

Position Description

Title:	Centre Director, Safe Haven Initiative
Business unit:	Early Learning
Location:	22 Church Street, Richmond VIC 3121
Employment type:	Full-time, maximum-term to December 2025
Reports to:	Program Manager

About Uniting

Uniting Vic.Tas is the community services organisation of the Uniting Church. We've been supporting people and families for over 100 years. We work alongside people of all ages in local communities in Victoria and Tasmania. Our services reach to Albury-Wodonga in the north, Mallacoota in East Gippsland, the Wimmera region in the west, and across Tasmania.

We empower children, young people and families to learn and thrive. We're there for people experiencing homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction or mental illness. We support people with disability to live the life they choose. We assist older people to maintain their independence and enjoy life. We provide opportunities to access training and meaningful employment. We're proud to welcome and support asylum seekers to our community. We work to empower people with the information, skills and tools they need to live a healthy, happy life.

As an organisation, 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, sex and sexual orientation. We welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and non-binary, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ+) people at our services. We pledge to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services.

Our purpose: To inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice

Our values: We are imaginative, respectful, compassionate, and bold

1. About the program

Cooke Court Uniting was selected by the Department of Education (VIC) as the site for an intensive early childhood education and care research project, as part of their Safe Haven budget initiative. The research project is being undertaken in partnership with Parkville Institute, a not-for-profit organisation established to operationalise and evaluate the program. The Australian government and philanthropy are also funding the project. The results from previous trials have found that children who participated in an intensive early education and care program had significant improvement in their cognitive (IQ and language) and non-cognitive skills (resilience and social-emotional). The University of Melbourne research team undertook a rigorous evaluation (Research report 5 can be found [here](#)). The objective of the intensive early childhood education and care program is that children living with significant adversity will experience a stable and enriching early learning and care program and enter school as confident and successful learners who are developmentally equal to their peers. The long-term objective of the program is that these children will enjoy the same life trajectories as their peers. This research will seek to determine whether children, recruited with the same eligibility criteria as those in previous trials, can achieve the same remarkable learning and development outcomes. This is one of four research sites to be established in Australia.

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2. Position purpose

As the Director of this research childcare centre, you will have overall responsibility for leading the operational elements of the program, nested within the usual childcare legislative requirements and with a commitment to the mission and values of Uniting Tas/Vic and the Parkville Institute.

3. Scope

Budget:

Nil

People:

- Service Administrator
 - Pedagogical Leader
 - Teachers
 - Educators
 - Infant Mental Health Consultant
 - Family Service Practitioner
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4. Relationships

Internal

- Executive Officer, Early Learning
- Area Manager
- Practice Manager
- Program and Project Delivery Manager
- Early Learning Program Manager
- Uniting Support Services as required

External

- Families and caregivers and children
- Parkville Institute
- Department of Education and Training
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Referring Agencies
- Local Government Authorities
- Peak bodies
- Other Community Service Organisations as required

5. Key responsibility areas

General leadership:

- The Centre Director is responsible for the overall operations of implementing a high-quality early education and care service for children and families, providing strong engagement with and leadership to the teachers, educators and specialist staff and building strong and meaningful partnerships with families, children and our Parkville Institute research partners.
- As the Nominated Supervisor, you are the responsible person in charge of the service and in your absence, you will ensure that another responsible person (as defined by the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011) is in charge of the service.
- Specifically, as the Nominated Supervisor you are responsible for ensuring that the centre's:
 - Day-to-day operations comply with the requirements of the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, and the National Quality Standard for Early Education and Care
 - Policies and procedures are implemented in accordance with Uniting values, mission
 - Policies and procedures and pedagogy are implemented in accordance with the Early Years Education Program model
 - Quality Improvement Plan is developed collaboratively and implemented so that staff are working towards exceeding the National Quality Standard for Early Education and Care
 - Commitment to ongoing reflective practice and continuous improvement is maintained and supported.
 - Meets its commitments in accordance with Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics (2016).
 - Service philosophy is embedded into all aspects of practice.

