Welcome to Uniting

Working for a more inclusive, connected and just future.

Consumer Handbook

Uniting

Contents

Who we are	3
What we do at Uniting	6
Partnering with consumers	6
Your rights and responsibilities	7
Your safety and wellbeing	8
How we prevent harm and manage incidents	8
Protecting your privacy	9
Feedback, compliments, suggestions and complaints to Uniting	11
Other advocacy and complaints services	12

Who we are

We create real change in people's lives by working in partnership with people, communities, governments and other agencies to reduce the impact of poverty, trauma and disadvantage.

We provide compassionate care for people facing tough times and personal challenges.

We support children and young people to break the cycle of disadvantage. We help families keep safe, together and thriving.

For over 100 years we've been fighting inequality, opposing discrimination, and responding to the needs in our communities across Victoria and Tasmania.

Our vision for reconciliation with Australia's First Peoples →

Our commitment to child safety →

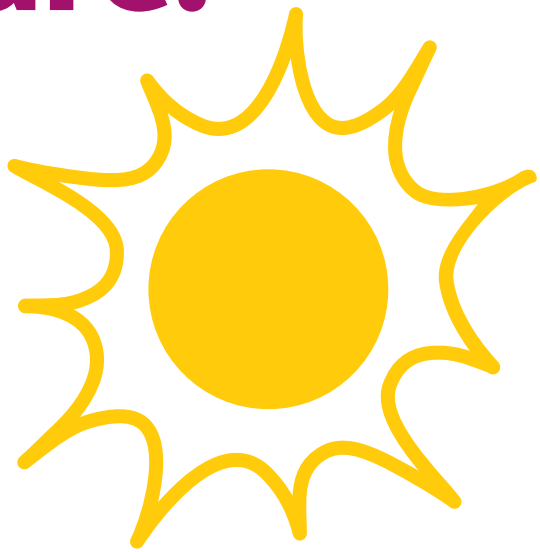
We stand against family violence →

We champion for social justice →

Our impact →

Our vision

Uniting for an inclusive, connected and just future.



Our values

Imaginative

We challenge convention, explore new possibilities and dare to dream for a better future.

Respectful

We act with honesty and integrity, and open our hearts to all people without exception.

Compassionate

We are nurturing, generous and thoughtful in our words and deeds.

Bold

We face injustice head on and stand up for what is right and true with confidence and strength.

Our commitment to equity and inclusion

Uniting is dedicated to offering services and being a workplace where everyone has a sense of belonging – where everyone feels heard, safe and connected.

Uniting recognises that some groups in society face long-standing and continued unfair treatment. We focus especially on advocating for, and supporting, Australia's First Peoples, those with visible and hidden disabilities, those who identify as part of the diverse rainbow communities, and those who are treated unfairly because of their culture or racial background.

We acknowledge language is constantly evolving. Language used to describe diverse communities' changes over time and can differ across cultures and generations. There may also be differences in how individuals use or define these terms.

What we do at Uniting

We believe in the dignity, essential worth and rights of every person.

That's why we work alongside people:

- Needing safe, stable and suitable housing
- Who want support to keep their family safe, together and thriving
- Who are young and want support through counselling, mentoring and life skills to work towards their goals
- Needing advice and support so they are better able to care for themselves at home or in the community
- Who want their children to access early learning in a creative and nurturing environment
- Needing support to get through a difficult time because of hardship or crisis
- Who want to gain control over their drug and alcohol use.

Partnering with consumers

Consumer partners have an important role at Uniting. Consumer partners are people who access our services currently, or have in the past, and have decided to share their expertise and experience with Uniting.

Our consumer partners and staff work together as equals to design and improve services. It is through these partnerships that consumers influence, direct, or decide what we do and how we do it.

We are always keen to partner with consumers, visit **unitingvictas.org.au/consumer-partnerships**

Our services

- Housing
- Early learning
- Child, youth and families
- Community support and homelessness
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Mental health
- Community care and carer support
- Social enterprises

Explore services →

Your rights and responsibilities

At Uniting, we welcome individuals of every age, ethnicity, culture, language, faith, beliefs, disability, neurodivergence, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, sex characteristics, or lived experience.

