

B14 UNITINGCARE AUSTRALIA

1. ABOUT UNITINGCARE AUSTRALIA

UnitingCare Australia's Mission is to express God's love for all people through the Uniting Church's commitment to supporting individuals, families and communities through advocacy and the enhancement of community service provision.

1.1 THE ROLE OF THE AGENCY

Acting within guidelines set by the Assembly or the Standing Committee, and grounded in the experience of the Uniting Church's community service providers, UnitingCare Australia:

1. Encourages theological reflection on the Church's community services work.
2. Advocates to Government and within the Church and community those policies and practices which enhance the dignity of people, especially those who are most disadvantaged and marginalised.
3. Enables exchange of information across Synods and Uniting Church service providers.
4. Seeks to enhance the quality of community service provision by the Uniting Church.
5. Represents the views of Uniting Church service providers to governments.
6. Works as appropriate with other churches and peak organisations in the community services field.
7. Acts on requests and referrals from Synods and the Assembly.

This paper reports on that activity according to the following four broadly defined areas:

- Theological reflection
- Advocacy, policy analysis and policy development
- Enhancing the quality of community service provision by the Uniting Church
- Communication and collaboration

UnitingCare Australia contributes to the life of the Church by:

1. Focusing the activities of the Agency on the vision of the Assembly as a whole.
2. Advising the Assembly and/or the Standing Committee on policy matters within their areas of responsibility.
3. Making policy decisions where the Assembly or the Standing Committee has delegated authority, either through UnitingCare Australia's Mandate or by resolution.

1.2 AGENCY PRINCIPLES AND SCOPE

UnitingCare Australia's work is grounded in guiding principles and values as outlined in the Agency's Mandate. These guiding principles and values state that:

- UnitingCare Australia will bring to all aspects of its work and ministry the theological framework that God's love is extended to all people, with no discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, sexuality, ability, class, colour, creed or cultural origin.
- UnitingCare Australia will work cooperatively and ecumenically, giving expression to the unity of God's love for the world, and the church as a loving Agency.
- UnitingCare Australia will constantly seek to develop national best practice supporting and giving focus to its work in the areas of policy and practical outcomes.

Propelled by our values and a theologically grounded understanding of hope and vision for a good society, we seek to make a practical difference in the world. The work of UnitingCare Australia is informed by: the daily experience of the countless Australians (estimated to be two million) who are supported by our community services agencies each year; the expertise of the UnitingCare

network; and the ongoing life of the Church. It is the coming together of values, vision and experience that gives strength and integrity to our activity.

Together with other agencies of the Church, UnitingCare Australia works to promote a just and participatory society, a united humanity, respect for all, and investment in the common good. For us, this is expressed particularly in relation to policy and practice associated with the provision of community services. Our task is to make explicit the connections between faith, social policy, and outcomes on the ground; to government, to the Church, and into the public domain.

UnitingCare Australia plays a significant role in promoting the Uniting Church's perspectives to government and the wider community; developing national positions; gathering and disseminating information; networking with other church and community bodies; and advocating our position to the Australian Parliament and relevant Australian Government departments.

The UnitingCare Network

The community services of the Uniting Church in Australia are extensive and diverse. The UnitingCare Network employs approximately 40,000 staff and is supported by the work of over 30,000 volunteers. We have more than 1,600 sites throughout the country. UnitingCare, as the network of community services and activities within the Uniting Church, gives concrete expression to God's love for the world.

UnitingCare Australia enables collaboration between Agencies, institutions, missions and Synods, and is a powerful vehicle for providing a unified public voice and collective action and activity. The work of UnitingCare Australia is embedded in the life and witness of the Uniting Church.

1.3 AGENCY MANDATE AND PRIORITIES

UnitingCare Australia's Mandate is to take up community service issues within the theological framework of the Uniting Church, particularly the Church's social justice perspectives; to develop and reflect on the policies and practices of the Uniting Church in community services; and to pursue appropriate issues within the Uniting Church, with government and the community sector, with the Australian community and with other parts of the Church. (Appendix A).

This triennium has been one of significant personnel and governance changes for UnitingCare Australia with the resignation of the previous National Director, Lin Hatfield Dodds, in July 2016 after fourteen years in the role, and the retirement of Peter Bicknell in June 2017 after ten years as Chair. The new National Director, Ms Claerwen Little, commenced in February 2017 and Hon. Bronwyn Pike was appointed by the Standing Committee as the new Chair in July 2017 until July 2018. Her role is on this Assembly agenda for appointment through the next triennium.

These changes have provided an opportunity to review and refresh the National Committee governance arrangements and Mandate which will be discussed at the March meeting of the Standing Committee. A new refreshed set of strategic priorities were also developed for the next three years. These strategic priorities guide the work of the Agency and priorities of National Office staff time (Appendix B).

