

**Safe and
secure
affordable
housing is
everyone's
right.**



In standing with those who experience homelessness and disadvantage, by providing a range of supports and by speaking out, together we will ensure that people have the opportunity to thrive.

Uniting works alongside individuals and families to build their capacity and confidence by empowering them with the support they need to succeed.

For over 100 years our people and supporters have worked alongside communities to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable people.

Learn more
1800 668 426
vt.uniting.org

Uniting



Together we're making a difference

Demand for our homelessness, housing and emergency relief services continues to increase. The enthusiastic response to our Winter Appeal demonstrates that, together with you, we are there when it matters for people who need it most.

Spring is finally here. For many of us, the emerging warmth represents new life and new beginnings. For others, it can simply mean relief that the cold nights are easing off.

For me, this spring is also a time to reflect on where new beginnings can lead us.

Just over 12 months ago, 21 UnitingCare agencies, Wesley Mission Victoria and two Uniting Church business units came together to create Uniting Vic.Tas. This new beginning was designed to strengthen our efforts to create an inclusive, connected and just world.

Building on our founding agencies' long histories of life-changing work, we continue to provide critical services that people rely on every day.

Providing services for people in crisis is just one area where we provide essential support. Our services span the breadth of life's needs, from early learning and education to support for older

people and their carers. All our services are designed to build on people's skills, talent and resilience enabling them and their family to thrive.

Coming together as Uniting has created new opportunities for us to strengthen the way we work alongside people and families. We're providing more services, launching new services and delivering in more locations.

Working to create change takes all of us, and I am grateful for everyone who contributes at Uniting—staff, volunteers, community, governments—and, of course, you. Making a difference for people is at the heart of everything we do, thank you for being part of it.

Paul Linossier
Chief Executive Officer

Campaign for change

We've joined the Everybody's Home campaign to end homelessness. We're working with other organisations across Australia to campaign for change.

We're asking for Federal and State Governments to:

- Increase public housing
- Develop a national housing strategy
- Provide a better deal for renters
- Give immediate financial relief to those struggling just to get by
- Commit to a plan to end homelessness by 2030
- Make home ownership more achievable



Join with us and sign the petition
everybodyshome.com.au

Courage overcomes

April knows firsthand what it means to be homeless.
Now she is determined to make a difference for others.

For 10 years, April shared a secure rental home with family members, all of whom live with a disability. In 2010, April and her family were asked to leave their home, beginning eight years of separation and instability.

Despite exhaustive attempts April was unable to secure appropriate housing for her family. We began working alongside April in 2012, supporting her to secure a social housing property in Ballarat. Being able to connect to social supports, like our Breezeway Meals Program, also gives her a chance to be part of a community where people look out for each other, and feel safe.

In August, we were proud to sponsor April to attend the 2018 National Homelessness Conference in Melbourne. Hearing about other people's experience of homelessness was empowering. April now plans to become more involved in her community, sharing her story to create change.

Across Victoria and Tasmania, increasing numbers of people are calling on us for crisis support. Common causes that drive people into homelessness are family violence or relationship breakdown, poor mental or physical health, problems with drug and alcohol use, the death of a loved one, high costs of renting, financial difficulties and unemployment. This reflects what we see in our services, every day.

We often think of homelessness as people sleeping rough however this makes up just 7% of people experiencing homelessness. It is a significant problem, but only the tip of the iceberg (ABS 2016 Census, 2018).

Some people are living on the streets, while others are couch surfing or sleeping in shelters, cars, temporary accommodation, boarding houses or public dwellings.

You help us provide material aid and other homelessness entry points, as well as case

management and integrated wrap-around programs such as private rental assistance and tenancy advice, accommodation options for families, specialist youth support, family reunification, homelessness network support and private rental brokerage services.

With you,
Change is possible.

Together we need to continue providing short-term crisis solutions while also addressing the root causes of homelessness; ensuring there is adequate affordable housing, and that people are able to access education, employment and healthcare.

