



Uniting WA

Board Members

<i>Chairperson</i>	Erica Haddon
<i>CEO/Secretary of the Board</i>	Amanda Hunt
<i>Deputy Chairperson</i>	Dr Ron Chalmers
<i>Member</i>	Chris Hunt
<i>Member</i>	Lisa Fini
<i>Member</i>	Mark Webb
<i>Member</i>	Alison McCubbin
<i>Member</i>	Jane Banker
<i>Member</i>	David Kyle

Overview

Uniting WA is the trading name of UnitingCare West, a community services agency of the Uniting Church Western Australia formed in 2006.

At Uniting, we exist to inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice. Our work addresses the causes of vulnerability and disadvantage, and we stand for a just society where individuals and communities are valued and connected.

We support people experiencing complex challenges, often brought on by intergenerational trauma or situational crisis. This includes support for people experiencing disability, homelessness, or mental illness; people at risk of family breakdown; children experiencing vulnerability; and people re-joining community after leaving prison.

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

In delivering our services, we seek to demonstrate our values of being bold, imaginative, compassionate and respectful. At Uniting, we seek to continually strengthen our ongoing connections to, and belonging within, the Uniting Church in Australia.

UCW Board Update

In 2019/20, 3 new members joined our Uniting WA Board – Erica Haddon, Jane Barker and David Kyle. Erica Haddon was subsequently elected to the position of Chair by the Uniting Board in October 2019.

Erica is a CPA who has honed skills in audit and risk, innovation and culture change and the connection of profit and purpose. Jane has a strong background in community engagement and brings strategic and commercial skills balanced with a passion for inclusion and social justice. David is Director of Admissions, Engagement and Communication at Scotch College, and is passionate about service learning and character education.



The Uniting Board is a passionate group of non-Executive Directors who are deeply committed to sharing their various skills, expertise and experience to provide support, direction and oversight to Uniting as it seeks to fulfil its purpose to inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice.

Annual Public Meetings

On 29 July 2019, the Uniting Board resolved to move the 2019 Annual Public Meeting (APM) to early 2020 on a one-off basis to enable the Uniting WA Strategic Plan 2020-2023 to be finalised and launched at the meeting, along with the presentation of the 2018/19 Annual Report.

At the same time, the Board resolved to move the dates for subsequent Annual Public Meetings to October, with appropriate changes to be made to the Governance Policy and Governance Planning and Reporting Schedule for 2020.

The 2019 APM was held on Thursday 12 March at The Platform in Perth, with approximately 100 attendees. Special guest speaker Carol Innes, Manager Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Arts at Development WA, addressed the crowd along with Chairperson Erica Haddon and Chief Executive Officer Amanda Hunt.

The launch of the Uniting WA Strategic Plan 2020-2023 was well received and the design was a 'soft launch' of the new Uniting brand.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

At Uniting, we have remained deeply concerned about the real and potential impacts of COVID-19 on our team, our volunteers, the people we support and the broader community.

The safety and wellbeing of our team and the people we support has remained paramount in our decisions and our ongoing response to the situation.

In response to the growing pandemic, we enacted our Pandemic Response Plan on 16 March 2020. This plan had been developed throughout the preceding weeks and was highly valuable in guiding decision-making and clarifying responsibilities.

The Pandemic Response Plan remains in place and is updated on an ongoing basis to ensure our response is evidence-based and practice-informed. We have had no known cases of COVID-19 to date.

From the outset, we focused on clearly communicating policies and decisions to our team and the people we support, clarifying how people may and will be affected, and committing to keeping people up-to-date. Our policies and actions were based on public health advice and in consultation with funding bodies and our service areas to ensure that we maintained critical and essential support in the safest and most compassionate way possible.

In addition to implementing minimum public health directives and adopting best-practice personal hygiene practices, we took actions such as: Implementing flexible work practices and a Pandemic Leave Policy; careful rostering of teams to minimise the potential for cross-infection; replacing face-to-face with phone and online service delivery wherever possible; restricting office access for visitors to appointments only; and postponing all non-essential volunteering.

Uniting remained fully committed and transparent throughout the pandemic response to provide certainty to all of the people we interact with, including our team. This included SMS, letter, phone and face-to-face contact with the people we support; public statements; a dedicated section for information on our website; dedicated non-public pages on the website for team members and volunteers who may not have continual access to our Intranet; internal posters and communications; and a dedicated Intranet page.