During this period, our advocacy work has had more focus on the aged care reforms than in previous years, as a result of the government paying keen attention to the rapidly growing numbers of older people in the population and the need to ensure healthy ageing and a sustainable service system. Other areas of activity included:

- Children, young people and families with a focus on vulnerable families, promoting early intervention and prevention, out of home care and early childhood education and care.
- Costs of living for low income and vulnerable Australians, including:
 - Energy poverty

- Income support including inadequacy of payments, compulsory income management, and improving financial health and wellbeing
- assessing and responding to the impacts of structural adjustments to the economy on people and communities' capacity to access the means and opportunity for a decent life
- Employment and employment support services
- Affordable housing and homelessness
- Disability services reform, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- Funding adequacy for services
- Government and not for profit relationship
- Taxation
- Regulation
- Workforce
- Assisting the community services of the Uniting Church in responding to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and redress.

1.4 AGENCY GOVERNANCE

The Assembly has delegated governance and functional responsibilities for UnitingCare Australia to its National Committee and Executive. The Agency's governance arrangements are set out in UnitingCare Australia's Governance Arrangements (Appendix C).

The National Committee has the responsibility to:

- approve social policy and other positions of UnitingCare Australia;
- assist and advise the National Director on the strategic direction for the national work;
- resource, acquire, and allocate national work;
- review the outcomes of national work;
- recommend an annual budget to the Standing Committee through the Assembly Finance Audit and Risk Committee (AFARC);
- ensure adequate organisational policy and practices;
- manage the establishment, membership and operations of national network groups and other working groups as necessary to further the work of UnitingCare Australia; and
- negotiate with the Assembly where there is an interest in varying Assembly workplace policies and act on any delegations of authority to vary such policies for UnitingCare Australia.

The Executive of the National Committee is empowered to act on behalf of the National Committee between meetings of the National Committee in respect of any of the responsibilities of the National Committee except such as the National Committee may determine.

In addition to its standing role, the Executive ensures that the financial operations of UnitingCare Australia are running appropriately. This includes:

- monitoring the budget and providing advice to the National Committee on income, expenditure and cash flow;
- presenting to a meeting of the National Committee information to enable timely input to AFARC regarding the annual UnitingCare budget for the following financial year; and
- considering the draft budget from AFARC to enable timely input into the Standing Committee determination of the UnitingCare Australia budget for the following financial year (noting that this is currently by the end of October each year).

The Executive of the National Committee is responsible for oversight of risk and reporting to the AFARC on these issues.

National Committee

The National Committee, as the key governance body of UnitingCare Australia and is appointed by the Uniting Church in Australia Assembly.

The National Committee membership comprises three ex-officio members, six Synod representatives and five appointed members.

Ex officio members

Hon. Bronwyn Pike, Chair
Colleen Geyer, Assembly General Secretary
Claerwen Little, National Director

Synod Representatives

Queensland Synod	Craig Barke, Chief Executive Officer UnitingCare QLD
New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory	Peter Worland, Executive Director, Uniting in NSW.ACT
Northern Synod	Daphne Read AO President, Somerville Community Services
Western Australia	Robert Watson Chair, UnitingCare WA Forum
South Australia	Rev Rob Brown interim CEO / General Secretary UnitingCare SA
Victoria and Tasmania	Paul Linossier Chief Executive Officer, Uniting Victoria and Tasmania

Appointed Members

Libby Craft, Chief Executive Officer, UnitingCare Wesley Port Adelaide
Chris England, Chief Operating Officer, Wesley Mission in Sydney (from March 2014)
Richard Hearn, Executive Officer, Resthaven Inc

Executive

The Executive comprises:

- the Chair of the National Committee
- the National Director
- the Assembly General Secretary or their nominee
- two (2) other members of the National Committee, one of whom shall not be in an ex-officio position

The Executive is currently comprised of:

Bronwyn Pike (Chair)
Claerwen Little (National Director)
Colleen Geyer (Assembly General Secretary)
Craig Barke
Chris England

1.5 AGENCY FUNDING

UnitingCare Australia is funded by contributions from the UnitingCare network. This funding is occasionally supplemented by grants for specific purposes.

1.6 AGENCY OPERATION

UnitingCare Australia has eight permanent, full-time staff and three part-time staff members. UnitingCare Australia is located in Canberra, in close proximity to Parliament House.

UnitingCare Australia works with the UnitingCare network through a range of ways including national networks, forums and working groups around service and policy areas. The networks and working groups assist in identifying issues and enable the network to work across organisational boundaries to pursue common goals. Members of these networks are drawn from across the UnitingCare network.

Networks have broad areas of interest and are not time-limited. Working Groups and Forums are established for issue-specific, time-limited purposes. Networks and groups report to the National Committee through the National Office.

The role of these networks and working groups is to develop, review and reflect upon the policies and practices of the Uniting Church in its community services ministry with people; and to contribute to the advocacy of UnitingCare Australia.

