

# UNITINGCARE AUSTRALIA

## 1. ABOUT UNITINGCARE AUSTRALIA

UnitingCare Australia's mission is to give voice to the Uniting Church's commitment to social justice through advocacy and by strengthening community service provision. 2023 marked thirty years of significant achievements in fulfilling this mission on behalf of the church and its service agencies. This milestone is something to be celebrated by us all as we strive to be a church at work in the world with a vision of hope and justice for all humanity.

### 1.1. The Role of the Agency

Acting within guidelines set by the Assembly or the Assembly 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 marginalized.
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
- Strategic Priorities
- Communication and collaboration

As an Assembly agency, UnitingCare Australia contributes to the life of the Church by:

1. Focusing activities of the agency within the vision and current strategic priorities of the Assembly as a whole.
2. Advising the Assembly and/or the Assembly Standing Committee on policy matters within its 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.

### 1.2. Agency Principles and Scope

UnitingCare Australia's work is grounded in its Mission: *to give voice to the Uniting Church's commitment to social justice through advocacy and by strengthening community service provision.*

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 1.4 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 in Jesus' call to be at mission in the world, 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 community services of the Uniting Church in Australia are extensive and diverse. The UnitingCare Network is comprised of 20 community service organisations from across the Uniting Church which collectively employ over 50,000 staff, supported by the work of 20,000 volunteers. There are more than 1,600 sites throughout the country through which \$5billion in services is delivered annually. 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 Governance**

This Triennium commenced with the appointment of Geoff Batkin AM to the Chair's role. The composition of the Board was relatively stable with the four Synod appointees being reappointed for a further three-year term and the other positions continuing. Rev Tim Hodgson (SA Synod) and Amanda Hunt (WA Synod) resigned in late 2021 to be replaced by Mark Waters and John Berger respectively.

In mid-2023 Mr Batkin advised the Board that he would not be seeking re-nomination for the Chair's role. As a result, a new Nominations Committee was established to oversee the recruitment of his replacement. The vacancy was advertised widely across the church, through our networks and on the Australian Institute of Company Directors website. A recommendation on the successful candidate will be made to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly for approval.

Covid19 continued to have influence on how the Board operated. Online meetings continued to replace face-to-face meetings until early 2022, with alternating face-to-face and online meetings becoming an accepted practice from then on.

In late 2022, the Board undertook an externally facilitated Board Effectiveness Review, the result of which included the development of a Board Governance Action Plan. In 2023 a Governance Working Group was established to further consider the findings from the Effectiveness Review including the need to look at the purpose and role of UnitingCare Australia and then to consider the best governance structure to support it.

This work is ongoing with an independently conducted survey of network agencies having been completed (in early 2024), followed by a Board workshop to reflect on the feedback, and the next step being a Governance Options Paper to be produced for consideration by the Board at its upcoming May meeting.

The Board continues to exercise its due diligence with regular reviews of the organisational strategy, risks and ongoing monitoring of finances and resources.

The Assembly has delegated governance and functional responsibilities for UnitingCare Australia to its Board in accordance with the UnitingCare Charter approved by the Assembly Standing Committee in November 2018.

The Board's functions include:

- Strategic leadership in accordance with the UCA mission;
- Monitoring the implementation of strategy, outcomes and decisions of the Board;
- Oversight of the management of the finances and resources;
- Monitoring risk and compliance; and
- Oversight of the performance of the National Director.

The Board comprises:

- Chair appointed by the Assembly;
- National Director of UnitingCare Australia appointed by Assembly Standing Committee;
- General Secretary of the Assembly;
- One Board member appointed by the Assembly Standing Committee on recommendation from each Synod of the Uniting Church using such process as each Synod may determine; and
- Up to three Board members, appointed by the Assembly Standing Committee on recommendation by the Board upon such terms and conditions as the Board determines.

Chair  
National Director of UnitingCare Australia  
General Secretary of the Assembly

Geoff Batkin  
Claerwen Little  
Colleen Geyer (until end 2023)  
Lindsay Cullen (from beginning 2024)

### ***Synod Representatives***

Queensland Synod

Craig Barke, Chief Executive Officer,  
UnitingCare QLD

New South Wales and ACT

Tracey Burton, Executive Director,  
Uniting NSW.ACT

Northern Synod

Lawson Broad, Chief Executive Officer  
Somerville Community Services

Western Australia

John Berger, Executive Officer, Caring  
Agencies, Uniting WA

South Australia

Mark Waters, Director,  
UnitingCare SA

Victoria and Tasmania

Hon. Bronwyn Pike, Chief Executive Officer,  
Uniting Vic Tas

### ***Independent Members***

Alison Overeem  
Mark Dingle  
Adam Connolly

## **1.4. 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.

In 2022 the Board refreshed the agency's strategic priorities for the 2023-26 period. The process was undertaken with input from our network, church and key stakeholders. The following four strategic priorities guide our work:

**Impact:** to position UnitingCare Australia as a high impact organisation

**Identity:** be recognised as a leading advocate with a clear profile and strong identity

**Relationships:** nurture and extend critical internal and external relationships with key stakeholders for impact and influence

**Resources and Capability:** ensure we have adequate resources and capability to deliver on our Mandate.

With the following three advocacy priorities:

**Justice for First Peoples:** That the unique place of our First Peoples in the life of our nation is acknowledge and upheld.

**Ageing to our Full Potential:** That all people experience compassion and dignity as they age and exercise their rights as full members of society.

**Economic equality and inclusion:** That all people are able to fully participate as citizens across all domains of life.

### 1.5. Agency Funding

UnitingCare Australia is funded by contributions from the twenty organisations within the UnitingCare network. This funding is occasionally supplemented by grants for specific purposes, currently the Remote Accord project funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care mentioned later in this report.

### 1.6. Agency Operation

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

UnitingCare Australia works with the UnitingCare network through a range of ways including national network groups and forums around service and policy areas. The networks, communities of practice and working groups assist in identifying issues, share best practice and opportunities and enable the network to work across organisational boundaries to pursue common goals. Members of these groups are drawn from across the UnitingCare network. Over the last Triennium there has been considerable growth and development in these working groups and the spirit of collaboration within the groups is strong.

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

The groups that have operated over the Triennium are:

- Leadership Forums
- Aged Care CEO Network
- Home Care Community of Practice
- Aged Care Quality Standards Working Group
- Trauma Informed Aged Care Community of Practice
- Uniting Friends of Ageing
- First Peoples Network
- First Peoples Community of Practice
- Advocacy and Government Relations Network
- National Communications Network
- Disability Working Group





Australian Disability Enterprises Community of Practice  
Emergency Relief Working Group  
Quality Risk and Compliance Community of Practice  
People and Culture Community of Practice  
Industrial Relations Community of Practice  
LGBTIQ+ Community of Practice  
Lifeline Services Network  
Op Shop Community of Practice  
Research Consortium Working Group





## 2. REPORTING AGAINST UNITINGCARE AUSTRALIA'S MANDATE

### 2.1. Theological Reflection

The Mandate affirms that UnitingCare Australia will take up community service issues within the theological framework of the Uniting Church. The Agency's *Faith Foundations* document, along with 'Service as Mission – A theological reflection on the Uniting Church's community services ministry and the work of UnitingCare Australia' provide a framework for the activities of UnitingCare Australia, underpinned by other key documents such as the Basis of Union and the Statement to the Nation.

Throughout this Triennium, UnitingCare Australia has had significant engagement with the Act2 project to ensure that community services are considered as an important part of deliberations regarding the future of the Uniting Church. We have provided two submissions, met with the Act2 team on many occasions, held three CEO forums, a Board engagement session in August and a workshop at the Leaders Forum in Adelaide.

Given the breadth and scope of the Uniting Church's community services network, the largest in the country, it is of critical importance to be part of the Act2 deliberations. The submissions were the result of numerous consultation processes across our network, and describe in detail a number of key issues that need to be considered in any decision making at this Triennial Assembly.

Our second submission can be found at Attachment 1.

### 2.2. The Work of UnitingCare Australia

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.

As part of celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we collected stories and reflections through a widely distributed survey, short video vignettes and in-depth interviews. As a result we produced a 'hero' video and a number of commemorative documents to ensure our history and achievements are on record. These included: *"Thirty Years of Influence Three Decades of Change"*; *"A History of Influence. A Future of Impact"*; *"A collection of highlights; A Message of Hope"*. To mark this important milestone a celebratory dinner was held at the Leaders Forum in Adelaide in September 2023 with special invited guests who had been part of UnitingCare Australia's journey over the past 30 years. The Leaders Forums gather together: the President of our Church; Moderators and General Secretaries; Directors of Mission; CEO's and key leaders from within our network. This is a time of celebration and reflection of the wider mission of the Uniting Church to members of the community most in need of care and compassion. The resources, including the videos, can be found on the UnitingCare Australia website at the 30 year campaign page.

UnitingCare Australia has continued to make an impact through advocacy and strengthening community service provision over the past three years. It has been a busy and productive period, with over 100 media releases and 50 submissions produced in all our advocacy priority areas, with related pre and post activities.

