

Building strong foundations.



By standing together with people living life at the margins and **raising our collective voice for change**, we create opportunities for people to thrive.

Many parents are working hard to build a brighter future for their children. Skye and her children Aylah (pictured) and Ryda are doing just that, thanks to your support.

You can also read how Freya and her partner Levi, featured in our recent Christmas Share Appeal, are settling into parenthood on page 5.

Learn more

1800 668 426
unitingvictas.org.au

Uniting



Building strong foundations for a secure future

Welcome to the Autumn 2020 edition of the Uniting Vic.Tas supporter newsletter. Thank you for the many messages of support and good wishes that I have received since I took on the role of CEO in December 2019. **It's an honour to take on the leadership of Uniting at such an exciting time in our development.**

I would like to acknowledge my predecessor and friend, Paul Linossier, who I know appreciated your support. During his three years as CEO, Paul built a strong foundation for us as we work to create a more compassionate and just society for all.

We represent more than a century of responding to the needs of people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage. We have learned from that historical legacy - both the good and the bad - and use those lessons as we look to the future, within a sector that is currently undergoing fundamental change. We can achieve more as one than we ever could separately.

We have a powerful voice that we can raise in support of the interests of the people we work with, and we are already using that. Some recent examples are increasing Newstart payments, improving our mental health system, ensuring people with disability and the elderly can live free of abuse and neglect, and providing all children with access to early learning to give them the best possible start in life. Your continuing support allows us to tackle inequality and bring about long term change.

In this newsletter, you will read more about how we are working to address the shortage of safe and affordable housing for vulnerable and disadvantaged people. Housing is a priority for the Uniting Church, so we have joined with Uniting Housing Australia to double the number of tenancies supported over the next ten years.

Our annual Winter Breakfast event is coming up and I invite you to join us. You can find the details on the back page of this newsletter. This year's event will focus on youth homelessness and will, as usual, launch our Winter Breakfast Program to provide people in crisis with a free hot meal during the cold winter months.

Thank you for your ongoing support. It's because of you that we can make a difference for people when they need it most.

Bronwyn Pike
Chief Executive Officer





Ensuring everyone has a place to call home

The rising cost of living and the lack of affordable housing has seen a growing number of people without a roof over their head. Uniting is working with the Victorian government and other community service organisations to provide practical support for people in crisis.

CHAnge project

Young people at risk in the Ballarat region are getting their lives back on track thanks to the CHAnge (Central Highlands Area nurture, grow, engage) program.

Through this program 16 to 23-year-olds at risk of homelessness can access stable housing. Dedicated youth workers provide advice on living independently, returning to education or finding stable jobs.

“We’re backing Ballarat youths and helping them turn their lives around by making sure they have the safety and security of a roof over their head,” Minister for Housing, Richard Wynne commented while visiting the project.

New homes in Bacchus Marsh

People with complex needs who may be sleeping rough in the Bacchus Marsh region now have access to stable accommodation.

Six new homes provide accommodation and tailored onsite support to meet the challenges faced by each person.

The houses are run by our Ballarat team in partnership with the state government, through its Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan.

These programs, and others like them, are possible thanks to your generous support.

Grampians youth find brighter futures

For over ten years, Karrung has offered housing and support to young people in the Grampians region.

Local youth are provided accommodation through the short stay program so they can focus on education, employment or training, while gaining the independent living skills they need to prevent homelessness.

For Bronte (pictured above), the program laid the foundation to build a brighter future.

Bronte moved into Karrung in March 2017 after escaping an abusive relationship.

Her two-year-old son, Noah, was cared for by Bronte’s mother while she got back on her feet.

“I was an empty shell when I arrived at Karrung. I didn’t know what I was doing with my life,

because I didn’t have my son with me,” Bronte said.

“The team were amazing. They gave me more than just somewhere to live. They gave me support during a really tough time in my life.”

Bronte lived at Karrung for just over a year.

During that time, she secured employment to become financially independent and worked with the Department of Health and Human Services to regain full care of Noah.

With the help of the Karrung team, Bronte secured a rental property to provide a safe home for her and Noah.

Bronte is now happily engaged and a mother of two, with her daughter Matilda born last year.



The spirit of giving

Many people in our community, who find the festive season particularly hard, had a brighter Christmas thanks to you.

You responded to those in need with a sense of compassion and generosity through our fundraising initiatives.

Food For Families

The 70 tonnes of food and other essential items pledged through Food For Families provided some much-needed Christmas cheer for people in crisis. It has also gone some way to restocking our shelves so we can continue to provide food to those that come to us for assistance in 2020.

We received a record number of registrations, with almost 900 individuals, families, schools, workplaces, congregations and community groups participating.

An additional 250 food boxes were delivered to Uniting in January for our relief efforts in bushfire-affected communities.

Meet Eileen

Long-time supporter Eileen collected more than 20 boxes and was the face of our 2019 campaign, featuring in our Food For Families initiative.

Thank you for your incredible efforts Eileen, and everyone who donated.

“Donating food and other essentials is a practical way to help people going through a tough time.” - Eileen

Food For Families 2020

- 1** Register anytime at **foodforfamilies.org.au** to collect food as a family, individual, workplace, school, community group, church or sporting club.
- 2** When registering you can select to be a **drop-off point** where participants can deliver their food and toiletry items.

