



*Orana, buildings and grounds*

June 2026

# Uniting Heritage

For past residents, people affected  
by adoption, and their families.



Uniting is the community services organisation  
of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania.

# Uniting

# Founding agencies

The founding agencies of Uniting Vic.Tas provided out-of-home care in Victoria. Under each agency listed below are the names of orphanages, children's homes, family group homes, foster care and adoption providers that were run by the former denominations of the Uniting Church – Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational. Uniting Vic.Tas continues to provide some of these services today.

**Connections:** Methodist Babies' Home (1929-1974), Presbyterian Babies' Home (1928-1977), Copelen Street Family Centre (1974-1991), Canterbury Family Centre (1977-2000), Copelen Child and Family Services (1991-1998).

**UnitingCare Gippsland:** Kilmany Park Farm Home for Boys, Sale (1923-1978), Kilmany Family Care (family group homes), East Gippsland (1978-2002), Kilmany UnitingCare (2001-2010).

**UnitingCare Harrison:** Arthur Harrison Boys' Home, Hawthorn (1960-1977), Harrison House Youth Services (also known as Harrison Youth Hostel), Melbourne eastern suburbs (1982-1994).

**UnitingCare Kildonan:** Kildonan, North Melbourne (1890-1937), Presbyterian Sisterhood (1901-1978), Kildonan, Elgar Road, Burwood (1937-1961), Kildonan Homes for Children, Melbourne's eastern and inner suburbs (1961-1993), Kildonan Child and Family Services, office in Whittlesea/Epping (1993-2007).

**UnitingCare Lentara:** Methodist Homes for Children, Cheltenham (1891-1953), Orana, the Peace Memorial Homes for Children, Burwood (1953-1988).

**Wesley Mission Victoria:** South Yarra Home (1900-1936), Tally Ho Boys' Training Farm, Burwood (1903-1986), Tally Ho Youth Services, Melbourne eastern suburbs (1986-1990s), Memorial Girls' Home, Fairfield (1922-1984), Moreland Hall, Brunswick (1936-1969), Lincoln House, Central Mission Hostel for Boys, King Street, Melbourne (c1939-1950), Wesley Youth Services, Melbourne eastern suburbs (1986-2017).

**UnitingCare Wimmera:** Wimmera Family Homes/Wimmera Community Care, Horsham/Stawell (1979-2000), UnitingCare Wimmera (2000-2017).

**UnitingCare Wyndham:** Werribee Support and Housing (also known as Bridges Foster Care Inner West), Werribee and Melbourne (1982-2017).

**UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania:** Dhurringile Rural Training Farm, Tatura (1951-1964), Regent House Hostel for Girls, Elsternwick (1966-1977).



# Carol's message

## Welcome to the first issue of Uniting Heritage for 2026

Hello everyone, welcome to our first Heritage Newsletter for the year.

During the past year I've got to know so many people who have a connection to Uniting. The people who deliver our services, the people who support our services, and the people like you who visit our services.

Earlier this year a group of us at Uniting visited some of the former out-of-home care and adoption service sites across Melbourne. I found it moving to learn about these places, the lives of the people who lived in them, and our connected history. It was also warming to see first-hand the passion and care the Heritage Service team has for the incredible work they do.

I understand the value of place, history and connection, so I'm delighted to share the wonderful news that we are able to keep hosting the Orana reunions at Rentoul Hall in Burwood. I came along to the reunion we held there on 21 May; it was so good to meet

many of you there, and to hear your stories about what place, history and connection means to you.

Sharing our stories can be so powerful. I have a deep respect and gratitude to those of you who generously share your own stories. Having so recently stood on the grounds of what was once the Tally Ho Boys' Training Farm in Burwood, it was especially moving to me to read Jenny's story of learning about her father's time spent there when he was a young child.

I hope you all enjoy this issue of Heritage News.



Carol Jeffs  
**Chief Executive Officer**

## Tributes

We have not learned of any deaths since our last newsletter.

If you would like to let us know about anyone who has died, please contact Chris Wade on 0402 969 621.



# Updates from the Heritage Service

## Jen's story.

Some of you may remember reading Jen's story in the October 2024 issue of *Heritage News*.

