



Effective: Date 13/08/14

Air Travel Policy

1 Introduction

Air Travel is costly to the environment

A return flight from Perth to Sydney results in the equivalent of 1.95 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) per person entering the atmosphere (that's nearly half the emissions of the average car over a whole year). Air travel is particularly damaging to the environment¹

The Uniting Church's concern for Creation will guide our decisions in all areas of our life together so that, as far as is practicable, we can reduce damage to our environment and increase the sustainability of our work together.

2 Objective

The Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Western Australia will reduce its carbon footprint by reducing its air travel related greenhouse gas emissions.

3 Scope

This policy applies to:

- Air travel by employees, ministers and others authorised and funded by the Synod of Western Australia and associated agencies

4 Responsibilities

Managers will reduce the negative human and environmental impacts of air travel through

- trip planning and reduction,
- use of alternative meeting technologies such as phone conferencing, video conferencing

¹ The impact of planes on the climate is complicated and not perfectly understood. The CO₂ emissions are straightforward enough, but plane engines also generate a host of other "outputs", including nitrous oxide, water vapour and soot. At flying altitudes in the upper troposphere and lower stratosphere, these outputs produce a range of climatic effects, multiplying the plane's environmental impact. For example, nitrous oxide causes the formation of ozone — a greenhouse gas that warms the local climate — but at the same time undergoes reactions which destroy methane, thereby removing another greenhouse gas from the atmosphere.

Even more complicated is the impact of soot and water vapour, which together can cause contrails (vapour trails) and in cold air can lead to the formation of cirrus clouds. The science surrounding this topic is not yet rock solid, but researchers believe that contrails add to the greenhouse effect — especially at night, when their tendency to stop heat escaping from the Earth isn't offset by their tendency to reflect incoming sunlight.

Today, most experts favour an aviation "multiplier" of around two. In other words, they believe that the total impact of a plane is approximately twice as high as its CO₂ emissions. The exact multiplier, however, will always depend on the individual plane, the local climate and the time of day. This article is adapted from [The Rough Guide to Green Living](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/apr/06/aviation-q-and-a) by Duncan Clark. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/apr/06/aviation-q-and-a>

- use of alternative travel methods where practicable –such as rail travel to Kalgoorlie and Bunbury.

5 Definitions

Offsetting is a way to effectively reduce emissions at times when we can't reduce our emissions through energy efficiency, or switching to an alternative technology.

6 Procedure

1. Offsetting the Emissions incurred in air travel

The Synod of Western Australia will:

- Work to reduce the number of air miles required as part of the Churches' work by 5% per year
- Keep accurate records of Synod-funded air miles per year
- Calculate a cost of the air travel we make on the environment using a calculator such as <http://www.carbonneutral.com.au/carbon-calculator/air-travel.htm>
- For each 1 tonne of carbon pollution from air miles, the Synod will direct the Financial controller to deposit in a fund set aside for the purpose, the sum of \$23.00
- Moneys from this fund will be available to churches and church related agencies to engage in carbon lowering technologies and improvements such as but not limited to
 - Purchase and installation of solar panels on roof of church or manse
 - Purchase and installation of insulation in the roofs of church or manse buildings
 - Purchase and installation of fuel efficient heating/cooling appliances

2. Reporting

The General Secretary will report on its application of this policy to Synod in Session annually and will chart the reductions in carbon footprint over time.

7 Related Policies and Procedures

- Motor Vehicle Fleet Management Policy
- Congregation Sustainable Practice Policy
- Sustainable Buildings Policy
- Landscaping Policy