

Autumn 2021

# Supporter Newsletter.

Call us  
1800 668 426

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[unitingvictas.org.au](https://unitingvictas.org.au)



## Uniting to make a difference.

Thanks to your compassion, people like Jhez and her son Troy, (pictured above) made it through the challenges of 2020 with positivity and promise. Together, we walked alongside the lost, lonely and vulnerable, offering support and strength when they needed it most.

In this edition, you'll find stories of hope renewed and lives transformed thanks to your support. You can read an update about Sonia, whose story we shared in our Christmas appeal. This Hobart mum is stronger than ever and ready to face the year ahead.

# Uniting

# Welcome to Autumn.



Thanks to you, our Uniting family, we have started 2021 with positivity and promise.

**I'm sure I was not alone in hoping the new year would bring a new start, returning to something a bit more like life as we knew it before COVID-19 changed just about everything. Unfortunately, that isn't the case and the pandemic continues to create challenges for us every day.**

Thanks to your partnership last year, we know hope is not lost. We can get through it all – together.

Our community witnessed one of the most challenging years in our recent history. Battling bushfire and pandemic, we saw more people slipping into crisis – many for the first time in their lives. Holding on to hope, and each other, we have made it through this far.

In darkest times, your compassion has been a shining light. Thanks to you, our Uniting family, we have been able to support our community when they needed it most.

**For your continued care, I want to say thank you. We simply couldn't do what we do without you.**

I am incredibly proud of our teams across Victoria and Tasmania. Quickly adapting to changing conditions, they found innovative ways to care for our community.

Like our community meals programs in Prahran, Ballarat and Hobart. Forced to close their doors, our teams transformed into a takeaway service. Now, we can still provide fresh food - and a friendly face – to those in need.

Together, we've taken strong steps forward. But there's still a long way to go. Thousands of Victorians and Tasmanians are struggling with the ongoing impacts of last year. Adding 2020 troubles to existing traumas, setbacks, and injustices, the demand on our services is greater than ever.

We want to be there for those in need, whenever they need us. But we can't do it alone.

As Autumn approaches, I am calling for your continued compassion and support.

Your generosity will have immediate impact in your local community. Together, we can deliver a brighter future for us all.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bronwyn Pike".

Bronwyn Pike  
**Chief Executive Officer**





# Warm meals, friendly faces.

For over 30 years, people have come to Hartley's Community Dining Room for a hearty meal. This vital service provides meals for those who couldn't prepare or access food themselves.

## Teamwork makes the dream work.

**Sadly, Hartley's was forced to temporarily close its dining room in March 2020 when COVID-19 hit. Thinking outside the box, the team were able to find new ways to provide fresh food - and a friendly face - to those in need. All thanks to StreetSmart.**

Founded by Adam Robinson in 2003, StreetSmart works to break down prejudices about people experiencing tough times. Coming to grips with the issues facing our community, StreetSmart started cooking up ideas on how to get involved.

"Organisations were worried about food insecurity, with many food outlets for people experiencing homelessness closing their doors," says Adam.

"We wanted to make an impact straight away."

With many venues closing their doors due to COVID-19 restrictions, the StreetSmart team saw an opportunity. "We realised there were empty kitchens with people willing to cook, and other people who still needed to eat," says Adam. "So we paired them up."

StreetSmart connected the local venues to the Hartley's kitchen, where they prepared meals for people who needed it most. "We just want people to feel safe, supported and have access to food all year round," says Adam.

Joining forces with StreetSmart, we now offer tasty, takeaway meals to people facing food insecurity - every day.

Meals Program Coordinator, Sara Loots says StreetSmart's support - worth over \$90,000 - was invaluable in keeping doors open. "It was a big relief for people who don't know where their next meal will come from," says Sara.

To keep bellies full - and spirits bright - over Christmas, StreetSmart gave an additional grant of \$6,500 to the program. "We normally close for 2 weeks over Christmas," says Sara, "but thanks to StreetSmart, we were able to keep supplying meals to people who rely on them."

*Our team at Hartley's has served up meals to people in need during the COVID-19 pandemic.*





## A season of caring.

This Christmas, people in crisis had something to celebrate – thanks to you. Your kindness ensured that our services could support those in need.

## Coming together to transform Christmas.

In recent years, Jess (pictured left) and her family have enjoyed a new Christmas tradition: changing lives.

