

Ethical Investment Policy

24 June 2020

Ethical Investment Statement

The New Zealand Anglican Church Pension Board (the *Board*), trading as Anglican Financial Care, is trustee of a number of trusts and retirement savings schemes and recognises its legal obligation to beneficiaries to work in their best financial interests. This involves considering the fiduciary risks associated with including and excluding investments.

The Board has invested ethically since its inception in 1972. However, in 2002 the Anglican Church's General Synod / te Hīnota Whānui declared its commitment in principle to a strategy for ethically investing Church funds by passing a resolution which recognises that ethical considerations form an integral part of the investment process in keeping with the Church's Christian values.

The Board recognises that economic decisions involve ethical choices. The Christian tradition recognises these ethical choices are made in a world marred by human failure and its consequences. Yet the Church still seeks goodness, the growth of human flourishing and believes God is active in restoring the world.

The purpose of the Board's investment activity is to turn members' savings into wealth. The Board's legal requirement is to act in the financial interests of its Members but our investment activity will also seek to participate in the good God is doing in the world.

Specific Considerations

While certain sectors are traditionally negatively screened (i.e. excluded) from investment portfolios, the Board recognises that some companies within these sectors may be adopting and practicing corporate responsibility policies which weigh against the misuse and harm related to their business activities, for example considering climate risk explicitly within their business strategies. In such cases, exclusion may be inappropriate and inconsistent with God's redemptive purpose and the transition to a better world.

Alcohol

Biblical writings recognise the dual nature of alcohol. Alcohol is celebrated as a gift of God but there are also warnings against its misuse and even references to abstinence and self-denial.

The Board believes that in the context of a gift from God, there's nothing wrong with the production or consumption of alcohol when used in moderation for enjoyment and health. The Anglican Church itself uses wine in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

However, there is concern about misuse of alcohol contributing to human and community harm and misery. Alcohol is justifiably regarded as a public health issue given its cost to society in terms of health, violence, crime and the consequential impact, particularly on women and children.

In investment portfolios, exposure to alcohol comprises producers and retailers (including major supermarkets, where sales of alcohol may be significant in absolute terms but only modest as a proportion of total sales).

The Board recognises there are improving standards of corporate responsibility in the production and retail of alcohol and these may be sufficient in certain cases to permit consideration for inclusion in investment portfolios. But in other cases, the Board will exclude from its investments, companies deriving more than 5% of turnover from the production or retail of alcohol.

Animal Welfare

The Board recognises animals are deserving of human stewardship and will seek to avoid investment in cases where animals are subject to unjust suffering, such as intensive livestock management using cages and crates and in testing beyond legal requirements for non-pharmaceutical purposes, where the replacement, reduction and refinement of animal testing procedures are not considered.

Armaments and Defence

Biblical references to warfare range from pacifism to the notion of Just War. In general however, the over-riding narrative is that the use of force should be a last resort, proportional, discriminate and undertaken according to ethical and strategic criteria. International law recognises the right of self-defence and acceptance of the responsibility to protect those who can't protect themselves.

If there's acceptance of the use of force in certain circumstances, then this infers acceptance of the need to maintain appropriately equipped resources and facilities and that defence is more acceptable than offence (although a complication is that offensive weapons may be required for defensive purposes).

The Board will exclude investing in armaments of an indiscriminate nature. This includes weapons such as nuclear weapons, land mines, cluster munitions, chemical and biological weapons, many of which are the subject of international treaties. The exclusion involves the production of the weapons systems and the material provision of parts or services associated with those weapons and the transportation of such weapons systems to countries with poor human rights.

The Board will exclude investment in companies where more than 5% of turnover relates to conventional weapons systems, parts or services.

Fossil Fuels

Biblical principles infer creation is to be cared for and protected for future generations.

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, countries have committed to limiting increases in global average temperatures to less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The Paris Agreement targets infer risks to companies within the energy sector who don't appropriately adapt their business models.

The Board has elected to respond by excluding companies whose principal business is in coal and/or tar sands and to prioritise investments in other energy companies according to their extent of contribution towards a lower-carbon world.

The Board recognises that fossil fuel divestment is a matter of importance to the Church and there are some who share a sense of frustration with the lack of progress towards the Paris Agreement targets. But the Board is also conscious that members appreciate periods of good performance from companies in the energy sector and therefore a sensible balance in approach is required.

In recognition that part of the solution lies with alternative energy solutions, the Board has also invested in a global alternative energy fund.

In addition, the Board has a long-standing direct investment in a forest.

Gambling

In the case of gambling, context is important. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with gambling as a form of entertainment and relaxation or viewed in the context of taking proportionate risk.

The concern is misuse and where the desire and hoarding of money for its own sake is the prime motivation. There are biblical warnings against the desire, love and greed of money and that the hasty, reckless and wasteful use of money is foolish and unlikely to lead to the attainment of wealth.

As is the case with alcohol, the Board is also concerned with societal impacts of gambling, particularly where there's human and community harm. The negative effects of gambling addiction on individuals, families (particularly women and children) and society remain significant. Gambling addiction is associated with depression, suicide, violence and crime and disproportionately impacts those from adverse socio-economic circumstances.

The Board will avoid investment in companies who derive more than 5% of turnover from the activities of (or provide the premises for) gambling.

Note: the Board is conscious that there's scope to draw parallels between the individual pursuit of gain via excessive and risky speculation (including the use of "other peoples' money") and corporate behaviour in the legal pursuit of profit. These are difficult issues, which are the subject of on-going public policy debate. The focus of the Board's policy relates to the commonly accepted forms of gambling.

Pornography

The exploitation and degradation of humans for commercial gain is contrary to God's purpose. The Board recognises that a distinction between production and distribution versus transmission is valid and that definitions of pornography can be subjective.

However, the Board will exclude investment in companies involved in the production and distribution of pornography or companies who own and operate premises where providing pornographic experiences is the main activity, or companies where more than 5% of turnover is generated from the activities of pornography.

Tobacco

Smoking is a leading cause of preventable mortality. Smoking also impacts non-smokers (including children) via passive smoking. There's no question tobacco is a public health issue.

The Board is aware companies in the tobacco industry are transitioning to alternative business models involving products (e.g. e-cigarettes) which may be less harmful and contribute to reducing traditional cigarette smoking. Nevertheless, these "reduced-risk" products may also be stimulating youth addiction, thereby contributing to a public health conundrum in terms of creating an environment for adults who deserve access to potentially less hazardous alternatives.

Consequently, a prudent approach is to monitor developments in the tobacco industry but for now, exclude investment in companies deriving more than 5% of turnover from the production or retail of tobacco.

Other Considerations

The Board uses a leading provider of corporate governance and responsible investment research when considering investing in shares.

The Board has a relationship with the UK based Church Investors Group which enables further insights into ethical matters and provides an opportunity to vote its shares with like-minded investors.

Note

In order to ensure sufficient diversification, the Board may make investments in tracker funds, diversified or composite equity funds, alternative strategy funds, or fixed interest funds which may not apply the Board's ethical screening processes.

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