



Cornerstone

Our values, our mission, our foundation





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Our vision

Justice, hope and opportunity for all.

Our mission

To support, serve and empower people most in need.

“What does God require of you but to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God.”

Micah 6: 8

Foreword from Sue Ash, CEO, UnitingCare West

Welcome to *Cornerstone*.

In masonry, the cornerstone is the first stone set in a building's foundation. It determines the position of the entire structure, and is the reference point for everything that follows. That is what *Cornerstone* is all about – it represents the foundation of our organisation.

Read on to understand the values and principles that underpin and guide everything we do at UnitingCare West, both collectively and individually: from policy development and decision making, through to day-to-day service delivery across myriad disciplines.

You'll learn how our values – empathy, respect, inclusiveness, integrity and commitment – are more than just words. You'll see that they're at the core of our inclusive organisation. They are the cornerstone of our progressive approach as we support and empower those most in need within our community, no matter belief or background.

You will also see that our values have synergy with the ethics and principles of the professional training of many of our service delivery staff.

So I invite you to find out more about our wide-reaching and often life-changing work. And if our principles strike a chord with you – as they do with so many people across Western Australia and Australia – I encourage you to share and become part of our ongoing story.

Kind regards,



Sue Ash

Chief Executive Officer





Turning our vision into reality

The Uniting Church in Australia is firmly rooted in the tradition of the Christian Church. As part of the Uniting Church family, we therefore draw our inspiration from the Judaic-Christian vision of a united humanity and a just and participatory society under God.

Our organisation, work and client-base extend beyond traditional religious boundaries.

In keeping with our vision of justice, hope and opportunity for all – irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, ability, class, ethnicity, belief system or cultural background – we're a diverse group of people. Our services are tailored to meet different needs within the community. Broadly, they cover the following core areas:

- Independent Living & Accommodation Services
- Mental Health & Disability Services
- Community & Family Services
- Corporate Services

Children will survive infancy - playing and laughing without fear
Adults will do productive work in safe conditions and receive just wages
Families will live together in harmony and be a blessing to each other
Old people will live out their lives in peace
No one will be hungry
The homeless will find shelter
The oppressed will be set free
The vulnerable will be protected
Weapons of war will be destroyed and all humanity will live together in peace
The earth will be cared for and protected
All people will know and love God

Isaiah 65: 17f



Our Vision

Active, local and sustainable for all

Our Mission

To support, serve and empower people who are at risk

Our Values

As part of the Mission of the Uniting Church in Australia in pursuit of justice, peace and reconciliation for all, we at UnitingCare West will act with:

- Empathy
- Integrity
- Respect
- Accountability
- Commitment



Our values in action

The five values at the heart of our organisation are empathy, respect, inclusiveness, integrity and commitment. These values have a strong connection with the Christian scriptures. They were decided upon following the founding of UnitingCare West in 2006 as part of the development of our Strategic Plan – a whole of organisation process that involved our Board, staff and volunteers.

We developed a statement of the shared character and guiding principles that underpin the way we work together and with our clients. Moreover, we committed to foster a culture of innovation and collective action, united by our vision, mission and values. Today, these collective statements form the basis of our working ethos, which informs everything we do, at every level.

The following passages, linked to the values, are taken from Paul's Letter to the Romans. They are a set of navigational lights and not a complete account of Christian ethics. They seek to give guidance and stem from the general command to love.

"Love one another as I have loved you."

John 15: 12

Empathy

We act with empathy by showing understanding for the feelings and circumstances of others, which means:

- Putting aside our personal judgments and listening to other people's perspectives
- Providing a working environment and delivering programs that are flexible and responsive to the individual situations of staff, volunteers and clients
- Supporting staff and volunteers through high quality supervision and training
- Taking the concerns of staff, volunteers and clients seriously.

"Rejoice with others when they rejoice, and be sad with those in sorrow."