In 1949, when she was just 2 years old, Jen was placed in the Presbyterian Babies Home. Through connecting with the Heritage Service team, she learned about why her parents placed her there, and of an 'aunt' to whom her parents entrusted her, who offered Jen an "unbroken thread of care, steadfast through many changes".

Very generously, Jen and her husband Sam, have allowed us to share their story through this video: [unitingvictas.org.au/services/family-services/heritage-service/](https://unitingvictas.org.au/services/family-services/heritage-service/)



## Redress Scheme.

The Victorian Historical Forced Adoptions Redress Scheme is open to applications from mothers until February 2028. The Scheme offers affected mothers:

- A financial payment
- Access to counselling
- An apology process.

The Scheme has a support team to help you through the application process and to answer your questions: [www.vic.gov.au/redress-forced-adoptions](https://www.vic.gov.au/redress-forced-adoptions)

## Farewell to Olivia ... for now.

Our Archives and Records Coordinator, Olivia Hărășan, has recently started parental leave as she is soon to have a baby. While we will miss Olivia, we are grateful for her expert management of our records over recent years.

In the meantime, Sally Pfeiffer in our team will take on our collection digitising and indexing projects. We look forward to sharing news about these records in future Collections Spotlight articles in this newsletter.

We wish Olivia all the best with her new family and look forward to her return next year.

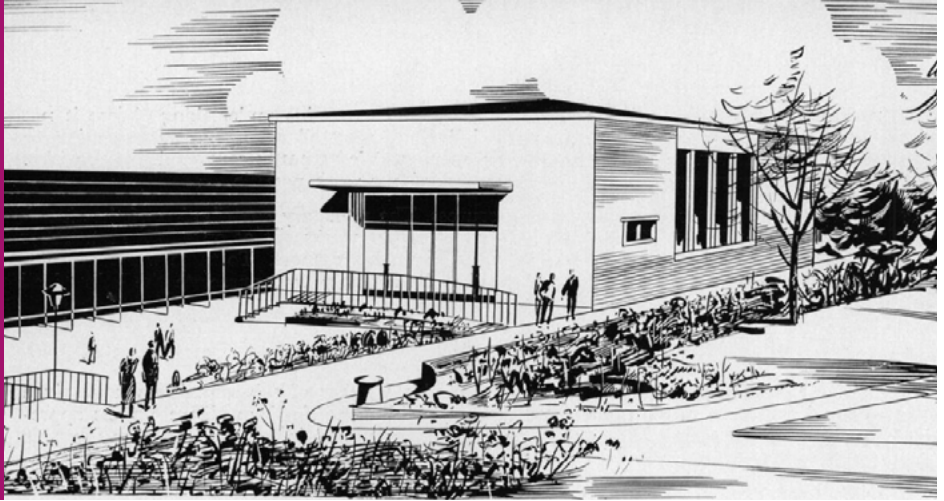
## New Heritage Service email address.

In April, the Heritage Service team introduced a new dedicated email address for requests for records: [heritageservice@unitingvictas.org.au](mailto:heritageservice@unitingvictas.org.au).

This change will help ensure we respond to new requests effectively. Once your request has been allocated to a case worker, they will contact you directly and then support you through the process of receiving your records.

Please note, the phone number for the Uniting Heritage Service remains unchanged. You can still reach us on **0402 969 621**.

## Orana reunions to remain at Rentoul Hall.



*Rentoul Hall.*

After saying goodbye to Rentoul Hall and the Orana site in Burwood last year, we are delighted to say that we can now keep meeting at the Hall after all.

After a year of uncertainty about the future of Rentoul Hall while it was put up for sale, we have learned it has been purchased by the Christian Alliance Church of Victoria. They own the Orana Chapel opposite the Hall, and plan to use the Hall for their services and other activities.

The Church is committed to honouring the history and significance of the Hall. As a result, they have generously invited us to keep holding Orana reunions in the Hall, for which we are very grateful.

It was wonderful to hold our most recent reunion on 21 May at Rentoul Hall where former residents and staff were able to reconnect and share memories together.