The networks and groups that have operated over the triennium are:

- UnitingCare Australia's Network on Ageing
- Residential Aged Care Working Group
- Home and Community Care Working Group
- UnitingCare Australia's Children Young People and Families Network
- UnitingCare Australia Social Policy Network
- UnitingCare Australia Ministry and Missions Network
- Disability Working Group
- Emergency Relief and Financial Counselling Interest Group
- Energy Affordability Reference Group
- Gambling Reference Group
- National Information Communication Technology Group
- Outcomes Measurement group
- Brand Reference Group
- Leadership Forums

2. REPORTING AGAINST UNITINGCARE AUSTRALIA'S MANDATE

2.1 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The Agency's Faith Foundations document provides the theological framework for the activity of UnitingCare Australia. The value and distinctive contribution UnitingCare Australia makes to public policy debate stems from its faith foundations, and the continuing process of theological reflection and discernment that guides the agency and the wider UnitingCare Network.

In 2017 we were very fortunate to have engaged Rev. Dr Ji Zhang as part of our team in his role as the Assembly Theologian-in-Residence. Ji provides ongoing theological advice and input to our policy and advocacy work and to the work of our Agencies. He is currently developing a Theology of Social Service and undertaking a refresh of the Faith Foundations document given it was developed over 20 years ago. Ji's contribution to our work has been invaluable so far and he is

looking to develop processes to engage regularly with the ministry agents within our social services.

The Ministry and Mission Network, which has met regularly over this triennium, has provided an opportunity for those working in the Uniting Church and Agencies with particular leadership responsibilities for mission and culture, to connect, dialogue, and reflect on the policies and practices of the Uniting Church in its community services with people.

The network has developed this year into a self-sustaining group meeting annually, called the Uniting Ministry and Mission Network, still with a strong connection and input from UnitingCare Australia and now also our Theologian-in-Residence.

The network's particular tasks have been to:

- Engage representatives from Agencies and missions in relevant conversations and meetings in order to build a shared understanding of current issues facing faith-based community service providers;
- Reflect on current issues facing Agencies and missions, and to offer these reflections to the Assembly and Synods, UnitingCare Australia, and Synod UnitingCare agencies and Uniting Church missions to inform theological considerations and positions, and practical service outcomes; and
- Provide peer support to people in similar roles through shared resources and learning opportunities.

UnitingCare Australia has also recognised the need to spend time reflecting on the place of faith-based agencies in social service delivery and to clarify the independent identity of UnitingCare services that deliver government funded services. A project is underway to clearly articulate the contribution of the UnitingCare network to the Australian community, and to articulate its value.

During the last triennium, UnitingCare Australia has continued its work with UnitingWorld to build a partnership between the Uniting Church in Australia and the Protestant Church in China (China Christian Council/Three Self Patriotic Movement). There are three elements to this partnership: the development and sharing of theology; working together on theological education; and sharing knowledge and experience about the delivery of social services. UnitingCare Australia is involved in all three of these aspects of the relationship. This engagement will assist UnitingCare Australia, the UnitingCare network and the Uniting Church in Australia in broadening and deepening our theological reflection of the social services of the Uniting Church.

2.2 **ADVOCACY, POLICY ANALYSIS AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

Using our size, scope and diversity as a national network, we continue to advocate for policies and positions that build opportunity for all people to live hope-filled lives in an environment that promotes wellbeing.

UnitingCare Australia engages in advocacy to three major sets of stakeholders:

- To government and parliament;
- Across the Uniting Church and wider Australian community; and
- Within the UnitingCare network, seeking the enhancement of the quality of advocacy and community service provision.

All of UnitingCare Australia's advocacy work is focused on the wellbeing of vulnerable people and ensuring that all people can flourish. This advocacy is not driven by self-preservation, but by achieving the best outcomes for vulnerable people. Sometimes this means that UnitingCare Australia argues for policies and practices that make the community services work of the church

more challenging, but this is consistent with the Mandate which tasks UnitingCare Australia to “give expression to...the church as a loving agency.”

2.2.1 POLICY ANALYSIS, POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND ADVOCACY TO GOVERNMENT

UnitingCare Australia has continued to make an impact through advocacy and strengthening community provision service over the past three years. It has achieved this by working collaboratively both internally and externally with the Church’s network of service providers, other major church providers, the community sector, government and politicians. The move to consumer-directed care and a more market-driven community sector, particularly in the disability and aged care areas, has required careful monitoring to identify the impact on access to services. In addition, the Government’s focus on punitive welfare measures targeting those most vulnerable has also required a focus from the agency.

UnitingCare Australia has played a key role in shaping aged care reforms, including leading advocacy around changes to funding for aged care services, with the aim of ensuring those most in need are not disadvantaged. The Agency has been prominent in putting forward feedback and solutions through submissions to a large number of government inquiries and consultation roundtables. Focus areas include service quality, elder abuse, dementia, diversity, home care packages and the challenges relating to the workforce in this sector going forward. The Agency has also contributed to the review of the aged care legislation currently in progress. Two face-to-face meetings of the Aged Care Network have been hosted annually and have allowed the opportunity to focus on innovation, share challenges and opportunities for improvement and identify advocacy opportunities.