Operational management and leadership:

- Ensure operations comply with the Uniting's policies and procedures and provide regular reports on the operation of the centre about the status of the service's administrative procedures, parent and community liaison, staff professional development and training, and any other areas as the need arises.
- Provide financial information on request to the organisation to inform the preparation of the service's annual budget.
- Be conversant with the service's budget, monitor and take steps to ensure the service operates within that budget, making necessary adjustments to ensure compliance with service's financial plans and budget.
- Understand and utilise processes to access additional funding and/or subsidies.
- Ensure the organisation is informed of any problem which would affect the children, service approval, or quality assurance rating, regulatory and legal compliance, or the smooth running of the service.
- Ensure Parkville Institute is informed of any issue which would affect fidelity to the model
- Ensure effective enrolment procedures in collaboration with the senior leadership team and the Parkville Institute.
- Possess a sound knowledge of Family Assistance Law as it relates to Child Care Benefit and ACCS (Wellbeing) and demonstrate an ability to report through the Child Care Management System.

Education and care:

- Lead the collaborative development and implementation of the service philosophy as a key informant for the curriculum and pedagogy.
- Take a senior leadership role as a member of a multidisciplinary team supporting the implementation of the Early Years Education program model.
- Support the implementation of the relevant early years framework and the National Quality Standard at an exceeding quality standard.
- Ensure the service facilitates a play-based learning environment and develops learning programs responsive to children's ideas, strengths, and abilities.

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- Lead the development of a culture of inclusive practice and an environment which honours and responds to the diversity and cultural traditions of the staff, families and children participating in the program.
- Collaborate with the senior leadership team in ensuring currency in best early childhood practice.
- Support the implementation of the Early Years Education Program model with fidelity in collaboration with the Parkville Institute and the senior leadership team.
- Collaborate with the pedagogical leader to ensure staff maintain meaningful documentation related to program planning and evaluating individual children's progress and achievement in learning over time.
- Ensure the service strives towards embedding environmental sustainability across all areas of the service's operations, including the educational program.
- Ensure environments reflect and respond to community contexts and family backgrounds.

Children's health, safety and wellbeing:

- Take overall responsibility for the protection of rights and the dignity of all children attending the service.
- Maintain a hygienic environment where children are safe and supported and appropriately supervised at all times.
- Collaborate with the senior leadership team in the implementation of a trauma informed, attachment focused program for children (the model).
- Ensure staff and visitors meet safety requirements including working with children, police checks and sign in protocols.
- Ensure compliance as a mandated reporter in accordance with the service's Child Protection Policy and Child Safe Standards.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the health and safety implications and requirements for meeting the individual needs of children with specific chronic health conditions, disability, developmental delay, allergies, or trauma or whose religious or cultural backgrounds require individualised health, dietary and safety practices.
- Ensure first aid and medication is administered and documented in compliance with the service's policies and procedures.
- Ensure children's immunisation schedules are up to date and documented.
- Provide a safe and supportive environment for mothers who are breastfeeding their infants.
- Maintain overall supervision of the centre's nutrition policy and practices to ensure that 75% of children's nutritional needs are met each day.
- Facilitate timely repairs and maintenance and that equipment is appropriate for purpose and children's development and learning.
- Ensure effective processes are in place to meet Workplace Health and Safety requirements:
 - ensure Workplace Health and Safety procedures are understood and are followed by all staff
 - investigate workplace hazards and ensure any required changes to policies, procedures and practices are made
 - provide a consultative process for communication of Workplace Health and Safety information allowing staff input into Workplace Health and Safety issues
 - ensure staff are appropriately trained in Workplace Health and Safety, standard work method statements and risk assessments
 - provide staff with pertinent Workplace Health Safety information and updates.

People and teams:

- Collaborate with the pedagogical leader to ensure all staff have a sound knowledge of the National Quality Framework, in particular the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, and the National Quality Standard for Early Education and Care and meet these requirements to a high standard in their work practices.
- Work with the pedagogical leader to ensure that staff provide a supportive educational and care environment and are thoughtful about their interactions with children, building relationships that will be central for supporting children's social and emotional development and wellbeing and capacity for behavioural regulation.

