



**Uniting**  
*Care* West

# The Role of Not for Profits and Active Citizenship

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UNITINGCARE WEST  
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With thanks to Karyn Lochore of 550A Consulting for support in research and editing.  
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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this time was to step back from the issues-management and decision-making that characterises life as a CEO, and to instead reflect for an extended period of time on:

1. What has changed (and what has stayed the same) in the human services sector over the past 50 years;
2. What themes emerge; and
3. What those themes might mean for the wider human services sector in Western Australia, and for UnitingCare West, over the next decade or so.

After more than six months of presenting some or all of the material to external forums and workshopping with the Board and Executive of UnitingCare West, this final version is now available as a published document.

This paper focuses on the themes that have emerged and the future role and contribution of the Not for Profit sector. At the microscale, the purpose of this paper was to provide UnitingCare West with another tool to engage with issues of leadership both within the organisation, and within our broader context.

At a larger scale, this paper is intended to give boards and management teams within the community sector a snapshot of policy history and foreseeable directions to help as they respond to the fast changing environment. I hope also that it will provide a starting point for engagement between business, consumers, government, and community service organisations as together we shape our community.

Managing the jigsaw of change is always easier if the factors or pieces contributing to the change can be understood. We have in front of us, a series of jigsaw pieces. The pieces are shifting in relation to each other, and many of the pieces are changing shape themselves. I believe that we still have the opportunity to shape the pieces of the puzzle, and to draw them together in ways that benefit our community. The fundamental purpose of this paper is to show how that might be possible.

This paper does not deal in depth with the experience of Western Australia's First Nations. Aboriginal people interact with the WA social services sector in many ways, in policy development and advocacy, service delivery and as service recipients. Their experiences are specific, diverse, and very important to a full understanding of the

sector and its future. I have not felt able to address that experience adequately; I trust that others will come after me and do so.

If you find the material useful or you have additional insights, please provide feedback to [sue.ash@unitingcarewest.org.au](mailto:sue.ash@unitingcarewest.org.au)

Finally, my sincere thanks to the Board of UnitingCare West for making the opportunity to undertake the period of study leave that provided the initial opportunity to bring together my thinking on these matters.

The views in this paper are personal and can't be attributed to UnitingCare West or any other person.

Sue Ash AO

June 2016

## 1. THE HISTORY OF THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT SECTOR IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

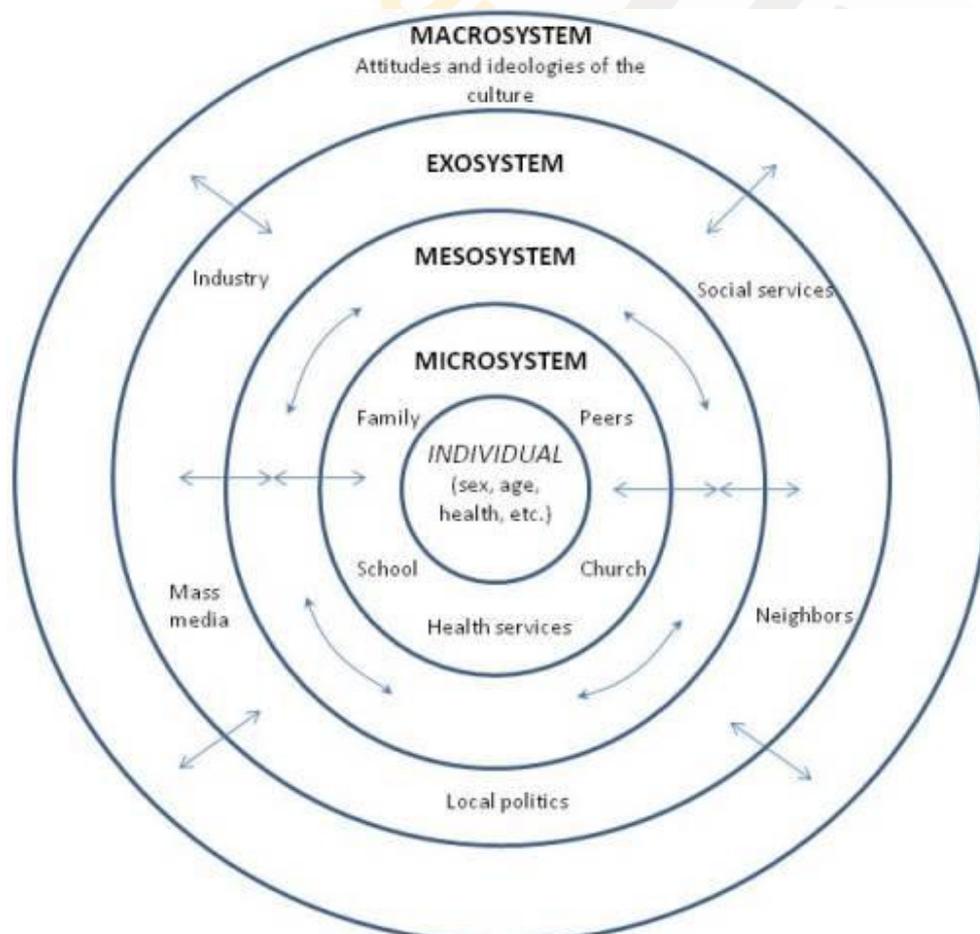
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It is critical that we look back not just at the incidents of past, but to what we can discern of the systems and patterns at play in our history. Using a theoretical model assists with establishing a framework for being understanding. There are many useful models of systemic analysis. I've chosen to work with the *ecological systems* model developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, both because it is well-known, and for its explanatory power for the changes I've observed over my career.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK - BRONFENBRENNER