UnitingCare Australia has successfully developed and trialled, with three Uniting Church service providers, a values-based recruitment model for the service sector. This pilot has informed changes to government policy and the development of a federally funded national workforce initiative – Launch Into Work. The pilot successfully trained, mentored and employed 36 people who had previously been struggling to get a foothold in the job market, a number of them long-term unemployed. Candidates were selected for their attributes, capability and life experience rather than skills and work experience. The program is designed to teach them the skills and expertise they need for the role and support them as they learn.

Other highlights over the past three years include:

- Submissions to parliamentary, departmental and independent inquiries and reviews on a wide range of areas, including disability, aged care, welfare reform, early childhood education and care, budget measures, competition and user choice in human services and charity law.
- Undertaking a cross-Church and services consultation to inform a submission in response to the review of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). Additionally, preparing submissions to Senate inquiries around proposed legislative changes that will impact on the activities and operation of church providers.
- Advocacy around the punitive welfare measures the Government has been endeavouring to impose on some of the most vulnerable in our community including drug testing of people on Newstart and the expansion of the Cashless Welfare Card into new communities across Australia.
- Preparing annual federal pre-budget submissions to Treasury and budget summary documents to inform the Uniting Church network.
- Providing expertise and support to the Church’s Royal Commission National Task Group in relation to the Child Safe Framework and redress scheme.
- Engagement in the Early Learning: Everyone Benefits campaign to increase public awareness of the benefits of investment in early learning.
- Advocacy with the sector around the Jobs for Families Child Care package.

- Hosting two Leaders Forums comprising leaders from across the Church and its Agencies to discuss current and emerging issues that impact services and the Australian community.
- Hosting face-to-face forums on key policy areas such as disability, housing and homelessness and aged care with attendance from both internal and external stakeholders.

2.2.2 ADVOCACY WITHIN THE CHURCH AND AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY

Over the last triennium UnitingCare Australia has raised the profile of key social issues within the Church and among the public. The Agency has continued to: help people understand and advocate on issues of poverty and social disadvantage; spoken at churches about the community services work of the Uniting Church; written about key social issues for church publications; and developed an online portal for advocacy resources to enable people to advocate on social issues. UnitingCare Australia has been instrumental in taking a lead in advocating and developing whole-of-church responses on issues that affect multiple parts of the Church's life, such as the Religious Freedoms Bill and the review of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

After each Federal Budget UnitingCare Australia has provided expert analysis, commentating in the mainstream media and informing the UnitingCare network and the broader Australian public about the implications of the Budget for vulnerable people.

UnitingCare Australia encourages its wider networks to utilise UnitingCare policy materials, to enhance their own advocacy work in their own context, and uses stories from UnitingCare agencies to support the national advocacy and policy work. Policy materials, positions papers and other documents are posted onto the UnitingCare Australia website to support this approach.

UnitingCare Australia also collaborates with other Agencies and Councils of the Church, such as UnitingJustice (Assembly); the Assembly Resourcing Unit; UnitingWorld (Assembly); the Ministry for Christian Unity, Doctrine and Worship (Assembly); Uniting Mission and Education in NSW/ACT Synod; and the Justice and International Mission unit of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania; to educate, collaborate and advocate for policies and practices which enhance the dignity of all people. For example, UnitingCare Australia has collaborated with some of these groups to write joint submissions and has a regular presence at the National Young Adults Leaders Conferences.

2.3 ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVISION BY THE UNITING CHURCH

UnitingCare Australia's networks and working groups have multiple purposes. They feed into the policy development of UnitingCare Australia, but they also work as vehicles for sharing best practice and enabling Agencies to improve the quality of their community service provision. In the past triennium, UnitingCare Australia has undertaken numerous projects to build the quality and coherence of the Uniting Church's community service provision and to assist the UnitingCare network in adapting to contextual changes that are occurring for the social services sector.

These projects include delivering two successful Leaders Forums for all our key leaders in the church and our Agencies to discuss issues of mutual concern, theology, identity and build mutual understanding and trust. This will become an annual event to ensure that we continue dialogue on the things that matter to us all and build a strong shared identity. UnitingCare Australia is also continuing to lead the conversation and process to develop a stronger national brand that we can all identify with and be proud of.

Projects that enable greater coherence across the Uniting Church's community services nationally have emerged in response to UnitingCare Australia's knowledge of changes that are occurring in the social services sector. The Agency's presence on government working groups and committees allowed UnitingCare Australia to predict changes such as the move towards larger contracts in tendering and consumer choice in service delivery.

Recognising these changes, UnitingCare Australia has helped the UnitingCare network adapt. We have had a key role in bringing together regularly our disability service providers to share together learnings and responses to the changes in service delivery as a result of the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and equally with our aged care providers with the introduction of Consumer Directed Care.