## Out of Home Care Redress Scheme – applications closing date extended to 31 December 2026.

The Victorian Government's redress scheme for people who were abused when living in institutional care started on 10 December 2024. The closing date for applications has been extended to 31 December 2026. If you are interested in applying to this Scheme, you are encouraged to contact one of the organisations below who can help you understand the eligibility criteria and work out next steps:

- Open Place: [www.openplace.org.au](http://www.openplace.org.au)
- Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN): [clan.org.au](http://clan.org.au)
- Relationships Australia Victoria: [www.relationshipsvictoria.org.au](http://www.relationshipsvictoria.org.au)
- Child Migrants Trust: [www.childmigrantstrust.org](http://www.childmigrantstrust.org)
- Connecting Home: [www.connectinghome.org.au](http://www.connectinghome.org.au)
- Drummond Street Services: [www.ds.org.au](http://www.ds.org.au)
- National Survivors Foundation: [www.survivors.org.au](http://www.survivors.org.au)
- Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency: [www.vacca.org](http://www.vacca.org)

For this Scheme, successful applicants are offered a range of supports including a financial payment, counselling and a personal acknowledgement. More information about the Out of Home Care Redress Scheme is available at [services.dffh.vic.gov.au/redress](http://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/redress)

The National Redress Scheme is still receiving applications until 30 June 2027:  
[www.nationalredress.gov.au](http://www.nationalredress.gov.au)

# ‘An untapped power’: Finding my records.

By Leonie



*Leonie and her baby brother.*

Searching for my records has been a lifelong dream. Having spent most of my childhood in and out of care, I had so many disjointed memories, and as I got older, I wondered if any of it was true, or was it my imagination. I needed to put the jigsaw pieces together.

After many failed attempts with other agencies (who were all very helpful and caring, and just as heartfelt and passionate as Uniting) I reached out to Catriona, who got back to me within a few weeks with a “Yes, we’ve located your files”.

Catriona also informed me that she was retiring and said, “Chris Wade will take care of your files and be there when you receive them, you are in great hands”. Chris and I spoke about the files over email and by phone. He mentioned there was a lot to get through and prepared me mentally for my day to meet in person and finally receive my files.

The day came and I flew into Melbourne from Sydney on 14 January 2025. In my pocket was a picture of me as a little girl, I wanted this picture to be with me, and also a picture of my brother who had passed away 8 months prior. My brother was also a part of my dysfunctional childhood and having those

photos of us as children made me feel like I was being the parent we never got.

My husband came with me, my rock, my best friend. I was in a strange calm, quiet, excited and nervous state before we met Chris: my hands were sticky and wet from sweating, and my heart was pounding so strongly I could see my chest move through my violet knitted top.

My mouth was so dry I had completely emptied two water bottles, and my lips a little cracked from nibbling them out of nerves. My husband provided the space I needed to feel it all, and I’m grateful for this moment of truth and to share it with him.

We were sitting in the foyer downstairs, and I had called Chris to let him know we were here, and where we were sitting. Chris came and introduced himself and I felt complete calm wash over me, my hands stopped sweating, my heart eased, and I knew in this moment the truth was about to be revealed.

Chris took us upstairs and into a room that had lovely pictures of the children’s homes, and there were food and refreshments provided, and on the table were my files.



*One month before Leonie's brother died, 9 months before Leonie received their files.*

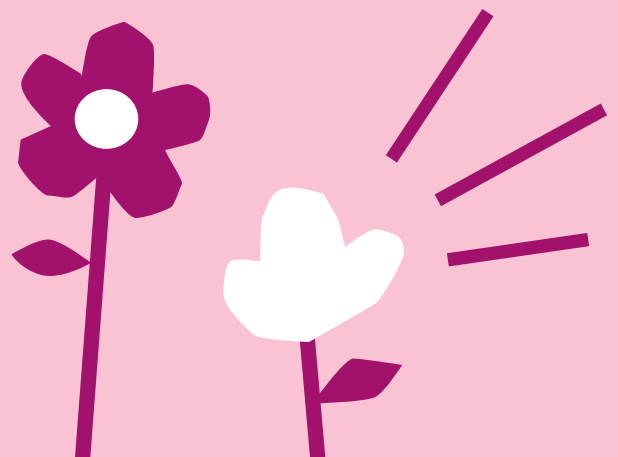
Chris sat with me and together the three of us – me, my husband, Chris – and my childhood photos uncovered the truth of my brother's and my childhood past. Finally both my brother and I have been seen and heard – we weren't swept under the rug anymore.