83% increase
in people
accessing crisis
services
5 or more times
in a year



We supported
12,111
people experiencing
homelessness across Victoria
and Tasmania in 2018



Hope for Esta

In 2016, Esta sought refuge in Australia after fleeing her home in Papua New Guinea, where her violent husband and other community members had put her life at risk. She made the difficult decision to leave her three children in her mother's care to ensure their safety.

Esta began working in rural Victoria, living on a farm and fruit picking to earn money. When the cost of her living and rental payments became too much, Esta was asked to leave. She had no money, and nowhere to go.

Many asylum seekers are unable to work, access welfare or apply for supported accommodation. For many vulnerable people like Esta, our Asylum Seeker Program can be their only lifeline.

With our support, Esta now has a place to call home and is working towards a brighter future. She is also an active member of the Women's Group. Every month the Women's Group brings together over 60 women seeking asylum to be creative, share stories and create new friendships.

"We come together at the Women's Group, all [from] different countries, and we forget about everything," she said. "We go out, we eat, we

learn about things. It has given me confidence."

The Asylum Seeker Program is not government funded, and relies on support from the community.

Thank you to the Brunswick Uniting Church Congregation who showed off their best dance moves at their recent Bush Dance and raised over \$4100, which will directly support people like Esta.

“When I think about my children it's stressful.”

— Esta

Building confidence in kids

Across Victoria, our lunchtime bicycle and cooking programs are supporting at-risk primary school students to build a foundation for the future.

Through practical, hands-on activities and positive mentoring, children grow in confidence and build friendships, helping them to stay engaged with their education.

Simon, 11, and Oliver, 9, had experienced difficulties relating with teachers and other students, which was affecting their learning. Both boys were invited to join our Bicycles Over Lunchtime (BOLT) program. During their first BOLT session, the boys didn't interact with other students and refused to participate. Six months on, both Simon and Oliver have grown in confidence and their ability to talk to their teachers and peers has improved significantly.



At just 11 years old, Annie had already experienced the effects of family violence. She lacked self-esteem and would spend her time in the company of adults, rather than children her own age. Annie was invited to join the BOLT program, along with our Cooking Over Lunchtime (COLT) program.

Annie is starting to believe in herself more, “I don’t want this program to end,” Annie said. “I have so much fun, and I love seeing [my mentor] every week.”

We delivered the BOLT and COLT programs to more than 800 students across Victoria in the past year.

Working with families for a brighter future

Supporting families with complex problems means better outcomes for safer children.

For Natasha and Chris, substance use and family violence caused instability for them and their three children. They were referred to Uniting in the Wimmera, where our Integrated Family Services team has been working with them to overcome their challenges and provide a nurturing home for their children.

Natasha and Chris were supported to set achievable goals for a safer home life including improving their connection to their children's school, providing support with kindergarten and

child care for their youngest child, and providing support for Natasha as she referred herself to a counsellor and trauma program.

After Chris and Natasha's relationship ended, we helped Natasha find accommodation, and provided funding to purchase whitegoods and establish a stable home environment for her children.

With support from us and other community service providers, they continue to work towards a happier and healthier future.

Integrated Family Services are delivered across Victoria, supporting families to overcome family violence, mental illness, alcohol and substance use, disability, unemployment, housing instability, homelessness and poverty.

Recovery in community, changing lives

“This is the best I’ve ever felt in my life. I have learnt to love myself again.”

— John, participant in the Catalyst alcohol and other drugs program

People working to overcome alcohol or drug use are looking to a brighter future with support from our award-winning Catalyst program.

Most rehabilitation programs require people to stay in a residential facility. In a new approach, people can now attend the Catalyst program during the day.

“By remaining in the community, people can maintain their family, work and social commitments and connections, and immediately practice the skills they have learned,” said Catalyst Programs Manager Shannon Bell.

