

Uniting Vic.Tas
Annual report 2016–2017

Uniting together



Uniting



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**“We’re so thankful the
kids are in school and
thankful we are now safe.”**

Syrian refugee Maher and his family
accessed support from Kildonan
UnitingCare's New Arrival Settlement
Services in Shepparton.



People are important and change is possible.

In standing with those who live life at the margins, by strengthening our communities and by speaking out, we will create a more just society.

For over 100 years we've delivered community services across Victoria and Tasmania. We're about building capacity and confidence in children, young people and families, people with disability, older people and people newly arrived in Australia. We work with people at risk of or experiencing financial crisis, homelessness, mental illness and problems with alcohol and other drugs, by empowering them with the support they need to succeed.

Our work was founded through the joining of 21 UnitingCare agencies, Wesley Mission Victoria, Share and UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania Early Childhood Services. Together we are more than 7000 people delivering over 770 programs and services that enrich the lives of 200,000 people.



Chair report



We are Uniting. One organisation with a clear purpose to inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice.

Our path to Uniting started with the decision in June 2015 by the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania on a new strategic direction for its community services agencies so as to strengthen its ministry of compassion and care.

In October 2016 Uniting was established and the

governance of the 22 founding agencies transferred to the newly formed Uniting Board – one Board shared by all 22 agencies. (Share and UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania Early Childhood Services came under the supervision of the Uniting Board in July 2017.)

For the 2016–2017 financial year our founding agencies remained separate organisations but reported to our new, common Board. In this report we present our first set of combined annual accounts. We also share the achievements and stories of our founding entities.

Uniting is built on the legacy and professionalism of these agencies and the work our people do every day, to be there for others and to enable them to transform their lives.

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the former Board members and CEOs of the founding agencies, the members of the

UnitingCare Network Project Control Group (PCG), Synod Standing Committee and Synod employees, Commission for Mission, founding agency employees, volunteers and donors – all of whom have contributed to the vision and establishment of Uniting.

Our work makes a difference. We have a grassroots understanding of the issues people face. We have a range of services to offer specialist expertise and local knowledge. As Uniting, we can link these strengths together to have greater impact for our communities – broadening and connecting our services in new ways to create an inclusive, connected and just world.

Together, we can also learn from the challenges and triumphs we experience to build new innovative service models. We can use our collective strength and insights to confront poor public policy and the structural injustices in our society. I am excited about the possibilities we have before us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Bronwyn Pike'.

Bronwyn Pike
Board Chair

“Our strength is in the work our people do every day, to be there for others and enable them to transform their lives.”

CEO report

Uniting stands with the most vulnerable and marginalised in our communities. This is year one of our consolidated governance arrangements, but also a continuation of over 100 years of collective history, knowledge and skills.

We have come together to ensure our important work is sustainable and will continue for generations to come.

The community services sector faces significant reforms. Most obviously the changes in the way people access services and how funding is organised, such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and similar reforms in aged care.

The drivers of change go beyond this. They encompass increasing compliance requirements, government preference for scale and the challenge of escalating need, combined with higher community expectations regarding service delivery and governance.

As individual agencies we were vulnerable to these waves of change. We can now share and leverage our collective

strengths, connecting our services to provide comprehensive support to people in distress. We can utilise our expertise and identify areas of best practice and projects to roll-out across Victoria and Tasmania.

We can build a robust and responsive organisation so that we can do more to ensure the best possible outcomes for the people we support now and into the future.

Joining gives us a stronger voice to advocate for improved services, human rights and social justice.

Now together as one, our focus remains on enriching communities, confronting injustice and empowering people of all ages to live a full life.

2016–2017 was our transition year. From 1 July 2017 we are

one organisation. The process of change, integration and realising our potential will characterise our early years.

As the first generation of Uniting we are working to imagine and shape our future, exploring how we will live out our purpose and values.

With the deepening of individual choice within Australian social policy we need to build and invest in our ability to deliver a great customer experience; and continue to focus on ensuring our clients' needs are heard and reflected in our systems, processes and new ways of working.

This work can only be built by supporting and joining up our people. By connecting our teams of skilled, passionate professionals, and committed volunteers,

“While we have reached this significant milestone it is the actions we continue to take each day that are important, the difference we can make in people’s everyday trials and triumphs.”

“Now together as one, our focus remains on enriching communities, confronting injustice and empowering people to live a full life.”

we can aspire to realise greater change than before.

In acknowledging our rich and diverse history we also acknowledge the less informed practices and consequences for people in our services in the past.

The establishment of the Uniting Heritage Service provides an opportunity to support those women and men who as children lived in homes and institutions, and lead the way in resolution. Within the first year the number of enquiries to the Heritage Service each month has risen from six to 37. This points both to the value of the service and the extent of the work ahead of us.

The journey towards Uniting has been both challenging and exciting. I wish to acknowledge the committed group of

founding agency CEOs and senior leaders that have worked tirelessly to lead their teams on our shared journey.

While we have reached this significant milestone it is the actions we continue to take each day that are important, the difference we can make in people's everyday trials and triumphs, and the positive change we can bring about as Uniting.



Paul Linossier
CEO



Director of Mission report

Advocating for justice and serving others is in the DNA of the Uniting Church. Over more than 100 years, as congregation members have planned to meet the needs of the migrant, the marginalised or the next door neighbour, they have gathered support, formed committees and created organisations to serve with wisdom and effectiveness.

In Victoria and Tasmania, many of these organisations became the UnitingCare agencies and Wesley Mission Victoria that are now part of Uniting. Uniting is founded on those early impulses, tentative steps to show love and the new expressions of church life.

In the process that led to the establishment of Uniting, the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Major Strategic Review identified that by developing “closer working relationships between worshipping communities of the church and agencies of the church [the Uniting Church] can together strive to care for the whole person”.

This year, at the same time as our founding entities began coming together, we have worked with congregations and presbyteries to ensure the long-standing relationships they have with these entities are also integrated into Uniting.

We provide services in conjunction with 60 congregations, often with long-term mutual commitments to meeting the local community needs together. While the Mission team lead church engagement, our partnerships within the Church are embedded locally by our staff and volunteers.

In May, we commenced consultation across the Church, seeking input to a model of mutual engagement to guide our work as the community services organisation of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania. This project is being led by Martin Cowling, former interim Executive Director of UnitingCare Australia, and will conclude with a report to our Board and the presentation of a proposed model to the Synod Standing Committee in late 2017. Much of the early consultation continues the work of the UnitingCare Network Project Control Group and has been



welcomed as the relationships continue to develop.

I wish to thank God for our staff, volunteers, supporters and Church partners and ask for your patience and prayers as we move forward to work together in mission.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Clarke".

Rev John Clarke
Director of Mission

“We provide services in conjunction with 60 congregations, often with long-term mutual commitments to meeting the local community needs together.”

Our purpose

To inspire people, enliven communities & confront injustice.



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 foundation

Christ invites us to serve humanity by creating an inclusive, connected and just world.

Our services

We work with over 500 people a day in more than 770 programs and services in Melbourne and local communities across Victoria, from Albury-Wodonga in the north, Mallacoota in East Gippsland, the Wimmera region in the west, and across Tasmania.



Aged and Carer Services

During the later stages of life, a person's needs may change and they, and the people who care for them, may need extra support. We assist older people and their carers to stay active and continue living an enriching life. Our services include personal care, cleaning, nursing, gardening and social activities that connect them with their community.



Child, Youth and Families

Every person has a right to live safe from harm. We work alongside children, youth and families to set goals, develop their skills and strengthen relationships that enable them to thrive. Where staying in the primary home isn't possible we provide residential care, foster care, kinship care, adoption and permanent care services.



Employment Services

We support people experiencing unemployment, people with disability and people experiencing mental health issues to access training to help them build on new opportunities. Employers looking for job ready employees can work with us to find the right candidate.



Alcohol and Other Drugs

Problematic alcohol and other drug use can have long lasting effects on people, their relationships and their community. We support people in their personal recovery goals and work with them to reduce the impact of substance use through counselling, rehabilitation and withdrawal support. We also provide education and training programs for corporations, professionals and sector staff.



Disability

For people living with disability, accessing support is about being empowered through choice. We work alongside people to build their capacity and independence, assist them to participate in their local community and achieve their goals. We provide a range of services including residential and day activities as well as support National Disability Insurance Scheme participants to access the services they need.



Mental Health

Mental health issues can have a lasting effect on a person's wellbeing. We work with people experiencing mental health challenges by supporting their wellbeing goals. We also provide confidential 24-hour support for people experiencing personal crisis through Lifeline.



Business and Social Enterprise

Our business and social enterprises support communities to build, innovate and grow by providing employment pathways and generating sustainable income that is invested locally. We provide corporate consultancy, training and education to promote and facilitate inclusive business practice through systems and processes that identify and support vulnerable consumers.



Early Learning

Early childhood is a time of exploration, creativity and discovery. We offer long day care, family day care, occasional care, kindergarten, out of school hours care and vacation care for children at all stages of development. Children with additional needs can access further support through inclusive programs.



Resilient Communities

People experiencing crisis and homelessness often need support while they focus on building brighter days ahead. We provide a range of services including accommodation, material aid, meals, bill payment assistance and financial counselling to people living in disadvantage. We welcome individuals and families newly arrived or settling in Australia and offer case support and accommodation, as well as social and learning activities.

Our locations



Connections UnitingCare



A child with an imprisoned parent faces a range of economic, social and psychological challenges. This year funding was received to establish a Family Links program, which is designed to prioritise the needs of these children and support them as they grow. We work with children to reduce the social and emotional impact of an imprisoned parent, and support a continued child-parent relationship when in their best interests.

