

Pursuing Innovation
Our Faith
Working Holistically
A Focus on the Disadvantaged
Striving to do better
Social Justice
Respect
Empower
Working Together



Our Statement of Purpose

UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania is integral to the ministry of the church, sharing in the vision and mission of God - seeking to address injustice, working together to overcome disadvantage and to strengthen communities.

Preamble – Uniting Church in Australia

Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) is the largest non-government provider of community services in Australia. The *UnitingCare* network across Australia consists of over 400 community service agencies, thousands of programs and projects, more than 36,000 staff and over 24,000 volunteers. The network serves around 2 million Australians each year. It provides services in the areas of aged care, child care, children and youth, family support, housing, disability, remote communities, and emergency relief.

Our social justice, advocacy work and community welfare services express our belief that God is committed to life now. It is this love of God and neighbour that has sometimes drawn the church into controversial situations. It has long taken a role in the political arena, encouraging moral, social and ethical integrity.

The UCA has been at the forefront of Aboriginal rights issues, including the Native Title debate and reconciliation. It has taken a stand on environmental issues, and supports the equality and dignity of marginalised people such as ethnic minorities, disabled people and homosexual people. It is a multicultural church, striving to treat people on an equal basis, and seeking to give a voice to the poor, outcast and needy.

This caring for people and communities, together with advocacy, forms a very significant part of the mission of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Introduction – UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania

UnitingCare was launched in 2000 as a network of community service organisations within the Uniting Church in Australia. *UnitingCare* Australia has a strong focus upon advocacy at the national level on behalf of *UnitingCare* Agencies and Missions.

UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania (UCV&T) is the network of all community service Agencies and Missions within the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, except those within *Uniting Aged Care* Victoria and Tasmania.

The UCV&T Office is a unit within the Synod Commission for Mission which provides oversight and coordination of Uniting Church agencies. Its role is to provide leadership, strategic planning and oversight of innovative community services, and to enhance constructive community engagement in the wider church. This is outlined in the UCV&T Statement of Purpose and Function.

The UCV&T network comprises organisations of varying size and service complexity situated across Victoria and Tasmania. These organisations have grown out of the particular local responses of people in the Uniting Church to the need in their communities.

Being a network of community service agencies with this rich history informs and challenges us every day. It calls us to ask questions such as:

- how do we (agencies) discern our part in God's mission;
- does the acceptance of funding and other resources challenge or reduce our ability to speak and advocate with those who are most vulnerable;
- how do we challenge unjust structures and ideologies; and,
- how do we ensure that we are assisting reconciliation in individuals and communities to achieve wholeness in body, mind, and spirit.

We believe that wholeness or fullness of life is a journey for ourselves as a network, as much as it is about the work that we do with and for others. Within this tension there are not always clear or measurable concepts or outcomes. However we are committed to walking together in this challenge and being open to better ways to achieve our purpose of seeking to address injustice, working together to overcome disadvantage and to strengthen communities.

Our communities include those people who use our services, local communities where our services are based, the wider Church, the community sector, staff and volunteers, government and financial contributors, and business and industry.



The Purpose of the Strategic Framework

The purpose of the Strategic Framework is:

- To set out clearly the purpose, values, aspirations and priorities of UCV&T and to engage agencies within the network in the identification of their role in implementing this Strategic Framework;
- To provide the context within which agencies are expected to formulate and review their own strategic plans during 2008-2010.

The Strategic Framework is given expression at a local level through agency strategic plans.

The process of strategic planning involves discussion of values, vision and reflection on God's mission in the world - a discussion involving *UnitingCare* Victoria and Tasmania, *UnitingCare* agencies and the wider church, which clarifies our joint purpose and our reason for being.

The end result of our combined efforts must lead to a range of actions which assist board members, staff and volunteers to be as effective as possible as each plays their part in this mission.

UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania's Strategic Planning Policy clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the UCV&T office and agencies in strategic planning.



Theological Foundation

Jesus said “I come in order that you might have life – life in all its fullness.” (John 10:10)

The Uniting Church’s community services exist as part of the worship, witness and service of the Church, acting in response to disadvantage, working for justice, and building up communities with others.