UnitingCare Australia and its networks have developed a set of Service Principles from which practice frameworks can be applied nationally, created a quality, research and evaluation group to share information and learnings and develop shared learnings and commenced a data project to build a platform on which regular and reliable data can be collected and utilised to inform service delivery and advocacy. A shared outcomes framework is also in development. Innovation is one of the core values of UnitingCare Australia and building on the work of our Agencies we are working with government to look at new and different ways to address social disadvantage and create a sustainable service system.

UnitingCare Australia has taken a leadership role in assisting the Church and its community services to respond to the Royal Commission. UnitingCare Australia is a member of the Royal Commission Task Group and has assisted in a number of ways in drafting responses, preparing documents, reworking on the National Child Safety Framework.

Over this triennium, UnitingCare Australia has continued to lead the national fundraising effort of the network, the Target-UnitingCare Christmas Appeal.

2.4 COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

UnitingCare Australia works at the interface between government policy, funding, and regulation of service provision; the UnitingCare network; the lived experience of those who use our services; and the wider life of the Uniting Church.

UnitingCare Australia works cooperatively with other Uniting Church Agencies, the National Council of Churches, and also with community services agencies from other denominations. Through the past triennium the Major Church Providers group has grown and strengthened. The Major Church Providers meet regularly in Canberra, release joint statements and reports, advocate together and collaborate where possible on areas of mutual concern. Collectively these Agencies represent the vast majority of social services in Australia. When the churches speak with a unified voice the impact is significant.

UnitingCare Australia also continues to work constructively with national community sector bodies such as NACA (the National Aged Care Alliance), ACSA (Aged and Community Services Australia) and ACOSS (the Australian Council of Social Services).

Highlights include:

- Collaborating with UnitingWorld to build a strong relationship with the Protestant Church in China (China Christian Council/Three Self Patriotic Movement).
- Producing regular publications for the benefit of the UnitingCare network and broader public.
- Working with the other Major Church Providers on Pre-Budget submissions, Budget night and post-Budget reports.
- Working as part of the Homelessness and Housing campaign 'Everybody's Home'.

3. ACTIONS FROM FOURTEENTH ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS

There were no relevant resolutions from the Fourteenth Assembly.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

UnitingCare Australia, like the rest of the Uniting Church in Australia, is continually adapting to changing political, social and ecclesiastical contexts. The dynamic context in which UnitingCare Australia operates poses numerous challenges and opportunities as the agency seeks to live out a Christian vision of transformation and reconciliation.

As public debate centres on the financial viability of government-funded social services, UnitingCare Australia will continue to cast a vision of a society in which the common good is upheld and in which all people are cared for. The Agency will also play a key role in helping the social services of the Uniting Church to adapt to adjusted funding and operating environments which will likely place significant pressure on many services. This is likely to involve working to strengthen the brand and reputation of UnitingCare; creating avenues for working together across state boundaries; contributing to collective fundraising efforts; and helping Agencies collect and maintain useful data and provide clear evidence of their efficacy.

A key element of UnitingCare Australia's engagement with this shifting context will be helping the Uniting Church and the social services of the Uniting Church articulate a clear and distinct identity as sovereign agencies that cooperate and collaborate to work towards the common good. Work has begun and will continue on this articulation, including the theology that the Church's social services emerge from and the contribution they make to Australian society.

UnitingCare Australia has commenced developing a deeper relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) to see how we can work together and what might be possible for the future. We are committed to working with UAICC to look at the best possible ways to advocate on the issues affecting First Peoples going forward.

In order to maintain and strengthen the life of UnitingCare, the national office will continue working to build closer ties between the activity of the Uniting Church's social services and the worshipping life of Congregations. The social services of the Uniting Church are inextricably tied to the witness and worship of the Church. These two particular expressions of the *missio dei* (congregational life and social services) offer enormous strength to one another.

UnitingCare Australia will work closely with UnitingWorld to build a deeper and richer engagement with the global Church. The next triennium will involve collaboration with the Protestant Church in China (China Christian Council/Three Self Patriotic Movement), and helping the community services of the Uniting Church in Australia to think more globally about their work and what it means to be the Church.

UnitingCare Australia will continue to work practically with Agencies and government to collaborate on new solutions for intractable social challenges. Thought leadership will also be provided on a range of policy matters such as:

- welfare reform;
- children and young people;
- social investment and inclusion;
- the independence of charities and their right to advocate; and
- future funding of aged care.

UnitingCare Australia aims to lead a strong, unified, compassionate and creative national network to influence for better quality of life outcomes for this most disadvantaged and deliver social services that make a positive difference. As we speak with one voice nationally, our capacity to influence and interface with government, business and the wider Australian community to ensure that more Australians have the means and opportunity for a decent life, is enhanced. UnitingCare Australia will continue to adopt a strongly ecumenical approach and will continue to deepen

partnerships. In doing so, UnitingCare Australia will give expression to God's love as part of the Uniting Church in Australia.