When the festivities get going, Jess gets to work. Every December, she asks her nearest and dearest to collect food and essentials for families in need. For Jess, 2020 was no different.

“Collecting goods from family and friends at Christmas is the perfect excuse to catch up and spend time together,” says Jess.

Together with friends and family, Jess gathered 27 bags and 14 boxes of food and essential items in 2020 – her greatest collection yet.

“We all need to eat, so it’s a simple way people can help,” says Jess.

“It’s a great feeling to be able to help people in your local community at Christmas - and beyond.”

## You make a real difference.

Sonia shared her story as part of our 2020 Christmas Appeal, which raised over \$544,700. Sonia also celebrated Christmas with her family and friends at home.

But the festivities didn’t stop there. While picking up a food hamper, Sonia shared some Christmas cheer of her own. Sonia donated over 80 freshly laid eggs to Uniting’s NoBucks service in Hobart. “Our chooks lay a lot of eggs, so I thought it would be nice to give them to Uniting for people who need them,” says Sonia. “It felt good to be able to give back.”

Sonia also presented the Hobart team with a tin of biscuits to say thank you.

“They do a wonderful job, and I wanted to make sure they know that it’s appreciated,” says Sonia.



## A legacy that lights the way.

**Janet is committed to caring for others - now and in the future.**

Janet and her brother were raised on a healthy diet of caring, compassion and kindness. Taught by their mother to support those facing hard times, Janet has never lost the ‘habit of helping.’

A gift in her Will to Uniting serves 2 meaningful purposes for Janet: a tribute to her mother, and a way of caring for her community - long into the future.

“My mother died more than 50 years ago,” says Janet. “But, while she was alive, she always encouraged us to think about others.”

Janet is helping to ensure vital services will always be available and accessible to the most vulnerable in our community. And you can too. For information about how to leave a gift in your Will, please call us.

**T 1800 668 426**



# The spirit of giving.

It's because of you that we can make a difference for individuals, families and communities.

## The team that keeps giving.

**For most, Christmas is the 'season of giving.' But for the team at Epworth HealthCare, it's something they do all year round.**

A few years ago, the Epworth team joined our Food For Families appeal.

"Some of our staff commented that this is something we could do all year round, not just at Christmas," says Scott Bulger, Executive Director of the Epworth Medical Foundation and Brand.

"Staff are encouraged to buy a few extra items when they do their shopping, bring them in and place them in one of the collection bins."

The team have donation sites set up at their Richmond, East Melbourne, Camberwell, Box Hill and Geelong sites.

"It's nice to know that the food we donate will immediately help people in their time of need," says Scott.

Along with collecting food and essential items last year, the Epworth team raised \$10,000 for Food For Families.

To find out how you can get involved in Food For Families, turn to page 8 of this newsletter.

*Executive Director of the Epworth Medical Foundation and Brand, Scott Bulger and Peri-Anaesthetic Manager, Alice Whitbread are happy to support Food For Families all year round.*

## Targeting a brighter future.

**As part of the UnitingCare Australia network, we partnered with Target Australia once again for the annual Target Christmas Appeal. Uniting together, we encouraged people to support families in crisis at Christmas.**

The response was overwhelming, especially given the hardships faced by so many in 2020.

With your support, we raised almost \$60,000 for people struggling to access vital necessities, such as food, toiletries, and a safe place to live.

The Target Christmas Appeal has supported us in making a real difference to families across Victoria and Tasmania for nearly 30 years now.

It's your kindness that helps us share joy at Christmas - and hope for the year ahead.

