



SYNOD 2023 REPORT

UNITINGCARE WA FORUM

MEMBERSHIP

Chair	John Berger
Chair – Good Sammy’s Enterprises	Trent Bartlett
CEO – Good Sammy’s Enterprises	Kane Blackman
Chair - Juniper	Maree Arnason
CEO - Juniper	Russell Bricknell
Chair – Uniting WA	Erica Haddon
Co-CEO – Uniting WA	Jen Park
Co-CEO – Uniting WA	Michael Chester

REPORT

Being with Jesus in Ministry

Within the realities of the 21st century provision of community services, the agencies seek to ensure, through the Forum, to continue to bring the values and mission of the Christian story to the modern world. In doing so the agencies, through word and deed, translate these values and mission for the common good of humanity to the wider Western Australian community, reaching out to those most vulnerable. This had been reinforced by the commitment of each Agency to the following document - “Statement of Intent and Commitment”.

Synod Strategic Framework

The following two excerpts are from the “Statement of Intent and Commitment” and reflect the vision and mission of the agencies.

“God is love... We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:8,19). The primary motivation for the Uniting Church in Australia in providing social services is our Christian response to the universal and self-giving love of God. Love is the foundation of compassionate service to the world.... Community service ministry was an essential part of the formation of the Uniting Church in Australia. The Uniting Church’s response to the Christian gospel will continue to involve us in Australia and beyond; social engagement is fundamental to the mission of the Church.” (Theological Reflection: Mission and Service of UnitingCare)

“Engaging the Church with the world through community services provides us with opportunity to live out the Christian vision. The Christian vision is inclusive, all encompassing, and looks for the equality of opportunity for individuals, peoples and communities. ... It represents a nurturing, healing and caring church, working not only in partnership with itself but also with the community. It presents a powerful vehicle for a unified public voice to defend justice, the need for good governance, and investment in the common good.” (UnitingCare Australia: Faith Foundations)

Synod Strategic Focus Areas and Actions

The UnitingCare WA Forum meets formally four times a year and there are a number of other points of connection occurring outside of these meetings. For example:- the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) meet regularly; as do the Agency Chairs; the CEOs visit congregations; the agencies host open days and/or hold an annual meeting; the Executive Officer attends both Synod and Presbytery meetings throughout the year. There is also a quarterly meeting of agencies and key church staff to explore opportunities for partnerships, promoting connections and communication. These activities ensure there is a strong connection between the work of the agencies and the broader church.

The agencies lead by example through their ongoing commitment to excellence, sustainability, building partnerships, embracing diversity and being the voice of justice for all. This is exemplified through a range of activities undertaken over the past 12 months.

Strategic reviews

Each of the agencies have undertaken a strategic review and are in the process of endorsing their plans going forward.

Sustainability

Each agency has positively responded to the economic challenges faced through the implementation of organisational changes and the introduction of innovative systems to enable their capacity to deliver quality services and remain sustainable. All the agencies are exploring how they can meet sustainability targets in the future.

Diversity and equity through direct action

The agencies are leaders in embracing accessibility and reaching out to the most vulnerable in our communities. Of note, has been Good Sammy's leadership in promoting and leading by example their capacity to employ people with a disability into open employment. They are a leading employer of people with disability in Western Australia. Another example includes the commitment to Reconciliation Action Plans and other affirmative action plans.

Engagement with the broader church

The agencies regularly reach out and connect with congregations through either open days and/or visits to congregations. This has resulted in a range of partnerships and collaborations on the ground within local communities. They continue to be open to opportunities and welcome any approaches by congregations. They have also distributed communiques of this offer through the Monthly Congregational Mailouts and News and Notes.

Advocacy through direct action and through UnitingCare Australia

The agencies continue to be pro-active in a range of advocacy activities either directly or through a range of peak bodies such as UnitingCare Australia. Foremost is their commitment to being a voice for those members in our society who experience significant disadvantage and vulnerability. Of note has been the work in Aged Care promoting sustainability of funding and standards of care. The agencies remain committed to supporting the work of the Disability Royal Commission and have regularly attended the Synod Task Group which is chaired by Uniting WA CEO.

Conclusion

I would like to thank the Agencies for their ongoing commitment and work on behalf of the Church. We look forward to continuing to explore opportunities for connection and collaboration with the broader church. We also remain committed to the work of Uniting Care Australia.

John Berger, Chair

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