Romans 12: 15



Respect

We act with respect by valuing people, property and the environment, which means:

- Being courteous and using appropriate language in our communications with others
 - Honouring the rights, dignity and decisions of other people at all times
 - Ensuring that all resources (human, material and financial) are used effectively and efficiently to achieve the best outcomes for our clients, the community and the environment.
-

“Let love be without any pretence. Avoid what is evil; stick to what is good. In brotherly love let your feelings of deep affection for one another come to expression and regard others as more important than yourself.”

Romans 12: 9-10

Inclusiveness

We act with inclusiveness by embracing and celebrating diversity, which means:

- Acknowledging and welcoming the diverse backgrounds, opinions and beliefs of all staff, volunteers and clients
 - Maintaining an organisational culture where clients, staff volunteers and the community are given the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes
 - Providing a workplace that is safe for all people and free from any form of discrimination or harassment.
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“Give the same consideration to all others alike. Pay no regard to social standing, but meet humble people on their own terms. Do not congratulate yourself on your own wisdom.”

Romans 12: 16





Integrity

We act with integrity by working ethically, nurturing trust and upholding our principles in everything we do, which means:

- Providing services that are characterised by honesty to ourselves, our clients and the community
 - Developing meaningful, fair and productive relationships with our clients and the community based on mutual commitment, trust and openness
 - Behaving in ways that reflect our agency values and recognising the contribution that we all make to our work
 - Operating from a foundation of upholding relevant laws, regulations and standards.
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“... bear in mind the ideals that all regard with respect.”

Romans 12: 17

Commitment

We act with commitment by working together towards agreed outcomes with steadfastness and resilience, which means:

- Striving for excellence but acknowledging and learning from our mistakes
 - Directing our services towards those most in need and frequently reassessing our direction to ensure that we are responding to changing needs.
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“In the service of the Lord, work not halfheartedly but with conscientiousness and an eager spirit.”

Romans 12: 11





Employing the Strengths Model, improving lives

In our mission to support, serve and empower people most in need, we employ the Strengths Model, which complements our values and working ethos perfectly.

The model originated in the USA and was developed by Charles Rapp at the University of Kansas. Unlike traditional models of care, which put the emphasis on diagnosis and 'fixing' a person's deficits and problems, the Strengths Model focuses on the positives.

The Strengths approach is a methodology that enables us to help people harness their strengths, experience and skills to attain their goals. In doing so, the Strengths Model empowers our clients, enabling them to achieve a better quality of life.

The principles of the Strengths Model

- The focus is on the person's strengths, not their diagnosis, symptoms, weaknesses, problems, or what they are perceived to lack.
- The community is viewed as an oasis of resources, not as an obstacle to working with people.
- The client is the director of the support process.
- The support worker/client relationship is primary and essential.
- Proactive community outreach is our preferred way of working with clients.
- Everyone continues to grow, learn and change.

Sometimes a problem solving approach is necessary to deal urgently with a crisis situation being experienced by our client. In such situations, where prompt action is necessary, we always try to empower our clients so that long-term solutions are also achieved. This not only reduces the likelihood of a recurrence, but also enables us to actively promote lasting social change.

Bringing it together with our professional ethics

Together, our vision, mission and values create a clearly defined working ethos that guides everyday practice standards throughout our organisation.

There is a very clear congruence between these organisational values and the ethical principles of professional groups such as the Association of Social Workers, the Australian Psychologists Association and the Accounting Professional and Ethics Standards Board, that give rise to the specific professional responsibilities:

- Respect for individuals
- Social justice
- Responsible care
- Professional integrity

These values and principles form the cornerstone that enables a moral community to be built at UnitingCare West.



Our roots and inspiration

UnitingCare West was founded in 2006 by the Uniting Church in Western Australia and is part of the UnitingCare national network of more than 400 Uniting Church agencies, which provides community services to over 1.8 million Australians each year.

The Uniting Church of Australia, our parent organisation, was formed in 1977 when the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches came together.

A shared vision of unity

With a shared vision of a restored creation and a united humanity, the Uniting Church is focused on realising a just and participatory society under God. A society in which all people live together in peace; treat each other justly; are free to develop to their full potential; are loved and loving; live in harmony with the earth; feel loved and accepted by God; and are filled with joy.