The time during the reading of the files stood still and flew by; I guess this is the only way for now I can express how it feels to go back 50 years in time. After we went through the files with a few rest breaks along the way, it was time to go home. A mixture of feelings came up: I did and didn't want to leave. I wanted to leave to digest all my learnings, and I wanted to stay and uncover the rest of the files in this sacred space.

I'm so grateful that the Uniting Heritage Service team exists; the energy that goes into this special place is something truly special, comforting and safe, forever in my heart. Thank you so much for this experience of returning home to myself.

We went home back to Sydney and dedicated five more days to reading through the other folders. With more on their way, it's helping me to understand so many unanswered questions about myself and my brother.

I do plan to tell my story soon. But for now, I just want to share of my experience of how it has helped me put my life back together; in my memories and in my confidence to live with the truth and purpose, and to help someone take their first step into finding their voice. It's an untapped power that I'm forever grateful for. Until next time.



# Finding peace through connection with my father's past.

By Jenny

My father passed away when I was 20 years old and our relationship had been distanced prior to his passing due to my parents' divorce when I was 11.

I didn't know a lot about my father's family. All I knew was that he was an orphan, and that he had lived in Tally Ho Boys' Training Farm in Burwood, Victoria. My mother didn't have any answers to the questions that I would ask, and sadly, dad had passed away before those questions even became questions in my mind.

Over the years, there became a deep longing for some answers, for some history. Where did I come from? Who was this man? And what was the family's story?

I started my search in earnest for answers. I don't remember how, but I connected in with Uniting's Heritage Service and met Chris Wade. Chris was amazing. He listened to my story. He put in the hard yards and he came back to me with a bundle of documents and history, not only of my father's time in Tally Ho, but his life before that, how he ended up in Tally Ho and his life after he was released to the world as a young man.

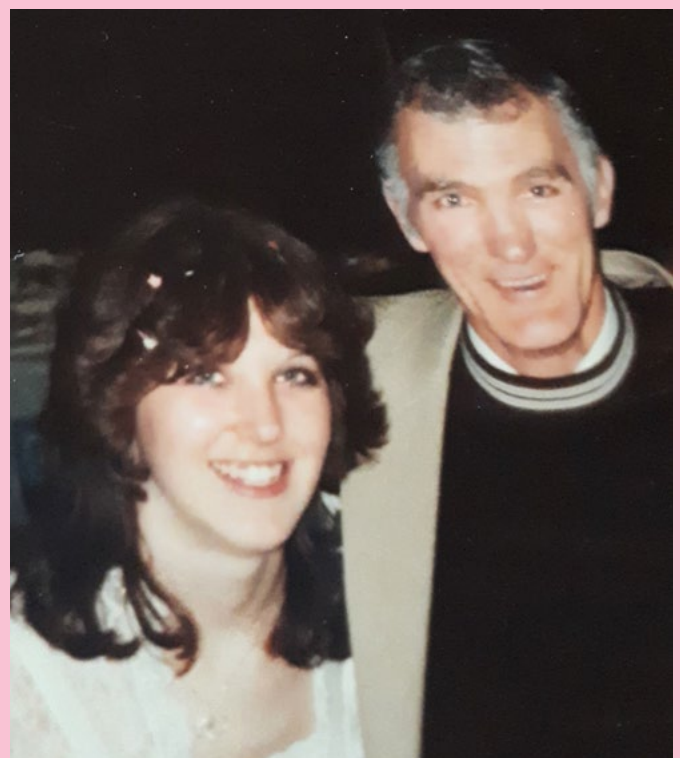
Having this information filled so many gaps, answered so many questions, and gave me a sense of belonging and family. There are still many more questions left to be answered, and I hope that in time those answers will show themselves, but for now my heart is at peace, that ache in my chest has gone.