Your rights – what you can expect from us

As a Uniting consumer, you have the right to:

- Be treated with respect and dignity
- Be referred to by your chosen or preferred name and correct pronouns, including protecting your gender and sexual identity as required
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Access your information held by Uniting
- Receive services in line with Uniting's policies in a welcoming, safe and secure environment without abuse and neglect, violence or preventable injury
- A culturally and psychologically safe environment
- Information about Uniting services, programs and supports available in a language and format you understand, including any medical, technical or service-related terms
- Access a language or Auslan interpreter
- Have a support person or advocate
- Be informed and involved in decisions that affect you, including planning and goal setting, and to make your own choices
- Give feedback about how you think we can improve our services and hear about the outcome and any changes that have been implemented
- Make complaints that we listen to respectfully, take seriously and respond to quickly
- Have information about external advocacy and complaints services
- Refuse, decline or withdraw from services at any time
- Receive information about other services and support options, including options available to you after you leave a Uniting service.

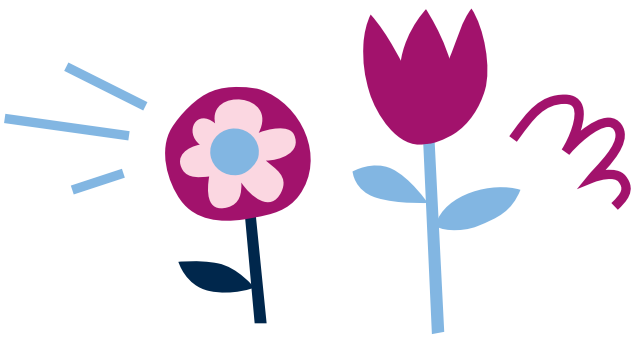
We commit to helping you understand your rights and responsibilities.

Your responsibilities – what we expect from you

As a Uniting consumer, it's your responsibility to:

- Treat all other consumers, and our workforce, with respect and dignity
- Take part in activities according to the policies, rules and guidelines of the service
- Attend your appointments, or let us know within 24 hours if you're unable to make it
- Collaborate toward agreed plans and goals
- Not drink alcohol, use drugs or illegal substances on Uniting premises
- Not bring any illegal items or substances onto Uniting premises
- Take care of your personal safety and not put others in danger
- Behave safely and appropriately (not be violent, abusive or threatening toward people)
- Not share audio, video, photographs or any other form of digital capture of Uniting staff or other consumers without their prior consent
- In an emergency, follow instructions from Uniting staff
- Let us know if you wish to decline or withdraw from services.

If you can't meet these commitments, we may not be able to offer you our services and programs.



Your safety and wellbeing

The safety and wellbeing of all people we work with is important to us. That includes being physically, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically safe.

Uniting works hard to keep all people we work with safe from harm and protected from abuse. We aim to provide trauma-informed services and care environments. We provide safe workspaces and ensure we have good safety practices and systems in place.

If you have any concerns about your safety or wellbeing, or ever feel unsafe when accessing a Uniting service, please let us know.

How we prevent harm and manage incidents

An incident is when someone is harmed or could have been harmed. Harm can be anything which causes you damage or injury, physically, emotionally or psychologically.

Uniting has strong systems to prevent harm to you and others. We report and investigate incidents, and we act when things have gone wrong.

We want to know as soon as possible if you know about an incident that involves Uniting. You can:

Speak to your main Uniting contact person or program manager, or our Quality team

Contact our Quality team by calling **03 9192 8100**, or writing to **130 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000**, or emailing **ConsumerFeedback@UnitingVicTas.org.au**

Complete our feedback form by visiting **unitingvictas.org.au/feedback**

Seek advice from an advocacy service (listed at the back of this handbook).

Protecting your privacy

We keep your personal information and data private to prevent unauthorised people from accessing your information.

The Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth) and other state laws tell us what we must do. We won't share personal information about you or your family with anyone outside Uniting without your permission, unless the law says we have to.

If you are a carer you must protect the personal information of people you are caring for.

Sometimes we use de-identified (meaning you can't be personally identified) information to help improve our services or report to funders.

Uniting's **Privacy Policy**:

- Explains how we manage your information and data
- Says how you can contact us to access and update the information we hold about you.

Ask a Uniting staff member if you would like a copy of our Privacy Policy.

What is personal information?

Personal information is any information which identifies, or might identify an individual, such as your name, address, email, phone number, date of birth, health and medical/health information, or family details.

Protecting of your personal information

We will keep your personal information safe, secure and confidential. We will protect your information from misuse, loss or interference by having secure systems and processes.

We will keep and dispose of your personal information in a secure way, and we follow the Australian Privacy Laws.

We will tell you if your personal information is part of a data breach if the breach could cause you serious harm. If we can't contact you, we will announce the data breach on our website.

Collecting personal information

Your personal information will be used only for the reason it was originally collected. When we collect information, we will take reasonable steps to tell you why we're collecting it and how we'll use or share it.