‘The ministry of community services is one expression of the Church’s task or call to mission...Drawing upon the vision of the Basis of Union we seek and encourage the Church in its community service work **to be the Church.**’ (*A Common Sense of Purpose: The Rejoining of Word and Deed*, P.9)

This theological framework is built around three key elements of the vision of the Basis of Union. The church is challenged to:

- **be a community of reconciliation**

It is important, but not sufficient, for the Church to meet demonstrable needs. Its unique task is to provide the opportunity for reconciliation with God and therefore with one another and oneself – to be itself a sign of God’s love and justice.

Jesus’ ministry challenged people to consider the nature of service to one another. While the Church’s commitment to people who are poor and disadvantaged has resulted in substantial community services, these must always seek to break down barriers which divide and separate people. We must continue to ensure that reconciliation is a focus within services, the life and the structural relationships of agencies.

- **be a pilgrim people**

The Church is a pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised goal. As such, we are called to be a people who travel lightly and so are free to be faithful, a people who are able to respond quickly to change and are constantly expecting there to be new ways of doing things.

Over the years, congregations and presbyteries have developed a range of services to meet people’s needs. These are constantly forming and reforming in response to current and potential future needs. The Church must always wrestle with its relationship with contemporary culture: there is an inherent tension in being part of a culture which we seek to transform. ‘The Church’s community services work is one way in which the Church is engaged in the world, living the tension of being in the world but not of the world.’ (*A Common Sense of Purpose: The Rejoining of Word and Deed*, P.10)

We must continue to explore where the values of society are congruent with those of our faith and where they are in conflict. We need to consider the extent to which we can participate in society without being subsumed, and how we can stand apart without becoming irrelevant.

- **entwine word, sacrament and service**

The corporate identity of the Church as the body of Christ is seen in worship and service, and there is a unity of the ministry of the Word (and Sacraments) and the ministry of service. The Church, however, has often accepted the relegation of the spiritual to the private realm, and we have often seen a split between congregations at worship and agencies at mission.

We must continue to affirm that agencies are part of the Church. A key component of this will be the agencies’ sense that they hold together mission and worship.

(Adapted from: *A Common Sense of Purpose: Rejoining Word and Deed* 1994)



Our Values

Our Faith

Seeking to share in the love and purpose of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, we strive to address injustice and to offer reconciliation and hope

A Focus on the Disadvantaged

Having particular concern for people who are vulnerable, poor and marginalised

Social Justice

Promoting, equity, human rights, participation and access for all

Empowerment

Seeking to build on people's strengths and enabling people to speak and act for themselves

Respect

Respecting the contribution of all involved in our network, valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity

Working Holistically

Responding to the total circumstances of those we serve, promoting wholeness by working at all levels

Working Together

Seeking partnerships in service delivery, acts of solidarity and social commentary

Pursuing Innovation

Continually examining our services and programs to ensure they are cutting edge responses to human need

Striving to do better

Undertaking ongoing research, evaluation and quality improvement

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What Informs Us In Our Work

Facilitating Full Life

Jesus came so that people might have life in all its fullness. We believe that communities are able to identify what full life means for themselves. Our role is to engage and relate with those communities, in all their diversity, in an authentic and empowering way and to advocate for change within society. The purpose of our advocacy is to redress structures and ideologies that lead to injustice. We do this within our wider multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-faith community.

We further believe that all people can best discern what they need in order to achieve wholeness of mind, body and spirit. As community agencies who work amongst those most vulnerable, our expression of the gospel is to walk with people to enable them to build on the skills, competencies and resources they already possess, by working to expose and remove ideologies and structures that block their way.

This commitment challenges us to promote such fullness of life - physically, emotionally, socially, environmentally and spiritually.

In relationship with Indigenous Australians

The Uniting Church in Australia has recognised, through a covenantal relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and the apology made to the stolen generation that indigenous people have been subjected to decades of systematic erosion of culture and strength through various community and welfare practices. Guided by this covenantal relationship with the UAICC, we seek to redress this injustice through the development of service approaches that strengthen families and communities, and are culturally appropriate.

We believe that reconciliation brings people together through sometimes difficult times and recognises both internal reconciliation of mind, body and spirit and external reconciliation with history and experiences. In our work with individuals, families and communities we are committed to reconciliation between all Australians.

However, we believe in the unique place of all Indigenous Australians in our history and their role in shaping the future. We commit ourselves to reconciliation with all indigenous people. It is within this work with Indigenous Australians and others that we gain transferable insights that will inform all our relationships within the community.