I have answers. I have the truth about who this amazing person was, that he survived such terrible hardship as a young child, and through the years of life as an orphan at Tally Ho, And who then went on to become a husband, a father, a friend and so much more. I'm so sad that he's not with us today to see the amazing family he's left behind.

The gratitude I have for Chris Wade and the Heritage Service for the answers they gave me cannot be put into words. I am grounded and have found a peace I never knew existed because I have connected back in with my father and his story.



*Jenny's father with his car – he took so much pride in everything he did, including keeping his car spick and span.*



*Jenny with her father at her wedding in 1984, two years before she lost him to heart failure.*



## Collections Spotlight.

An autograph book from the Methodist Home for Children.

Last year, Marlene, the daughter of Dorothy Cruse – a former resident of the Methodist Home for Children – shared an autograph book from the 1930s with the Heritage Service.

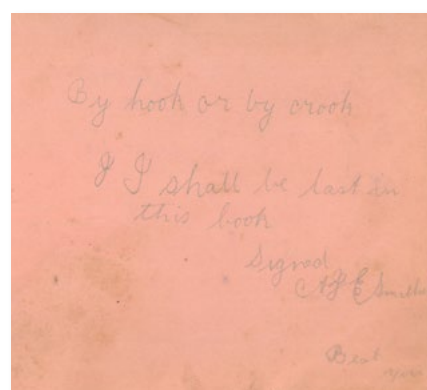
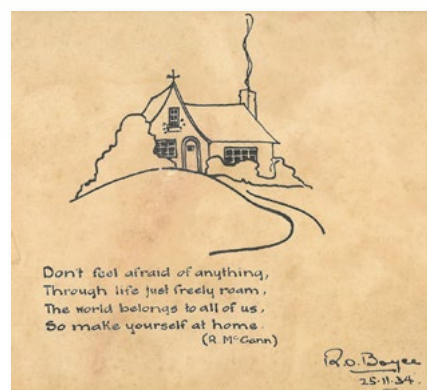
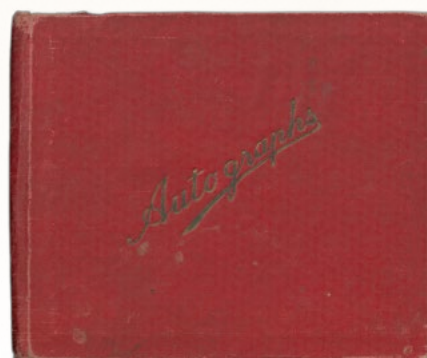
The book contains 36 pages of poems and ditties written by residents of the Home, including the poem shown here accompanied with a lovely sketch.

Written during the Great Depression, the children's entries are similar to nursery rhymes, sometimes humorous or cheeky, and often conveying a word of advice for life. The book also features a few later entries which were definitely not written by children, including one written by a WW2 soldier.

We digitised the book and then returned this significant and vulnerable item to Marlene. We are reviewing the names in the book to see if any former residents, or their families, have been in contact with us. If you have a family member who lived at the Methodist Home for Children during the 1930s, you are welcome to contact us to find out if they wrote something in this book.

We are very grateful to Marlene for allowing us to share this autograph book with other residents and their families in the future.

*Top to bottom: The front cover of the autograph book, kindly loaned to us by the daughter of a former resident; A poem by R. McCann and illustration by R.O. Boyce dated 25 November 1934; By hook or by crook, I'll be the last person to sign this book.*





# A tour of our history, marked by māfana.

By Matt Julius, Uniting Church Engagement Worker

Earlier in the year, led by the Heritage Service team, a small group of people from across Uniting, along with Moderator Rev. Salesi Faupula, took the opportunity to visit past Methodist and Presbyterian out-of-home care and adoption service sites across Melbourne.

The sites we visited were spread across metro Melbourne, mostly in the inner west and north, and outer east. Seeing the places where young people lived, and in some cases were born, was deeply moving.

Throughout the day, members of the Heritage Service team shared profound stories of people who lived in difficult circumstances, who experienced care in hidden and surprising ways, and the painful realities of good intentions unintentionally causing harm. This gave us immense respect for the Uniting Heritage team's work at the crossroads of archiving, counselling, private detective work, and bearing witness to humanity.