We'll use your information specifically for providing Uniting services and activities, such as assessing your eligibility to access programs and services, or to tailor services to meet your needs. We'll ask for your consent (permission) if we need to share your personal information with other services or organisations.

We may also collect information we receive from other agencies or government bodies.

What if you don't want to give us your personal information?

You can choose to stay anonymous. If we can, we'll provide our services without needing your name. But we might not always be able to help you.

Disclosure of your personal information

We do not disclose (share) your personal information unless you agree or would reasonably expect us to do so.

We will ask for your consent if we need to share your personal information with other services or organisations.

You can withdraw or change your consent at any time.

There may be times when the law tells us to share information without your consent, for example, when we:

- Are aware of family violence and/or child safety concerns
- Are worried about someone's safety, health or welfare
- Must report critical incidents to our funding bodies.

Accessing your personal information

We work hard to ensure all the personal information we hold is relevant, accurate, complete and up-to-date. You have the right to access personal information about you that we hold. You also have the right to correct the information we hold unless the law says we can't.

Requests for access to information should be made to the Uniting Privacy Officer:

Call **03 9192 8100**
Email **PrivacyOfficer@UnitingVicTas.org.au**

Depending on the type of request, we may ask for proof of your identity. If we can't give you access, our Privacy Officer will tell you so in writing.

We will take all reasonable steps to provide access to the information you request within 30 days. There may be a cost to you for us to respond to your request.

Updating your personal information

Please contact us if your details have changed, or if you think the information we hold about you is incorrect.

Privacy complaints

If you think your privacy has been breached, or you have a complaint about how we have handled your personal information, contact our Privacy Officer:

Call **03 9192 8100**
Email **PrivacyOfficer@UnitingVicTas.org.au**

Feedback, compliments, suggestions and complaints to Uniting

Uniting is committed to providing quality services to the communities and people we serve.

Your feedback provides valuable information to help us improve the services we provide.

Children and young people's feedback and complaints

We understand children and young people need user-friendly ways to give feedback and make complaints. Go to the **Child Safety** page on our website if you're a child or young person who wants to give feedback or make a complaint.

Compliments and suggestions

We welcome all feedback, including compliments and suggestions, to help us provide quality services and improve our premises/equipment. Where appropriate, we'll forward compliments and suggestions to our staff and management. We'll make all efforts to share with you the outcome of any actions made about your feedback or suggestion.

Complaints

If you make a complaint, we will:

- Manage your complaint in a fair and professional way
- Ensure sure you are not disadvantaged in any way
- Investigate the complaint, keep you informed throughout the process, and inform you of the outcome.

If you're not happy with the outcome of your complaint, you can seek support from one of the external advocacy or complaint services (listed at the back of this handbook).

Ways to provide feedback

If you want to provide feedback, including compliments and suggestions, or if you want to make a complaint about our services, you can:

- Speak to your service contact at Uniting
- If you are not comfortable speaking with your main service contact, ask to speak to a program manager or the Quality team. You can contact the Quality team:
  Call **03 9192 8100**
  Email
  ConsumerFeedback@UnitingVicTas.org.au
- Complete a feedback form, hand it in at your local Uniting site or post it to:
  Quality team, Uniting Vic.Tas,
  130 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne Vic 3000
- Complete an online feedback form which you can do anonymously.
  Visit **unitingvictas.org.au/feedback**
- Email
  ConsumerFeedback@UnitingVicTas.org.au
- Complete exit and other surveys or reviews
- Take part in a consumer focus group. Visit
  unitingvictas.org.au/consumer-partnerships

Other advocacy and complaints services

If you wish, you can have a family member, friend or an independent advocacy/complaint body help you give us your feedback.

The independent advocacy agencies listed in this handbook play an important role in protecting your rights and interests. They can help you give us your feedback and make sure we hear and respond to your concerns.

There are different advocacy and complaints services depending on what help you need. If services do not have specific contacts listed, then refer to 'General contacts' section.

Carers

Carers Tas
Call 03 6144 3700
Email **ombudsman.vic.gov.au**

Carers Vic
Call 1800 514 845
Email **reception@CarersVictoria.org.au**

Disability services

Complaints Resolution and Referral Service
Call 1800 880 052
Email **crrs@glresolution.au**

Disability Gateway
Call 1800 643 787
Email **DisabilityGateway@benevolent.org.au**

Disability Services Commissioner (Victoria)
Call 1800 677 342
Email **complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au**

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline
Call 1800 880 052
Email **hotline@workfocus.com**

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
Call 1800 035 544
Email **contactcentre@NDISCommission.gov.au**

Early learning

Department of Education and Training – Early Childhood
Call 1300 307 415
Email
quality.assessment.regulation@education.vic.gov.au

Education and Care – Department of Education Tasmania
Call 1800 816 057
Email **ServiceCentre@decyp.tas.gov.au**

Employment services

National Customer Service Line
Call 1800 805 260
Email **NationalCustomerServiceLine@jobs.gov.au**

Other advocacy and complaints services (cont.)

