

# Congregation Connect

## Exploring local community services together.

Uniting Vic.Tas and Uniting congregations work to build a brighter future for the vulnerable and marginalised, reaching out to inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice.

## Partnership to deliver crisis accommodation for women.

**Construction has started on a new crisis accommodation facility in Mitcham, designed to support older women at risk of homelessness.**

The Mountview House facility is nearly two decades in the making and is a wonderful example of our strong connection with local congregations.

Our new CEO, Bronwyn Pike joined with partnering organisations Mountview Uniting Church, Community Housing Ltd (CHL), Oak Building Group and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to celebrate turning-the-sod on the eight-unit development.

“Mountview House will be a step toward helping address the need for older women’s crisis accommodation in Melbourne’s East.”

Rev Brendon Byrne reminded us of how the congregation’s vision for this land flows from God’s mission and heart for people and thriving communities.

“Through partnering with Uniting Vic.Tas, CHL and Oak Building Group, and with support from the Victorian Government, the congregation’s vision is becoming a reality,” Bronwyn added.



L-R: Rev Brendan Byrne – Mountview Congregation past Minister, Bronwyn Pike – Uniting Chief Executive Office, Steve Bevington – Managing Director, CHL Building Construction partner, Dustin Halse MP – Member for Ringwood.

## Spiritual and Pastoral Care in difficult times.

Narelle Gillespie is one of three chaplains offering pastoral and spiritual care to residents, carers and staff at Uniting. Since joining Uniting three years ago and given the significant changes the organisation has seen since the merger, many staff have come to value greatly the pastoral care offered in a Christian organisation. With an engaging presence, she regularly visits over 40 sites including our disability and out-of-home care residential facilities in the east and south of Melbourne.

Narelle offers a safe and confidential listening environment in which people can share their life circumstances or journey in a way that is comfortable for them. Through pastoral care, they can explore possibilities for personal and spiritual growth through an attentive and compassionate presence.

With her husband Paul, she cares for a growing family of four adults and their partners. In Narelle’s spare time, she enjoys walking, gardening and her current hobby is restoring an old caravan!

### Contacts

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# Uniting

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



## Pancake Day 2020

Pancake Day is fast approaching, and we are busy preparing host packs, which will be ready for distribution in mid January.

This Pancake Day, you can help make a difference to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in Victoria and Tasmania. All money raised goes directly to Uniting programs (of your choosing) to support people in our community experiencing crisis, vulnerability and disadvantage.

Register now for Pancake Day 2020 at [victas.pancakeday.com.au](http://victas.pancakeday.com.au) or by completing and returning the enclosed registration form.



## Coffee Cup Challenge

We recently shared with you the story of St Leonard's, Brighton and their Coffee Cup Challenge, which has taken their Pancake Day fundraising efforts to a whole new level. A number of congregations have already jumped onboard to start their own Coffee Cup Challenge. It's not too late for you to join in.

To learn more about this great initiative or how we can support you to participate in your own Coffee Cup Challenge, please contact the Community Fundraising team on **1800 060 543** or by emailing [pancakeday.info@vt.uniting.org](mailto:pancakeday.info@vt.uniting.org)

## Guide to Supporter Services.

If your congregation would like to donate to a local Uniting service, please contact us on **1800 668 426** for information on how to do this.

If you are planning to hold an **event to fundraise** for your chosen Uniting service, please call the Community Fundraising team on **1800 060 543** for support or to discuss your idea.

Any contribution, no matter how big or small, makes a huge difference towards helping your local community and you can direct where you want the proceeds from your fundraising event to go.

All donations/proceeds can go directly towards your nominated service or to where the need is greatest.

## Homelessness on the rise.

Many congregation members will have noticed an increasing number of people sleeping rough in our communities, but this is the tip of the iceberg. Most people experiencing homelessness are not easily identified; they are living in temporary accommodation, in cars or staying with friends or family.

As the cost of housing has increased, incomes have stagnated, especially for people reliant on government income support. As a result, more people are being locked out of the rental market, while waiting lists for public and social housing are growing.

In Hobart, homelessness has risen 21% in the past five

years, with one in 80 people in Tasmania accessing specialist homelessness services in 2016-17. On any given night in Victoria 24,000 people are homeless. As need increases, homelessness services struggle to meet demand, with a third of people attempting to access specialist homelessness services being turned away.

Uniting is committed to expanding housing options for people experiencing disadvantage and advocating for better services for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

Uniting Vic.Tas is in the process of preparing its submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into

Homeless, which calls on the state government to urgently address the shortage of affordable housing, provide comprehensive assistance to prevent people becoming homelessness, and ensure that people accessing homelessness services are not turned away due to inadequate funding.

Members of the public are also able to make a submission to the Homelessness Inquiry [parliament.vic.gov.au/lbic-lc/inquiries/inquiry/976](http://parliament.vic.gov.au/lbic-lc/inquiries/inquiry/976)

To read more about our advocacy in housing and homelessness, visit [vt.uniting.org/community-issues/homelessness-and-housing/](http://vt.uniting.org/community-issues/homelessness-and-housing/)