
UnitingCare West

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Sue Ash AO
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I. 2015-16 – UNITINGCARE WEST'S 10TH YEAR

UnitingCare West was established by a decision at the 2005 Synod of the Uniting Church in WA. In the following years, the organisation has become known for working with people who don't usually have easy access to services and people who have complex needs, those most in need.

Three factors have impacted UnitingCare West during this year – external changes in the Australian community and economy and the impact on those people who are most in need; internal reflection on the directions of UnitingCare West as the next Strategic Plan for the organisation was debated; and ensuring the

organisation is able to respond to these changes effectively and efficiently.

The Board of UnitingCare West continued to be actively engaged in the governance and directions of the organisation. David Holden, Chairperson for the past three years, resigned at the beginning of the year and Deputy Chairperson, Glenda Campbell-Evans, ably led the Board through the finalisation of the new Strategic Plan and the appointment process for the next Chairperson. General Council of the Synod appointed Peter Fitzpatrick AM as Chairperson of the Board in December 2015.

2. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Strategic Plan 2016-2020: UnitingCare West consults widely with key people when a new Strategic Plan is being developed. This feedback and direct involvement of more than 100 staff and volunteers developed the UCW Strategic Plan 2016 -2020. The plan has a strong emphasis on innovation and adaptability, maximising positive outcomes for people and communities and building our profile so we can better advocate for those most marginalised in our communities.

Delivering Positive Impact: UnitingCare West finished the roll out of a client friendly approach to assisting individuals to work towards positive outcomes, no matter which service they are accessing at UnitingCare West. Known as the Outcomes Star, each star enables people to determine their approach to improving

at least eight aspects of their lives. It has been widely supported by staff and people accessing our services alike, and assists UCW to determine whether our work is making a positive impact.

Financial Counselling is a service being accessed by an increasingly diverse range of people in the community. At the end of June 2015, the WA Government announced all State Government funding for financial counselling services in the Perth Metropolitan area would cease. After successful lobbying, the WA Government re-instated funding for the service and UnitingCare West, Anglicare and eight other smaller agencies worked in partnership to successfully tender for the new service.



The early results of this new service are very encouraging with more consistent service availability across the metropolitan area and the retention of the significant expertise available through the financial counsellors providing the service. The number of people needing these services continues to outstrip the capacity of the organisation to provide the service.

The population of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness continues to grow and change. The emerging groups of vulnerable people include older women who are leaving the workforce; people living with a disability who are likely to be assessed as suitable for work but not able to find work; and families with children who have experienced a significant casualization of their work situation or redundancy. The UnitingCare West family homeless support service, Family Foundations, has needed to be scaled back to three evenings a week due to lack of financial support. However UCW is committed to maintaining the service as it is one of the few services available to homeless families in the wider metropolitan area.

Being Innovative and Adaptable: The Inner City Service Centre (ICSC) situated in Aberdeen St, Northbridge has been refurbished and more than ten additional services including Orange Sky Laundry, The Street Doctor, Centrelink and ten other organisations now regularly attend ICSC to ensure people who are most in need have easier access to a range of services in addition to the services UCW provides.

Preparing for Changes to Disability

Services: The Commonwealth Government has been driving significant changes to the delivery of financial support and service delivery funded by the Australian Government for the past five years. The changes to the Disability Services system have been threefold

- the person living with the disability has become the centre of the system;
- the financial support for that person is now assessed through a lifetime cost model;
- and a market approach to the provision of services is now in place.

Preparation for these changes has been underway at UCW for more than two years.

The biggest challenge has been to support existing clients through the changes and align our mission with the new system.

Being Seen and Heard: In September 2015, the CEO Sue Ash AO undertook a three week period of study leave. The learnings from this leave have been very beneficial to the Board, the organisation and, increasingly the wider community. One version of the Study Leave paper is available on the UnitingCare West website.

Being Efficient and Performance Focused: Fremantle Service Centre was opened in August 2015. Members of the six Uniting Church congregations in the surrounding areas were involved with the launch of the Service Centre and a number of joint activities have been initiated.

UnitingCare West (and Mofflyn before the inception of UCW) has provided out of home care and foster care services for vulnerable and abused children for many years. These services, as well as services designed to stop children needing to be cared for out of their own homes, all received positive reviews from the Department for Child Protection & Family Support. However, the Department has announced a complete re-tender of all of these services at the end of 2017, so the staff and carers are working hard to prepare for this event.

Measuring and distributing community support has been a focus for 2015-16. UnitingCare West's Food Rescue program collected more than 500,000 kg of fresh food and distributed it to more than 65 charitable organisations and programs in the metropolitan area. Material assistance has also been a focus. UnitingCare West has consulted with service recipients as to what assistance makes a real difference to them and now collects and distributes these items. Pop-up events such as Coats & Jackets have been a really successful way of ensuring UCW meets needs without running generic Op Shops.

NOTE: This model of Material Assistance may be of interest to congregations.



3. THE COMING YEAR

The next year will see some exciting initiatives including the roll out of a refreshed brand and brand statement. UnitingCare West launched a new logo on 1 July 2016. UCW will now co-brand with the National UnitingCare logo. This brings UnitingCare West into alignment with the other WA Synod agencies, Juniper and GSI.

Connecting people and communities is an important part of UCW's effectiveness. In the coming year, UCW will clearly enunciate the benefits and strategies for community connection. This work will be integrated with some of the work the WA Synod is doing in relation to strategic development of congregations and the Church.

4. SUMMARY

As UnitingCare West commences its second decade of service, we give thanks for the many lives that have been positively impacted by the services provided, the staff and volunteers who have worked diligently to deliver the mission of

the organisation and the continued encouragement and interaction UCW has with individuals, congregations and the wider Church in WA.

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