

# WA STATE ELECTION RESOURCES



The Uniting Church stands alongside those at the fringe of society, the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed. The Uniting Church WA Social Justice Commission has a commitment to solidarity and advocacy. The Commission helps resource the Church to engage in public issues and debates within the wider community, to address issues of social concern and to take action where appropriate. As part of our resourcing role, every election year the Social Justice Commission seeks to inform the Uniting Church community of issues we see as important to consider when voting.

## OUR VISION FOR A JUST AUSTRALIA

The Uniting Church in Australia resource *Our Vision for a Just Australia* states:

We see a nation where each person and all creation can flourish and enjoy abundant life.

The Uniting Church in Australia believes the whole world is God's good creation. Each person is made in God's image and is deeply loved by God. In Jesus, God is calling us to be co-workers in the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation.

Our vision, grounded in the life and mission of Jesus, is for a nation which:

- is characterised by love for one another, of peace with justice, of healing and reconciliation, of welcome and inclusion.
- recognises the equality and dignity of each person.
- recognises coexistent sovereignty of First Peoples, has enshrined a First Nations voice and is committed to truth telling about our history.
- takes seriously our responsibility to care for the whole of creation.
- is outward looking, a generous and compassionate contributor to a just world.

## ABOUT THE RESOURCES

As Christians, we have a responsibility to think about how we engage in the democratic process when we cast our vote in March 2025. Decisions we make affect not only us, but our Western Australian community.

The resource is non-party political. We wish to move beyond the slogans and look to the heart of the issues.

The material is intended to help our community identify important issues facing Western Australia, listen to politicians and political parties with discernment, and cast an informed vote.

The Commission have identified seven topic areas to focus on, with printable resource sheets to download.

With these resources we encourage you to be informed, be inspired to find out more, follow the topics up with candidates standing for election and share and discuss with others in your church and community.



Uniting Church in Australia  
Western Australia



A WELCOMING  
CHRISTIAN  
COMMUNITY

# JUSTICE REINVESTMENT



Your faith | Your vote | Your voice

As Christians, we believe that all people are made in God's image, and that all lives are precious. The Gospel of Jesus also speaks of liberation for captives and the inclusion of people otherwise excluded from society (Luke 4:18-21). We want a change in approach that prioritises cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing among the most vulnerable people in our society, who are those most at risk of incarceration.

**UNITING  
CHURCH IN  
WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA  
HAVE BEEN  
LONG-TERM  
ADVOCATES  
FOR  
RESTORATIVE  
AND  
REHABILITATIVE  
JUSTICE  
PRACTICES  
ACROSS THE  
WA JUSTICE  
SYSTEM**

## OUR CONCERNS

Western Australia has persistent and growing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system. The most recent Aboriginal imprisonment rate for WA is 4,661.20 per 100,000 people, compared with only 336.4 in the general population (based on average daily number, ABS data).

Adult and Juvenile Corrective Services cost over \$1 billion a year (DoJ Annual Report, 2020/21) and the incarcerated population in Western Australia has risen by 14% in the last 5 years to over 6,500 people (Corrective Services, 2022).

Since July 2022, the WA Government chose to incarcerate school-aged children inside Unit 18 – a wing inside maximum-security adult prison, Casuarina. Unit 18 has been universally condemned and described as a human rights violation.

Two children have now lost their lives inside Western Australia's failed youth justice system. They are the first recorded deaths in WA's youth prisons, and both have happened in just this last year.

WA needs to meet International standards when it comes to safeguarding children. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended in 2019 that the minimum age of criminal responsibility should be at least 14 years of age globally.

## ASK YOUR CANDIDATES

- How do you intend to reduce incarceration rates particularly among Aboriginal people?
- Will you agree to raise the age of criminal responsibility to ensure children 13 years and younger are not detained?
- Will you close the failed Unit 18?
- Will you fund the development of justice reinvestment initiatives like Olabud Doogethu in Halls Creek?
- Are you interested in reducing incarceration and recidivism by creating a smarter justice system, building stronger families and safer communities as advocated by Social Reinvestment WA?



Uniting Church in Australia  
Western Australia

# DISABILITY



The Uniting Church in Australia *Statement of Access and Welcome* affirms that all people are created in the image of God, including people with disability. The faith, gifts, hopes and dreams of people with disability are to be valued and honoured, and God is a God of justice and peace, who seeks reconciliation amongst all people. As a community of reconciliation, the Uniting Church seeks to advocate for justice and equality for people with disability in the wider community.”