Throughout the ever-changing and rapidly evolving situation, we are proud that our team displayed incredible resilience and commitment to their work and our mission to stand for a just society and support people most in need. The people that we exist to serve will be even more vulnerable – those who already live with complex challenges such as mental illness, disability and homelessness, and far too many children experiencing vulnerability will be relying on community services for support. As a result of this, Uniting is advocating strongly for increased Government funding support.

Uniting WA Strategic Plan 2020-2023

The Uniting WA Strategic Plan for the next 4 years was launched at the 2019 APM on 12 March 2020.

The plan aligns with the Uniting brand and clearly defines our strategic goals, the people we serve and our commitment to ensuring we maintain our focus on mission. It also spells out the expected outcomes of achieving our goals, helping us to measure our successes and alter our approaches where needed.

Developed in thorough consultation with the Uniting team, the Board approved the plan in early 2020.

Launch of Uniting WA

On 29 May 2020, UnitingCare West entered a new phase of growth and began trading as Uniting WA. This was borne from a decision by the Uniting Board in August 2019.

Becoming Uniting is more than just having a new logo and look – it's about clarifying and embracing the very essence of who we are as an organisation and our deeply valued place within the Uniting Church. While the important work we do for the Western Australian community remains the same, we have sharpened our focus on our mission and standing for a just society.

As an organisation, we see the change in brand as an opportunity to draw closer ties with our Uniting family nationally. It's also about retaining our proud Western Australian history and ensuring the legacy of those involved in our formation in 2006 will always live on through Uniting.

The Uniting brand is shared by Uniting NSW.ACT and Uniting Vic.Tas. This unity and collaboration – with two much larger sister organisations – gives us greater ability to be effective in advocating for the issues which strike at the heart of our mission. We may be smaller in size, but our voice is larger and we retain our independence and uniquely Western Australian perspective.

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

Our Purpose: To inspire people, enliven communities and 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 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.

Partnerships which make a difference in our community

At Uniting, we engage closely with a number of partner agencies to make a collective difference in the lives of vulnerable people within our community. This includes fellow members of the WA Alliance to End Homelessness, 100 Families WA Project, Imagined Futures and the Financial Counselling Network. We have also actively sought greater collaboration with Aboriginal agencies, establishing ongoing partnerships with Wungening Aboriginal Corporation and Noongar Mia Mia.

Uniting Church Social Justice Commission

Our Practice Lead for Community Engagement has been a guest attendee of monthly meetings of the Uniting Church Social Justice Commission. Attending these meetings creates a wonderful synergy between Uniting and fellow church agencies in relation to Social Justice Issues. In 2020, Uniting and the Social Justice Commission worked together on a co-branded engagement activity during Reconciliation Week 2020.

Rainbow Lunch groups

For 20 years, Rainbow Lunch groups have been making a difference in the lives of people experiencing mental health issues, loneliness and social isolation. Hosted by Uniting Churches across Perth, and supported by Uniting WA since the creation of UnitingCare West, Rainbow Lunch groups bring people together to share a meal and connect with others in the community. Everyone is equal – people walk through the doors to feel welcome and not judged.

Uniting Church schools

In 2019, Uniting Church schools continued to be enthusiastic participants in our Uniting programs, providing a vast amount of material donations along with proceeds from school collections totaling \$11,500.

Uniting Church schools generously participated in our Christmas Hamper Appeal, donating dozens of backpacks for children experiencing disadvantage with the essentials needed to start the school year. Schools also put together toiletries packs for people experiencing homelessness or crisis, as well as participating in a virtual activity for Reconciliation Week 2020.

Many of our Uniting Church schools took part in the Cozy Toes Winter Sock Appeal as well as providing food for the Tranby Engagement Hub throughout the COVID-19 crisis. In 2020, our Uniting appeals and activities have been co-branded with the Uniting Church WA wherever possible.

With some support from Uniting, St Stephen's School continues their Food Rescue program at Lakeside Joondalup in conjunction with Rotary. The school collects unsold fresh food from cafes and restaurants for distribution to people in need throughout the northern corridor.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted to make clear the intention of Uniting Church of WA, Uniting Schools and Uniting to work collectively together on community service projects.