As an organisation we have matured during this period, building strong relationships with the Government and Opposition, the Greens and a number of independents to work closely on shaping policies and responses that ensure the most vulnerable are looked after, and the community sector is better supported in its important role on the front line. Our work is guided by a Communications and Advocacy Strategy which was developed in consultation with our network and endorsed by our Board.

We have continued to work collaboratively both internally and externally with the Church's network of service providers, other major church providers, the community sector, government and politicians.

Given our work is grounded in the experiences of our services and those who use them, we have created a number of new network groups and communities of practice across the network which both inform our advocacy and strengthen service delivery by sharing challenges, opportunities and resources.

At a strategic level we continue to feed into the Federal Budget process through clear, concise and costed pre-Budget submissions focused on our priority areas and provide the church and its services with a summary of the key implications of the Budget on the night it is handed down.

The following provides a snapshot of the work undertaken over this Triennium across the three priority areas of advocacy.

### **2.2.1 Justice for First Peoples**

In September 2021, the second Gathering of First Peoples from across the Church and its service network was held online because of the restrictions around Covid19. In August 2022 a face-to-face Gathering was held in Brisbane. First Peoples from across the Uniting Church, the Uniting Aboriginal Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and the UnitingCare Network attended. The event was an opportunity to come together, learn from each other, build relationships, and strengthen the First Peoples voice. A key outcome from the Gathering was the issuing of a joint statement reaffirming and recommitting to lasting justice for First Peoples.

The First Peoples Network and First Peoples Community of Practice have met regularly. The First Peoples Network comprises First Peoples from across the Church, UAICC and UnitingCare network. The First Peoples Community of Practice comprises First and Second Peoples again from the Church, UAICC and network. Both the Network and the Community of Practice have informed UnitingCare Australia's advocacy around Justice for First Peoples including focus areas of the Cashless Debit Card, the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children, Covid19 vaccinations and the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The First Peoples Network and Community of Practice have also strongly supported our role in working with the Church and Congress in relation to the Voice to Parliament. The focus was on educating people across the Church and its agencies on the Referendum and its importance to First Nations People and the wider community. We participated in a Voice to Parliament advocacy day at Parliament House in collaboration with Anglicare Australia, Baptist Care Australia, Catholic Social Services, The Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Society. The day involved a number of meetings with politicians, speaking to a joint letter to Federal Parliamentarians to urge them to support the Voice to Parliament.

Following the Referendum result it has been a period of reflection with the regular online meetings of the First Peoples Network and Community of Practice providing this opportunity for all attendees. We also held an online Gathering on 30 November and again this was an opportunity for reflection and discussion about what organisations are doing across the network and what could be achieved together. We are currently finalising plans for a further face-to-face Gathering in Adelaide on 23 April 2024.

### **2.2.2 Ageing to our Full Potential**

UnitingCare Australia was a key leader in the Aged Care Campaign "It's time to care for aged care" which called for a world-class, rights-based aged care system that meets the needs of older Australians now and into the future. The campaign culminated in the release of the 2021 Federal Budget which contained a \$17.7 billion package for aged care.

To support the Aged Care Campaign, in June 2021 we established Uniting Friends of Ageing – a national network for Uniting Church members interested and concerned about ageing and aged care. On 2 October 2021 Older Persons Sunday was included in the Uniting Church's national calendar. It was first time UnitingCare Australia had an official date in the UCA calendar.

To further support this campaign, UnitingCare Australia set up and chaired the Australian Aged Care Collaboration (AACC). The AACC comprised representatives from the two aged care peak bodies at the time ACSA and LASA, UnitingCare Australia, Anglicare Australia, Baptist Care Australia and Catholic Health Australia. The AACC also led a project to form one aged care peak for the sector – the Aged and Community Care Providers Association (ACCPA).

We have played a key advocacy role in a number of other reforms and outcomes for aged care including: a fully funded increase to wages for aged care workers, a Summit on aged care financial sustainability, the Fair Work Commission's ruling for an interim 15% increase in wages for aged care workers, delaying of the new Support at Home program to allow for adequate implementation time and the design of the new Aged Care Act.

The National Director was a member of the inaugural National Aged Care Advisory Committee, appointed by the Minister for Health and Ageing to provide guidance to the government on the roll out of the reforms in response to the Aged Care Royal Commission.

The Aged Care CEO Network has continued to meet fortnightly online and held a number of face-to-face meetings including a meeting with Ministers Butler and Wells in Adelaide on 31 March 2023. A Home Care Community of Practice and an Aged Care Quality Standards Working Group have also been established with representatives from across the UnitingCare network.

UnitingCare Australia developed a national Commitment Statement to support the UnitingCare network to build its capacity to deliver trauma informed care for Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers.

### **2.2.3 Economic Equality and Inclusion**

During the pandemic extensive activities were undertaken in this priority area including ensuring access to vaccinations for the most vulnerable in our communities and an increase to the JobSeeker rate, and adequate resourcing, PPE and Rapid Antigen Tests for community services to sustain them in their work.

This Triennium has seen a change of government at the Federal level. The Labor Government's focus on wellbeing, including their Wellbeing Budget, has provided a strong opportunity for advocacy for UnitingCare Australia with submissions on: the Employment White Paper, Buy Now Pay Later Consultation, Measuring What Matters, Extent and Nature of Poverty, Cost of Living, Parents Next, Jobs and Skills Australia, Strengthening the Safety Net, National Care and Support Economy and Strengthening the Community Services sector. As a result, we had the opportunity to appear at a number of Senate Hearings, usually accompanied by a representative from the UnitingCare network to bring the lived experience to the table.

A consortium of UnitingCare network organisations successfully tendered to deliver the government's Escaping Violence Payment (EVP) pilot program. Since inception of the Program in October 2021, over \$186 million has been delivered to EVP clients through tailored support packages. The consortium is currently advocating for the program to become a permanent part of the Family and Domestic Violence supports. This has been a very positive collaboration and has built an appetite for further national service delivery opportunities.

UnitingCare Australia has undertaken two reviews of the EVP Program and a key outcome was the development of some factors for successful collaboration which inform the way consortiums across



the UnitingCare network need to work together for effective national service delivery (see Attachment 2).

A collaboration of six organisations from the across the UnitingCare network have worked with UnitingCare Australia and the University of Canberra to produce a 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Child Social Exclusion Index Report. A Parliament House launch of the Report is scheduled for 27 March 2024.

#### **2.2.4 Responding to the Disability Royal Commission**

UnitingCare Australia provided the secretariat lead for the Disability Royal Commission National Task Group which met regularly during the Royal Commission's term of operation. A key outcome from the Task Group was the creation of People with Disability Overarching Principles. These were developed through a working group, set up by the Task Group, comprising representatives from across the Church and network, people with disability and academia. The Overarching Principles are being put up to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly for approval and communication across the church.

The UnitingCare Australia Board made the decision at their 2022 strategic planning session to remove Responding to the Disability Royal Commission as a strategic priority because the Disability Royal Commission was coming to an end.

#### **2.2.5 Remote Accord**

The Remote Accord was formed based on the belief that every community has an equal right to accessible, high quality aged care services. Initiated following the strategic actions outlined in the 2018 'A Matter of Care' report, the Remote Accord is funded by and works closely with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, with a focus on relationship-building with remote service providers, stakeholders, and policymakers. Notably, the Remote Accord created and maintains an extensive database of remote service providers, a website toolkit with resources for remote providers and their staff, and in 2023 hosted a successful Remote Workforce Summit attended by providers from across remote Australia.

Additionally, the Remote Accord engages stakeholders across the sector and advocates for policy solutions that take the unique needs of remote services into account. The Remote Accord's efforts include preparing submissions on legislative drafts and advocating for culturally sensitive quality standards in remote areas. The Remote Accord is governed by a Leadership Group made up of leaders from service providers operating in remote and very remote areas from across Australia and industry experts, with a Director and secretariat support based in UnitingCare Australia's national office in Canberra.

The Workforce Implementation Project aims to enact aged care service reforms in remote and very remote Australian communities, focusing on overcoming systemic challenges and improving service delivery. Collaborating with selected communities, the Project is implementing tailored strategies for staff attraction and retention while developing a toolbox of widely applicable service improvement strategies. Key goals include establishing guiding principles for community engagement, mapping services, classifying service maturity levels, implementing tailored reforms, fostering collaboration between aged care and other service providers, building local capacity, and creating service delivery models.

Funded since 2022, with funding until mid-2025, project sites include Murdi Paaki in NSW, Yalata in SA, and the Kimberley in WA. Site-specific projects for 2024 include hybrid tertiary training, housing initiatives, recognition of prior learning, community ownership models, and provider engagement surveys. Site-specific frameworks and reference groups are being developed to guide initiatives and inform the overall toolkit. The Project Team are made up of seven full-time staff working across Australia.

## 2.3 Communication and Collaboration

One of our key strategies for ensuring collaboration across our community services, UAICC and our wider church is the hosting of the Annual UnitingCare Australia Leaders Forum. This is a unique opportunity that brings together all our key leaders for one to two days of dialogue, fellowship and collaboration and to deliberate on the major challenges and opportunities facing us all. Three Leaders Forums were held this Triennium – online due to the pandemic in 2021, a two day event at Parliament House in Canberra in 2022 and a one day event at UCity in Adelaide followed by the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner in 2023. The theme that has emerged over the past few years and in particular last year was the strength of our collaboration and the appetite to behave more nationally as one, and to find projects that can be delivered utilizing the strengths of both our services and our church. This year's Leaders Forum will be back in Canberra at Old Parliament House in September.

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.

Our Networks, Working Groups and Communities of Practice (CoP) have grown enormously, attracting strong membership from across the network. These groups inform our advocacy activities and participants value the opportunity to share challenges and opportunities, practice, information and resources. In 2023 we undertook a survey of our various groups to gather feedback on their effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement. We received 53 responses with feedback being overwhelmingly positive: 92% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that being on the group adds value and is relevant to their role (8% were neutral); 92% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that being on the group has helped them build relationships across the UnitingCare network (8% per neutral)

UnitingCare Australia works cooperatively with other Uniting Church agencies, 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), ACCPA (Aged and Community Care Providers Association), Ending Loneliness Together, and ACOSS (the Australian Council of Social Services). Additionally, UnitingCare Australia staff have had roles on a number of government consultative groups including Chairing Minister Rishworth's National Coordination Group for Emergency and Food Relief, Minister Wells' National Aged Care Advisory Group and the Department of Social Services Stronger Places, Stronger People Advisory Group. UnitingCare Australia also has a place on the Lifeline Australia Board which is filled by a representative from the UnitingCare network that delivers Lifeline services.

## 3. AGENCY CONTACTS

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Claerwen Little



**Director - Policy and Advocacy**  
**Director - Communications & Public Affairs**  
**Director – Remote Accord**  
**Executive Officer**  
**Senior Communications Advisor**  
**Senior Advisor**  
**Senior Advisor**

Fay Mound  
Anna Page  
Mary Quinlan  
Kate Lyttle  
Tess Newton-Palmer  
Tanya von Ahlefeldt  
Georgina Watson

In addition, the Remote Accord's Workforce Implementation Project has 7 full-time contract staff.

**Claerwen Little**  
**National Director**

**Geoff Batkin**  
**Chair**





**Attachment 1**

## ***A shared future together***

*A second submission from UnitingCare Australia on the Act2 project of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia.*

*June 2023*



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## Foreword from the Chair, UnitingCare Australia

The Board of UnitingCare Australia offers this submission as its second contribution to the Act2 process – the first being *“Community Services, Discipleship and Renewal in the Uniting Church”*. Fundamental to all the conversations guiding our thinking in both submissions has been our commitment of being ‘One Uniting Church’ engaged in God’s mission of worship, witness, and service in the world.

At the time of contemplating this 2<sup>nd</sup> contribution to Act2 we are also celebrating the journey of mission in action and the substantial growth and development of the UnitingCare Australia ‘movement’ since its coming together 30 years ago. This has been a journey of courage and risk-taking seeking to optimise the resources that God has entrusted us with and building on a spirit of collaboration.

Imagine today, the missional impact of our Church in action (through UnitingCare Australia and its 19 network members) with more than 50,000 staff, 30,000 volunteers across over 1,600 locations throughout Australia and touching the lives of more than 1.4 million people each year.

This paper reflects on each of the ‘key questions’ and ‘objectives’ in the four workstreams recently articulated in the Act2 Project and offers some thoughts and recommendations about our shared future together.

We would welcome the opportunity to continue further individual discussions with the Act2 Project Team as well as within other Councils of the Church *‘as together we discern the future to which God is calling us.’*

Geoff Batkin

Chair



## Background

1. UnitingCare Australia made a submission to the Act2 Project of the Assembly in October 2022 in the form of a Discussion Paper titled *"Community Services, Discipleship and Renewal in the Uniting Church"*.
2. The paper provided an outline of key considerations relating to:
  - The theological basis for the Church's community services
  - The service footprint (of agencies that form the UnitingCare Network)
  - The changing external environment
  - The challenges and opportunities for the future of the Church's community services
3. At the conclusion of the paper, three questions were posed for further consideration:
  - Are the current church governance arrangements "fit for purpose"?
  - What would enhance relations between community service agencies and the rest of the church? A part of this is the way authority and responsibility are currently matched and might be changed?
  - How can we better work together to build goodwill between the community service agencies and the wider church?
4. This Paper seeks to build on the material outlined in Submission 1, to support the further consideration of these questions and to offer some models and options in addressing these questions.

## Further Progress of the Act2 Project

5. Since the earlier submission, the Act2 Project has further defined and prioritised its work through the establishment of 4 workstreams:
  - Local Communities of Faith
  - National Identity
  - Governance and Resourcing
  - Theological Culture and Education
6. Each of these work streams have direct relevance to the activities and contributions of the Church's health and community service agencies.
7. Currently the project's focus is in 'broad listening for ideas and imperatives' (*"Explore" as defined in the Project Plan on a Page*).
8. In describing its own work, the responsible Project Team records *"the Act2 Project is the biggest conversation we are having as the UCA – a whole of Church process and approach to discerning the future to which God is calling us"*.
9. The integral nature of community services (including policy advocacy) to the Church's mission starts with the Basis of Union ('worship, witness and service'), and has continued to evolve through, for example:
  - the 1977 Statement to the Nation,
  - the 2018 Our Vision for a Just Australia, and

- UnitingCare Australia's Faith Foundation.
10. On this basis, health and community service agencies are clearly participants in this conversation.

## Process undertaken to support this submission

11. UnitingCare Australia engaged with its network agencies via a questionnaire that addressed the following topics and sought to explore the experience of the agency in connection with that topic:
- *Financial contributions*
  - *Property arrangements*
  - *Legal and governance arrangements*
  - *Synod Relationship*
12. A summary of the responses received addressing each of these topics are reflected in Appendix 2 to this paper.

## National Identity

Reflecting on the theme '**How we are one Church**'

13. From UnitingCare Australia's perspective, a recurring theme and underlying assumption through which the Act2 Project's work is to be progressed is the concept of being 'one Church' in all facets of our mission, activities and initiatives.
14. This is as important for the health and community service agencies of the Church as it is for other aspects of the Church's life. In considering this theme, it is equally important:
- in the life of the agency;
  - in the collaborative efforts of agencies through their own initiatives as well as through UnitingCare Australia; and
  - through the relationships between agency and other parts of the Church – eg. Synods, Presbyteries and congregations
15. In contrast to other institutions of the Church (eg. schools, tertiary colleges and some health institutions) the agencies that form the UnitingCare Australia network have over 3 decades of collaborative activities, sought to intentionally engage and evolve a national identity that is consistent with that expressed of the Church through the Basis of Union.
16. Reflecting on the last 5 years, growth in the operations, breadth and depth of services has continued. (Further details related to this growth is referenced in Submission 1). This growth is at odds with the reduction in numbers of our congregations over this same period (for example as referenced in National Church Life Surveys during this time).

17. This represents a shift in how the form and shape of the Church presents and engages with relevancy to the community and can be viewed positively as part of its evolution. This resonates with the call of the Basis of Union to keep *“under constant review so that its life may increasingly be directed to the service of God and humanity, and its worship to a true and faithful setting forth of and response to the Gospel of Christ”*.
18. This reduction in congregation activity and resourcing has continued to place pressure on the ability of congregations, Presbyteries and Synods to fund their own operational and missional activities and services. Additionally, this has left little capacity for those parts of the Church to financially support agency led community service activities and placed more pressure for funding and resources to be sought from agencies for the work of the Church.
19. In projecting forward to what is likely to occur over the next say 10 years, it is reasonable to predict continued growth of our health and community services, supported by further consolidation and reorganisation of operations to support that growth. In the key areas of services being aged care, NDIS, child and family support, mental health services – the needs of communities and the mechanisms of government to respond to that growth will continue to rely on the non-government sector and there is a continuing place for compassionate, faith based organisations to play a significant role through service delivery, systems change and advocacy.
20. Additional areas of likely growth and opportunities for expansion are in social and affordable housing and continuing to support the transition to Aboriginal led service delivery models where their communities are particularly impacted.
21. It is timely then to consider the most effective way for health and community services to be stewarded in the future in light of this expected and continuing growth – and the way in which those services are to be governed and overseen by the Church. There is opportunity to explore how any proposed changes to the Church’s own structure will impact this exploration – to ensure that all options including nationally led, State based led or regionally led models are considered.

#### Public Profile and Branding

22. Despite the size, scale and breadth of our services footprint, there is not equivalent public recognition that reflects this experience when being sought out to comment on public policy. An example on this was in the delivery of a recent shared policy statement nationally where we were a co-signatory and aligned with other faith based peak providers. It was in the end Vinnies and Salvos who were most referred to and sought out in public conversations – despite our own experience and credibility being much more significant than theirs on the issue.
23. Responses via our questionnaires confirm:
  - Variety of brands
  - Legally held in different places eg, by the Assembly, by the relevant Synod, directly by the agency
24. There is no formal governance of brand and identity related issues for the agencies. Working arrangements rely on personal relationships amongst executive officers and shared understanding of that inter-relatedness. At times this has meant that actions of

one part of the network have resulted in unintended consequences including reputational risk and negative impacts to other parts of the network because of the lack of clarity of impacts and accountabilities.

25. In a recent attempt to share and have intentional oversight of a brand consistent with our church polity, the “Uniting” branding has been shared across Uniting NSW.ACT, Uniting Vic Tas and UnitingCare West. Originally it was offered as a potential national brand to the network – and subsequently taken up by 2 additional agencies. Oversight of brand governance was developed to have participation of the agencies as well as the Assembly, and is intended to support internal brand governance and operational arrangements. It was proposed that the brand “ownership” be taken up nationally by the Assembly and managed as a national brand – but the capacity of the Assembly to execute on this with legal and governance structures has delayed the execution of this intent.
26. It is also evident from responses that there is inconsistency with co-branding models with the UCA brand. Protocols were established about 15 years ago to provide for a more consistent approach but has not been actively communicated and lack of awareness and commitment to those arrangements is a contributor to the current experience.
27. There is future opportunity to develop a more intentional model of ‘house of brands’ to further improve the working together arrangements as they have potential to impact national identity.
28. Despite these challenges of our multiple brands and lack of alignment of responsibilities and accountabilities due to our structures, we have achieved many examples of collaboration. This has been possible because of the level of personal relationships across our agency leaders, deep commitment to look beyond our own internal needs and perspectives and to work around those impediments. Examples of recent collaborations are detailed in Appendix 3 to this paper.
29. The challenge continues to be before us with increasing imbalances in financial capacity between agencies and other parts of the Church, it may mean that opportunities for collaboration across the whole of the Church become more difficult and transactional in nature.
30. The question this gives rise to is whether more significant changes in structure and governance will provide an improved framework and leads to building mutually beneficial relationships that support and reflect a Church called first and foremost to respond in mission. What and where do we see ourselves as Church in say 10 years time, if that is to remain our priority?



## Governance and Resourcing

### Financial Contribution

31. There are a variety of financial contribution arrangements between agencies and Synods – ranging from nominal financial contribution to Synod, modest contributions based on shared service provision; through to more significant contributions where the agency has size and scale.
32. The contributions are described as both direct financial contributions as well as indirect – for example, through surpluses generated as a result of the pooling of shared service expenses from agency participation – financial and insurance services are examples.
33. Where more substantive financial contributions are payable there are a variety of mechanisms that underpin the payment with little consistency in either the mechanism supporting the payment or the documentation that reflects the payment.
34. *Intentionally excluded*
35. *Intentionally excluded*
36. *Intentionally excluded*
37. *Intentionally excluded*
38. Beyond whether the arrangements meet external scrutiny and are assessed as permissible, a further question arises is a 'mission and stewardship' one, namely **should** and to what extent should public benevolent institutions of the Church be financially contributing to the church institution?
39. In answering this question, clearer transparency and rationale for:
  - What it is being contributed;
  - How it is contributing; and
  - For what outcomes.
40. Consistency of principles will be an important indicator that despite variety resulting from their application, we remain part of 'One Church'.

### Property arrangements

41. Historic arrangements for property accessed by agencies across each Synod are variable and reflect the unique history of that Synod that has contributed to:
  - Quantity of property arrangements
  - Value of property
  - Custom and practice unique to that Synod as to:
    - Whether property assets have been retained in the ownership of the respective Property Trust
    - Whether, in the case of incorporated entities, they have been permitted (or not constrained) by the Synod to hold real property assets in their own right.
    - The nature of the relationship between agency and Synod as to respective property interests, control and delegation of authority vary substantially

42. Some variability also arises due in some degree to variation in our respective State Acts of parliament that establish the church's legal structure and Property Trust arrangements. For example, the WA Act includes the ability for the Synod to create additional bodies corporate within the Act structure and alongside the Property Trust. This mechanism has been used in WA in the incorporation of some of their agencies without requiring them to go to a Corporations Act model. It reflects that relevant property assets in those contexts are held through that corporate structure as an alternative to the Property Trust.
43. It is noted that the Assembly has determined policy in relation to property over a variety of resolutions and policies since 2016. It is not easy to see how effective those policy changes have been from a whole of Church perspective. There is not high visibility of the policies themselves or active processes that have been applied consistently across the Church. It is not evident that our health and community service agencies have benefited from the application of these policies to support their mission.

### *Current and Ongoing*

44. Reliance on property resources and the ability to derive income and capital growth through property has significantly underpinned the ability of many agencies to grow their services, often cross subsidising non-funded services through property related mechanisms.
45. In Synods where property resources have not been historically accessible or available (for a variety of reasons) there has been direct relation to the size and scale of community service agency capacity that has developed.
46. In effect, better resourced Synod agencies have been able to effectively cross subsidise the growth of community services within their own Synod geographies. This opportunity has not been available in all Synods where similar access to property as an underpinning resource has not been as available. This may not result in the areas of most need (nationally) being addressed or prioritised, or easily cross-subsidised beyond Synod agency geographic boundaries. Is this an adequate response in mission of a truly National Australian Church?

### *Looking ahead*

47. In considering the range of challenges to current Synod operations and corresponding changes, looking ahead to the medium (5 years) and long term (20 years) future, do we envisage that Synods and Assemblies might be wholly or substantially financially dependent on agency contributions?
48. If so, are there new models and mechanisms that can be explored that will more effectively and efficiently meet this medium and longer term scenario?
  - Could some agencies move now to support some Synod activities in different ways eg. To provide share service and administration functions now directly from agency's existing capacity and resources?
  - Should we be exploring more intentionally new and integrated models of ministry that operate out of community service contexts and alongside congregational activities. Eg, the model of Connect 100 in Queensland is a live example.

*Current and emerging community needs related to property*

49. A current and critical social and community issue is access to secure **social and affordable housing** in Australia. The mechanisms for government support and partnering with community organisations to deliver and operate social and affordable housing are under a national regulatory framework – albeit with variation in its application in the exercise of State Regulatory roles.
50. A fundamental requirement to access development and institutional funding under that regime is that the regulated entity must be a *Corporations Act* company. Agencies that operate within Property Trust legal entities are not for some purposes eligible to access the mechanisms and for other purposes, the Property Trust ownership model can be more complex and less well understood than investors in this model (eg. Government, Super Funds, Financial Institutions) may be prepared to tolerate. At this stage, the Victorian Synod has established a regulated housing entity through Uniting Housing Victoria Ltd (a company limited by guarantee) and is pursuing these opportunities at scale (subject to the Synod's preparedness to allow access to Property Trust assets, or allow property to be directly held by its company limited by guarantee subsidiaries).
51. Relative to other areas of community services (eg. Aged care, disability services) our network wide portfolio of **social and affordable housing** is proportionately smaller. If there was a collective view to be an active participant in addressing this contemporary issue of access to affordable and secure tenure at scale, its likely that changed arrangements in legal, governance and property relationships with Synod's will need to be modified and quickly.

**Legal and Governance**

52. There are a variety of arrangements evident from participant responses to questionnaires. Even where legal entity arrangements are similar, custom and practice contributes to a variety of delegated authority and accountability arrangements. Eg. Currently there are differing approaches to the legal role of the Property Trust in different Synods. This has flow on effects for agencies and more inconsistencies raises greater regulatory risk.
53. There is a cost to maintaining high levels (sufficient to meet increasing regulatory and public accountability) of governance across multiple agencies.
54. There is complexity that contributes to inconsistency in our internal governance – and adds to confusion (and additional cost in explaining our structure) externally.
55. There is challenge presented by custom and practice models continuing to provide points of difference being often driven from concerns by the Church (whether represented through any of its Councils – Assembly, Synod or Presbytery/Congregation) of potential 'MISSION DRIFT' by agencies – which has often led to overreliance on control of property as the mechanism more comfortably relied on to guard against this. There is not the same awareness, confidence in or capability to initiate other more sophisticated levers of control that are open to the Church in their relationship with agencies through more contemporary but equally robust governance-based levers of control.

### *Differential Tax concession arrangements*

56. All agencies within the UnitingCare network are structured as Public Benevolent Institutions (PBIs) and Deductible Gift Recipients (DGR).
57. This contrasts with the other parts of the Church as Religious Charities which have differential tax concessions available to them. This differential tax concession arrangements that are accessible as PBI's create tensions in the way in which financial and contractual arrangements between agencies and other church entities are increasingly the focus of regulatory and community interest.

### *Increasing expectations of Related Party Obligations*

58. In addition to the focus area of tax, the tension of being related parties (agency and Synod bodies) whether as separate legal or tax entities, are increasingly requiring greater transparency and evidence that supports the independent decision making required.

### *Nature of relationship between agency and Assembly*

59. **Under our Regulations the Assembly has been the main conduit through which our National identity is exercised. This provides the basic rationale for UnitingCare Australia being set up in 1993 as an agency of the Assembly.**
60. **It is the Assembly which led the significant and particular relationship between the Church and First Peoples through the Covenant with UAICC. Over decades the approach has been to seek to prioritise engagement through UAICC. This presents challenges for agencies who have and need to maintain relationships with local communities reflective of their work.**
61. **Agencies have capacity to support the Covenant with UAICC and more broadly with Aboriginal communities through the local relationships that have developed in connection with their services.**
62. **As the Assembly seeks to refresh its covenant the opportunity exists to explore the deepening of relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities both through UAICC and directly with local communities.**

### *Role, structure and governance of UnitingCare Australia*

63. Is there opportunity to revisit again the question of UnitingCare Australia as an agency of the Assembly, or a 'joint venture' of the Synods? Funding is entirely through the Synod based agencies.
64. Despite being an agency of the Assembly, UnitingCare Australia does not have a recognised role within the governance of the Assembly. This presented difficulties for example at the last Assembly in Session in the presentation of papers on behalf of UnitingCare Australia. It meant that papers were only able to be presented by individuals who were appointed to the Assembly as members through other representative arrangements.
65. Difficulties in the current legal and governance structure are around:
  - Responsible Persons – governance regulatory responsibility is with ASC and not the UnitingCare Australia Board

- Employer is UC Assembly Ltd (on the basis that this entity attempts to take a similar role as the Property Trusts exercise as 'bare trusts' but with additional Corporations Act responsibilities). Real risk that individual board members are holding the regulatory responsibility without the corresponding authority.
- This also applies to the evolving changes within Workplace Health and Safety environments suggests responsibility for these risks in our context is with individuals who don't carry the authority to manage that risk.

66. Given the points expressed above, the inevitable response is that UnitingCare Australia should be incorporated. Once resolution of its preferred internal governance arrangements are confirmed in relation to its delegation, accountability and reporting to relevant Church Councils, this can be appropriately reflected in the equivalent governance structure of the incorporated entity.

#### Nature of relationship between agency and Synod

67. The questionnaire responses reflect a variety of ways in which corporate services arrangements between agency and Synods are reflected in very transactional arrangements. As the size scale and capacity of agencies to undertake their own services, while capacity at Synods to lead those services has in the main, diminished – the question of whether these arrangements continue to be fit for purpose and apply the best stewardship of resources.
68. An alternate approach might be to explore the extent to which some agencies might be able to leverage their own resources for the benefit of Synods and the church more broadly – and doing so while still meeting their own regulatory constraints.
69. There are a variety of ways in which governance by Synods are exercised
- Eg. Mechanism of Moderator / general secretary as ex-officio on agency boards (Qld and NSW) – only practical where there is consolidation of governance and scale warrants it
  - Board Chairs of UnitingCare Qld and Wesley Mission Queensland are member of the Qld Synod's Standing Committee
  - In the Synod of NSW.ACT Board Chair of Uniting is ex-officio a member of the Synod Standing Committee and currently the Chair and 2 board members are also board members of the relatively newly created Synod Board
  - Where separate corporate entities exist – or company limited by guarantee structures are likely to emerge in the future, it is important that the accountable governing body (Synod or Assembly) understands the different mechanisms available to it to exercise its control and to require accountability

#### *Arrangements for 'Institutions'*

70. There are a variety of ways in which Synods currently proactively (or not) identify agencies as 'Institutions' under the Regulations (or not).
71. This has flow on effects to access to Indemnity under the Regulations which can be intentionally included or excluded. In some cases, non-recognition as an Institution has given rise to a different kind of relationship eg. Through an MOU.
72. There does not appear to be a common understanding of the differing arrangements that exist for agencies that are in different classifications of relationships with Synod.



There are a variety of implications arising from an external perspective if they are still regarded or treated as a Uniting Church agency or UnitingCare Network agency.

### *Ministry in community contexts*

73. There are emerging opportunities for the variety of expressions of ministry exercised in community settings. Sharing our respective experiences of these ministry expressions which increasingly are funded directly by agencies, will be important in redefining our understanding of these ministries and the place they hold in our regulations and bylaws.
74. As funding for traditional congregational ministry placements is challenged (in many regional contexts, no ministers have been available, capable of being funded, and this situation unlikely to change in the future) there is opportunity to develop models of shared ministry – congregational and community service focussed. Effective case study examples of where this has been working well recognise and actively manage potential areas of tension that this model can give rise to.
75. Recognising that leadership within agencies is exercised by both lay and ordained leaders they are predominantly lay led in both executive and non-executive leadership contexts. In looking at contemporary models of theological education this should be seen through the lens of not only ordained leadership models, but with the experience of lay leadership roles exercised in agencies.

### *Nature of relationships with local communities of faith and discipleship*

76. There are considerable current links between local churches and services co-located with their property. In some states the structure of missions recognised under the Regulations continue to flourish. Some connect through the UnitingCare Australia network while others are not formally part of UnitingCare Australia
77. Within many of our agency led services there are various forms of “local communities of faith” that do not meet the current form and designation of a congregation or Faith Community.
78. In the further consideration of Act2’s work in defining the local expression of witness, worship and service, it is UnitingCare Australia’s contention that this should be flexible enough to include those who identify the expression of their faith through their association with the Church’s agency.

### *Emerging issues from external environment*

79. A further matter to raise as a continuing and emerging issues is community expectations for engaging with Vulnerable Persons:
  - Historically – arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse – has required a regime of responsibility required of the Church and formal and regulated “redress” arrangements
  - UCA responded proactively (and consistent with the advocacy role it has played in supporting the role and function of the Commission). Under those ‘redress’ arrangements, including the establishment of UCA Redress Ltd, many of the historic liabilities relate to past community service activities and in the main these liabilities are understood to be inherited by successor agencies.

- There is an emerging and future issue for historic claims that do not have a successor agency that can reasonably meet those liabilities, or indeed in some Synods where they will be challenged to meet the liabilities from existing resources. This will require a more 'national' approach (whether nationally led or with a 'joint venture' approach between Synods and Assembly in its resolution – consistent with our One Church approach.
  - There are ongoing ramifications from Commissions of enquiry in Aged Care (recommendations still to be fully implemented); Disabilities; Mental Health (and potentially in the future on the wellbeing of children in out of home care contexts) are in various states of completion.
80. All of these enquiries are focussed in areas of current service delivery for agencies of the network. UnitingCare Australia has made collective submissions and taken advocacy positions on a national basis – while at the same time responsibility for exercising those commitments remain in largely state based delivery agencies.
81. There are risks in this approach and we recognise that a failure to meet obligations and community expectations of one agency has flow on consequences in terms of reputation and government funding confidence for other agencies.
82. Additionally, for the Church, irrespective of the classification of an agency in their relationship with their Synod or Assembly, there is inevitably flow on effects for the Church. Our experience in meeting and resolving the challenges of Frontier Services is a relevant example of this. (Refer to this example in Appendix 3 of collaborations.

## Conclusion

Health and community service agencies of the Uniting Church are integral to, and bear witness to, the life of the Church in each of its expressions of worship, witness and service.

***If we had a blank page, what would structure and governance as a national Australian Church delivering health and community services of our scale and complexity look like (considered on a consolidated basis)?***

The breadth and depth of people leadership, specialist expertise, administrative and corporate systems within Uniting Church agencies could be potentially freed up and applied more directly within the wider Uniting Church.

In reflecting on the future structure and governance options, and viewed with the lens of the experience of agencies, the following principles are offered:

### Principles:

- Fit for purpose – making the complex simple (but not simplistic) and capable of responding in agile ways at scale
- Transparent
- Striving for excellence in delivery in the various areas of specialty – and organising our business models to support quality and evidence based service delivery practice (stewardship of opportunity to effect systemic change and disrupt disadvantage in

doing so) – while at the same time using every opportunity to maximise efficiencies and being the best stewards of our resources

- Maintain strong advocacy that is aligned with our mission and informed by the deep experience gained through the depth and breadth of our operations
- Support a national identity and profile that reflects the size, scale and experience arising from our services and actively encourages collaboration with intentional consideration of the benefits of national delivery in specific areas eg. nationally operating children's services?
- An emphasis on theological reflection of our purpose and practice
- Integrated models of service delivery that support and encourage (even drive) inspirationally with local congregations and communities – combined with integrated models of ministry that work seamlessly between agency, community and congregational life
- Leadership development and training that is focussed on both ordained and lay leadership offered within agencies
- Commitment to First Peoples through both UAICC and through relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities developed by agencies and responsive to the nature and location of their services.

In applying these principles, the following options could be explored for structuring health and community services in the future.

In each of the options below, UnitingCare Australia is recommended to be an incorporated entity (likely company limited by guarantee) noting that its internal governance arrangements (its delegations, accountability and reporting) can be appropriately reflected in the design of its constitution as an incorporated entity.

**OPTION 1:** Increased national operations through **models of cooperation** amongst existing agencies – on a self select basis.

National activities would consist of both advocacy, strengthening service provision as well as operational activities through cooperative models (which could include joint ventures across multiple states).

This option is expressed to some degree in UnitingCare Australia's **Strategy on a**

**OPTION 2:** A **national structure** that supports continuing advocacy and increasingly national operated services that seek to continue to take the efficiencies of operations (shared services or areas of identified service delivery) and ability to maximise social impact through both services and advocacy.

Acknowledging there will continue to be a role for small to medium agencies that remain networked and part of the Church's service response.

## Recommendations

1. Consistent with the principle that the Church is at mission in our communities through the activities of agencies, formal recognition of health and community service agencies in revised constitution / regulations of UCA including:
  - a. the opportunity for agencies to participate in decision making within key councils of the Church
  - b. in some forms of agencies, to be recognised **AS** a council of the Church
  - c. being intentional and consistent about what it means to be designated an 'institution' – and for health and community service agencies what are the consequences (responsibilities and accountabilities) when so endorsed?
2. A consistent approach to the underpinning legal, governance and missional directions that can support the emergence of new legal structures, (specifically company limited by guarantee structures) and recognised to be an expression of 'one Uniting Church'
3. Expansion of the current definition for 'congregation' that recognises the variety of local communities of faith and discipleship that are prevalent in health and community service agency contexts – that the activities of agencies are an expression of the Church's worship, witness and service.
4. Explore the potential for agencies to share resources (including corporate services):
  - a. with each other
  - b. with Synods and Assembly (within mechanisms available and consistent with regulatory requirements) including the exploration of models for some agencies to directly provide for services currently operated by some Synods and the Assembly.
5. As the Act2 Project explores its workstream for theological culture and education, it should not be limited to candidates for ordained ministry but should also reflect the significant lay leadership being exercised. Key elements should:
  - a. apply to both executive and non-executive roles as they exercise their leadership of our agencies.
  - b. include values based leadership training models and approaches
  - c. provide input from agency experience and perspective into theological education for all ministry agents

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### 2023-26 Strategy On A Page

Mission:	
To give voice to the Uniting Church's commitment to social justice through advocacy and by strengthening community service provision	
4 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	3 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES
<b>1. IMPACT – to position UnitingCare Australia as a high impact organisation</b> i. Use the collective voice of the UnitingCare network to deliver significant policy change in each advocacy priority area ii. Improve the lives of the most vulnerable through strengthening and enhancing the Uniting Church's community service provision iii. Strengthen the voice and role of UnitingCare Australia as the National Body for the Uniting Church's community services network	<b>1. JUSTICE FOR FIRST PEOPLES</b> That the unique place of our First Peoples in the life of our nation is acknowledged and upheld
<b>2. IDENTITY - Be recognised as a leading advocate with a clear profile and strong identity</b> i. Affirm the unique voice of UnitingCare Australia through an agreed collective national identity ii. Embed a campaign approach to all aspects of our work iii. Harness the heritage and mission of UnitingCare Australia, our network, our church and the UAICC iv. Leverage the footprint, research evidence and practice expertise of our network	<b>2. AGEING TO OUR FULL POTENTIAL</b> That all people experience compassion and dignity as they age and exercise their rights as full members of society
<b>3. RELATIONSHIPS - nurture and extend critical internal and external relationships with key stakeholders for impact and influence</b> i. Position UnitingCare Australia as a trusted adviser and recognised expert to Government, Parliament, the media and the community ii. Provide national leadership to the network to maximise quality service provision, national collaboration, and sharing of information and best practice expertise iii. Facilitate relationships across the Church to position the role of community services as a vital part of its life and witness iv. Play an active leadership role across the aged care and community sectors through collaboration and cooperation in areas of common concern	<b>3. ECONOMIC EQUALITY AND INCLUSION</b> That all people are able to fully participate across all domains of life
<b>4. RESOURCES AND CAPABILITY – ensure we have adequate resources and capability to deliver on our Mandate</b> i. Nurture and support a strong, diverse, safe, capable and agile team ii. Leverage the expertise and resources in our network including as spokespeople, subject matter experts, and campaign champions iii. Ensure our sustainability, viability and social responsibility through good governance and management practices iv. Use our financial and human resources effectively for maximum impact and improve ways and systems of working	<b>6 VALUES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hope</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Justice</li> <li>• Compassion</li> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Innovation</li> </ul>





## Appendix 2

### UnitingCare Australia Survey Responses

#### Introduction

The following insights summarise feedback sought from the Uniting Church's network of community service organisations regarding the nature of financial contributions, property arrangements, legal and governance structures, relationships with Synods and congregations, and numbers of chaplaincy and ministry personnel within services. Agencies were also asked to provide good news stories and examples of positive collaboration occurring across the life of the Church through its community service agencies (Appendix 3).

Insights regarding these topics were sought on behalf of UnitingCare Australia's Board, via an email survey that was distributed to UnitingCare agency CEOs and Synod General Secretaries in March 2023.

In summary of the key themes that have emerged from the feedback received, significant variation exists across UnitingCare organisations with respect to their structural and relationship arrangements with Synods and congregations. Scope exists for streamlining structures and functions to ensure that services are able to operate at their peak and deliver best outcomes for clients and those in their employ. In particular, standardising fee structures and property arrangements, in addition to legal, governance and reporting requirements, would all provide opportunity for simplification and enhancement of processes to allow for best practice and continuous service improvement to occur more efficiently.

#### Financial Contributions

The majority of respondents reported making financial contributions or payments to their Synod and/or Congregations. Three organisations reported that they make no contributions, or have no relationships in place with their Synod/Congregations pertaining to property ownership.

All respondents who make financial contributions reported that contributions are made on an annual basis.

*Intentionally Excluded*

#### Property Arrangements

The majority (50%) of respondents reported that property is held under Property Trusts auspiced by the Uniting Church.

Approximately 40% of respondents indicated that their own organisation holds property titles.

The remainder of respondents indicated a combination of adopting both organisation-held and Property Trust held property ownership arrangements.

Several agencies noted their legal entitlement to own property under their own constitutions, despite their properties being held by a Property Trust.

Agencies also reported that property that is jointly used by the organisation and congregations is split according to agreements made locally.

One agency noted that their organisation was the sole owner of all property via a Foundation, which operates as a wholly controlled entity of that organisation.

Regarding approval processes for property purchasing, those agencies with properties held by a Property Trust generally reported needing to acquire Property Trust approval in order to buy and sell property. By contrast, organisations that hold property in their own name are typically able to make decisions around the sale and purchase of property without needing to report to Synod. In such instances, Board approval is alternatively sought.

## Legal and Governance Arrangements

All respondents reported direct Synod oversight of their operations. Specific examples of Synod oversight were reported to include:

- Board appointments, and potentially, Board dissolution
- Monitoring and ensuring good governance
- Approval of changes to organisational rules and regulations
- Approval of variations to agency constitutions.

It was noted by some organisations that Synod has no direct involvement in day-to-day governance.

Several agencies also noted their requirement to adhere to the following procedures as part of Synod 'Forum' requirements:

- Meeting four times annually
- Advising Synod regarding agency strategic directions, policy frameworks and planning for the Church's mission in community areas
- Advising Synod of any public statements, submissions regarding matters of social policy and advocacy, and
- Reporting to the Synod Standing Committee, as required.

In terms of Board appointments, the following processes were reported:

- Appointments by Synod through Annual Meetings, or by Synod Standing Committee if between Annual Meetings.
- Appointments through PM Church Council
- Appointments through Synod Standing Committee, on recommendation of the Board
- Appointments recommended by the organisation's Board, for final sign-off by Synod Standing Committee.

Approximately 70% of respondents reported specifically appointed governance roles or different tiers of governance. These include:

- Moderator and General Secretary assuming Ex-Officio Board member positions
- Establishment of subcommittees and related reporting arrangements in accordance with Synod requirements. For example, to a Synod Board Governance Committee and Synod Audit and Risk Committee.

One organisation also noted their implementation of regulatory governance requirements in accordance with their adoption of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

All respondents reported that, to varying degrees, Board members should either be members of the Uniting Church or identify with the Christian faith. Different expressions of this were reported, for example:

- Three Board members must also be members of the Uniting Church.
- Where possible, at least two members of the Board should be confirmed members of the Uniting Church with eligibility to represent the organisation at the annual meeting of the Synod.
- Board members must be committed to the ethos of the Uniting Church.
- The majority of Board members are required to be members of the Uniting Church or another Christian church.
- A 'best endeavours' approach to maintaining two Directors who are members of the Uniting Church, but this is not a fixed requirement. Maintained per a Memorandum of Understanding with the Church developed when the organisation changed company structure and formal legal association with the Church.

## Synod Relationship

Approximately 50% of respondents reported having no formal decision-making capacity within Synod. Of those organisations that reported having Synod decision making capacity, the following arrangements were described:

- Informal relationships at a governance level and some individuals occupying governance roles both with PM and at Synod
- Board Chair sitting as a voting Member of the Synod Standing Committee
- As an ex officio voting member of the Synod Standing Committee, the CEO is a non-voting standing associated member of Synod Standing Committee.

Respondents noted more informal arrangements applying to Presbytery voting procedures, where organisational representatives attend meetings, but do not hold prescribed roles or nominee rights. One organisation noted that they are listed in their Presbytery as an organisational member and that one staff member attends meetings and exercises membership entitlements.

With regard to reporting arrangements, the following mechanisms were described:

- Reporting to Synod through Annual Report and Synod Standing Committee
- Reporting to Synod through annual Governance Meeting
- Provision of Annual Statement of Mission Intent to Synod and annual joint meeting of Board and Synod Standing Committee
- Regular meetings with Synod Director
- Informal six-monthly reporting to Synod Standing Committee, not requiring approval/sign-off
- Formal six-monthly reporting to Synod, including financial reporting.
- Provision of quarterly financial reports to Synod, including quarterly Risk Report.

## Chaplaincy/Ministry Personnel

Director of Mission - <i>Uniting AgeWell</i>	1
Chaplain Coordinator (lay person) - <i>Uniting AgeWell</i>	1
Interim Chaplain - <i>Uniting AgeWell</i>	1
Spiritual Carer - <i>Uniting AgeWell</i>	1
Pastoral and Spiritual Care Workers (Part-time) - <i>Juniper</i>	11
Pastoral care volunteers – <i>Juniper</i>	12
UCA Minister of Word - <i>Uniting AgeWell</i>	1
Minister of Deacon - <i>Uniting AgeWell</i>	1
Candidate for Ministry - <i>Uniting AgeWell</i>	1
Anglican Priests - <i>Uniting AgeWell</i>	3
Lay people - <i>Uniting AgeWell</i>	5
Mission and Ethos Partners – <i>Uniting Vic.Tas</i>	2
HC – <i>Uniting Vic.Tas</i>	3
Chaplaincy/pastoral care practitioners* - <i>Uniting NSW.ACT</i>	100
Chaplains - Blue Care and Hospitals – <i>UnitingCare QLD</i>	45
Connectors - Connect 100– <i>UnitingCare QLD</i>	11
Environmental Sustainability – <i>UnitingCare QLD</i>	2
Indigenous Strategic Partnerships – <i>UnitingCare QLD</i>	6
Mission Office (including Directors of Mission) – <i>UnitingCare QLD</i>	8
Prison Ministry – <i>UnitingCare QLD</i>	4
UnitingCare Chaplains (wellbeing) – <i>UnitingCare QLD</i>	2
Tertiary chaplain @ Flinders University – <i>UnitingCare South Australia</i>	1
Chaplains working in Correctional Services – <i>UnitingCare South Australia</i>	2
SA Health hospital chaplains – <i>UnitingCare South Australia</i>	7
School chaplains – <i>UnitingCare South Australia</i>	5
Hospital chaplains working in the private health sector – <i>UnitingCare South Australia</i>	4
Chaplains working in Aged Care – <i>UnitingCare South Australia</i>	16
Chaplains embedded in community services (FTE) – <i>Wesley Mission</i>	10

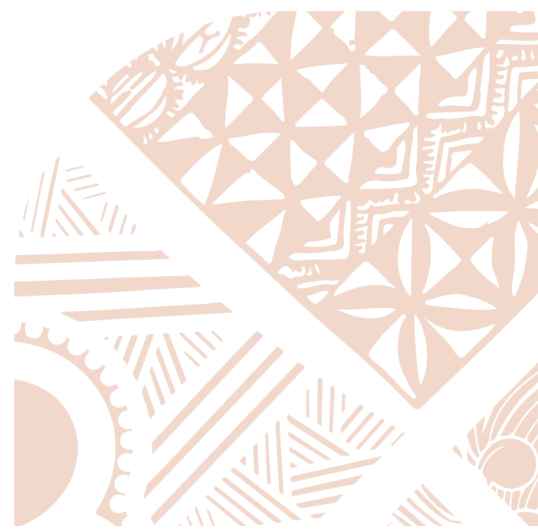
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>266</b>
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*\* Collectively provide 110,000 hours of care every year for people in residential aged care, hospitals, prisons and the wider community.*

***Breakdown of personnel for South Australian organisations:***

<i>Ministry Workers – Uniting Communities</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Ordained Minister (full-time) – Uniting SA</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Pastoral Care Workers (Part-time) – Uniting SA</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Pastoral Care Volunteer – Uniting SA</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Chaplains (Part Time – 1.5-2 days per week) - Resthaven</i>	<i>11</i>

One organisation noted that pastoral training is an essential component of their selection criteria in appointing new members of their Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team. The organisation accepts applications from all Christian denominations.





## Appendix 3

### Good news stories & collaborations

Contributor	Story/Information
Uniting NSW.ACT	<p>With respect to stories: our Annual Report is available here <a href="https://www.uniting.org/about-us/annual-reports">https://www.uniting.org/about-us/annual-reports</a> and has introductions from the Moderator, Chair and CEO/ED at the beginning that touch on the relationship between church and Uniting. In addition there is a section on Mission specifically in pages 24-28. There are stories there that can be shared. There is also specific reference to the Church's Future Directions commitments and how Uniting seeks to work in alignment with the Synod.</p> <p>We will soon be preparing stories to share as part of our Synod reporting, but to provide further stories in the timeframe you have given, and check them as needed before sharing them, would be difficult, so I hope what is in the annual report will be sufficient.</p> <p>Information on the work of our advocacy and social impact directorate, as well as the rest of Uniting, can be found in the annual report too. In NSW.ACT the Synod sets specific advocacy areas of focus that Uniting then works on, including developing resources for congregations and individuals to participate in this work. Our advocacy team also provides support and resources for congregations looking to engage in local advocacy.</p>
Uniting Vic.Tas	<p>Available at: <a href="https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/FUN-ConConnect-Autumn-FY23-FA-Digi.pdf">https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/FUN-ConConnect-Autumn-FY23-FA-Digi.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Over 30 years fighting food scarcity</b></p> <p>Thanks to your generosity, our Food For Families program has put food on the table of those facing crisis for over 30 years. The program is needed now more than ever as the impacts of the pandemic and the rising cost of living has left many struggling to afford basic food items. Last year, our program collected 67 tonnes of food and essential items for those in need. This year we hope to exceed that amount so we can meet the growing demand of individuals and families seeking food relief. Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre (ASWC) Team Leader, Aimee Dare, expressed just how crucial these food donations are for people seeking asylum. "Times have been tough for clients at the Centre," she said. "We've been sending food out to families as quickly as it's been coming in."</p> <p>Please register now and help us provide practical assistance for people when they need it most. Call us on 1800 668 426 or visit <a href="https://foodforfamilies.org.au/register">foodforfamilies.org.au/register</a>.</p>
Uniting Vic.Tas	<p>Available at: <a href="https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/FUN-ConConnect-Autumn-FY23-FA-Digi.pdf">https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/FUN-ConConnect-Autumn-FY23-FA-Digi.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Celebrating 20 years - Late last year the Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre (ASWC) celebrated its 20-year anniversary</b></p>

	<p>Over 150 people, including clients, staff and volunteers, past and present, and key congregation partners came together and celebrated with food, music, dancing.</p> <p>ASWC volunteer and Australian singer-song writer, Liz Stringer, enthralled the audience with her performance as she expressed the centre's greatest strengths: its strong relationships, big heart and passion for real change.</p> <p>Since opening in 2002, the Centre has offered welcome and care to people in need of a safer life in Australia.</p> <p>ASWC Team Leader, Aimee Dare, specifically expressed her gratitude to congregations for their long-standing support of the program.</p> <p>"Congregations have always been behind the work we do. Their commitment to advocating for justice and supporting those seeking asylum is truly inspiring", she said.</p> <p>While the anniversary revealed the heart-warming stories and impacts of the ASWC, it was also a bitter reminder of the unrelenting barriers and inequalities people seeking asylum face in Australia.</p> <p>ASWC Community Development Worker, Anna Vost said, "I hope we won't need the Welcome Centre forever. I hope everyone just gets given permanent visas and they can go on with their lives."</p> <p>If this article has inspired you to be involved, please reach out to your Mission and Ethos Partner.</p>
UnitingCare Australia Consortium	<p><b>Escaping Violence Payment</b></p> <p>Nationally funded Domestic Violence support program – auspiced by Uniting VicTas and delivered by identified agencies in each state jurisdiction.</p> <p>The model of auspicing national funding arrangements is a clear limitation in the network's capacity to deliver nationally funded programs – it relies on establishing program specific governance and accountability frameworks with risk for the program being disproportionately held by the auspicing agency.</p>
LeapIn!	<p><b>Joint Venture between UnitingCare (Qld) and Uniting NSW.ACT – LeapIn! (<a href="http://www.leapin.com.au">www.leapin.com.au</a>) (digital platform and registered Plan Manager under NDIS)</b></p> <p>This represents investment (financial and executive capacity) in collaborative innovation in what was at the time the emerging 'market' of NDIS</p> <p>It has ultimately proven to be a successful endeavour, having been challenging in the pathway to sustainability.</p> <p>It also identified lack of clear delegations and inconsistent exercise of decision-making authority within and across each Synod – requiring disproportionate time, executive and governance capacity to be deployed to support the initiative. Lessons learned through the early phase has contributed to some streamlining of processes – nevertheless there remains more opportunity to build our capacity and capability for joint venture activities.</p>

Collaboration Committee	<p><b>UnitingCare, Uniting NSW.ACT, Uniting VicTas, UnitingAgeWell</b> Supports CEO engagement and Chairs interactions with Assembly representation on issues of service delivery issues arising in their large agency/ multi service context. Terms of Reference supported and approved by each of the Synods.</p>
Frontier Services	<p>The potential failure of Frontier Services aged care and community services in NT (at the time operated as an agency of the Assembly), prompted responses from other Synod agencies in the network to underpin the resolution and continuation of services through the establishment of <b>Australian Regional and Remote Community Services</b> as a subsidiary of UnitingCare Queensland. This required collective capacity (executive and governance) as well as financial resources to be offered by other agencies in the network – our existing structures potentially were a limitation in achieving the end outcomes.</p>
Wesley Mission	<p><b>Collaboration in Taree between Wesley Mission staff and Uniting Church congregations in the region</b> Particularly a collaboration between Rev Claire Wright and the people of the Manning Uniting Church. Together we host a fortnightly BBQ, building authentic community among marginalised people in Taree along with sharing resources, connection and support. This growing initiative has amplified and magnified the impact of Manning Uniting Church in serving their community with the love of Jesus. <b>Joint flood relief work and exploring future projects with Uniting Church congregations in the Northern Rivers region</b> Together with Rev Pablo Nunez, Rev Phil Dokmanovic, and Rev Peter Overton, Wesley Mission has engaged in visioning conversations about how we can together magnify and amplify the missional impact of local churches in the region. Wesley Mission staff also collaborated with the people of Ballina Uniting Church in providing assistance and support to people affected by the floods in 2022. In November of 2022, we held a special service of lament and hope at Ballina Uniting Church. This service brought together members of the local community, leaders and members of the congregation and other UCA congregations, and leaders and staff from Wesley Mission to share together in grieving loss and celebrating God's response in and through God's people. <b>Wesley Connect street level ministries</b> Members of Wesley Mission's congregations and of congregations beyond the Mission are building authentic community among marginalised people in Taree along with sharing resources, connection and support. This begins with a worship and discipleship community, Wesley CityHeart that meets on Tuesdays and is linked with our Sunday CityHeart community. It also includes groups where people from the church gather with people in the wider community to share in music, Bible study, prayer and conversation. Volunteers are trained and supported in pastoral care through our Wesley Connect Ministry, which focuses on conversation and connection with quality coffee, tea and refreshments around tables. Members of the volunteer team not only serve others—including many with complex and often urgent needs—but</p>

	<p>are also continually nurtured in their own discipleship journey. Our weekday street level ministries in the CBD are closely linked with our Edward Eagar community in Surry Hills and there is significant crossover in participation between the two centres.</p> <p><b>Missional Communities and Church Planting</b></p> <p>Wesley Mission is committed to establishing new missional communities in places where our services have earned trust in the wider community. We are also committed to planting new mission-focused congregations in close collaboration with other councils of the Church. To undergird these commitments in our strategic plan, we are also committed to identifying, equipping and sending hundreds of missional leaders to build up the church for mission. We cannot do any of this as alone. Key leaders in Wesley Mission's congregational life and community services have engaged in serious conversation and exploratory work with Synod, Uniting, several presbyteries, and individual congregations about new ways that we can work together in these areas.</p>
UnitingCare QLD	<p>A program initiated by UnitingCare (Qld) which seeks to strengthen connections with Uniting Church congregations throughout Queensland.</p> <p>Local projects are designed to foster collaboration in serving our communities, provide care and support for UnitingCare staff and volunteers and promoting innovation in driving shared mission and vision for the church in Queensland communities.</p> <p>The aim is to achieve 100 such local partnerships.</p> <p>Connect100 Projects are now underway, or imminent right across Queensland—from Cape York in the north, to the Gold Coast in the south, and in inland areas such as Mt Isa and Roma. Each Uniting Church Presbytery across the Queensland is now an active partner with UnitingCare through a Connect100 initiative.</p> <p>Connect100 is now well integrated within the Mission Group, with the group committed to the ongoing development of Connect100 partnerships across the state. Associate Directors of Mission regularly introduce Connect100 to various work groups across the organisation, and close collaboration with UnitingCare's Reconciliation Action Plan team is evident.</p> <p>Redcliffe UC community hub has now opened with co-located FADS teams on site, and an integrated Connect100 partner facilitating shared mission and pastoral care of UCQ staff. This first generation Connect100 project is demonstrating what can emerge in other locations.</p> <p>The Connect100 team addressed the 33rd Synod to a warm welcome. Almost 80 Synod members chose to participate in a Connect100 workshop and presentation.</p> <p>From a 2021 focus on raising awareness and building readiness, efforts in 2022 have moved to the development and implementation of local Connect100 partnerships across Queensland. There are currently fifteen projects active, or ready to commence, together with two that have concluded. The newest Connect100 partnerships are in Mt Isa, Townsville, Chermshire, Ripley, Flagstone and the Darling Downs. There has been some level of contact or exploration with more than 75 congregations to date, covering each of the seven Presbyteries within Queensland.</p>



Pastoral care, mental health first aid, accidental counselling and disaster recovery form just some of the initial offerings of training to congregations throughout the Connect100 network. Outcomes include stronger congregations contributing to community resilience, task-ready volunteers engaging in UnitingCare services, and strengthened relationships between UnitingCare and congregations. Training activities offered through Connect100 are coordinated by Michelle Richardson, Chaplain (Holistic Care) for UnitingCare Qld.



## Examples of Local Projects

### Redcliffe UC (Live)

Partnering with Redcliffe UC's community hub, to offer community chaplaincy engaging families & young people

### Mackay (Live)

A small initial partnership with St Pauls UC in Mackay, supporting FADS and BlueCare teams and developing community care

### Flagstone Community Centre (Live)

A UCA community centre in the new growth area of Flagstone, delivering community chaplaincy and engagement initiatives

### Mt Isa (Live)

Supporting communities in Mt Isa, connecting with BlueCare Community, Lifeline and FADS teams

### Cairns South (Live)

Supporting community development in the Cairns southern corridor including Gordonvale and Edmonton. Engaging first peoples, multicultural groups and UCA congregations across Cairns

### Maryborough (Live)

Helping Maryborough UC support marginalised members of the community through it's community breakfast project and relationship with UnitingCare

### West End Townsville (Ready)

Exploring relationship between West End UC, Pinangba and other UnitingCare services working with aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Townsville

### Bottle Tree Bush Chaplaincy (Ready)

Supporting community engagement in the Maranoa and the Western Downs Leichardt/Carnarvon Highway corridors

### Rockhampton (Design)

Building on the concluded CQ Rural Mission project, this new partnership includes Rockhampton and inland communities in the Dawson and Callide Valleys.

### Cape York Communities (Design)

Early scoping work relates to a community chaplaincy project in Cape York, growing local capacity for pastoral care and community chaplaincy

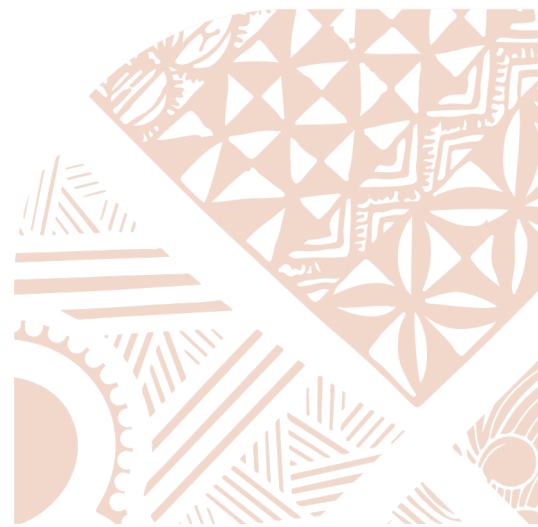
### Buderim (Scoping)

Exploring relationship between Buderim UC, FADS and Buderim Private Hospital to grow partnership and community engagement

### Gatton (Scoping)

Gatton UC is developing a support project for seasonal workers in the Lockyer Valley. Connect100 partnership may enable an expanded scope of care for this group





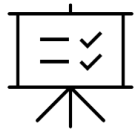
## Attachment 2

### Factors for successful collaboration

A summary of the key factors for successful collaboration across the UnitingCare Network is provided below.



Agreement on **core aims and objectives** – “what does success look like”?



**Clear scope** and agreement on what can be realistically achieved and what falls beyond the scope of the project.



Agreed **timeframes** – realistic milestones and deadlines, agreed by all partners (both internal and external).



Alignment on **organisational values**, which should form the most reliable and unwavering guide for project implementation.



Alignment on **performance standards** – agreed thresholds to be achieved in ensuring a high quality of service and support delivered to clients.



**Sufficient financial support** to deliver expected outcomes, with clear communication regarding processes for funding delivery.



**Sufficient human resources** to facilitate implementation of the initiative, and time allowed for recruitment of suitable personnel.



Clear and consistent **communication** maintained throughout delivery.



Consistent use of strong **collaboration and shared decision-making** mechanisms.



Use of effective **tools to facilitate collaboration and information sharing**, such as ICT platforms, communication and data collection tools and platforms, as well as other project 'enablers'.