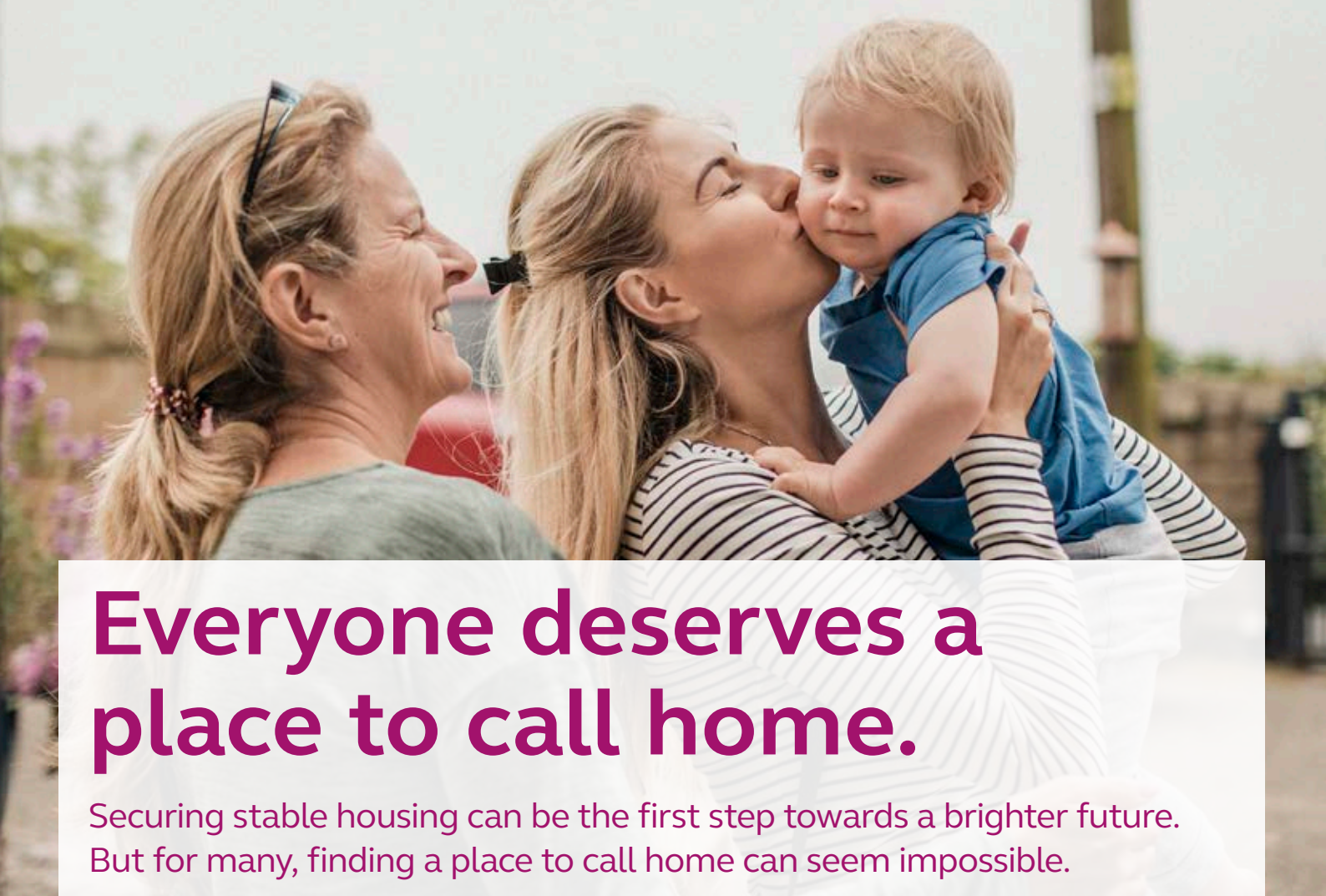


## Food in the fridge and hope for the future.

**Thank you to the many individuals, families and groups who took part in Food For Families in 2020.**

Your generosity helped stock our shelves for the start of 2021, with over 28 tonnes of food and other essential items pledged. To find out how you can continue supplying food in 2021, turn to page 8 of this newsletter.





# Everyone deserves a place to call home.

Securing stable housing can be the first step towards a brighter future. But for many, finding a place to call home can seem impossible.

## The issue.

**For people experiencing homelessness, housing affordability is often a hurdle on the road to stability.**

Being unable to afford – or find – safe, stable housing affects their ability to better their circumstances and work towards a brighter future.

## The problem.

**Housing affordability continues to be an issue throughout our communities.**

As property prices continue to rise, more and more people are finding themselves in housing stress. Yet, after decades of underinvestment, Victoria still has the lowest proportion of social housing in Australia.

3.2% of Victoria's housing stock is social housing – well below the national average of 4.2%.

It's no better in Tasmania, where people in need of social housing struggle to find a safe, secure home.

## The solution.

**With your ongoing support, we are working to fix this problem.**

So far, we have:

- pledged \$20 million to address the affordable housing shortage in Victoria and Tasmania.
- planned 500 new social and affordable housing properties across Victoria over the next 5 years, including a 30- to 36-unit development at Ringwood.

“The bottom line is that we need to invest in more stock,” says Uniting Vic.Tas CEO, Bronwyn Pike.