Urie Bronfenbrenner's *ecological systems model* was developed as a tool for understanding the development of individuals in the context of their environment. Bronfenbrenner's model identifies four 'systems levels' that surround individuals:

1. The *microsystem*, including family, peers, school, health services, church groups, etc;
2. The *mesosystem*
3. The *exosystem*, including industry, mass media, local politics and social services
4. The *macrosystem*, including the attitudes and ideologies of the culture.



Bronfenbrenner's model provides a theoretical framework for considering changes that have occurred in the ways that individuals relate to the world around them, over the course of my career.

While the structure of the model may still be sound, the importance of each of the levels of the model has changed in 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia.

1. The *microsystem*, including family, peers, school, health services, church groups, etc;

Family is multigenerational and often not located in physical proximity. Social institutions including the church have diminished in importance.

2. The *mesosystem*

The connection between the microsystems and exosystems has decreased with many arguing that there is little community connection influencing or enabling connection between the informal and formal parts of a person's life.

3. The *exosystem*, including industry, mass media, local politics and social services

These are the formal structures that surround an individual

4. The *macrosystem*, including the attitudes and ideologies of the culture.

Attitudes and ideologies that impact an individual are now more diverse. For twenty or thirty of the past fifty years, they were more inclusive and respectful especially of First Australians, however, the past five or so years have seen increasing separation and nationalism.

I see four primary drivers of these changes.

### **Individualism**

Bronfenbrenner explained the primary connection between the person and their environment as being informal relationships with people in the *microsystem*. In many cases, these relationships were important because geographical necessity made them so; before general access to cars, and well before the internet, the school or church down the road, the shops or the scout hall in your suburb were the places you might be most likely to find social interaction.

Today, individuals expect greater choice about where they find social interaction, and in many cases they are exercising that choice. People travel across the city to find just the right school or church for their family, or find communities of like-minded people online. We make these choices because there is value in them, but

cumulatively, they mean that we value our individual preferences more highly than we might otherwise have in the past.

Families were, and are, the first and most permanent social structure most people interact with and belong to. However, in two key ways, families have changed over the last 50 years. Firstly, many more people are now part of family structures where members of four generations are simultaneously alive – great-grandparents, grandparents, parents and children. Caring responsibilities for the youngest and oldest members of our community often now fall in complex ways to the two ‘sandwich’ generations. Spatial complexity, as well as interactions with formal care of various sorts, can both add to, and subtract from, the burden of these responsibilities. Secondly, more people experience ‘serial monogamy’ over their life courses, with the associated blending, and in some cases fracturing, of social networks.

### **Commodification**

Increasingly, everything in our lives can be measured, and is measured. If a thing or activity cannot be easily measured, it is as if it doesn’t exist; only where we can record a unit of time or activity or, particularly, assign a financial value or characterise something as a financial transaction, does a thing become visible in how we record or describe the systems of Australian society.