Once you've registered, we'll send you an email with the next steps.



Shout out to our top Food For Families collectors

Congregations

St Andrew's Uniting Church
Ringwood Uniting Church
St John's Toorak



Community groups

The Avenue Neighbourhood House
Mitcham Community House
Concept Blue residents



Individuals and families

Michelle Lovell
Jessica Cox
Eileen Rooney



Schools

Aspendale Gardens Primary
Gardenvale Primary
Templeton Primary



Workplaces

Swinburne University
13cabs
IMCD AUSTRALIA



Food For Families. Thanks to you.

We'd like to acknowledge the following businesses who provided practical support to help run Food For Families:

- 13cabs
- Golden Messenger
- Commonwealth Bank
- whiteGREY
- Mindshare



Christmas Share Appeal

Through our Christmas Share Appeal, your generosity helped raise over \$380,000 to support families working towards a brighter future.

You were introduced to two families - Skye and her children, Ryda and Aylah, and new parents, Levi and Freya. We are thrilled to let you know that both families are doing well.

Aldous, (pictured above with his mum, Freya) is a healthy, blue-eyed baby with a full head of dark hair. The couple enjoyed their first Christmas as a family and Levi has returned to work to support them.

Meanwhile, Skye beamed with pride as Ryda set off for his first day of Grade Two. Skye continues to attend our programs, along with Aylah, to build her parenting skills.

Target Christmas Appeal

As part of the UnitingCare Australia network, we once again partnered with Target to encourage people to donate to support families in crisis during the festive season.

We were overwhelmed by the response and the spirit of giving, especially by younger members of our community.

Children who might have otherwise gone without Christmas presents, benefited from two thoughtful six-year-olds pooling their pocket money to buy gifts. They even decorated their own wrapping paper to make them more personal.

Thank you for helping us share joy and hope at Christmas.



Volunteers in the community

Personal experience drives Anne to make a difference

Anne is an integral part of the Hobart emergency relief team, providing practical and emotional support to individuals and families working towards a brighter future.

Anne spent 20 years working in the mental health field, inspired by her son's diagnosis of schizophrenia at just 15 years of age.

After retiring in 2017, Anne knew she had more to give.

"When my son was diagnosed, I wanted to step up and help other families going through similar circumstances," says Anne. "I like being able to help people who are going through a rough patch, often through no fault of their own."

In the past year, we provided emergency relief services to individuals and families in the greater Hobart area more than 2500 times.

"Awful circumstances can happen to anyone. If you lose your job, go through a relationship breakdown or a workplace injury, it can all lead to financial difficulties," Anne says.

"If I can put a smile on someone's face and ensure they feel heard, even just for a few minutes, it can provide a little bit of time out from their troubles."

Anne says an increasing number of families in the Hobart area are reaching out for assistance.

"We can't rely solely on government funding for our (emergency relief) programs. It is nowhere near enough to reach the growing number of people who come to us," she says.

"I just want to say thank you to people who support our programs. It's because of you we can keep going."



Community connection keeps Virginia going

Virginia (pictured above with Paul Linossier and Bronwyn Pike) has been the heart and soul of our Sale Op Shop for 33 years and her service was recently recognised at our Melbourne Annual Public Meeting.

“I started volunteering in the shop a week after it opened,” Virginia says. “My husband was working away at the time and I had three young children, so it was a good way for me to get out of the house and socialise with others.

“My children and grandchildren have all grown up around the Op Shop – it’s part of my life.

“It’s been a wonderful journey that has kept me connected to my community.”

Her fellow volunteers helped Virginia through the tragedy of losing her daughter after a long battle with cancer last year.

“Everyone has been so kind, caring and understanding,” Virginia says. “I don’t know what I would have done without them. They were so supportive.”

The knowledge that funds raised through the shop go back into the local community and the joy of helping people find a bargain keep Virginia motivated.

Funds raised from the Sale Op Shop directly support our programs and services across Gippsland.

“I can’t believe it has been 33 years. It has gone by in the blink of an eye.”



“It’s been a wonderful journey that has kept me connected to my community.” - Virginia

Become a volunteer

If you’re interested in becoming a volunteer at your local Op Shop or any Uniting service, please visit unitingvictas.org.au/volunteer

Get involved

Winter Breakfast

Winter can be a particularly challenging time for those most in need. Please join us for our annual Winter Breakfast event in 2020. This event marks the start of the Winter Breakfast Program. Every winter for the last 27 years, people in the Prahran area experiencing crisis can enjoy a hot meal and some company.

Date: Friday 22 May

Time: 7am for 7.30am start (early but well worth waking up for)

Location: Malvern Town Hall, 1251 High Street

Theme: Homelessness among young people

Register your interest by contacting our team:

T 1800 668 426

E winterbreakfast@unitingvictas.org.au

Pancake Day

Thank you to everyone who has already registered or held their 2020 Pancake Day event.

If you haven't, never fear! It's not too late to get together, have some fun and make a difference. We're encouraging people to hold an event any time before Easter.

To get involved, please contact our team:

T 1800 060 543

E pancakeday.info@unitingvictas.org.au
victas.pancakeday.com.au

You can help make a difference to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in your community. All money raised goes directly to local programs and services to help people when they need it most.



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

Fundraise for us

Host an event at your school, workplace or community group and get together to raise funds for your community.

T 1800 060 543

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



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

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