Family services

Commissioner for Children and Young People (Tasmania)
Call 1800 000 123
Email ChildComm@childcomm.tas.gov.au

Commission for Children and Young People (Victoria)
Call 1300 782 978
Email contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au

Department for Education, Children and Young People (Tasmania)
Call 1800 816 057
Email ServiceCentre@decyp.tas.gov.au

Department of Families Fairness and Housing (Victoria)
Call 1300 884 706
Email feedback@dffh.vic.gov.au

Kids Help Line
WebChat counselling
Call 1800 551 800
Email admin@KidsHelpline.com.au

Homelessness

Council to Homeless Persons (Victoria)
Call 1800 066 256
Email has@chp.org.au

Homes Tasmania (Housing Connect)
Call 1800 800 588
Email BusinessOps@homes.tas.gov.au

Housing

Consumer, Building and Occupational Services (Tasmania)
Call 1300 654 499

Crisis Accommodation (Victoria)
Call 1800 825 955

Homes Tasmania (tenancy and maintenance)
Call 1300 665 663
Email TenancyServices@homes.tas.gov.au

Housing Registrar (Victoria)
Call 03 7005 8984
Email HousingRegistrar@dtf.vic.gov.au

Tenants' Union of Tasmania
Call 03 6223 2641 or 1300 652 641
Email info@TenantsTas.org.au

Tenants Victoria
Call 1800 068 860
Email admin@TenantsVic.org.au

Mental health

Access Mental Health Helpline (Tasmania)
Call 1800 332 388

Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (Victoria)
Call 1800 246 054
Email help@mhwc.vic.gov.au

Victoria Mental Illness Awareness Council
Call (03) 9380 3900
Email reception@vmiac.org.au

General contacts

Consumer Affairs (Tasmania)
Call 1300 654 499
Email **CBOS.info@justice.tas.gov.au**

Consumer Affairs (Victoria)
Call 1300 55 81 81
Email **forms.consumer.vic.gov.au/gef**

Department of Social Services Complaints
Call 1800 634 035
Email **complaints@dss.gov.au**

Equal Opportunity Tasmania
Call 1300 305 062
Email **office@EqualOpportunity.tas.gov.au**

Health Complaints Commissioner (Tasmania)
Call 1800 001 170
Email
health.complaints@HealthComplaints.tas.gov.au

Health Complaints Commissioner (Victoria)
Call 1300 582 113
Email **hcc@hcc.vic.gov.au**

Office of the Public Advocate (Victoria)
Call 1300 309 337
Email **OPA_Advice@justice.vic.gov.au**

Office of the Public Guardian (Tasmania)
Call 1800 955 772
Email
public.guardian@PublicGuardian.tas.gov.au

Ombudsman Tasmania
Call 1800 001 170
Email **ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au**

Ombudsman Victoria
Call 1800 806 314
Email **complaints@ombudsman.vic.gov.au**

Privacy Commissioner within the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
Call 1300 363 992
Email **enquiries@oaic.gov.au**

Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
Call 1800 657 500
Email **TasCAT@tasCAT.tas.gov.au**

Victims of Crime Commissioner (Victoria)
Call 1800 010 017
Email **enquiries@VoCC.vic.gov.au**

Victims of Crime Service (Tasmania)
Call 1300 300 238
Email **victims@justice.tas.gov.au**

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
Call 1300 079 413
Email **admin@vcat.vic.gov.au**

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
Call 1300 292 153
Email **enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au**

Social Services Regulator
Call 1300 310 778
Email **contact@ssr.vic.gov.au**

Support that changes lives.

When we respect our history, unite toward achieving a common purpose and share common values, a collective spirit is born.

This gives us the foundation to dare to reach further than ever before and be informed by the voice of our consumers and communities to drive real, positive social change.

Call us
03 9192 8100

Email us
Hello@UnitingVicTas.org.au

Visit
unitingvictas.org.au

Follow us

If you would like the information on our website in another language, go to the homepage and click on the translate tool at the top of the page. We can organise an interpreter for you if needed.

Ask a staff member if you would like a printed copy of this handbook.

Published October 2026.

Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited
ABN 81 098 317 125

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

Uniting