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- Work with the Parkville Institute and the senior leadership team in supporting the professional learning and development of staff working in the centre.
- Ensure staff qualifications and ratios meet the needs of the service in accordance with the prescribed ratios of the Early Years Education Program model: 1 adult: 3 children under three years of age and 1 adult: 6 children over three years of age.
- Oversee the establishment and maintenance of the primary educator model where each teacher or educator is the primary educator for three children.
- Work with the pedagogical leader to provide overall support and supervision for all staff
- Promote a healthy team environment that supports staff wellbeing.
- Develop and model positive and open channels of communication with all staff and with families.
- Lead and guide a culture of reflective practice that supports informed decision making and continuous improvement.
- Collaborate with the pedagogical leader to ensure documentation of children's learning is professionally presented and is an authentic, accurate representation of children's learning and development over time.
- Encourage and model positive, respectful, responsive, and nurturing relationships with children.
- In collaboration with the senior leadership team, develop, conduct and document regular staff feedback and appraisal processes, that inform professional learning programs and support capacity building for all staff.
- Coordinate the scheduling and documenting of regular senior leadership team meetings and monthly staff meetings.
- Participate in and prepare reports for operational management and replication research meetings as required with Uniting and Parkville Institute.

Collaborative partnerships with families and communities:

- Promote and model clear, respectful communication between the organisation, managers, staff, and families.
- Build and maintain effective local networks within the local area including relevant local community organisations, government agencies and referring agencies.
- Ensure the staff team is knowledgeable about and sensitive to the aspirations and needs of families and the local community.
- Develop and maintain respectful, responsive, and reciprocal relationships with families or caregivers.
- Support the 12-weekly goal setting meetings with families and their child's primary educator in recognition of their role as children's most important educators.
- Create a safe, welcoming, inclusive supportive, and informative environment for families
- Act as a resource person for families when needed.
- Encourage families to contribute to building a sense of community in the service.
- Maintain and share current information which assists families to access resources within the local and wider community.
- Be an advocate for high quality services for children and families in the community.
- Manage events and experiences with children and families which promote awareness of their community and reflect child-centred learning.
- Implement a range of strategies to obtain families' input for planning improvements as part of the Quality Improvement Plan.

Research project:

- Communicate regularly with the Parkville Institute team as part of ensuring program operationalisation as intended as part of the Safe Haven initiative.
- Provide reports and data for the Parkville Institute as part of program fidelity assessment research in collaboration with the pedagogical leader as requested.
- Collaborate with the senior leadership team in the induction into the model, and the ongoing mentoring and coaching for teachers and educators.

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Personal accountability

- Compliance with Uniting's values, code of conduct, policies and procedures and relevant government legislation and standards where relevant.
- Cooperate with strategies to actively ensure the safety, protection and well-being of children who come into association with us.
- Ensure appropriate use of resources.
- Work collaboratively with Uniting (Victoria Tasmania) employees and external stakeholders in accordance with Uniting's values and professional standards of behaviour.
- Actively participate in initiatives to maintain, build upon and promote a positive and collaborative workplace.
- Identify opportunities to integrate and work collaboratively across teams.
- Take reasonable care for your own health and safety, and health and safety of others (to the extent required).
- Promote a positive safety culture by contributing to health and safety consultation and communication.
- Promptly respond to and report health and safety hazards, incidents and near misses to line management
- Attend mandatory training sessions (i.e. equal employment opportunity, health, and safety) and mandatory training specific to position.
- Declare anything that you become aware of through the course of your engagement which may impede your suitability to work with children and/or young people.
- Declare any potential or actual conflict of interest that you become aware of through the course of your engagement:
 - based on a relationship with a current member of Uniting's workforce; or
 - based on my ongoing work with another organisation.