This will be the first program in southern metropolitan Melbourne providing a coordinated response for children when a parent is taken into custody. By focusing on the children of imprisoned parents, the “unintended victims of crime” can be supported to grow into healthy and well-adjusted adults. We are engaged with the Dandenong Magistrates Court and the Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders who have been running Family Links successfully at the Geelong Magistrate Court for a number of years.

A program addressing alienation in the Afghan community in the cities of Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia has received

government funding for the next 12 months.

The Community Engagement Early Response program was designed with Afghan community leaders and government and community service agencies to foster inclusion and reduce anti-social behaviour. The program promotes a sense of community by helping connect vulnerable people with employment and

education activities, family support, youth and recreation services, mental health services, drug and alcohol services, or social and cultural events. An intervention can be as simple as helping people access English classes or volunteer work. The program also aims to build capacity among community and youth leaders, enabling them to support young people and their families.



English classes foster community connection.

Our foundations are in the actions of many courageous people who worked to address injustice in Melbourne, beginning in the 1920s. Our services make a practical difference to children, young people and families every day.

Creative Ministries Network



Uniting CEO Paul Linossier and Griefwork's Bette Phillips joined locals walking in Bendigo in memory of loved ones lost to suicide.

Each year on the Queen's birthday weekend we hold the Victorian Truck Drivers Memorial in Alexandra. The service commemorates those in the transport industry who have died in crashes, from suicide or from heart attacks by adding their names to a memorial wall. This year more than 300 people attended the service as part of the Alexandra Truck, Rod and Ute Show.

For the past six years we have also been part of the Suicide Prevention Awareness Network (SPAN) event in Bendigo, when those who have

lost a loved one to suicide take part in a memorial walk. On the same weekend some 250 motor bike riders participate in Ride for Life to raise money for Lifeline. These activities raise the awareness of Lifeline for those that need it, with an increase in calls after each one.

The Victorian Timber Workers Memorial is held each October in Woori Yallock, with a permanent memorial in Heyfield. The memorial is an important place for remembrance and reflection.

All three events were initiated by the GriefWork program,

which for 20 years has supported those who have lost loved ones to a work-related death. There are 122 names on the Truck Drivers Memorial alone, each one representing not only a lost life, but also affected family members and friends.

One of the ways our clients are able to work through grief is in art therapy workshops, where they are supported to explore their emotions in creative ways. While many need assistance to deal with the day-to-day loss of a loved one, clients can also use home visits and workshops to build resilience around significant events, such as birthdays and anniversaries.

Founded 28 years ago as the Urban Ministry Network, we work with people to restore personal and societal relationships. We integrate arts-based activities in programs dedicated to healing, justice and reconciliation.

John Macrae Centre



We undertook a major renovation at the centre between January and March this year, but we were able to keep our programs running in a temporary space provided by the Toorak Uniting Church. It was challenging to balance practical and ergonomic needs with a warm and inviting atmosphere, but clients have already noticed the difference our new home has made to them. One of our seniors, Bill, told us he is finding it easy to navigate the space. “I really appreciate the accessibility throughout and how easy it is to go outside with my motorised chair,” Bill said.

Helping people stay active, involved in the community and capable of caring for themselves as much as possible is an important part of continued independent living. By working with older people and people living with dementia – and those who support them – we can help them overcome the individual challenges they identify.

There are numerous opportunities for participation in a wide range of activities, such as art programs, chess, gardening, card games, craft projects, music, exercise and ball games, and guest speakers. People can attend quizzes, musical events and go on organised outings



Clients enjoying the Spring Dance.

We began as a fortnightly lunch club in 1968 initiated by the members of the Toorak Uniting Church. We offer friendly, equitable and flexible programs to enhance the lives of older people and their carers five days a week.

and excursions. There are also social groups, a walking group and coffee group to enable participants to engage socially, build friendships and reduce isolation in a safe and supportive environment.

At the start of the financial year we moved from state

funding to federal funding, which necessitated being set up for the new My Aged Care System and Data Exchange. In April our Home and Community Care program was audited and all 18 standards were met.

Kildonan UnitingCare



Our South Asian Men's Behaviour Change program was recognised with a silver award in the 2016 Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards. The program was started in 2013 to provide opportunities for men who use violence against their families to address their behaviour. It acknowledges culturally specific challenges including the impact of migration on family relationships, and a lack of awareness of Australian legislation. The program uses a dual approach of working with men who may not otherwise take part in anti-violence programs, while also supporting women and children affected by violence. A second program for Arabic speakers has commenced.

In November we marked our 135th anniversary. We reflected on the life of the organisation and what we have achieved, celebrating at an event at the Melbourne Museum and through the launch of a book tracing our history.

Energy Australia partners with us to help promote better energy use and raise money to reduce energy costs for vulnerable households. On 17 March peak-hour commuters at Southern Cross Station in Melbourne were asked

for a "high-five". Every hand slap earned a \$1 donation from Energy Australia to our Home Energy Visits program, and \$22,200 was raised in just two hours. The money funded appliance swaps and retrofits to enable even more households to increase their energy efficiency and save money on bills.

At its annual conference in March, the Rotary Club

of Central Melbourne experienced The Settlement Journey, an interactive presentation by our New Arrival Support Services team. It included a UNHCR refugee tent and a video of the conditions in refugee camps to highlight the experiences refugees faced before settling in Australia.

Our origins date back to 1881 yet we deliver some of the most innovative community services in Victoria. We target the issues that can lead to personal hardship, family stress or breakdown before they take hold.



Former children's home resident Graeme McLeod with Kildonan UnitingCare CEO Stella Avramopoulos at our 135th anniversary event.

Lentara UnitingCare



In September our Fresh Start social enterprise was awarded the gold Global Best Award for innovative and creative partnerships in international education, training and employment sector at the International Partnerships Awards. It also was awarded the overall award at a ceremony in Oslo, Norway.

Fresh Start creates employment opportunities and pathways

for vulnerable people in the cleaning and facility services sector. A number of partnerships – including Monash and Deakin universities, training providers, local governments, community organisations and corporate entities – have made the program successful. Participants in Fresh Start improve their employability, resilience and independence, enabling them to overcome major causes of poverty.

For 129 years we have worked to create opportunities for individuals and families to flourish. We support people in Melbourne's north and east, providing resources vital for wellbeing and participation in the community.

In 2016 we created the cross-disciplinary Lentara Codesign Studio in collaboration with RMIT University's School of Media and Communications. Lecturer Dr Seth Keen said the partnership was established to come up with innovative ways of communicating social challenges and solutions through design and technology.

"Students developed creative and digital responses to a range of projects, including Lentara UnitingCare's annual Winter Appeal," Seth said. Three students gained permanent part-time work with us, and the studio won a Dean's Award at RMIT for integrated scholarship.

Partnering with businesses and other agencies ensures the community benefits from holistic approaches to solving social disadvantage. We have worked with Scott's Refrigerated Transport on food donations, and the Cabrini Community Health centre for refugees and asylum seekers, among others. Semken Landscaping has collaborated with us on the Second Seed community gardens program, designed to ensure people in need of food assistance receive fresh fruit and vegetables in their relief packages.



Fresh vegetables from Second Seed are added to emergency relief packages.



**For Carol,
imagination is key
to inspiring a child's
development.**

Our work in action

Celebrating community connection

Getting dressed for work, Carol chooses odd shoes and socks, bright colours and mismatching earrings and wonders what adventures are in store for her today. Will she go on a treasure hunt, turn into a fairy, or be buried in the sandpit up to her elbows?

One thing she knows for sure is that engaging in a child's world and encouraging imagination is key to inspiring development – and a lot of fun.

Carol has been an educator with Lentara UnitingCare's early learning services for 13 years. She started as a kindergarten assistant and now works permanently at St Andrews Uniting Church Kindergarten in Fairfield.

For Carol, being a kindergarten teacher is more than just a job, it's her life. Providing nurture, care and connection to children and families well beyond their kindergarten years is how she enlivens her community.

It's not uncommon for Carol to share a milkshake at local cafe 'Mumma Says' with families past and present.

A true testament to Carol's work and playful spirit is the way her local community talk about her role in their lives.

"My girls all made strong connections with Carol because of her inclusive, fun and caring qualities. After three children attending kinder over five years, we are fortunate to still catch up with Carol. The connection and influence of this wonderful educator and person continues."

"Carol is widely recognised in this community and loved by all she meets. Her charm is boundless and we are all greater for her presence in our neighbourhood."

"The staff at St Andrews kinder have impacted our lives greatly. There is only one Carol... she has a relaxed approach all the time and shows the kids that you should never be afraid to be yourself."

Share



A volunteer preparing a meal for asylum seekers, a Share-funded program.

We were established in 1980 to create awareness of and financial assistance for the welfare work of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania. We raise funds for UnitingCare programs that offer crucial support to people in need.

Since we began the need for emergency relief services has dramatically increased, and the circumstances surrounding these needs have also become far more complicated. Our primary aim has always been to fund vital programs that

support the most vulnerable in our community.

In 2016 we distributed \$1,307,310 in Share grants to the founding entities of Uniting. These funds went towards programs providing emergency relief, meals

and food, housing support, child and family services, asylum seeker support, education assistance and counselling services.

The Acts of Kindness gift catalogue was launched in 2016 and we had an overwhelming response within just a few weeks. Gifts ranged in price from \$10 for a hot meal at an outreach centre for a person experiencing homelessness to \$1,500 for 12 months of educational support for a child facing disadvantage. In total, more than 1,000 gifts were purchased and almost \$70,000 was raised. Other services funded include support for women and children experiencing family violence, food packages for people in need, support programs for refugees and asylum seekers, utility bill payment assistance and shelter for the homeless.

Nisha Solanki, Fundraising General Manager at Prahran Mission, said contributions to Share that are received as grants by agencies have made a significant difference to people who are living difficult, challenging lives. "Not only do services such as emergency relief at Prahran Mission provide material aid, they give hope and support to those in desperate need."

South Port UnitingCare



This year we rolled out the Bicycles Over Lunch Time (BOLT) mentoring program to its 50th school. The program now reaches more than 700 disengaged young people. BOLT started in 2013 with a group of grade 6 boys working with mentors on bicycle maintenance. Less than 12 months ago the program had still only grown to include 12 schools before expanding dramatically. Positive mentoring and social engagement helps the students develop life skills such as communication, leadership, responsibility and teamwork, leaving them better placed to start high school.

The program has received significant community

support, with several local police stations donating bikes and police participating as mentors and building rapport with the young participants. Bunnings has donated tools and materials to the program, giving the participants a wider range of equipment than they otherwise would have had access to.

The Cooking Over Lunch Time (COLT) program also started this year. COLT teaches young people the basics of food literacy, cooking, nutrition, food sourcing and hygiene. Like BOLT, COLT provides a safe, stable environment for young people to interact and talk with mentors. The pilot program launched with the capacity to engage six to

eight children in two primary schools, but by the end of the first term 16 schools were interested in running the program. Chef's Hat donated cookware for the pilot, while Rotary clubs, banks, sports clubs and businesses have all supported the mentoring programs.

Youth worker Jake Garvey said every session made a difference. "The amount of personal growth and enthusiasm I see in the students makes each day a memorable one," he said. "Telling students that local businesses have helped them really gives them a sense of belonging and gratitude to their community."



Grade 6 boys and their mentor working on bicycles in the BOLT program.

We have been working to reduce the effects of poverty in the South Melbourne, Port Melbourne, Middle Park and Albert Park communities for over 160 years. We help people overcome obstacles in their lives every day.

UnitingCare Ballarat



This year we established a clinical psychology service to support people with complex or multiple needs, who were previously dealing with individual services. Implementing a more holistic approach is part of our commitment to supporting members of the community with a combination of mental illness, homelessness, or alcohol or other drug issues.

The need for a bulk-billed dual diagnosis psychological clinic was evident, and people have been referred from across a number of our services, in particular our housing and crisis response programs. Although the clinic is in its early stages, the number of people

using it means we soon hope to have a multidisciplinary team working with clients from Monday to Friday.

In August we took part in the Halving Homelessness Think Tank, working with people experiencing homelessness, as well as industry experts, community and school groups, and business owners, to come up with innovative ways to address homelessness.

The result was more than 600 ideas and 24 community teams charged with developing the most promising, with the aim of implementing two new programs.

Along with answering Lifeline calls, one of our earliest services was responding to

requests for crisis support and housing. This year we have been working with people experiencing homelessness through the Victorian Government's new Street to Home and More than a House programs, as well as taking the lead for the Central Highlands region's response to the Responding to People Sleeping Rough in Extreme Weather policy.

We provide people sleeping rough or in sub-standard accommodation the support they need to achieve their goals, whether it's obtaining long-term housing, improving their health and safety, or reducing the risk of homelessness.



Our work began in 1971 with volunteers answering Lifeline crisis calls in the small office of a church manse. We provide a wide range of services to people and families in Ballarat, Ararat and the Central Highlands region.

UnitingCare Ballarat's Sean Duffy chairs the Responding to People Sleeping Rough in Extreme Weather working group in the Central Highlands region.

Paving the path to a brighter, safer future

Penny* had been struggling with addiction to ice and cannabis for some time before she was referred to UnitingCare Ballarat's Tabor House by a family member.

After Penny completed the program, she would touch base regularly with staff to talk about how she was going. She self-referred back to the program twice, identifying when she felt she was no longer coping or was reverting to past patterns.

impacted significantly on Penny's wellbeing. Working together, it was agreed that Penny would return to the family home, with the support of strategies and goals that would enable a safe environment to continue her recovery journey.

“The program was brilliant. Staff actually understood us, gave us one-on-one help and we all were treated the same which definitely helped me,” Penny said.

“Creating a safe and supportive environment and fostering relationships which continue well after the program has finished is what sets the program and the staff that run it apart. The results speak for themselves,” Ivan said.

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UnitingCare Bendigo



For over 30 years, we have responded to the needs of people experiencing hardship and crisis by providing emergency relief in the form of food parcels. The steady increase of people seeking support due to high unemployment rates, and increased reporting of domestic violence has placed our volunteers and donors under considerable pressure to meet the levels of support required. Deeper community and client engagement has been a goal, and this year managers and volunteers worked together to initiate community lunches in partnership with the Forest Street Uniting Church.

Community lunches are an open invitation to clients and the community, to share a meal, speak with a social worker and talk to volunteers about their need for support. The initiative has gained wonderful traction, and benefitted from the support of Bendigo council and other local community partners.

Heather, a regular client at Kangaroo Flat Emergency Relief, said people come in for a simple thing and soon see it's so much more. "They can sit down and talk, open up and feel part of the community."

Each Christmas, our services are inundated by people who are experiencing systematic or situational hardship. In 2016, our Christmas Gift Giving program received a significant number of gifts and food hamper donations

from schools, businesses and families across our region. Thanks to their generosity we were able to support almost 1000 children in nearly 300 local families at a difficult time of year.

We were formed in 1977 following the establishment of the Uniting Church. We provide emergency relief for the local, greater and rural Bendigo communities through a range of predominantly volunteer-run services.



Heather is a regular client at Kangaroo Flat Emergency Relief.

UnitingCare East Burwood Centre



We commenced in 1973 as a counselling and care centre for couples and families. We support people who are facing challenges in their daily lives through counselling, practical help and support groups.



Volunteer Laylee the dog taking group members for a walk!

A private donor's generosity enabled us to launch Kidsplay in April. This child-centred play therapy program supports children aged 2-12 who fall outside the scope of other child mental health services or are without language. Toys can be used instead of words, helping children acknowledge and process what they are experiencing. Helping children establish trusted relationships and communication can support them through social, emotional or developmental difficulties, trauma or violence. Parental or carer involvement is an important part of the process.

In 2016 Good Shepherd Microfinance recognised our

No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) as an example of how the program can be a catalyst for change. They highlighted a case study from our scheme of a young man on Centrelink benefits who took a \$1200 loan for car repairs. The man could then attend job interviews and was hired, allowing him to build a better life without government support.

Older people and people with mild dementia in our Positive Living Groups have shown they are still committed to their community by participating in a range of fundraising activities this year. The linguistically and culturally diverse groups got behind the Pink Breakfast, Australia's Biggest

Morning Tea and beyondblue, respected charities that resonate with members.

"I might be elderly," said one participant, "but when I am in the group and we are doing something to help people who have been affected by cancer – as many of us have – it makes me feel like I can give something back and still be a real contributing member of the community."

The groups also signed up for Relay for Life, and are teaming up with their positive paws pal Laylee to support Bark for Life at an adapted event in our hall and grounds.

UnitingCare Geelong



A recurring concern among the people accessing our services was the financial challenge of utility bills in times of crisis. In response, this year we pioneered the Family Bill Assist program, and its success inspired other agencies to implement similar services. It is predominantly an intervention program, helping people in financial difficulty to prevent their situation escalating.

We found that people accessing our emergency relief services were deciding to forego food or rent to pay utility bills, potentially risking their homes. Instead, clients can speak to a bill assistance worker who will support negotiations with utility companies, help them access grants or payment plans, and work with them to prepare a realistic budget. Once a year people can also access small sums of money to establish payment plans if they need. Other support, such as linking people with food, clothing, accommodation or specialised services, is an ongoing priority.

Our Jobseeker mentors support Work for the Dole candidates as they deal with the challenges or barriers they face while looking for work. Jobseekers may have to contend with issues

such as a lack of experience or qualifications, mental health concerns, or a lack of confidence or self-esteem. Mentors provide the support and understanding that can enable jobseekers to overcome their hurdles.

The Geelong Food Assistance Network was formed by

UnitingCare Geelong and other local agencies providing food relief to make sure surplus food donations are used, while also minimising waste. Recently, for example, food that couldn't be stored by one agency was immediately redirected to another and distributed to those in need.



The Family Bill Assistance program helps people pay utility bills in times of crisis.

For 40 years, we have worked with the local community to address disadvantage, hardship and poverty in the Geelong and Barwon region. We provide emergency relief, small loans and funds for uniforms and books for school students.



**Claire helps
jobseekers to gain
skills and feel
more confident.**

Our work in action

Supporting people to build capacity and confidence

Much inspiration can be found when you're in the garden getting some dirt under your fingernails.

This is where Claire's journey as jobseeker-mentor in the UnitingCare Geelong opportunity shops began – in the vegie patch she started for the UnitingCare Geelong food bank.

Her experience and skills in teaching adult literacy and people with disability meant she was the perfect candidate to become a volunteer in the jobseeker-mentor program at UnitingCare Geelong.

Since starting as a mentor, Claire has had a tremendous impact on the confidence, skills and experience of jobseekers who spend up to 12 months in work placement as part of the Work for the Dole program.

Designed to help jobseekers learn new skills, develop confidence and overcome their barriers to full-time employment, the program relies on volunteers like Claire to work alongside jobseekers in the opportunity shop.

Some barriers to employment cannot be broken down overnight.

"The essence is patience and developing trust," Claire said.

"If confidence is a problem for a jobseeker, then we sit down and try and work on that. Often they're perfectly capable but just need some help believing in themselves."

Some of the jobseekers Claire has worked alongside have moved on to meaningful employment opportunities, and others say that they feel more confident and at ease on their employment pathway.

Others continue to volunteer in the UnitingCare Geelong opportunity shops after they finish their initial commitment, a testament to Claire as a respected and valued volunteer and mentor.

The positive, safe and happy environment at UnitingCare Geelong has empowered many jobseekers to grow and flourish. One jobseeker said, "Claire has helped further my job experience and was so welcoming and friendly" while another shared that Claire is "very supportive and helpful".

UnitingCare Gippsland



Our services have been making a difference to the lives of people across Gippsland for 37 years. We work to strengthen communities and address poverty and disadvantage through community development.



Children immersed in the Drumbeat program.

This year the Australian Institute of Family Studies recognised our Wellbeing Programs Activity for its innovation in service delivery. It comprises two evidence-based early intervention programs that support the emotional wellbeing of students and families.

The Secret Agent Society (SAS) program empowers and teaches skills to children with social and emotional challenges as well as their parents and teachers. The 10-week program is designed for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders or other social and emotional challenges, including ADHD, anxiety and anger management issues.

Drumbeat is a drumming program that combines

experiential learning with cognitive behaviour therapy. It is aimed at 8-12 year olds and adults who may be anxious about or resistant to talk-based therapies. It explores issues central to healthy relationships and lifestyles in a structured format over 10 weeks.

Over the past year we delivered more than 35 SAS and Drumbeat programs in primary schools and community settings. One child who participated in the SAS program said of their experience: "It's like teachers now understand how my brain works, it makes me feel calm". Four of our facilitators gained senior accreditation this year and are also mentoring newly-trained staff. A further six staff are being trained to meet

program delivery demand for the next two years.

Our Families and Schools Together (FAST) program helps build support networks and foster inclusiveness over an eight-week course, with monthly follow-ups for two years. By establishing links between families, communities and schools, children are happier at school and more likely to feel they belong.

Journey to Big School is an initiative of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care. Through it, we engage with Indigenous community members and professionals to analyse Koorie families' needs and support them to develop plans for their future.

UnitingCare Goulburn North East



This year our Responsible Gambling Fund program was ranked second in New South Wales for performance and volume of gambling counselling. The program services Albury and the Riverina Murray region, providing counselling for people who are causing harm to either themselves or the people around them when they gamble. People experiencing gambling issues can use counselling to draw on their own strengths and resources to solve their problems and explore options in a safe, non-judgemental environment.

One client had an appointment with one of our counsellors

to address rising credit card debt. “The kindness and understanding shown to me was first class. I cannot thank her enough,” they said. The recognition of the difference counselling can make to people experiencing gambling problems has led to a funding increase to pay for a second full-time staff member. People can contact this free and confidential service direct or by referral from agencies or other organisations.

In February we entered the commercial market for home care packages, working with older people and their families to develop packages that respond to their goals and

requirements, and allow them to take charge of their own lives. The aged care team worked hard to transition our aged care services to an end-to-end customer experience which resulted in an increase in the number of clients accessing our services.

Our respite programs in Wangaratta, Mooroopna and Wodonga have long supported individuals and their carers in our region. One carer said initially she had to talk her husband into trying McFarland House but they had a wonderful experience. She said, “He has asked me to book him in ASAP so he can come again!”



We have been supporting people in the north-east of Victoria and border area of NSW for over 26 years. We empower people to live independent lives through advocacy and programs that meet individual needs.

Clients sharing friendship...and a laugh.

UnitingCare lifeAssist



We were formed as Community Options Victoria in 1987 to give people with dementia options for the care they needed. We support older people, people with disability and their carers to live the life they choose.

In February government-funded home care packages for older people became portable, with funds linked to the client rather than to a service provider. In January we were one of the first community services to run public information forums to guide people and their families through the process of obtaining in-home services.

Since the launch, more than 2000 people have attended the forums. To further help people navigate in-home support options we developed detailed literature and online tools including a cost comparison

calculator to compare government-subsidised services with self-funded ones.

The successful trial of the Hampton Park Carer Hub was extended to Pakenham and Forest Hill. The Hubs are informal meeting places where carers can share their experiences and receive peer-support, with the Forest Hill Hub focusing on assisting carers to prepare for the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The Pathways for Carers program trial started in late 2015 in conjunction with the City of Maroondah and Yarra Ranges Shire Council. It created an opportunity for carers to connect with a range of service providers and other carers while enjoying time away from their caring roles. The program encourages carers to focus on their wellbeing by taking part in a relaxed walk and engaging with their peers.

A second monthly walk has been added in Maroondah in response to demand, while walks have also started in the Cities of Manningham and Boroondara. We are now helping other organisations set up Carer Hubs and Pathways for Carers walks in areas not covered by our funding.

Educating older Victorians on how to access the right support.





Piumika and Dianna have developed a wonderful relationship.

Our work in action

Bringing together unlikely housemates

Ninety one-year-old Dianna was born in Italy and came to Australia as a child. She and her husband had a dairy farm in Gippsland before settling in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, where they raised their six children.

Piumika, aged 34, came from Sri Lanka six years ago for her post-graduate studies in agricultural science at the University of Melbourne.

What do Dianna and Piumika have in common? A lot more than you might think. They've been living together for two years thanks to UnitingCare lifeAssist's Homeshare program. Homeshare matches people seeking companionship and practical help to live at home with people who need accommodation.

For many householders, the thought of sharing their home with someone new can seem a little strange, perhaps even unsettling. The magic to a good Homeshare experience is in the matching process.

When Dianna and Piumika first met they immediately felt they had found a good match.

Within minutes, Dianna announced she would call her "Mika" and started planning what they might do together.

Piumika happily swapped her busy inner Melbourne accommodation for the fresh air of the leafy eastern suburbs. She loved the warm, family atmosphere of Dianna's home and the chance to be part of such a welcoming family.

Dianna's son, Peter, is pleased that his mum feels safer and happier now she has company at home.

"Mum felt nervous living on her own but had no interest in leaving her home of 50 years," Peter said.

"Mum and Piumika have shared interests in cooking, gardening and football, and they also have their own interests in church, university and bowls.

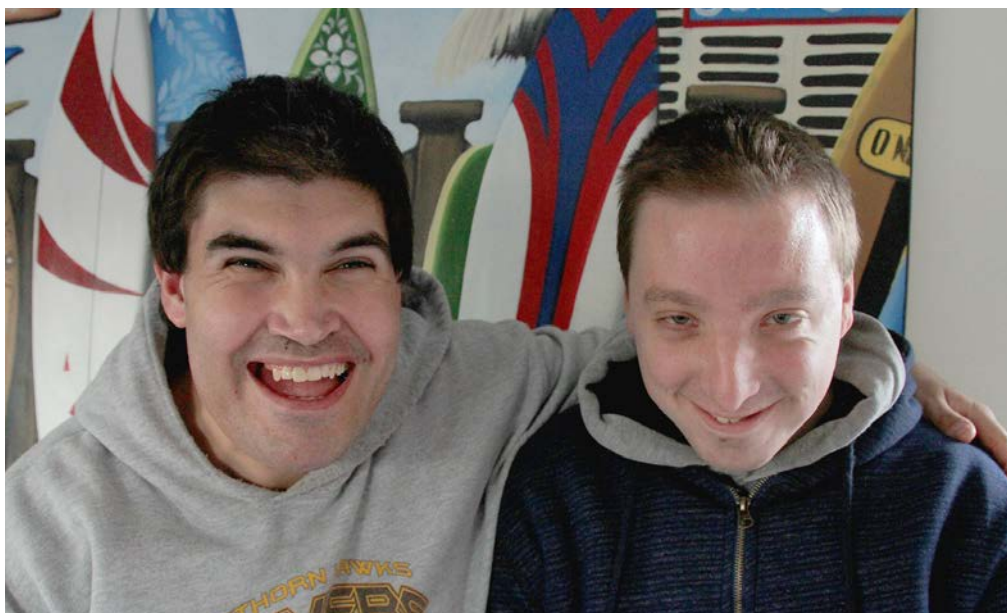
"Since Piumika moved in, Mum became noticeably happier.

"They have developed a wonderful relationship, so much so that Mum introduced Piumika at family Christmas as her new daughter."

UnitingCare Harrison



We have been working with people in need since the early 1960s, as an agency that supported young people. Now our services build independence and provide opportunities for people of all ages.



Through the Genesis program Josh and Craig now have the skills to live independently.

Ahead of the UnitingCare agencies coming together under Uniting, we were successful in the joint tender for the Tenancy Assistance and Advice program. This will provide an early intervention approach to working with financially disadvantaged families and singles or survivors of family violence to improve their housing and life outcomes.

It is clear that early interventions can stop disadvantage leading to homelessness, or other negative social or psychological effects. One client was in crisis, with no home or safe place to live

with their children. We were able to place the family in a church-donated property and then assist them with further resources and support. "I now have a private rental and have settled in nicely, things are looking up for us," the client said.

Over the year our Disability Services team worked to move our independent living programs into the NDIS funding environment. Support at Your House and Genesis Independent Development program (Genesis) provide one-on-one support and skill development to people living in their own home, or as part of our live-in 20-week

program. Each program is customised to meet the needs of the individual and provide the support they feel would help them live independently. This can include cooking classes, budgeting advice, domestic skills or community interaction. A number of co-tenants from Genesis have since moved into private shared rental properties.

As well as working directly with clients, this year we also advocated with governments and funding bodies on their behalf for action on homelessness, sustainable housing policies and inclusion for people living with disabilities.

UnitingCare Prahran Mission



This year the Australian Association of Social Work and the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses both endorsed our Hearing Voices Approach training. As part of the statewide Voices Vic program, which we initiated in 2009, people with a lived experience of hearing voices or auditory hallucinations can undertake training and become peer support volunteers. The program is based on research that found many people hear voices without feeling distress or needing to access mental health support. Peer support volunteer, Mat, said after the training, “I can see the way forward and I want to help others”. The training is being rolled out across metropolitan and regional areas of Victoria.

We partnered with the Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre to provide mental health training to volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In July, 10 volunteers – many of whom speak English as a second language – received information on different types of mental illnesses and how to support those living with a mental health condition. The volunteers are matched with people experiencing mental illness and are able to take them to appointments,

assist with transport and engage them socially to reduce isolation.

The St Kilda 101 Engagement Hub was closed for renovations for nine months, but reopened in June this year. People who use the facility were delighted with the changes, including a landscaped garden, a quiet room, a consulting room for visiting practitioners and a new kitchen with outdoor decking. Up to 90 people attend every day, and we expect that number to grow. One participant said on the day of reopening, “I can feel my spirit lift” in response to the upgrade.

We were founded in 1946 in the wake of new and progressive ideas about social welfare. We provide services to people experiencing homelessness and economic disadvantage, as well as services to people experiencing mental illness.

Culinary skills program participants cooking lunch for over 70 people at the new St Kilda 101 Engagement Hub.



UnitingCare ReGen



We established the state's first mother and baby residential withdrawal service in September, after working with the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services to make treatment services more accessible for parents. Alcohol and other drug use can be a response to the challenges of parenting, but children can be a strong motivating force for parents to seek help.

By supporting mothers and their children, our residential service can help overcome the conflict between seeking treatment and parenting responsibilities. As one client, Tara, said, "I wouldn't have come to detox if I couldn't bring my son". Many mothers

find it difficult to enter and stay in treatment, fear child removal if they admit to drug use, and may have difficult intimate partner relationships. Residential care that engages with children as well as parents can minimise the risk of abuse or neglect and ensure children are supported.

This year we published *The Reason Why We're Here*, a report that documents the evidence behind our participation model. Sustainable, meaningful treatment outcomes for people who use alcohol and other drugs are more likely when they are engaged in the planning, delivery and review of the services they use. We

encourage participants in our programs to develop their skills and share their own expertise and experiences to help us support other clients. This report is part of our commitment to evidence-based responses to emerging needs, and informs our advocacy.

Our Consumer Pathways project was also launched this year and is the next step in our work to empower the people who use our services. It provides a range of supported training and professional development opportunities for people seeking to take up studying, employment or volunteer roles.

The Reason Why We're Here report documents the evidence behind our participation model.



Since 1970 we have been working with people affected by alcohol and other drug use to reduce harm and promote wellbeing. We raise our voice to challenge the stigma of drug addiction and improve understanding of issues.

UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania Early Childhood Services



In March, educators from across our services joined Early Childhood staff at a professional development day. The event was an opportunity to share information and experiences with colleagues and learn about turning policy into practice with regard to Child Safe Standards. Guest Christine Straubinger of Ripple Logic spoke about service delivery from a child's perspective and the impact this can have on a child's resilience and capability. A presentation by teachers from the Ringwood Uniting Church Pre School about a successful project they ran with their local community rounded out the day.

One Million Stars to End Violence is a global weaving project that encourages people to be the light and kindness they want to see in the world. Teachers Di Catalano and Kate Braunthal felt the need to be a part of the Australia-initiated project due to the high statistics of domestic violence in their area and the vulnerable families at their centre. It was also an opportunity to bring their kinder community together.

At the launch the project was met with great enthusiasm and commitment from families. Parents, children, council volunteers and



Stars made by families as part of a campaign to end violence and promote kindness.

A unit of UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania, we provide quality education and care services for children in collaboration with parents, families, local government and the broader community.

educators sat together learning to weave stars. They held fathers nights and afternoon teas for mothers and grandmothers. CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) families were able to participate due to the project being creative and hands-on rather than language-based. The stars they made became a focal point and

were displayed throughout the kinder. Their goal was 1000 stars and they ended up with 1327. The children and their families delivered their stars to the Maroondah City Council and were so proud to have been involved. They are looking forward to seeing the installation of stars during the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games.

UnitingCare Tasmania



The programs at our southern Scots campuses have moved towards an Emilio Reggio approach to early learning. We recognise children are competent individuals who develop well when placed in supported environments with encouragement from their educators and peers.

Since this change we have seen the children displaying huge developmental steps. Even the smallest children are able to sit at tables and share community meals in their age groups. Toddlers are cleaning and setting their tables, and serving themselves confidently. They have shown they are also able to decide how long they will play after lunch, before choosing their rest time and self-settling.

Our educators have moved to using a deep listening grid as a recording tool, rather than recording observations in a more traditional way. Consequently educators are no longer programming individually, but taking a group approach and building a stronger and more informed program for the children.

We continue to respond to demand for emergency relief services in southern Tasmania, maximising client support by offering additional

Encouraging independence from an early age with the Emilio Reggio learning approach.



We are regarded as vibrant, relevant and forward thinking in our local community. Our early learning, community and family services have been positively impacting the lives of Tasmanians for more than 20 years.

services when needed. Rising rental costs and the disparity between cost of living and benefit payments have contributed to high levels of need in our community.

Client feedback has shown us how important our services can be to people facing challenges: “Your help reminds me that even on the bad days there is still kindness

in the world.” Increasing awareness around family violence has also resulted in more people seeking assistance to leave dangerous home environments. Family violence affects all socio-economic groups, and even women in previously affluent circumstances can find themselves destitute or in need of basic items.



The Pathway Home program gives parents practical and therapeutic support.

Our work in action

Reuniting families

The domino effect of family violence can be devastating. The disruption caused in the lives of people living in a violent situation can be long lasting.

Sarah* and her two daughters have lived with substance use, family separation and physical and emotional violence within their family home. The unstable situation resulted in Sarah's children being placed in out-of-home care.

Sarah's story is not uncommon. UnitingCare Tasmania's Pathway Home program, delivered in partnership with Tasmanian Child Safety Service, works alongside parents to deliver practical and therapeutic support when they most need it.

After experiencing a difficult childhood herself, Sarah needed support to recover and rebuild from her past, so she could work towards reunification with her daughters.

Sally Ryan, Pathway Home Worker and Northern Family Services Manager at UnitingCare Tasmania, said the majority of parents who access the Pathway Home program were once in the child protection system themselves.

"A history of trauma and lack of consistent, solid role models can have a lasting effect through adulthood and parenting. Yet the dedication and commitment of parents to bring their children home is inspiring," Sally said.

"Our aim is to put the right support in place that empowers families to create real intergenerational change."

The road to reunification is never simple. In Sarah's case, the constant risk of re-engagement and retribution by her violent partner and his acquaintances was very high.

Gradually, Sarah was able to spend more than four consecutive nights with her daughters. Then one afternoon she was able to pick them up from school and bring them home to stay.

Pathway Home continues to provide support for the first six to 12 months after reunification to ensure the best long term outcomes for children and families.

**We've taken steps to protect this person's identity.*

UnitingCare Werribee Support and Housing



For 20 years we have been advocating for vulnerable residents facing or experiencing homelessness in our area. In December that expertise was recognised when we received a four-year, \$15 million grant from the Victorian government to fund a specialist homelessness package. The funding will cover a new early intervention program, including four staff,

two additional case managers to support people from transition housing into private rentals, capital for purchasing properties, a justice worker for people experiencing mortgage stress, and funding for leases.

This year three generous anonymous donors contributed \$150,000 to enable us to deliver three vital programs.

We began in the 1980s to provide support to homeless youth. The city of Wyndham in Melbourne's west is a diverse community and one of the fastest growing municipalities nationally.

The HELP program is delivered in conjunction with a local primary school, and supports young people who have attendance issues. It links the student, their family, the school and the community to work together to improve the educational outcomes of the student.

The Early Intervention Counselling program supports vulnerable Wyndham residents outside the school system, many with complex or multiple needs. We work with young people to build their skills and confidence, referring them on to specialised services if they feel they need more support.

Our Young Parents' Support Play Group is open to single parents or to couples who are experiencing challenges parenting their child or children.

Our local community is home to a number of asylum seekers on community detention orders. We have advocated for additional resources to support them, and also worked with local groups to foster social inclusion and community support; for example, a final year social work student on placement with us connected a group of male cricket-loving Sri Lankan asylum seekers to local cricket clubs, where many are still involved.



Young parents and their children socialise at the Young Parents' Support Play Group.

UnitingCare Wodonga



Staff and volunteers at our social enterprise restaurant, One Dish.

We were established in 2001 by Uniting Church congregations in the region to provide emergency relief and financial counselling to people facing disadvantage in our local community.

In February, we opened a social enterprise restaurant to foster inclusion in our community by bringing people in need and hospitality students together. One Dish has no set prices and diners pay what they can afford. Everyone is welcome for a meal, providing opportunities for people who would not otherwise go to a restaurant to build confidence and create connections. In the long term this will contribute to them being able to reach greater independence.

A partnership with Wodonga TAFE, the 30-seat restaurant also gives students a chance to gain practical experience and see first-hand the enjoyment

of people coming together from all walks of life to share a meal. One Dish operates under the guidance of a talented local chef who had been out of work and was a client of UnitingCare Wodonga for over a year. The restaurant is open on Fridays during the TAFE terms and also provides free prepared nutritional frozen meals to people in crisis.

We have been partnering with other schools and TAFE colleges to increase the food support we can provide to people in our community. Seven local secondary schools and TAFEs run cooking programs for students that produce meals for distribution

in our food parcels. Over the past year almost 9200 meals were produced by students. In total, we distributed more than 500,000 meal equivalents to the community this year.

In May, we received nearly 400 blankets through our annual winter blanket appeal. ABC Goulburn Murray, Woolworths and local sporting clubs got behind the appeal by helping us get the message out and accepting donations at locations across Wodonga. Our clients were very grateful to have new or nearly new sheets, pillows, mattress protectors, doonas, quilts and blankets to keep them warm.

Wesley Mission Victoria



Our annual Food for Families appeal marked 25 years of workplaces, schools and church and community groups supporting people experiencing disadvantage. In 2016, 47 tonnes of non-perishable food and toiletry items valued at approximately \$242,500 were donated to our Crisis and Homelessness Centres in Ringwood and Footscray. It took 318 volunteers to collect and sort all the donations, which included contributions from individuals for the first time. Appeal media reached an audience of 17 million, highlighting the issues faced by people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including domestic violence and housing affordability.

This year saw the arrival of Fire & Clay herb sticks into 30 Mitre 10 stores across New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. The sets of four ceramic herb labels – labelled oregano, parsley, chives and basil – are crafted by supported employees at our disability social enterprise. More than 30 Fire & Clay employees are paid to produce quality pottery pieces for the home and garden.

This is the first time Fire & Clay products have been stocked by a commercial chain, validating



Fire & Clay employee Monica is proud of her ceramic herb sticks.

For over 124 years, we have been providing community-based services that empower people to improve their quality of life and increase their social participation. Our reach extends from Melbourne's west to inner Gippsland.

the quality and worth of these hand-crafted pieces. For Fire & Clay employees, Mitre 10's support is recognition that people with intellectual, neurological and physical disabilities deserve social inclusion, empowerment, dignity, quality of life and economic independence.

The redevelopment of the Wesley Church site in

Melbourne's CBD started this year, after 30 years of planning. Several buildings have been demolished, but we are committed to recording both written and oral histories of the Princess Mary Club. Archaeological digs on parts of the site have also commenced under the guidance of Heritage Victoria to look at historical Indigenous and early settler activity.



Andrew's family shared stories with staff at Wesley Neurological Support Services.

Our work in action

Enriching lives through deeper understanding

After receiving a significant diagnosis, it can feel as though life is separated into the 'before' and the 'after', with the experiences, interests and passions of before feeling like another lifetime ago. A new story-sharing project at Wesley Mission Victoria aims to build better relationships and an understanding of people's life experiences.

Wesley Neurological Support Services provides specialist support in purpose-built accommodation for people with progressive neurological disorders, including the degenerative condition Huntington's disease.

The story-sharing project involves family members and friends in helping staff get to know residents through sharing memories, history and special details about their loved ones.

House coordinator Jonathan Williams knows the difference it can make when staff have a better understanding of the people they support every day.

"We want to know as much as we can about our residents. They have lived rich and interesting

lives – we don't want them to be defined by their disease," Jonathan said.

Through the project, the staff have learned more about 50-year-old Andrew, who is in the late stages of Huntington's disease and is no longer able to communicate. Andrew's cousin Julie is grateful for the chance to share details of his life, especially his dedication as a husband and father.

"Andrew is very clever. He was a chemical engineer," Julie said.

"He had the predictive test and knew he carried the gene so set about staying healthy and fit," Julie said. He held a black belt in martial arts, exercised regularly and maintained a healthy diet. Andrew made an enormous effort to delay the onset of the disease.

"On the day we told Andrew's story it was really quite special.

"I'm glad the staff have greater insight into his life and can chat to him about his interests. It's hard as it's a one-way conversation, but I know Andrew would still love it," Julie said.

Wesley Centre for Life Enrichment



The needs of the community have changed since the Wesley Uniting Church in Geelong began its outreach in 1942 and our services have evolved with them. We offer counselling and educational support programs.

areas such as relationship and family support, stress management, grief and loss, depression, trauma, addictions and general counselling.

Overall 750 counselling sessions have been provided in the past year, with most people attending about three sessions until they identify a reduced need for support. Counselling is available to all regardless of their circumstances, and those on low incomes can access subsidies on a sliding scale, while wait times are kept to a minimum.

The No More Walking on Eggshells program supports women recovering from family violence, while we supported women who experienced the death of a partner through Learning to Live with Loss. A group for isolated older women called Face to Face finished in 2016 after participants started supporting themselves and developing their own social network.

We delivered a number of carer mindfulness and self-care sessions in collaboration with Barwon Health's Carer Support Service. Central Geelong's Storyfest in the April school holidays provided an opportunity to reach children with Mindfulness Tools for Kids sessions.



Kids practising mindfulness during Storyfest.

A range of support programs and groups has been offered over the past year to provide care, counselling and education to those in need. We worked with groups and individuals as they developed positive relationships with themselves, each other, their families and their communities. Programs and sessions for groups of children

and carers have focussed on mindfulness and well-being. They provide strategies, tools, and tips for maintaining good mental health.

Following some significant staffing changes, we moved to engage counsellors with diverse therapeutic skills to broaden the range of support we could offer. Our counsellors can offer assistance in

Wimmera UnitingCare



This year, we launched headspace Horsham, providing support for young people aged 12-25. We are the lead agency of the service which covers issues such as relationships, drug and alcohol use, mental health, bullying, anxiety, depression, negative self-image and uncertainty about future plans. We worked with the Wimmera Pride Project to design and establish a support

worker role to specifically respond to the needs of the LGBTI+ community.

More than 70 young people sought support from the free health service in its first two months. Karina, 17, is one client who praised the headspace service. "The one-on-one counselling sessions are helpful in times of need and support. Everyone is so

understanding. It is a warm and welcoming environment!"

In February we started collaborating with the Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative, an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation that works to ensure the provision of effective health, welfare and family services to the Aboriginal community across the Wimmera. Through the partnership, our out-of-home care team has increased understanding of how better to act in the best interests of Aboriginal children and communities. This knowledge will assist us in 2018 when we transition the aboriginal children in our care to Goolum Goolum. We also jointly ran a camp for aboriginal children in care in the Wimmera, to increase the connection between the young people and their culture.

Our early learning services have grown to include eight childcare centres, five kindergartens and 15 Family Day Care educators making us the largest early learning service provider in western Victoria. Centres are located across a broad range of rural communities including Balmoral, Kaniva, Hopetoun, Warracknabeal, Jeparit, Rainbow, Nhill and Dimboola.

UnitingCare Wimmera CEO Wendy Sturgess with team members at the launch of Headspace Horsham.



Established in 1981, we support communities all across the north west corner of Victoria. We work with vulnerable children, youth and families and people living with mental illness or a disability.

Our people

Together, we are 7000 people delivering over 770 programs and services in communities that count on us.

The people of our organisation are our greatest strength in responding to change in the community services sector and to meeting the growing demand for services. With dedication and outstanding resilience, our employees and volunteers deliver on our commitment to client outcomes.

We are proud to have highly experienced, qualified and innovative thinkers whose investment in our purpose and values is the foundation on which we will build. In coming together, we have an opportunity to create market-leading consumer experience and adopt best practice models from across our teams.

“This work can only be built by supporting and joining up our people. By connecting our teams of skilled and passionate volunteers and professionals, we can aspire to realise greater change than before.”

Paul Linossier
CEO Uniting Vic.Tas



3639
employees



3518
volunteers



Family counsellor Adam and non-residential rehabilitation program worker Anez work together at UnitingCare ReGen.

**“I was so happy
that I was able
to be there for
someone else.”**

**Kannan volunteers as a telephone
crisis supporter with Lifeline after
losing his brother to suicide.**



Our Board

Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited officially commenced operations on Monday 3 October 2016. On this day, the Boards of the 21 UnitingCare agencies and Wesley Mission Victoria stood aside and the new directors of Uniting took office.

Chair Bronwyn Pike

Bronwyn is the Chair of Western Heath and the South Australian Urban Renewal Authority (Renewal SA), and a board member of the Australian Health Policy Collaboration. She is the Chair of Uniting Care Australia and serves on the board of Uniting NSW.ACT. Bronwyn is also president of the Australian College of Educators.

As a consultant, Bronwyn provides strategic planning advice, executive mentoring, and support to non-government organisations.

Prior to these roles, Bronwyn was the State member for Melbourne and Victorian Minister for Housing, Aged Care, Community Services, Health, Education and Skills. Her 13-year parliamentary career included 11 years as a minister.

Before entering parliament in 1999, she was the director of justice and social responsibility in the Synod of Victoria.

Bronwyn is a lifelong member of the Uniting Church.

Deputy Chair Sue Norman

Sue was formerly a Chair and a Board member of Wesley Mission Victoria and has had a long association with the Uniting Church in several capacities.

Sue is an experienced company director, with a proven track record in applying sound business and governance principles to not-for-profit organisations.

An accountant by profession, Sue is a former Executive Director of UCA Funds Management and is credited with transforming the organisation to a professional funds management operation, by employing specialist staff, introducing contemporary business practices and systems, and establishing transparent reporting.

Sue is also a past member of the Board of Trustees and Director of Benefund Limited (the Uniting Church in Australia Beneficiary Fund) and the University of Divinity (formerly Melbourne College of Divinity) Council.

Robyn Batten

Robyn has held leadership positions in some of the



Paul Linossier, Bronwyn Pike, Heather Watson and Linda McCrorey

Thank you to the Board members of our founding agencies for your contribution to the vision and establishment of Uniting.

Uniting Church's largest community and aged care agencies. These include Executive Director of Uniting Aged Care (Vic/Tas), Executive Director of Blue Care and Executive Director of Australian Regional and Remote Community Services (ARRCS) in Queensland.

Prior to this, Robyn held CEO and executive positions in health and local government in Victoria and South Australia. Many of those roles involved leading major organisational change.

Robyn is the Executive Chair of Leap in! a joint venture between UnitingCare Queensland and Uniting NSW.ACT. Robyn is also the Vice Chairman of MIM China Pte Ltd and a Strategic Stakeholder in Borderless Healthcare Worldcare Inc.



Robyn Batten

Mark Heintz

Mark is Chief Executive Officer of Otway Pork, a fully owned subsidiary of privately-owned Australian agri-food company The Pastoral Pork Group. He is a former vice president of Cycling Victoria and also a former Chair and Board member of Lentara UnitingCare.

Formerly a crisis intervention counsellor, Mark has extensive leadership experience in large-scale business turnaround, change management, strategic planning and dealing with conflict.

Mark is a past participant of the Williamson Community Leadership program and was awarded the St James Ethics Centre Fairfax Fellowship and an Asialink Business Leaders Scholarship.

Linda McCrorey

Linda is the Principal Consultant with Enhancing Quality Services Consulting and a former Chair and a Board member of UnitingCare Gippsland.

Linda has lived and worked primarily in regional Victoria. Her work experience is in the areas of community health, disability, case management, women's health, aged care, sexual assault services, Aboriginal services, and alcohol and drug services.

Linda has worked as an assessor for accreditation agencies for 15 years. She is a QIP (Quality Improvement Performance) Assessment Manager and has previously worked as an Aged Care Quality Assessor.



Mark Heintz

Phil Morris

Phil has worked in the health and community health services sector for over 35 years. Prior to retiring in 2014, Phil was a senior executive responsible for rural hospitals and a number of community health centres and services within the Tasmanian State health agency. Phil has degrees in social work and public policy.

Phil chairs the Board of Cornerstone Youth Services that operates the Headspace youth mental health service in Launceston, and is a member of the Pilgrim Uniting Church Council and a member of the Presbytery of Tasmania Standing Committee. He is a former Deputy Chair of UnitingCare Tasmania. He also wears an apron each week volunteering in Maggie's Cafe, an outreach of Pilgrim.

Peter Prasser

Peter is General Manager-Group Balance Sheet and Liquidity Management with the National Australia Bank.

Peter has more than 15 years' experience reporting to boards, executive management committees and regulators on business strategies, funding, risk management issues and policies, and financial performance in an environment of sound corporate governance. He has a strong focus on ensuring businesses understand the dimensions of governance and risk within their operations.

Peter was a former Chair and a Board member of Prahran Mission and is a member of the Council of Elders at the Toorak Uniting Church.

Rev Allan Thompson

Rev Allan Thompson, now semi-retired, previously ministered in rural and suburban congregations. He was a presbytery minister and associate general secretary of the Synod, with special responsibility for the Uniting Church in Tasmania.

Allan was the Chair and Executive Director of Wimmera UnitingCare. He was the inaugural Chair of Connections UnitingCare and UnitingCare Tasmania.

Allan is the Chair of Uniting AgeWell (Vic/Tas) and believes it is vital that the Uniting AgeWell Board and the new Uniting Board work closely together, particularly in the provision of services to older people.

Heather Watson

Heather is a former partner in national law firm McCullough Robertson, and a former Chair and Board member of UnitingCare Queensland.

Heather currently chairs and is a Director of the Community Services Industry Alliance and is a Director of the National Affordable Housing Consortium. She is Chair of Uniting NSW.ACT.

Heather has had a lifelong involvement with the Uniting Church and was a founding Director of BoardConnect, a not-for-profit specifically focused on improving the governance capacity of non-profit boards.



Phil Morris

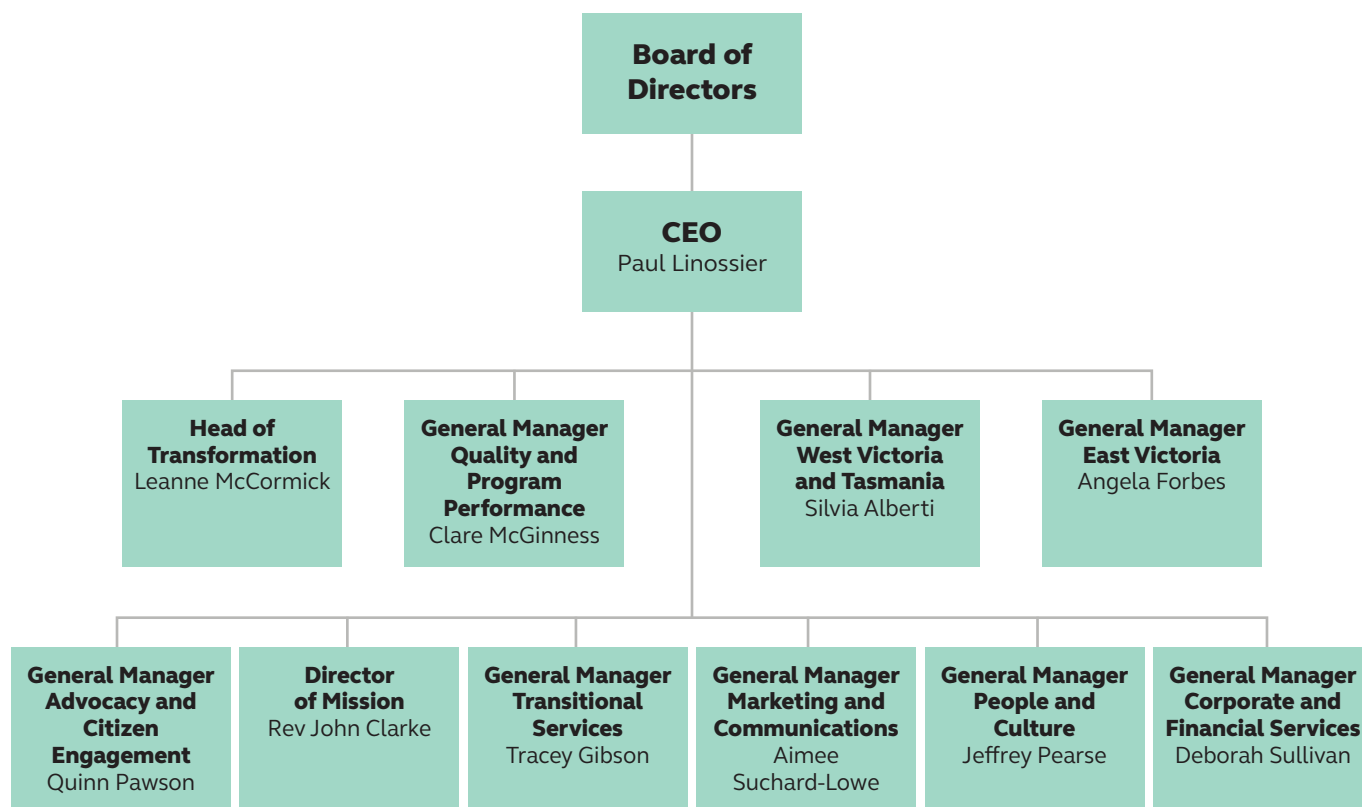


Peter Prasser



Rev Allan Thompson and Sue Norman

Organisational chart



Financial report

The financial information presented in this report has been extracted from the audited financial report of Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited for the year ended 30 June 2017. A copy of the full financial report and auditor's report is available on request.

Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited is incorporated under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) as a company limited by guarantee (ABN 81 098 317 125) and domiciled in Australia.

For this report, Uniting received permission from the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission to provide comparative amounts from the Wesley Mission Victoria annual financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2016.

Employees

Uniting employed 3639 people as at 30 June 2017.

Volunteers and donations in kind

Uniting has 3518 volunteers who make an invaluable contribution to our work. During the financial year under review, it is estimated the volunteers provided approximately 1,160,000 hours of service which would equate to approximately \$40.6 million.* Uniting also received donations in kind valued at approximately \$275,000 which have not been recognised in the financial statements.

Results for the year

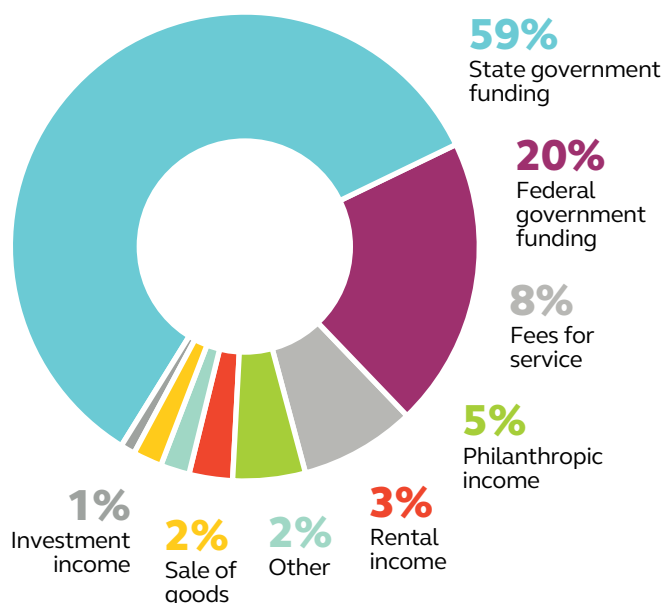
Uniting reported a loss for the year of \$16,000 (2016: surplus \$6.7 million). The total revenue for the year was \$261.6 million (2016: \$67.5 million).

Review of financial condition

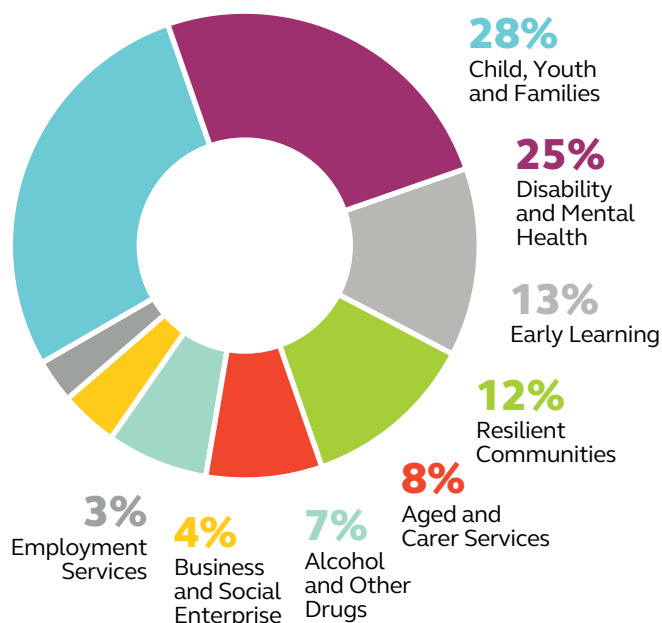
The total equity of Uniting at 30 June 2017 was \$294.3 million (2016: \$29.6 million).

The net cash outflow/inflow from operating activities during the financial year was Inflow \$6.5 million (2016: Outflow \$2.6 million).

Total revenue



Total expenditure (by service stream)



* The approximated hours and value have been recalculated since being published in the Directors' Report in the financial statements.

Directors' declaration

In accordance with a resolution of the Directors of Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited, we state that in the opinion of the Directors:

(a) the financial statements and the notes of Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited for the financial year ended 30 June 2017 are in accordance with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Act 2012, including:

- (1) Giving a true and fair view of the company and its consolidated entities' financial position as at 30 June 2017 and of their performance for the year ended on that date; and
- (2) Complying with Australian Accounting Standards and Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Regulation 2013; and

(b) there are reasonable grounds to believe that Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited and its consolidated entities will be able to pay their debts as and when they become due and payable.

On behalf of the Board



Bronwyn Pike
Chairperson of the
Board of Directors



Mark Heintz
Director and Chair of
Finance and Property
Committee

Melbourne, 28 November 2017

Statement of comprehensive income

	2017	2016
	\$'000	\$'000
Government contributions	208,144	47,906
Fees for service	20,085	4,902
Donations, bequests and other philanthropic income	12,454	2,146
Sale of goods	5,099	-
Other income	15,841	12,557
Total revenue	261,623	67,511
Employee expenses	182,432	44,776
Client expenses	33,337	2,554
Occupancy expenses	15,243	4,035
Administration expenses	22,094	4,906
Depreciation and amortisation	5,558	915
Other expenses	2,975	3,406
Total expenditure	261,639	60,592
Net surplus (deficit) for the year from continuing operations	(16)	6,919
Discontinued operations		
Deficit for the period from discontinued operations	-	(259)
Net surplus for the year after discontinued operations	(16)	6,660
Other comprehensive income		
Movement in restricted fund reserve	425	(253)
Net changes in fair value on available for sale financial assets	3,429	(121)
Total comprehensive income for the year	3,838	6,286

Statement of financial position

	2017 \$'000	2016 \$'000
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	77,023	8,208
Receivables	7,887	1,939
Other financial assets	2,241	427
Total current assets	87,151	10,574
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	229,228	10,762
Investment properties	-	3,869
Intangible assets	10,968	11,030
Available for sale assets	34,488	7,300
Other non-current assets	20	-
Total non-current assets	274,704	32,961
Total assets	361,855	43,535
Current liabilities		
Payables	37,118	5,525
Provisions	18,334	4,200
Total current liabilities	55,452	9,725
Non-current liabilities		
Payables	6,213	3,427
Provisions	5,879	808
Total non-current liabilities	12,092	4,235
Total liabilities	67,544	13,960
Net assets	294,311	29,575
Equity		
Contributed equity	12,623	12,623
Reserves	265,687	1,360
Accumulated surplus	16,001	15,592
Total equity	294,311	29,575

Thank you

We acknowledge with great appreciation the following donors, trusts, foundations and governments whose commitment and generosity enable our work in the community.

Bequests

Agnes Jessie Caroline Wilson Charitable Trust
Alexander Miller Estate
Alison Margaret Clark Estate
Arthur & Doris Clayton Fund
Barbara J Brown
Daisy Gardner Trust Fund
DTM & Ethel Davies Memorial Fund
E.C. Blackwood Charitable Trust
Enticknap Bequest
Estate of Arthur H Brown
Estate of Audrey Patricia Mitchell
Estate of Bert Fagg
Estate of Bessie Mary Thompson
Estate of Bettine Patricia McCaughan
Estate of Colin Cutler
Estate of Dudley Barton Adams
Estate of Elizabeth Marian Allison
Estate of Frances Alberta Watts
Estate of Frank Thomas
Estate of Frederick Michael Chafran
Estate of George Leslie Henderson
Estate of Harry Halliwell
Estate of James Holt
Estate of John Michael Thirsk
Estate of Joy Atkinson MacDonald
Estate of Leslie Kennedy
Estate of Lillian Bessie Hewitt
Estate of Lillian Betty Dendtler
Estate of Lindsay J Baldy
Estate of Lois and Brian Scott
Estate of Lois Margaret Smart
Estate of M L McDonald
Estate of Marjorie Lawrence Beattie
Estate of Mervyn Kydd
Estate of Nancy Alice East
Estate of Norma Jean Ward
Estate of Paul Dillon
Estate of Percival Box
Estate of Russell William Hunter
Estate of Ruth Walsh

Estate of Sally Jane Hornsby
Estate of Shirley Jean Cheshire
Estate of Suzanne De Villers Bosisto
Estate of Sylvia May Sneddon
Estate of Valma Nelle Matthews
Estate of Wallace Caudwell Clarke
Estate of William and Georgena Bradshaw Charitable Trust
Frank Hincks Bateman Estate
George Warman Estate
Hicks Estate
Jean Kassimates Bequest
John Russell MacPherson Fund
Joseph Hill Trust Fund
Mackie Bequest
Mavis Elderson Foley
Mr William Brown
N J Horton & Grace Horton Charitable Fund
Rimington Estate
State Trustees Australia Foundation – Henry Shaw Educational Donation
State Trustees Australia Foundation – The Francis Family
State Trustees Australia Foundation – William A Shipperlee
Suzanne Lois Frances Boyd
The G L Godfree Bequest
The Harry Dicker Fund
The Hinds-Martin Charitable Endowment
The John Robertson Grigor & Eva McKenzie Bequest
The Therapon Foundation
The William & George Sunderland Trust
Wesley Hill McGrath Estate

Trusts, foundations and other grants

Angel Fund
ANZ Staff Foundation
Australian Communities Foundation
Bagot Gjergja Foundation
Bell Charitable Fund
Besen Family Foundation
Board of Mission and Resources – Uniting Church
Campbell Edwards Trust
City of Port Phillip

We also couldn't do what we do without the support of hundreds of donors, volunteers, businesses, schools, community groups and church congregations who provide in-kind goods and services, cash donations and their time, knowledge and passion to make a difference in people's lives, every day.

City of Stonnington
Collier Charitable Fund
Coopersmith Family Foundation
Dick Smith Foods Foundation
Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal
Gandel Philanthropy
Geelong Community Foundation
Give Where You Live Foundation
Grenet Foundation
Harold Mitchell Foundation
Henry Berry Estate
Inger Rice Foundation
Joe White Bequest
Kirk Robson Theology and Arts Memorial Fund
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
Marshall White Foundation
Mona Georgina Harris Perpetual Charitable Trust
NAB Foundation
Percy Baxter Charitable Trust
Perpetual
Peter Williams Foundation
Pethard Tarax Charitable Trust
Portland House
Price Family Foundation
Scanlon Foundation
Share
Shine On Foundation
St Andrews Foundation
The Andrews Foundation
The Archie & Hilda Graham Foundation
The Danks Trust
The Flora & Frank Leith Charitable Trust
The Hilton White Estate
The Jack Brockhoff Foundation
The John and Betty Laidlaw Legacy
The Marian & E.H. Flack Trust
The Peter Isaacson Foundation
The R E Ross Trust
The William Angliss (Vic) Charitable Fund
Walter and Eliza Hall Trust Fund
Whitehorse Community Chest

Government

Commonwealth Government

Department of Employment
Department of Health
Department of Human Services
Department of Immigration and Border Protection
Department of Social Services

Victorian Government

Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) Horsham
Department of Education and Training
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Justice and Regulation

Tasmanian Government

Department of Education
Department of Health and Human Services



Get involved

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.

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.

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.

Become a carer

For children and young people who are unable to live with their birth families, a safe and supportive home environment can be life-changing. If you have a spare room and a big heart, we'd love to hear from you.



Learn more
vt.uniting.org



“It really is a fulfilling role. I love having a chat to the regulars, it makes my day.”

Volunteer Jim works front of house at Hartley’s Community Dining Room at Prahran Mission and the patrons adore him.

Our founding entities

We are 24 community service entities of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania who have joined together to form Uniting. We have a long and respected history of supporting local communities in Victoria and Tasmania.



Donna enjoying a cuppa at Wimmera UnitingCare's Winter Warmers morning tea.

Uniting

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