Support from / working with congregations

In addition to the support received from the Uniting Church Western Australia, Uniting is grateful for the donations received from 43 congregations totaling \$23,000.

Many congregations and individual members of the Uniting Church community support us regularly with material assistance, financial donations and many hours of volunteer time. Knitted blankets, food and the genuine care offered by our Uniting Church community is deeply generous and greatly appreciated.

This community are also the heart of Rainbow/Friendship Lunch groups, the Uniting Christmas Appeal, Share Affair and many other joint initiatives. Fremantle Wesley Uniting Church continues to be a vital supporter of the emergency relief fund at our Fremantle office.

We particularly acknowledge the generous support of the Uniting Church in the City, which donated \$500,000 to the work of Uniting in support of the Tranby Engagement Hub.

Donations are integral to our mission and represent a deep connection with our community and Uniting Church family. Donations enable Uniting to provide the supports and services which lie beyond the scope of government funding as well as enhancing established programs.

One of the aims of the Uniting WA Strategic Plan 2020-2023 is to strengthen our connection with local congregations. This includes exploring ways that we can work together to provide opportunities for supporting people in the community who are experiencing hardship and disadvantage.

Together we are aspirational in our vision to tackle injustice.

Improving community engagement through volunteering and social enterprise

We could not deliver our Uniting services without the significant support from our volunteers. In 2020, our 177 volunteers across all of Uniting have contributed 26,000 hours towards our Uniting services, supporting people most vulnerable in our community.

In addition to this, our Food Rescue Carts are operated by a force of 77 volunteers. Sixty six cafes within the Perth CBD contribute around 3.5 tonnes of food each month, the equivalent of 9,000 meals distributed to people experiencing homelessness and crisis from the Tranby Engagement Hub, and the Salvation Army facilities on William Street and at The Beacon.

Willetton Uniting Church and Girrawheen Centres

To align with NDIS structures, our Uniting Individualised Services area moved to more person-centred and individualised services throughout the past 12 months. As a result, centre-based programs operating from Willetton and Girrawheen Uniting Church properties stopped operating. Participants were supported throughout these changes and were transitioned to community based support services, individual support services or to other providers. The Uniting Board has resolved not to pursue a purchase of the Girrawheen site due to previously unknown development restrictions imposed on the property title.

Wyn Carr House

The property known as Wyn Carr House in Fremantle is in poor condition and requires substantial structural and cosmetic investment to make the space respectful and suitable for provision of services.

We are considering longer-term options to seek alternate funding for the continued provision of services at Wyn Carr House along with other properties utilised in the Homeless Accommodation Support Service (HASS), Group Homes and Independent Living Program (ILP) areas.

Aberdeen St, Perth – Tranby Engagement Hub

On 28 October 2019, Uniting was granted \$1,763,981 in Lotterywest funding to refit the Tranby Engagement Hub and the neighbouring office space at 17/7 Aberdeen Street. The Premier presented the grant to Chairperson Erica Haddon and CEO Amanda Hunt on 4 December at Tranby.

The funding will result in a full internal re-alignment and fit-out at Tranby to increase overall capacity while adapting the space to complement more purposeful, person-centred and trauma-informed service delivery. The refurbishment project will also involve purpose-built offices to accommodate our Financial Counselling services at the recently acquired unit next door at 7 Aberdeen Street.

Project works are expected to commence in September 2020 for a 6-8 week period. During this time, a suitable alternate site will be secured for the delivery of Uniting's homelessness services contracted to be delivered at Tranby.

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

Uniting has remained fully committed to working through the Disability Royal Commission process with complete transparency, in order to realise the fundamental rights of people with disability.

Uniting was one of many organisations who were called to respond to a Notice to Produce and a Notice to Give Information, which required us to share information with the Disability Royal Commission including processes, policies, plans and reports.

We have and will continue to endeavor to meet all requirements asked of us.

As an organisation that provides person-centred services, Uniting commends the forward-facing focus of the Commission, which will advocate for improvements that will ensure ongoing high-quality support for people with disability in the future.

At Uniting, we address the causes of vulnerability and disadvantage, stand for a just society and support individuals and communities to be valued and connected.

Erica Haddon
Chairperson

Amanda Hunt
Chief Executive Officer