6. Person specification

Qualifications

- A degree in early childhood education is preferred, however a highly experienced and skilled applicant with a Diploma in Children's Services (or equivalent as approved by Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority) will be considered.
- Current First Aid, CPR, Anaphylaxis, and Asthma certificates.
- Victorian Working with Children Check.
- National Police Criminal History Check.

Experience

- Comprehensive knowledge of theory relating to early childhood education and care, professional standards and approved learning frameworks, and contemporary understanding of evidence based best practice approaches to teaching and learning Have a sound knowledge and understanding of contemporary early childhood learning and development theories and learning styles.
- Five years' experience as a coordinator or senior manager in a children's services centre or equivalent.
- Knowledge of leadership theory and the use of a range of leaderships styles and the ability to research and disseminate information to others in a manner that is easily understood.
- Sound knowledge of legislation governing the operation of children's services, as well as a robust understanding of the quality areas under the National Quality Standard.
- Thorough understanding of Early Childhood Australia's (ECA) Code of Ethics, Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Code of Conduct and the service's Code of Conduct and be able to support other staff in their understanding of these Codes.
- Ability to coach and mentor early childhood teachers and educators in the development of an evidence informed educational program.

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- Ability to facilitate professional discussions and lead and support critical reflection in all aspects of program delivery across the service in consultation with relevant stakeholders.
- The ability to plan, work and manage time effectively with minimal supervision.
- Ability to challenge and support early childhood teachers and educators to improve their professional knowledge and skills as teachers and educators.
- Well-developed leadership and self-motivation skills.
- Ability to identify and utilise people's strengths and build relationships.

Core selection criteria

- **Values alignment:** ability to demonstrate and authentically promote Uniting's values of respect for the uniqueness and value of every individual; establish and maintain ethical relationships that enable people to be influential in their own support arrangement and ensure they are treated with dignity and respect; build on strengths and abilities of all; demonstrate transparency and accountability.
- **Child safety:** demonstrated ability to provide safe environments for children and young people and protect them from abuse and neglect.
- **Communication:** Strong and clear communication skills with the ability to build positive professional relationships with families, children, teachers, educators and other professionals; excellent interpersonal skills; high level written and verbal communication skills.
- **Teamwork:** experience and skills in working collaboratively with others in pursuit of team goals; collaborates and shares information; shows consideration, concern and respect for others feelings and ideas; accommodates and works well with the different working styles of others; encourages and supports respectful resolution of conflict within a staff team; willingness to be actively supporting others; contributes to the continuous improvement of an ethical, positive, collaborative and effective work environment.
- **Quality assurance:** ability to support the development and implementation of a high-quality education and care program for children; committed to continuity of individual learning and development and building multi-disciplinary professional practice; ability to operate in an inclusive and supportive learning environment.
- **Problem solving:** demonstrates creativity and innovation; can be flexible and resilient and quickly adapt to the work environment; be aware of and work with, the different strengths and abilities of the staff team; have developed skills in engaging children and families in different ways.
- **Leadership:** strong leadership skills and knowledge in leading education focused teams; ability to support and lead program planning in collaboration with the pedagogical leader and ensure the achievement of goals; ability to build strong, high functioning teams and align teams with the organisational values and goals, particularly those related to consumer-centricity; role modelling expected behaviour; strong ability to establish credibility with staff and inspire a shared vision.
- **Research:** Understand the importance of research in early education and the implications for evidence informed practice; be committed to supporting the research component of the Early Years Education Program model and to supporting fidelity to the model in partnership with the Parkville Institute, DET and Uniting (Victoria / Tasmania).

7. We are a child safe organisation

Uniting is a child safe organisation and is committed in everyday practice to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children, at all times. As a child safe organisation, employment with Uniting is subject to a satisfactory national (and international where relevant) police check and relevant Working With Children Check (and NDIS Worker Screening Check where relevant) to your State prior to commencement of any paid or unpaid work and/or participation in any service or undertaking.

This position description is subject to review and may change in accordance with Uniting's operational, service and consumer requirements.

8. Acknowledgement

I have read, understood, and accepted the above Position Description

Employee

Name:

Signature:

Date: