

Spring 2023 Congregation Connect

Pilot program supporting those rough sleeping.

Earlier this year, Uniting successfully piloted a six-month Street to Home program in the Wimmera region. As the final month of the pilot nears, Assertive Outreach worker Glenn Kimberley has already identified 64 people rough sleeping and in need of assistance.

These people range from six to 69 years of age. They include a single parent with four children living in a tent by a lake, a couple in their early twenties sleeping in their car in central Horsham, and a middle-aged woman living in a tent on her own in a national park.

“The people I work with are often so embarrassed about rough sleeping that they live each day trying not to be seen,” said Glenn.

“It can be a real challenge to get that initial engagement, sometimes it takes days, other times it takes months, but it’s all about building that trust in the relationship.”

Glenn has been working closely with local congregations in the region to promote the program’s work and spread awareness of issues affecting those sleeping rough. Church and community groups have responded generously, donating warm clothes, sleeping bags and blankets, as well as making financial contributions.

An application is currently being reviewed for ongoing funding and expansion of the program, replicating the Ballarat Street to Home program Uniting delivers across the Central Highlands.

If you would like to find out more about the impact of the programs so far, or how you can help, please contact Senior Manager, Homelessness Western Division Adam Liversage on **03 5332 1286**.



Paul* has been sleeping rough for three years.

Paul, a man in his fifties, has lived and worked in the Wimmera region for 23 years. Business closures and his industry’s work drying up has made it challenging for Paul to secure steady employment.

Paul mostly sticks to himself, staying out of sight and sleeping in disabled toilets to feel safe during the night.

“There is nothing around to rent. I know they’re meant to be doing new housing but how long is that going to take? There is just no housing around here,” said Paul.

Paul shared how important outreach programs are in supporting the community’s most vulnerable people.

“We [rough sleepers] could be anywhere. We could be up the street, by the river, the other side of town, you just don’t know where we are. That’s why you need people like Glenn,” he said.

“I know a lot of us are very grateful for what he’s done. If it wasn’t for him, I’d be... I don’t know where I’d be.”

**This is a true story about a real person. Some details such as names have been changed to respect the wishes of the person featured.*



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

Uniting



Rising costs hit rural communities hard.

Kangaroo Flat Emergency Relief Coordinator, Max Blume, has seen firsthand how rising costs are hurting those living in rural communities.

Max noticed many struggling families from Dunolly were making the 50km trek to Uniting's emergency relief service in Kangaroo Flat just to access basic needs such as food.

After hearing how challenging it was for residents to make the journey, Max partnered with the Dunolly District Uniting Church to offer food relief, material aid and other essential items to the community once a fortnight. The congregation welcomed the idea, offering up a freshly painted and carpeted room in their church to run the service.

"The Dunolly Uniting Church has been very kind and supportive. They even supply us with afternoon tea and homemade cakes," said Max.

With this congregation's help, the service has been able to support 36 families in the Dunolly district.

"They are very happy and appreciative for the help," said Max. "Food is very expensive in small towns.

"Our role is to make sure we can help people make their money go further and live a better life."

Fighting poverty and hunger.

Anti-Poverty Week, 15 – 21 October 2023, is a time to educate ourselves further on the issues surrounding poverty and how we can work together to end it.

At Uniting, we work across a range of community services, intervening early to help people avoid crisis, as well as supporting those who live life on the margins.

For the fourth year running, Uniting Vic.Tas CEO Bronwyn Pike is the Victorian Co-Chair of Anti-Poverty Week. Jeremy Pettet, Executive Officer of Uniting Tasmania, is the Tasmanian Co-Chair.

In Australia, on any given day, over half a million households are struggling to put food on the table. This sobering statistic is just a snapshot of the prevalence of food poverty in this country. As we respond to this, we demonstrate God's compassion for all humankind.

To combat food insecurity, Uniting is growing our Food For Families program to support even more people across Victoria and Tasmania. Running for over 30 years, Food For Families brings together schools, congregations, workplaces, community groups, families and individuals to donate non-perishable food and household essential items to those facing hardship.

The rising cost of living is making it increasingly hard for people to afford food. With your support we can provide even more struggling families with essential food items.

Register now, [foodforfamilies.org.au/register](https://www.foodforfamilies.org.au/register)

Winter blanket appeal.

Thanks to your support we were able to distribute over 2000 blankets and other winter items to those in need.



Mission and Ethos Partners

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