“We are providing housing for people on low incomes – we are not going to get the kind of rent that will pay back a commercial mortgage or loan,” she says.

“We need governments and private developers to partner with us during the construction phase.”

By speaking up and standing together, we can fix our system and support our community.

To keep up to date with our advocacy work, visit [unitingvictas.org.au/advocacy](https://unitingvictas.org.au/advocacy)

*The photo accompanying this story is for illustrative purposes. It is not a photo of Uniting consumers.*





# Helping people find their freedom.

For a group of refugee and asylum seeker families, this Autumn will be a race against time. As they leave community detention, over 160 people will have no home, no job, no stability.

## Seeking asylum is a human right.

People seeking asylum are some of the most vulnerable in our community. Many are fleeing persecution and harm, travelling to a strange country, often at great risk, hoping for comfort and support.

The Australian Government has decided to grant Final Departure Bridging Visa E to asylum seekers transferred from Nauru and Papua New Guinea for medical treatment.

While the visa offers families their freedom, the government's support stops 3 weeks after leaving community detention.

After that, they are expected to support themselves. For most of these families, this will be a challenge.

They may not be confident speaking English yet, or they might not have the right skills to find work.

Even if they do, jobs are hard to come by in a pandemic.

*Zainab (pictured above) attends our Settlement Hub in Shepparton*

## Give a fresh start to families in crisis.

With your support, we offer families the support they need for their fresh start.

With our Asylum Seeker Programs, we can help them find a home, feed their families and feel positive about their future. But we can't do it alone.

### Can you open your heart and your home?

If you're interested in housing families as they get back on their feet, please get in touch. We are searching for potential spaces for families for up to 6 months.

### Be a part of their fresh start.

Can't help with housing? Don't worry - there are many ways to get involved. You can:

- donate food or essential items
- make a financial contribution
- volunteer your time.

### Contact Supporter Services

T 1800 668 426

[unitingvictas.org.au/emergency-appeal](https://unitingvictas.org.au/emergency-appeal)



# Uniting to make a difference.

Your generosity can change lives in your community, paving the way for a brighter future. **Here's how you can get involved.**

## Feeding families, changing lives.

**Put food on the table - all year round - with Food For Families.**

Thanks to your generous support, over 17 tonnes of food and toiletries were donated last December. This achievement provided support for people in their toughest season yet.

But the cupboards are already looking bare. With the growing demand, our supplies will be gone by winter. We want to support everyone who reaches out to us, no matter what time of year it is. But we can't do it alone.

Your regular support will ensure people get what they need to get back on their feet. Because of you, we'll be there when they need us most.

Like the team from Epworth (see page 5 of this newsletter) you can make a difference by donating items on a regular basis.

No time to collect? You might like to make a regular financial contribution. A little bit, every month, can provide a lot for people in need. For just \$1 a day - or \$30 a month - you can provide a family with the basics they need to keep going.

Get in touch. Become a year-round Food For Families supporter.

**T** 1800 668 426

**foodforfamilies.org.au**

## Flip for a good cause

**Make a pancake - and a difference - for your community.**

It's never too late to flip for a cause. Individually, or as a group, you can host a Pancake Day event any time before the end of March.

All money raised goes directly to your local programs, supporting people in your community when they need it most.

Thank you to everyone who has already registered or held their 2021 Pancake Day event. Don't forget to share stories of your pancakes and warm hearts.

**T** 1800 668 426

**E** [pancakeday.info@unitingvictas.org.au](mailto:pancakeday.info@unitingvictas.org.au)

**victas.pancakeday.com.au**



Even the smallest act of kindness can brighten someone's day.

### Make a donation

Your generosity will help us provide essential services that are not covered by government funding. A gift today or a bequest for the future will make a positive and lasting difference to individuals, families and communities.

**T** 1800 668 426

**[unitingvictas.org.au/donate](https://unitingvictas.org.au/donate)**

### Fundraise for us

There are so many new, safe and creative ways to stay in touch and raise funds for your local community. If you have found innovative ways to stay connected with friends and family we'd love to hear from you.

**T** 1800 060 543

**[fundraising@unitingvictas.org.au](mailto:fundraising@unitingvictas.org.au)**

### Volunteer with us

Our 2400 volunteers are a vital and much loved part of our organisation. They give their precious time to help deliver our services. We rely on their support - and we're always on the lookout for more enthusiastic people.

**[unitingvictas.org.au/volunteer](https://unitingvictas.org.au/volunteer)**