In essence, all members of the Uniting Church are committed to creating a diverse community where differences in age, gender, sexuality, ability, class, ethnicity, creed or cultural origins are embraced and reconciled.

“...a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole.”

Basis of Union, Paragraph 3

The Basis of Union is the foundational document that guides the theological understanding, life and policy of the Uniting Church in Australia. As such, the Church is a fellowship of the Holy Spirit under Christ, living as a pilgrim people.

“... the Church is a pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised goal; here the Church does not have a continuing city but seeks one to come. On the way Christ feeds the Church with Word and Sacraments, and it has the gift of the Spirit in order that it may not lose the way.”

Basis of Union, Paragraph 3

Statement to the Nation

Inaugural Assembly, Uniting Church in Australia

People of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches have united. A new church has been born.

We, who are members of the first Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia address the people of Australia in this historic moment. The path to unity has been long and at times difficult, but we believe this unity is a sign of the reconciliation we seek for the whole human race.

We acknowledge with gratitude that the churches from which we have come have contributed in various ways to the life and development of this nation. A Christian responsibility to society has always been regarded as fundamental to the mission of the Church. In the Uniting Church our response to the Christian gospel will continue to involve us in social and national affairs.

We are conscious of our responsibilities within and beyond this country. We particularly acknowledge our responsibilities as one branch of the Christian church within the region of South-East Asia and the Pacific. In these contexts we make certain affirmations at the time of our inauguration.

We affirm our eagerness to uphold basic Christian values and principles, such as the importance of every human being, the need for integrity in public life, the proclamation of truth and justice, the rights for each citizen to participate in decision-making in the community, religious liberty and personal dignity, and a concern for the welfare of the whole human race.

We pledge ourselves to seek the correction of injustices wherever they occur. We will work for the eradication of poverty and racism within our society and beyond. We affirm the rights of all people to equal educational opportunities, adequate health care, freedom of speech, employment or dignity in unemployment if work is not available. We will oppose all forms of discrimination which infringe basic rights and freedoms.

We will challenge values which emphasise acquisitiveness and greed in disregard of the needs of others and which encourage a higher standard of living for the privileged in the face of the daily widening gap between the rich and poor.

We are concerned with the basic human rights of future generations and will urge the wise use of energy, the protection of the environment and the replenishment of the earth's resources for their use and enjoyment.

Finally we affirm that the first allegiance of Christians is God, under whose judgment the policies and actions of all nations must pass. We realise that sometimes this allegiance may bring us into conflict with the rulers of our day. But our Uniting Church, as an institution within the nation, must constantly stress the universal values which must find expression in national policies if humanity is to survive.

We pledge ourselves to hope and work for a nation whose goals are not guided by self-interest alone, but by concern for the welfare of all persons everywhere — the family of the One God — the God made known in Jesus of Nazareth the One who gave His life for others.

In the spirit of His self-giving love we seek to go forward.

First Assembly, 1977

A place of reflection

At UnitingCare West, reflective readings are shared before significant meetings. These are times we set aside for quiet thought as we listen to the words and find ourselves reflecting on the inherent concepts.

We believe this has a number of benefits for us as individuals:

- Providing a space to step back from work and centre your thoughts on the matters at hand
- Supporting discernment and values-based decisions
- Helping to develop the spiritual aspect of your being.

Moreover, it has some vital benefits for us collectively, as an organisation:

- Helping us develop a greater sense of community
- Ensuring we never lose sight of our calling or ethos.

A place of inclusion

While the principles of the Uniting Church of Australia underpin our work, we welcome people of all religions and beliefs, including those who do not prescribe to any faith. After all, inclusiveness and understanding are central to our core values. Indeed, it is this shared sense of inclusiveness and understanding that binds our growing workforce together.



Contact us

If you would like to find out more about our organisation and work, please visit www.unitingcarewest.org.au or contact us at:

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