Church Engagement Worker Matt Julius said the tour was profoundly moving.

"I was inspired by the way every member of the

Heritage Service team treasures the stories of each person with dignity and respect; holding the diversity of individual stories within a nuanced account of systems and social change.

"Some of the stories we heard today were deeply challenging, others witnessed tremendous hope and healing. It was such a gift to share this day with a great team of colleagues including our CEO, people from our current records and safeguarding teams, as well as others who work alongside and adjacent to the Heritage Service team.

"This history has a lot of wisdom to teach all of us."

It was a particular privilege to share the day with our Moderator, Rev. Salesi Faupula, the leader of the Uniting Church across Victoria and Tasmania. Part of the gift and challenge of the Church is its long memory, and responsibility for its legacy. Salesi's openness and spiritual wisdom was a deep gift. Salesi described the day as an experience of māfana – a Tongan word meaning deep spiritual warmth and pride.

A massive thank you to the Heritage Service team for hosting such a unique experience.



*Previous page:  
Then: Babies were housed at the rear, while the home's staff and administration office were housed in the main house at the front. The home also provided mothercraft training, who many of the nurses who trained there having contributed to the Heritage Service's vast photo collection.*

*Now: The group at the former Presbyterian Babies' Home in Canterbury. After this stunning mansion was donated to the Church in 1933, the Babies' Home relocated here from East Melbourne. The mansion is now serving as a retirement home.*



*Matt with the plaque at Wesley Place which commemorates the opening of the Princess Mary Club in 1926. The Wesley Central Mission opened the club in response to fears young women from country Victoria may fall prey to harmful and undesirable city influences. The club closed in 1988 and the site is now home to our 130 Lonsdale Street site.*

## About the Heritage Service.

Uniting holds records for approximately 30,000 children who experienced out-of-home care, foster care, orphanages, family group homes, babies' homes and adoption agencies. These records come from more than 20 past and current Methodist, Presbyterian and Uniting Church agencies, dating as far back as 1881.

Our Heritage Service team selects and cares for these archived records, photographs and historical materials to support people and their families to piece together memories and better understand the past.



**Find out more  
about our  
Heritage Service.**

## Other services outside of Uniting



### The Care Leavers Australasia Network

The Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN) is a support and advocacy group for people brought up in care away from their family – as state wards or children raised in children's homes, orphanages, other institutions or in foster care. CLAN also assists family members of people who were placed in care. The founding members of CLAN are care leavers involved in awareness-raising and advocacy about the issues facing people who experienced out-of-home care as children.

**T** 1800 008 774  
**E** support@clan.org.au



### Open Place

Open Place is a support and advocacy service providing direct assistance for people who grew up in Victorian orphanages and homes. Open Place helps people who identify as Forgotten Australians to deal with the legacy of their childhood experiences, and provides support to improve their health and well-being.

**T** 1800 779 379  
**E** info@openplace.org.au



### VANISH

VANISH provides search and support services to adults affected by adoption including natural mothers and fathers, adopted persons and their family members.

**T** 1300 826 474  
**E** info@vanish.org.au

## Support our work

The Heritage Service mostly relies on non-government funding. We greatly appreciate any donations that help further our work and secure this service into the future.

You can donate online and specify that your donation goes to the Heritage Services by visiting [unitingvictas.org.au/donate](https://unitingvictas.org.au/donate)

### Get in touch

**T** 0402 969 621  
**E** heritageservice@unitingvictas.org.au  
[unitingvictas.org.au](https://unitingvictas.org.au)

### About Uniting

Uniting Vic.Tas is a not-for-profit organisation working alongside local communities delivering a range of services for over 100 years.

The Heritage Service has been established for past residents and their families who were affected by adoption, or who received out-of-home care provided by the Presbyterian, Methodist and Uniting Churches. We help people access information about themselves or their family member's time in care and support them in their journey to better understand their past.

We work in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Peoples and as the traditional owners and custodians of this land.

We celebrate diversity and value the lived experience of people of every ethnicity, faith, age, disability, culture, language, gender identity and sexual orientation. We welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQA+) people at our services. We pledge to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services.

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

