

Position Description

Title	Case Worker – Adoption and Permanent Care
Business unit	Kinship, Adoption and Permanent Care, Southern Melbourne
Location	51 Princes Highway, Dandenong
Employment type	Part time (45.6 hours per fortnight) Ongoing
Reports to	Team Leader – Adoption and Permanent Care

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. Program information

The Adoption and Permanent Care team at Uniting covers the Southern Melbourne (Greater Dandenong, Casey and Shire of Cardinia) and Bayside Peninsula Divisions (comprising Frankston, Mornington Peninsula, Bayside, Glen Eira, Kingston, Port Phillip and Stonnington Councils). The program is funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) for Permanent Care and Department of Justice and Community Services (DJCS) for Adoption.

The Permanent Care Program aims to provide a stable and secure family life for children up to 12 years old from the child protection system who, for various reasons, cannot live with their own family. The program provides recruitment, training and assessment services, matches children to approved carers and provides post-placement support.

The Adoption Program provides: relinquishment counselling to parents considering adoption; recruitment, training and assessment services, placement of infants (or children with special needs) with approved carers and provision of post-placement support.

The Concurrent Care Program is run in conjunction with MacKillop Family Services and involves providing a stable and consistent placement when a child first enters Out of Home Care with carers who have been assessed and accredited for both home-based care and permanent care. This pilot program aims to target and identify children aged 0-3 years from the child protection system, who for complex reasons are unlikely to return to their own family. The program provides recruitment,

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training and assessment services, matches children to approved carers and provides post-placement support in conjunction with MacKillop Family Services.

2. Position purpose

The Case Worker role provides support to children and families across all the Adoption and Permanent Care programs including:

- Providing training and assessment of carer applicants
 - Assessing children requiring placement
 - Shortlisting placements for children
 - Providing relinquishment counselling for birth parents in the Infant Adoption program
 - Providing counselling to adopted people and their families in relation to past adoptions
 - Providing pre- and post-legal support to children, their carers and birth families, including supervising family contact
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3. Scope

Budget: *nil*

People: *nil*

4. Relationships

Internal

- Team Leader, Adoption and Permanent Care
- Manager, Kinship, Adoption and Permanent Care
- Senior Managers
- Uniting staff and volunteers

External

- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
 - Department of Justice and Community Services (DJCS)
 - Adoption and Permanent Care teams within Victoria
 - Home based care agencies and carers
 - Clients of the Adoption and Permanent Care programs
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5. Key responsibility areas

Service delivery

- Participate in information and educational group sessions for prospective adoptive, permanent care and concurrent care applicants
- Undertake detailed assessments of prospective adoption, permanent care and concurrent care applicants
- Undertake detailed assessment of children of all ages referred to the adoption, permanent care and concurrent care programs for placement using the Best Interests Case Practice Model
- Provide support and statutory counselling to persons considering relinquishment of a child for adoption under the requirements of the Adoption Act 1984
- Provide general Adoption Information Services to people seeking information in relation to past adoptions, family searching and outreach services

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- Support the birth family of a child/children case planned for permanent or concurrent care throughout the placement process
- Making recommendations for placement of children with approved carers on the Statewide Register
- Presenting assessment reports and recommendations to the Applicant Accreditation Committee and Child Link Panels
- Planning transitions of children into placements and participating in transitions including regular outreach visits to all parties including carers and birth relatives
- Provide pre- and post-legal supervision and support services to children and carers, including home visits, regular goal planning and review functions
- Co-ordinate and supervise contact arrangements (pre- and post-legally) between the child, carer and the birth family in the community, until such time as this can occur independently of Uniting
- Liaise with DFFH and DJCS personnel in relation to their guardianship or custodial role, provision of reports to the Departments and attendance at the Children's Court as required.
- Undertake case contracting responsibilities including preparing timely court reports, quarterly reports and draft case plans
- Maintain case notes, reports and files in a professional and timely manner
- Undertake other tasks including community education as required
- Participate in agency and team meetings/forums
- Participate in operational planning activities as a program and Division
- Hold portfolio responsibilities and undertake other duties, as required

Quality and risk

- Participate in fortnightly individual supervision with Team Leader
- Participate in peer supervision and reflective practice with the team
- Participate in professional development
- Work within the policies, procedures and practice standards and values of Uniting, the Adoption & Permanent Care Programs and DFFH and DJCS requirements

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

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6. Person specification

Qualifications

- A Social Work degree and eligibility for membership of A.A.S.W., or equivalent Psychology or other related qualifications

Experience

- Demonstrated experience and knowledge in child and family services including experience in either child protection, out of home care or adoption services
- Demonstrated competence in child and carer assessment, case management, counselling, family work, conflict resolution, advocacy and networking
- Experience in supporting placements for children in out-of-home-care, particularly those with developmental needs, including an understanding of the principles of trauma-informed, therapeutic parenting, and life story work
- Experiencing in preparation of assessment reports and court reports
- Experience in mentoring and supporting staff members, students or volunteers
- Experience in acting in supervisory roles, demonstrating leadership qualities and skills
- Demonstrated knowledge of the Adoption Act 1984 and the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Understanding of the historical impact of adoption and the effects of historical and current policy for adopted people and their families
- Knowledge of the theoretical frameworks underpinning permanency planning for children, including loss and grief, attachment, trauma, and child development
- Understanding of the Victorian child protection system and the process of permanency planning
- Demonstrated ability to manage own time, set priorities and deal with competing demands and work effectively as a team member
- Highly developed written and verbal communication skills
- Highly developed interpersonal skills including the ability to develop and maintain positive work relationships with the team, other programs and external service providers
- Demonstrated computer literacy including the ability to use a variety of databases
- Demonstrated knowledge of practices to engage and assure the cultural safety of clients from a diverse range of backgrounds, including those from an Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or CALD background, or the LGBTI community

Core selection criteria

- **Values alignment:** ability to demonstrate and authentically promote Uniting's values
- Personal Attributes:
 - Verbal ability: Open, honest, articulate and flexible approach to communication – written and verbal. The ability to actively listen.
 - Interpersonal focus: Strong interest in people and respect for others. The ability to suspend judgement.
 - Cooperative: Demonstrates team behaviours striving for co-operative and professional relationships.
 - Conscientious: Responsible, dependable, organised and persistent.
 - Open to experience: High level self-awareness, with the ability to admit mistakes, as an opportunity for reflection, learning and development.
 - Professionalism: Professional, confident, focused and clear about purpose and able to set appropriate personal boundaries.

Other Requirements

- Legal eligibility to work in Australia
- Current driver's licence valid in Victoria

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- A satisfactory national police records check is a condition of this position and is repeated every three years and International police check if required
 - Current Working With Children Check (Victoria)
 - Compliance and understanding/familiarity with organisational policies, procedures relevant legislation (Quality management system, Equal Opportunity, Health and Safety)
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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.