5. AGENCY CONTACTS

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Claerwen Little
National Director
UnitingCare Australia

UNITINGCARE AUSTRALIA

MANDATE

Agency/Committee	UnitingCare Australia
Responsible To	Assembly
Reporting Arrangements	To Assembly Standing Committee and the Assembly
Mission Statement	UnitingCare Australia's Mission is to express God's love for all people through the Uniting Church's commitment to supporting individuals, families and communities through advocacy and the enhancement of community service provision.
Mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To take up community service issues within the theological framework of the Uniting Church, particularly the Church's social justice perspectives. • To develop and reflect on the policies and practices of the Uniting Church in community services. • To pursue appropriate issues within the Uniting Church, with Government and the community sector, with the Australian community and with other parts of the church.
Guiding principles and values	<p>Jesus' ministry challenges us to give more serious attention to the nature of service to one another. Engaging with the world through community services provides the opportunity to live out a Christian vision which is inclusive, all encompassing and which looks for equality of opportunity for individuals, communities and peoples. UnitingCare Australia will bring to all aspects of its work and ministry the theological framework that God's love is extended to all people, with no discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, sexuality, ability, class colour, creed or cultural origin.</p> <p>UnitingCare Australia will work co-operatively and ecumenically, giving expression to the unity of God's love for the world, and the church as a loving agency.</p> <p>UnitingCare Australia will constantly seek to develop national best practice supporting and giving focus to its work in the areas of policy and practical outcomes.</p>
Key Responsibilities	<p>Therefore, acting within guidelines set by the Assembly or the Assembly Standing Committee, and grounded in the experience of UnitingCare service providers, UnitingCare Australia will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage theological reflection on the Church's community services work.

2. Advocate to Government and within the Church and community those policies and practices which enhance the dignity of people, especially those who are most disadvantaged and marginalised.
3. Enable exchange of information across Synods and Uniting Church service providers.
4. Seek to enhance the quality of community service provision by the Uniting Church.
5. Represent the views of Uniting Church service providers to governments.
6. Work as appropriate with other churches and peak organisations in the community services field.
7. Act on requests and referrals from Synods and the Assembly.

The responsibilities include:

1. Focusing the activities of the agency on the vision of the Assembly as a whole.
2. Advising the Assembly and/or the Assembly Standing Committee on policy matters within their areas of responsibility.
3. Making policy decisions where the Assembly or the Assembly Standing Committee has delegated authority, either through UnitingCare Australia's Mandate or by resolution.

Relation with other agencies

UnitingCare Australia will maintain regular contact with other Assembly bodies, to ensure coordination of the Church's actions and advocacy in community service matters.

Power to delegate

UnitingCare Australia has the power to delegate responsibilities.

Organisational Structure

UnitingCare Australia will operate through the National Committee, its Executive, the National Office, and Advisory Committees as determined by the National Committee and the UnitingCare network.

National Committee

The National Committee is the key governance body of UnitingCare Australia and is appointed by the Assembly Standing Committee.

Role and Responsibilities

The role and responsibilities of the National Committee as delegated by the Assembly are to:

- develop and ensure the implementation of the strategic plan for UnitingCare Australia
- discern and determine key priorities
- give oversight to the work of UnitingCare Australia, including the National Office and Advisory Committees

Membership

It comprises:

- the Chairperson, elected by the Assembly

Frequency of Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the National Director of UnitingCare Australia • the Assembly General Secretary or nominee • the Director of UnitingCare in each Synod • the Chair of each UnitingCare Australia Advisory Committee, appointed by the Assembly Standing Committee on the nomination of the National Committee • National Director of Frontier Services or nominee • one (1) additional person from each Synod appointed by the Assembly Standing Committee from nominations provided by the Synods, based on their expertise in relation to UnitingCare Australia’s strategic directions. <p>In addition, the National Committee has the option to co-opt up to two (2) additional members.</p> <p>Tenure of membership is for the Assembly triennium.</p> <p>The National Committee will meet face to face at least twice each year.</p>
Executive Role	<p>The Executive of the National Committee shall be appointed by the National Committee and is empowered to act on its behalf between meetings of the National Committee in respect of any of the responsibilities of the National Committee except such as the National Committee may determine.</p>
Membership	<p>The Executive comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Chair of the National Committee • the National Director of UnitingCare Australia • the Assembly Associate General Secretary • the Director of UnitingCare from one Synod • two (2) other members of the National committee
National Office	<p>The National Office is the national staff team body of UnitingCare Australia.</p>
Role	<p>Its role is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provide strategic leadership in the operations of UnitingCare Australia ▪ to provide a range of executive, administrative and management services to the National Committee and Advisory Committees ▪ to implement decisions made by the National Committee
Membership	<p>The National Office comprises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Director of UnitingCare Australia, appointed by the Assembly

**Accountability
Advisory Committees**

- Such other staff as determined by the National Director to be necessary or appropriate to further the work of UnitingCare Australia

To the National Committee in respect of the responsibilities delegated to the National Committee by the Assembly.

To the Assembly and General Secretary in all other matters.

