

Autumn 2024

Community in Mission



102

Community in Mission highlights the magic that happens when we partner together to enliven communities around us.

Welcome Jessica

Jessica Hateley-Browne joins Uniting Vic.Tas as the new Director of Mission.

Jessica brings a deep love of the Uniting Church in Australia combined with professional experience working with community service organisations.

She joins Uniting excited about the opportunity to serve the organisation and the Church by bringing together her professional skills with her understanding and care for the Church. Jessica worships at Northcote Uniting Church, and serves on the Assembly's Act2 Steering Group, providing leadership to the national Church as it discerns God's call for its future shape.

Jessica has previously been a member of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Standing Committee, and has led strategic projects for the Synod, such as the voluntary assisted dying consultation and review projects.

Jessica loves the mission and vision of the Uniting Church and is looking forward to realising it in new ways at Uniting Vic.Tas, leading a terrific team including Cheryl Lawrie who has been newly promoted to Mission and Ethos Manager. Cheryl will be the primary point of contact for all presbyteries and congregations. Jessica is looking forward to deepening her partnerships and relationships with the Synod as she gets established in her new role.



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

Uniting

Stitching hope

The Ruffy project, led by Uniting's Wodonga office, is a new initiative which produces swags locally to distribute to those sleeping rough.

The idea for this project sprang from the critical need of warmth and bedding for those experiencing homelessness within the Goulburn Northeast region.

St Leonard's Uniting Church Brighton have been a key reason the program has been able to get off the ground.

"The project has been challenging at times but luckily this wonderful seed funding has come from St Leonard's Uniting Church through their Coffee Cup Challenge proceeds," says Uniting's Emergency Relief Coordinator in Wodonga, Catherine Byrne.

The Beechworth Uniting Church has also generously donated to the program.

"It's amazing these funds can come in and help a region with their homelessness problem," says Catherine.

Beechworth Correctional Centre are proudly partnering with Uniting to create the swags.

"We want to make change and help those who are sleeping rough and empower the participants at the correctional centre in a well-meaning program," says Catherine.

Carevan will help to distribute the swags to those in need, as well as source further funding.

To learn how you or your congregation can support this program, please email Catherine Byrne at Catherine.Byrne@vt.uniting.org.



"The Ruffy Swag project will give people dignity that they can have a portable bed on their back and something warm to sleep in every night" – Uniting Emergency Relief Coordinator, Catherine.

Synod calls for drug reform policy

At the November 2023 meeting of Synod, Uniting Vic.Tas brought forward a proposal calling for a health-based approach to reduce the harm of illicit drugs.



Synod heard from Uniting Vic.Tas Alcohol and other Drugs professionals, who brought expert knowledge to this issue from over 50 years delivering specialist Alcohol and other Drug (AOD) treatment services.

Over 250 Synod members, representatives from across the community, participated in workshops and open discussions on the enormous harm to individuals, families and communities that substance abuse may cause.

The Church discourages use of illicit drugs whilst recognising the complex interplay between psychosocial, developmental and environmental factors that can lead to drug dependency and contribute to drug-related harm.

After discussion, deliberation and discernment across two days, the Synod resolved to adopt Uniting's proposal and call upon the Victorian and Tasmanian Governments to:

- Ensure drug policies are based in health and social responses with an aim to increase safety and wellness, while reducing criminalisation, stigmatisation and marginalisation
- Provide greater funding in demand reduction and harm reduction strategies to support people who use drugs and address harm to families and communities
- Decriminalise the possession and personal use of small amounts of illicit drugs.

The resolution is a demonstration of the Church's ongoing commitment to socially just approaches to supporting people facing vulnerability and builds upon Uniting's long history of advocacy in this space.

Manager, Mission and Ethos

Cheryl Lawrie

E cheryl.lawrie@unitingvictas.org.au

Contact Uniting

T 1800 668 426

E community@unitingvictas.org.au

Addressing the need for community housing in Bendigo

Planning approval has been granted to Uniting Vic.Tas for its community housing development, worth more than \$44 million, on the St Andrew's Church site in central Bendigo.



The St Andrew's site development will comprise of 73 new one- and two-bedroom units close to a range of services and amenities.

The congregation has been a part of the Bendigo community since 1854. Since their 150th anniversary in 2004, St Andrews has been trying to find a way to give back to their community.

Currently there are around 3000 people across Bendigo who are waiting for community housing and a safe and secure place to call home.

We hope this development will help to fill this need by providing a large number of high-quality, modern, architecturally designed units.

Pancakes with purpose

We had over 60 congregations register to flip for a good cause and take part in Pancake Day 2024.

From supporting families facing food crisis to helping rough sleepers find a permanent home, funds raised will go towards helping those who need it most.

Thank you for getting together, having some fun and making a difference.