AS A  
COMMUNITY OF  
RECONCILIATION  
THE UNITING  
CHURCH SEEKS  
TO ADVOCATE  
FOR JUSTICE  
AND EQUALITY  
FOR PEOPLE  
WITH DISABILITY  
IN THE WIDER  
COMMUNITY.

## OUR CONCERNS

A substantial and sustained financial commitment is necessary to build a comprehensive system of foundational supports for the nearly 20 per cent of Western Australians who live with a disability. These supports are essential for improving the quality of life and inclusion of people who do not qualify for the NDIS. Here are some key areas where investment is required:

**Targeted Supports:** Funding is needed for targeted foundational supports, such as home and community supports (eg shopping and cleaning), aids and equipment for people with less intensive support needs, and capacity-building programs for adults with psychosocial disabilities. Investment in community-based psychosocial supports can help reduce avoidable hospital admissions and relieve pressure on community treatment services.

**Inclusive Employment Programs:** The unemployment rate for people with disability is 7.5 per cent - more than double that for people without disability. Funding for disability employment supports and programs that increase social and economic participation for people with disabilities is necessary to ensure they have access to meaningful employment opportunities.

**Accessible Housing:** Unlike many other states and territories, Western Australia has opted out of the Silver Level accessibility standards from the National Construction Code, which were introduced to ensure new homes are accessible to people with disabilities. These standards include features such as step-free entries, wider doorways, hobless showers, reinforced walls in bathrooms for future installation of rails, and a toilet at entry level.

**Capacity Building and Peer Support:** In WA, 12 per cent of people with disability have experienced discrimination in the last 12 months, slightly above the national rate of 10.5 per cent. Programs that focus on individual and family capacity building, peer support, and self-advocacy are essential for empowering people with disabilities and their families.

## ASK YOUR CANDIDATES

- What plans do you have to enhance foundational community support networks and services for people with disabilities and their families?
- How will you ensure that public spaces, transportation, and buildings are accessible to people with disabilities?
- What initiatives will you implement to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities?
- What measures will you take to improve healthcare services for people with disabilities, including mental health support?
- How will you address the need for accessible and affordable housing for people with disabilities?
- How will you ensure that people with disabilities are represented in decision-making processes and that their voices are heard??



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Western Australia

# LONELINESS



Your faith | Your vote | Your voice

Jesus told us that he came to bring us life in abundance (John 10:10). The Uniting Church in Australia believes that “the fullness of our humanity is not found in wealth but in relationship with each other and the world around us.” (*An Economy of Life*) We want to see a Western Australian community where all people are connected, supported and feel a sense of belonging.

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## OUR CONCERNS

Loneliness and social isolation are separate but connected issues that affect many Western Australians. Whereas loneliness is a feeling of distress at being disconnected from the people around you, social isolation is a physical state where you have less interaction with other people.

People can feel lonely even when there are other people around them; in fact, 1 in 3, or 32% of Western Australians experience feelings of loneliness some or all of the time, according to the 2023 State of the Nation Report: Social Connection in Australia.

Perhaps surprisingly, young people at 18-24 are mostly likely to often or always feel lonely (22%) compared to only 5% of those over 75. This is linked to poor mental health, since lonely people are 4 times more likely to have either depression or social anxiety. People who feel lonely are stigmatised in our community, making it hard to people to speak up and ask for help. Nearly 1 in 3 Australians say they are ashamed of feelings of loneliness; and more than 1 in 4 Australians think those who are lonely are somehow less worthy.

100 Families WA, a collaborative research project involving Uniting WA, talked to families experiencing disadvantage, and found that hardship is both caused by and results in social isolation. Family relationships and social connections were really important, but these required “acceptance, empathy, and encouragement” that wasn’t always available.

Social isolation is also linked to family and domestic violence, with social isolation used as a tactic of coercive control.

All Australians can work to address loneliness and encourage social connections, but Government has a role to play, in funding organisations that offer social connections and mental health support. In particular, support for young people aged 18-24 to help them build meaningful connections at this vital transitional phase of their lives.