Role

The National Committee may establish such working groups and Advisory Committees as required and appoint such persons as it considers appropriate in relation to one or more areas of its work.

The role of the Advisory Committees is to

- develop, review and reflect upon the policies and practices of the Uniting Church in its community services ministry with people
- contribute to the advocacy of UnitingCare Australia; and
- assist the National Committee in the development of national positions within the area of responsibility of that Advisory Committee

Membership

The membership of each Advisory Committee shall be determined by the National Committee.

Tenure of membership is for the Assembly triennium.

Nature of Agency

Permanent

ORIGINAL APPROVED BY COMMUNITY SERVICES AUSTRALIA NOVEMBER 1992

Submitted to and approved by the Assembly Standing Committee September 1993

Amended and approved by UnitingCare Australia

March 2000

Approved by Ninth Assembly July 2000

Amended and approved by UnitingCare Australia

February 2005

Submitted and approved by the Assembly Standing Committee March 2005

Our vision

All people thrive in a healed and reconciled world

Our purpose

We give voice to the Uniting Church's commitment to social justice through advocacy and by strengthening community service provision

Our values

- Hope
- Respect
- Justice
- Compassion
- Integrity
- Innovation

Our drivers for change

Australia is undergoing significant social, demographic, economic and environmental change, and not everyone has the same access to a decent life. Our nation has not embedded respect and acknowledgement of our First Peoples in our culture and instruments of state. Inequality is widening and marginalised groups are missing out on many opportunities offered by a rapidly changing world.

Service providers will increasingly need to demonstrate their value to consumers, investors and donors. In particular, consumers will be empowered to have choice and control, and will interact with service providers in new ways, supported by the innovative use of technology.

We understand our role in facilitating the effective use of limited resources across a federated system, maximising the benefits of shared experience. To address these drivers and express our faith foundations, we will focus on five strategic priorities.

Our principles

Our work is guided by the following principles:

- all people in Australia are to be treated justly, accorded dignity and have their basic rights protected
- Australian society must be guided by a commitment to justice and full participation by its citizens across all domains of life, recognising those most disadvantaged and marginalised and the unique place of our First Peoples
- decision making on national policy must operate in a truly democratic way involving and empowering the greatest number of people through working cooperatively and ecumenically, and
- the Church, as part of society, must devote itself to worship, witness and service to give greater expression to God's love for the world and the Church as a loving agency that cares and works together for justice.

Strategic Priority Area 1. A just and fair society

- Articulate a positive vision for the future of our country that promotes inclusion and allows full participation for all people across all domains of life.
- Speak with a united and direct voice to government and the community seeking social justice through partnership and collaboration.
- Have clear priorities for advocacy including ageing, income support, housing, children's wellbeing and protection, social inclusion, disability and mental health.
- Tackle the emerging and structural changes sweeping our world.
- Share the stories of those we serve across the Church and the community.

Strategic Priority Area 2. Accessible and effective service systems for all

- Challenge policies that promote exclusion and ineligibility in community services.
- Articulate the value of not-for-profit and faith-based services.
- Promote access to quality supports and services in all communities.
- Listen to our diverse clients and network and using that information to improve outcomes and government services.
- Engage with government and others in trialling new ways of sustainable service design and delivery and new investment approaches.

Strategic Priority Area 3. Action informed by sound evidence, research and innovation

- Create an evidence base for quality practice and effective data collection.
- Share this evidence with the community and decision makers to reinforce our advocacy and to inform service design and delivery.
- Encourage innovation in service delivery and sharing learnings from other organisations and partners to find creative solutions for our diverse community.
- Broaden our evidence base by engaging with partners and key thought leaders in our community.
- Challenge harmful orthodoxies and implement programs and policies which support safety and best practice for all clients across our services.

Strategic Priority Area 4. Uniting together

- Share the faith motivations for our actions within the Church and the wider community.
- Build a strong, unified national identity.
- Develop strong partnerships with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and other First Peoples organisations.
- Find ways to bring the church and our diverse community together in justice and action.
- Build sound working relationships with other faith agencies and Churches.
- Promote collaboration within the network.

Strategic Priority Area 5. Strong leaders, good stewards

- Our team will have the right skills to work effectively together to achieve our goals.
- Facilitate the sharing of the expertise that resides throughout our network.
- Build a strong governance structure to guide the work of UnitingCare Australia.
- Develop and lead opportunities for national appeals and capacity and identity building.
- Be responsible and accountable stewards of the resources entrusted to us.

UNITINGCARE AUSTRALIA GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Assembly is the council with primary responsibility, in consultation with presbyteries and synods, for determining policy in doctrine, worship, government and discipline, and for oversight of the life and mission of the whole Church.

The Assembly has chosen to vest primary responsibilities regarding the mission of the Church in the area of national functions in community services to UnitingCare Australia.

The National Committee

Role

The Assembly has delegated the following governance and functional responsibilities to the National Committee:

The role of the National Committee as delegated by the Assembly is to

- develop and ensure the implementation of strategic directions for UnitingCare Australia;
- discern and determine key priorities; and
- give oversight to the work of UnitingCare Australia, including the National Office, National Networks and Working Groups, and the Network.