“When I started Catalyst, I was thinking, ‘What am I going to learn here? I’ve done rehab so many times already. How’s it going to be any different?’ But it’s been amazing,” John said.

“It’s relevant to everyday life. You get to practice what you’ve learned each night when you go home and you can use it everywhere to challenge your thinking patterns. You start to realise why you’ve been doing the things you have.

“I’m apprehensive, but I’m waking up with a smile on my face and I feel like there’s a real plan for what happens next.”

St Kilda’s Hub of support

For almost 40 years our 101 Engagement Hub in St Kilda has been a haven for people experiencing mental health issues. Bradley has found welcome, support, community and a sense of belonging.

Bradley lives with depression and anxiety, as well as obsessive and compulsive behaviours. At the Hub Bradley spends time with people who can relate to his mental health concerns, reminding him that he is not alone. Each week he attends yoga classes and he has also taken singing, drama and writing classes.

Bradley says he has learned that staying connected to his community is important for managing his mental health.

Each day up to 90 people like Bradley attend the Hub, and this number continues to grow. The Hub, which is located on the St Kilda Uniting Church



precinct, recently received a renovation including a new landscaped garden, quiet room, consulting room, and extended kitchen and decking area.

The Hub’s welcoming and supportive environment is nurtured by a continued partnership between our staff, volunteers and local congregation members.

Reverend David Pargeter attends the Hub each week to offer support and participate in activities. “It’s a place where everyone is treated with kindness and respect. For many who attend the Hub, it takes away the isolation they are experiencing in their lives. They feel safe here.”

Foster love, foster care

You can offer a safe and nurturing environment for a child who is unable to live with their family. Become a foster carer.

Over her 12 years of foster care experience, Kerry Post has cared for 48 children. Kerry and her husband have two children of their own. They signed up to be foster carers when they saw an advertisement at their daughter's primary school.

"It's been more rewarding than I can put into words," Kerry said. "Uniting has been so supportive. You can tell they really value their foster carers as much as the children they're supporting."

There are vulnerable children across Victoria and Tasmania waiting for you to change the direction of their life. You don't need to be an expert. You just need to care. You can make a commitment that will fit in with your lifestyle. Carers are matched with caseworkers who provide comprehensive support and training.

"The reward of knowing you're doing something that matters is so worthwhile," Kerry said.



Find out more

1300 241 545

vt.uniting.org/fostercare



It takes a village

A growing number of Australian grandparents are being called on to raise their grandchildren.

In Tasmania, our Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program ensures grandparents who are carers are supported every step of the way. We provide family support, advocacy, information and referral services at crucial times when carers need to navigate a maze of services, along with emotional and family relationship challenges.

"Grandparents are able to attend regular morning teas to connect with others in similar circumstances to develop

friendships and gain more information," Family Support Worker Christine Jeffries said.

"One carer recently described the program as her safety net. Some come to us experiencing grief due to the loss of their own child or other difficult family circumstances that have led to them caring for their grandchildren. Grandparents often tell us how valuable the support is to help work through their grief and move forward."



Food for Families

When people are experiencing crisis, healthy food is often their last priority. Your donation to Food for Families is a practical way to show people that someone cares.

With the cost of living rising and availability of affordable housing at an all-time low, the demand for food relief continues to increase. That's why we need to collect more food than ever before to ensure we can respond to everyone who comes to us for support.

You can give as an individual or family, or get together with your workplace, school or community group to collect food. The more people who get involved, the more lives we can impact.

Working together, we can get people back on the path to stability and a better future.



Register now
givealittle.org.au



Get involved

Make a donation

Your generosity will help us continue to 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.

1800 668 426

Fundraise for us

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

1800 060 543

Volunteer with us

Our 3500 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.

vt.uniting.org

A small act can sometimes be enough. A helping hand can halve a burden. One kind word can calm the nerves. Together we can do even more and there are many ways you can get involved.



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