## ASK YOUR CANDIDATES

- What plans do you have to enhance community support networks and services?
- What plans do you have to support voluntary and community organisations that provide places of social connection?
- What initiatives will you introduce to reduce stigma around loneliness?
- What measures will you take to support WA families who are experiencing hardship, and who don’t have strong family networks to support them?
- What plans do you have to increase awareness and support for victim-survivors or domestic violence including coercive control?
- What measures will you take to improve mental health support?



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# MENTAL HEALTH



Your faith | Your vote | Your voice

“I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10). These words of Jesus remind us that life is more than simply existing. Abundant life means being able to move beyond survival needs to growth of the soul and human potential. However, increasing numbers of Australians have simply been surviving. This struggle for survival has affected the mental health of many in our community.

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## OUR CONCERNS

Health promotion. Health is not simply the absence of disease, but rather a state of wellbeing. This is also true of mental health. The World Health Organisation notes that exposure to unfavourable circumstances, such as poor housing, unstable environment, poverty and violence, all have the potential to affect an individual’s mental health. ([World Health Organisation, \*Mental Health\*, 2022](#))

Access for vulnerable groups. First Nations, rural populations, and people living in poverty have difficulty accessing culturally safe and affordable mental health support, including for preventative care.

Crisis response services. Emergency Departments are not appropriate places for people in emotional or psychological distress. An alternative needs to be developed that is more suitable for mental health crises. (Consumers of Mental Health WA, [Election 2025: An election for mental health.](#))

A focus on a surplus. The Government’s policy of delivering a surplus for Western Australia has meant that a proactive response to the current mental health crisis has been curtailed to ensure the surplus occurs. Whilst fiscal responsibility is important, it is also important to ensure it does not happen at the expense of the vulnerable in our communities.

## ASK YOUR CANDIDATES

- What is your policy for improving crisis response for mental health services?
- What alternatives to emergency departments are you proposing to reduce the trauma for people experiencing mental health crises and accessing emergency medical care?
- How will you promote mental health in the same way as physical health is promoted, particularly for vulnerable populations such as First Nations and rural communities?
- How will you address the gap in services for those whose support needs are episodic and therefore they are not eligible for NDIS funding?
- How will you be proactive in addressing the challenges in developing resilience and good mental health because of the current social issues such as cost of living and housing?



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# HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS



Your faith | Your vote | Your voice

As Christians, we are called to love our neighbour, protect the vulnerable in our community and challenge unjust systems. Having safe, secure and affordable shelter is a basic human right. Everyone has a right to a place they can call home.

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## OUR CONCERNS

Since the last state election in 2021 the housing crisis in WA has worsened. According to Core Logic, rents in Perth rose by 13.6% in 2024, faster than in any other Australian city. Perth now has the second most expensive rental housing in Australian only surpassed by Sydney, and rents in some regional areas are higher than in Perth.

This means many low-income families can no longer afford housing and are becoming homeless. This is especially so for First Nations people who make up 4% of the WA population but 35% of those experiencing homelessness. *Shelter WA* indicates that homelessness has grown by 38% since 2021 putting many homelessness services under stress. In September 2024 *Anglicare* found that there was not a single property for rent in WA, not even a room, which was affordable by someone on Jobseeker or Youth Allowance.

Since 2021 the WA Labor government has substantially increased spending on social housing but not enough to overcome the desperate shortage of social housing caused by underspending in previous years. As a result, since 2021 the numbers of people on wait lists for social housing have increased from 16,500 to over 20,000 and average wait times for social housing have increased 45% to 148 weeks. Social housing makes up only 3.6% of the housing stock in WA, less than the national average and less than the OECD recommendation of 10%. *Shelter WA* indicates that at least 5000 new social houses need to be provided each year to overcome the current shortage.

The WA Labor government has passed legislation to give better protection to tenants, but have imposed no cap on rent increases as other Australian governments have done.

## ASK YOUR CANDIDATES

- Will you commit to providing 5000 new social affordable dwellings each year?
- Will you commit to a target of 10% social affordable housing in all new developments?
- Will you introduce a rent stabilisation mechanism to protect renters from excessive rent increases?
- Will you extend the rent relief programme beyond June 2025 to enable financially stressed families to remain in their accommodation?
- Will you increase funding to homelessness services, including providing more short-term accommodation for people in housing crisis?
- Will you support the establishment of a First Nations Housing Peak Body to develop policy to overcome indigenous homelessness and a First Nations Tenancy Support Programme?



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# CLIMATE JUSTICE



Your faith | Your vote | Your voice

“When we talk about climate justice, we are not merely asking for reduced emissions or stricter regulations. We are calling for a transformation of values—a movement from exploitation to care, from indifference to love. Climate justice is a theological imperative that demands we address the inequities that place the heaviest burdens on the poorest and most vulnerable.” (Rev Charissa Suli, President of the Uniting Church in Australia, *WCC Prayer Service*, November 2024)

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CREATION.**

## OUR CONCERNS

Climate Change is impacting everyone. This is not just a secular dilemma, but a significant matter for those of us who see ourselves as stewards of God’s sacred gift of creation.

Environmental damage is impacting heavily. Forest and street trees are dying; Various flora and fauna species are at risk; Rainfall in SW WA has decreased significantly; Wild fire risks are growing. Ningaloo Reef has been impacted by coral bleaching associated with rising water temperatures.

Australian temperatures have risen by 1.50C since 1910, which is the threshold signatories to the Paris Agreement are committed to keeping within to avoid massive global warming damage.

As one of the world’s largest gas exporters WA has a moral responsibility to consider the potential environmental damage this can cause.

Increasing quantities of greenhouse gases in the environment are fuelling rapid climate change. Fossil fuel extraction and use are major causes, along with sources such as farmstock and waste from landfills.

As Christians we are called to advocate for the voiceless – some people are more directly affected than others.

Unique ancient Murujuga rock art in the Pilbara has been nominated for World Heritage Status but is suffering damage from industrial emissions and is further threatened by long term expansion of the North West Shelf Gas Project.

## ASK YOUR CANDIDATES

- Will you promote more urgent implementation of renewable energy sources and transition away from fossil fuels?
- As well as taking into account the benefit of decisions for your electorate, will you also consider the impact of resource projects on the rest of the nation and the world? (Not just employment and shareholder profits, but also negative impacts such as carbon pollution or other damage?)
- Will you resist pressures from big industry or developers to ‘cut red tape’ at the expense of protections for natural habitats and constructive liveable community standards?
- Will you encourage active expansion of employment transition services to assist workers leaving the fossil fuel industries and wanting work in renewable energy and other environmentally respectful projects?



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# FAMILY & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Your faith | Your vote | Your voice

In the time that Jesus lived, it was normal for men in society to not speak to women who were not related. Women could not be disciples, and their legal testimony was only worth half of a man's. Like children, they were considered to be the patriarch's property. Despite this, Jesus welcomed women, taught them, spent time with them, and even disciplined them. He valued women and children in a way that was radical for his day. Today, while women have more rights, it is also important to acknowledge that people who are victim-survivors of family and domestic violence are all too frequently considered by the perpetrator as 'property'.

**THE UNITING  
CHURCH IS DEEPLY  
CONCERNED ABOUT  
THE PREVALENCE  
OF DFV IN OUR  
COMMUNITIES  
AND ITS  
DEVASTATING  
EFFECTS ON  
SURVIVORS,  
THEIR FAMILIES,  
FRIENDS  
AND OUR  
WIDER SOCIETY.**

Uniting Church in Australia,  
*Beyond Violence*



Uniting Church in Australia  
**Western Australia**

## OUR CONCERNS

With the twin crises relating to the cost of living and lack of affordable housing, victim-survivors of family and domestic violence are all too frequently faced with an impossible choice. Escaping from violence frequently leads to poverty, homelessness, and even the risk of children being placed into the custody of the perpetrator due to unstable living arrangements.

Whilst the community demonstrates a greater awareness of FDV and the associated issues compared to even at the last election, there are also myths that persist with victim-blaming, normalisation of abuse, and even still arguing that allegations of abuse are evidence of revenge. (source - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *FDSV Summary*)

We applaud that all sides of politics have committed to further funding to reduce domestic and family violence as well as to support victim-survivors as they rebuild their lives into the future.

## ASK YOUR CANDIDATES

- How will you ensure that funding allocated towards addressing issues related to FDV meets best practice guidelines for intervention?
- What are the practical ideas that your party is currently exploring in relation to reducing FDV?
- What practical steps will you be taking to ensure that women in shelters can be rehoused in a timely manner?
- Given the shortage of housing, how do you plan to ensure there is also emergency accommodation for perpetrators who are removed from the family home?
- What support will you give educators and other relevant professionals who teach children and adolescents about respectful relationships?