UnitingCare Australia has a leadership, rather than a managerial, role with respect to individual agencies and missions. The National Committee plays a key leadership role in ensuring that strong, enabling, transparent and participative processes encourage agencies, missions and Synods to choose to participate in, contribute to and shape the national work.

The National Committee has the responsibility to:

- approve social policy and other positions of UnitingCare Australia;
- assist and advise the National Director on
 - the strategic direction for the national work;
 - the resourcing, acquisition, and allocation of national work;
 - reviewing the outcomes of national work;
 - recommending an annual budget to the Assembly's Standing Committee through its National Finance Committee;
 - organisational policy and practices; and
 - the establishment, membership and operations of national network groups and other working groups as necessary to further the work of UnitingCare Australia; and
- negotiate with the Assembly where there is an interest in varying Assembly workplace policies and act on any delegations of authority to vary such policies for UnitingCare Australia.

Membership and Appointment

The National Committee shall comprise 9 ex-officio members and 5 members appointed by the Assembly through its Standing Committee.

The nine ex-officio members are:

- an Assembly appointed Chair (who shall be a Uniting Church member);

- the General Secretary of Assembly or their nominee;
- the National Director; and
- the Synod Director of UnitingCare or equivalent from each of the six Synods.

The five additional members shall be appointed so that the overall skills mix and composition of the Committee reflects the following experience and competencies:

- strategic thinking across the wide range of the Church's community services;
- research and evaluation;
- senior executive management experience;
- policy development and advocacy;
- business development; and
- theological reflection.

For the period from the commencement of the current arrangements until the 12th Assembly, at least three of the appointed positions shall be drawn from the former Uniting Missions Network.

Process for Nominations

Nominations for the appointed members shall be proposed to Assembly Standing Committee on the recommendation of a nominating group comprising the Chair, the Assembly General Secretary or their nominee and the National Director.

The provision of these nominations to the Assembly Standing Committee shall follow consultation with the network which shall include a call for expressions of interest.

Nominations for all members – ex-officio and appointed – to the Assembly Standing Committee shall include a brief biography of the nominee, and a statement of the nominee's potential contribution to the National Committee.

Term of appointment

The Chair shall be appointed by the Assembly every three years at the meeting of the National Assembly.

The appointed members shall be appointed by the Assembly Standing Committee at its first meeting following each meeting of the National Assembly.

Casual Vacancies

In the event of a casual vacancy of an appointed member position on the National Committee, the nominating group comprising the Chair, the Assembly General Secretary or their nominee and the National Director shall present to the Assembly Standing Committee a nomination for the filling of the vacancy. Such nomination shall take into consideration the overall skills mix and composition of the National Committee, and shall include a brief biography of the nominee and a statement of the nominee's potential contribution to the National Committee.

The term of the newly appointed member shall be until the completion of the original member's term of appointment.

Development of core organisational policies

To support its work and operations, the National Committee will develop a set of policies and procedures including:

- a code of conduct
- a statement of performance and accountability
- a guide to meeting processes
- a policy on the development of national positions

- a policy on the endorsement of national activity

Accountability

UnitingCare Australia is accountable to the Assembly. This includes through reports to the Assembly General Secretary, Assembly Standing Committee and the Assembly.

Roles within the National Committee

Role of the Chair

The Chair has primary responsibility for providing leadership with regard to the operation of the National Committee. This includes:

- chairing meetings;
- overseeing and approving agendas for meetings;
- liaising between the National Committee, sub-committees of the National Committee, the National Office or National Networks and Working Groups where appropriate;
- acting on behalf of the National Committee in urgent or emergency situations; and
- liaising with the Assembly and where appropriate representing the Agency to the Assembly or Assembly Standing Committee.

Secretariat function

Secretariat support is provided to the National Committee by the National Office.

National Committee Executive

Role

The Executive of the National Committee is empowered to act on behalf of the National Committee between meetings of the National Committee in respect of any of the responsibilities of the National Committee except such as the National Committee may determine.

In addition to its standing role, the Executive will ensure that the financial operations of UnitingCare Australia are running appropriately. This includes:

- monitoring the budget and providing advice to the National Committee on income, expenditure and cash flow;
- presenting to a meeting of the National Committee information to enable timely input to the National Audit and Finance Committee of the Assembly regarding the annual UnitingCare budget for the following financial year (noting that this is currently required by mid September each year); and
- considering the draft budget from the Assembly's National Audit and Finance Committee to enable timely input into the Assembly Standing Committee determination of the UnitingCare Australia budget for the following financial year (noting that this is currently by the end of October each year).

Membership

The Executive comprises:

- the Chair of the National Committee
- the National Director
- the Assembly Associate General Secretary or their nominee
- two (2) other members of the National Committee, one of whom shall not be in an ex-officio position, as appointed annually by the National Committee