Listening and Learning

We listen to God when we listen to those who are hurting. Transformation takes place when we listen to those who are hurting and we share in their healing. In this listening we validate our communities' experience and that of the people who need and use our services. We believe that they have abilities, survival strategies, knowledge, resources and desires which can assist them to meet their goals.

We intentionally work within the diversity of our whole community, and especially with those most vulnerable who are rarely listened to by being excluded from public debate. Our challenge is the inclusion of the ideas and desires of all in our community, and we make a place and a space where people know that their needs, dreams and ideas will be heard.



Strategic Priority 1

Being a Mission of the Church

The UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania network is a prophetic expression of Christ's love for the world, both human and all of creation, in seeking a better world as God intended. This means that we journey with individuals and communities to nurture social, spiritual and ecological wholeness. Those who are vulnerable, marginalised, traumatised or disadvantaged will know that our voice can be heard with theirs in speaking out against injustice.

Outcomes

- UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania will integrate insights of professional knowledge with the gifts of the faith tradition to confidently and coherently express participation in the Christian mission;
- Our organisational identity and reputation speaks of our integrity and our commitment to justice and is recognised as the community service network of the Uniting Church in Australia;
- In relationship with the wider Church, we will be able to use our gifts and resources to sensitively and swiftly respond to disasters and community upheaval;
- The people that need and use our services, as well as other stakeholders, will express that they were listened to, informed, valued, respected and treated with dignity in all that we do, and that they were invited and supported to be involved in decision making, including the shaping of our services and strategic directions; and
- Our relationship with UAICC will be guided by their covenantal responsibility of oversight of work with indigenous Australians.

Strategic Priority 2

Working Strategically Together

UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania will be a strong, cohesive, innovative network of agencies that provides leadership and planned, proactive responses to address particular community needs and that ensure the best possible outcomes for the communities in which we work.

Outcomes

- UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania will practice a model of partnerships between Agencies, Missions, Presbyteries, Congregations, other denominations and the wider community that will enable joint projects within and beyond the network to achieve the best outcomes for the community;
- We will work collaboratively with Uniting Aged Care Victoria and Tasmania in the best interests of older people in the community;
- We will have clearly articulated policy statements for key social issues which will be known within the network and the broader community;
- There will be a coordinated strategic planning process that links strategy at agency, regional, state-wide and national levels; and
- Grounded in Christian values, our governance model and practice will ensure that all boards and agencies will be viable and sustainable.

Strategic Priority 3

Growing Our Capacity

The operational capacity of the UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania network will be strengthened ensuring the best possible outcomes for the people and communities we work with. This will be achieved through a commitment to communication, collaboration and partnership.

Outcomes

- We will have a shared understanding of, and commitment to, what creates excellence in service delivery;
- We will be known for our commitment to and ability to articulate our shared values and how they are reflected in our daily practice;
- We will be structurally efficient in meeting our purpose; and
- We will ensure that our capacity is strengthened through adherence to a standards framework which is informed by our values.

Strategic Priority 4

Valuing people and their gifts

The UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania network will be recognised as leaders in community services supporting and valuing service users, volunteers (including Boards) and staff for the experience and gifts they bring.

Outcomes

- All who use or work in our services will be valued for their strengths and the gifts that they bring;
- We will have consistent human resource and industrial relationship policies, be compliant with all legislation, and be recognised as an employer of choice in the community service field;
- There will be structured opportunities for professional development for staff across the network; and
- A model of covenanting within the wider Church will be developed and implemented with intention of enhancing outcomes for the community.





Reference List

The following documents are referenced in this Strategic Framework.

Document	Where to find it
UCV&T Statement of Purpose and Function	Charter of Relationships
A Common Sense of Purpose: Rejoining Word and Deed	www.victas.unitingcare.org.au
Church as Employer policy	Charter of Relationships
Uniting Church in Australia Basis of Union	www.uca.org.au
(Draft) Framework for Collaboration of Research	UCV&T Office
Strategic Planning Policy	UCV&T Office

Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress means the Aboriginal and Islander body which is recognised by the National Assembly as having responsibility for the oversight of the ministry of the Church with the Aboriginal and Islander people of Australia.

The Covenanting Statement made in 1994 is a profound commitment before God to the Aboriginal and Islander people of the Uniting Church. The Statement and the response of the UAICC can be found at: <http://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/statements/covenant.htm>





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