverings are to be provided in neutral toning to harmonise with varying personal furniture and furnishings.

Floor coverings should be selected for durability and ease of maintenance.

4.3 Window Coverings

Good quality curtains shall be provided to windows and external glazed areas throughout. Curtains shall be lined if necessary to protect the materials in exposed locations.

4.4 Light fittings & Power Outlets

Adequate lighting shall be provided throughout with ample double power outlets. Include provision for standard lamps.

External lighting is required for security (cf. 3:13), but is also useful for the garden area.

Safety power boards including surge and earth leakage protection are required.

4.5 Insect Screens

Insect screens should be provided throughout to windows and doors.

5. GENERAL PROVISIONS

5.1 The following general items should be considered as necessary and basic.

5.2 Paintwork

Paintwork should be kept in sound condition. Painted surfaces should not be allowed to deteriorate to the stage where major remedial work is necessary to restore the finish. Regular inspections should be undertaken to ensure this.

5.3 Paving

Concrete (or similar hard surface) paving, with a non-slip surface should be provided at least in the following locations: – carport/garage, car tracks and paths to clothes hoist as appropriate. Minimise steps to facilitate easy access.

5.4 Termites

Termites are a potential problem in all areas and are particularly encouraged by damp conditions. When building make all necessary provisions.

Residences bought second hand should be inspected for termite infestation prior to purchase and if possible a certificate should be obtained from a pest exterminator signifying that the premises are clear of activity, or alternatively indicating what eradication measures may be necessary. Eradication should be completed before contracts of sale are finalised.

5.5 Vermin Proofing

New and existing residences should be constructed or modified, if necessary, to ensure that roof spaces are effectively sealed against the entry of birds, possums or rats.

5.6 Insect Pests

Manses should be treated on a regular basis preferably by a professional pest control service, to ensure long term protection against ants, cockroaches and other pests.

5.7 Drainage and Dampness

Where reactive clay soils exist ensure that the surface of the ground is graded away from the building and never allowed to form a dam in which water may be trapped for extended periods. Impervious paving should be carried around the perimeter for a width of 1 metre, with falls away from the walls. The joints at the wall need to be sealed. A spoon drain needs to be placed on the external edge of the paving and connected to the storm water.

Where normal permeable topsoil exists on a sloping site, water may be trapped under the surface. In which case this may require a system of agricultural drains. This will be especially necessary when the plan contains re-entrant angles. On these occasions expert advice will be needed.

Garden beds should not be built up against house walls especially in clay conditions. Watering of the garden can lead to movement in the clay and hence cracking in the walls may occur in dry periods. Certainly garden beds should never be built up above dampcourses.

Manse committees need to be alert to these issues on a continuous basis.

5.8 Garden and Grounds

Garden need to be designed with low maintenance in mind.

Appropriate fencing needs to be installed, both for privacy and security. Preferably the front garden needs to be fenced off from the driveway.

6. A PLAN OF FINANCE

An application to build, extend or renovate a manse needs to be submitted to the Property Board via the Presbytery. This must be done on the appropriate application form available from the property Board.

Applications need to include preliminary sketches and a plan of finance.

Early contact with the Property Board is recommended and this can be done direct. This allows the Property Board to get comments from its advising architects before final sketch plans are initiated. It is expensive to make changes further down the line.

Note that project builder plans do not provide for the peculiar needs of manses. If used, remember modifications are not always possible, but if so they are generally expensive.

7. REGULAR MAINTENANCE INSPECTION

It has been noted above that when building manses it is wise to keep in mind maintenance requirements and costs.

Inspections need to be done during the vacancy of ministry, with all adjustments and repairs completed before the new minister takes up residence. Such inspections are the responsibility of the Presbytery.

Ideally a congregation needs to plan for an annual manse inspection. Except for emergencies, this means that manse families are relieved of the need to initiate complaints, and allows the congregation to budget efficiently for maintenance.