The corollary to our persistent measurement is a persistent desire to describe relationships in terms of transactions. It was always the case that interactions between the *exosystem* and individuals were framed as transactions, whether individuals were making purchases from businesses or receiving services from government. However, increasingly, interactions with the *microsystem* - school, church, and even family – are conceived of in terms of transactions.

Many of the biggest changes to community services over the past 10 years have been linked to the increasing digitisation of records. The development of data transfer, data matching and linkage, and the increasingly sophisticated actuarial analysis of this material to analyse, direct and control expenditure have shaped practice in countless ways.

### **Financialisation**

People are valued in explicitly financial terms.

Interactions between people, and between people and organisations, are explicitly assessed in financial terms.

One of Bronfenbrenner’s key insights was that individuals interact with the world around them. Increasingly, those interactions are couched in terms of money, even

where putting a dollar value on an interaction can only function as a problematic proxy. For example, we know that there is more to the relationship between a parent and a child, or a person with a disability and a carer, but we persist in developing assessments of these and other interactions in purely financial terms, in order to slot them into wider networks of knowledge and analysis, which are framed in financial terms.

The language surrounding the 2014 Federal Government budget made explicit the implied categorisation of people into ‘lifters’ and ‘leaners’. The past three Federal Government budgets have demonstrated this position, where Government interacts with the people living in Australia through divisive frameworks, citizens (and not citizens), taxpayers (and non taxpayers), current and potential contributors including children (and non contributors including those who made a past contribution).

One of the end points of this transition is the explicit adoption of an ‘actuarial approach’ to the funding of social services in New Zealand, and other parts of the world.<sup>1</sup>

### **Globalisation**

Australia has not only opened many of our economic activities to competition with the global market; increasingly, we measure community, political activity and poverty in terms of global standards.

The competition and the associated development of markets has been a long-held position of the Productivity Commission. From the 1980s onwards, there has been a relentless move to grow economic activity and therefore productivity through the marketisation of a range of social services. This marketization commenced with child care, and now includes employment services, aged care, disability support services and in some jurisdictions, correction services and housing services.

Once a sector has been moved into a market paradigm, it becomes subject to a different value base and different workforce approach. Business models are subject to different tax and regulatory regimes and policy frameworks. Increasingly, social service providers are functioning within global contexts rather than national or state frameworks.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., *An Investment Approach to Welfare*, Budget Review 2015-16, [http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201516/Welfare#\\_ftn3](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201516/Welfare#_ftn3) (Accessed 31 May 2015).

## EFFECTS

I look at these changes as having two primary effects.

Firstly, roles that might previously have taken place in the *microsystem*, where they were characterised by informality and, over the life course, reciprocity, are increasingly being undertaken by, or mediated through, *exosystem* organisations. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is an example where public policy is grappling with the challenge of Government wanting to control eligibility and cost (using the frame '*reasonable and necessary*') while enabling people with disabilities to make decisions that enable them to live good lives (using the frame '*choice and control*').

Secondly, and relatedly, many microsystem interactions have taken on characteristics of *exosystem* interactions, as they are increasingly measured (often in terms of money), explicitly 'managed' and otherwise regulated. The current debate about fighting fires in Victoria is a good example.

## HISTORY

In many ways, the Western Australian community in 2016 would be relatively recognisable to a Western Australian from the 1950s. Our community then had a large proportion of overseas-born residents and citizens; at present at least 28% of residents are overseas-born, although they come from a wider range of countries.

In the 1950s, Aboriginal people made up a relatively small proportion of the population, as they do now. Aboriginal people were overrepresented in the judicial system, experienced higher rates of chronic and acute illness, and lower life expectancy. Overall outcomes for Aboriginal people have improved very little in the ensuing decades, although there are some specific areas of positive change.

In two key areas, however, Western Australian society is significantly different than it was in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Firstly, many women (approximately 59%) participate in formal employment.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, many families now have four generations alive at the same time (i.e. great-grandparents, grandparents, parents and children).

## HISTORY – THREE ERAS OF FUNDING IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

While the demographic changes outlined above were occurring, the business of social service was also changing. While the following history necessarily elides many details, I propose it as a way of surfacing some of the essential elements of the development of the social service sector in Western Australia, particularly in relation to the way they have interacted with government.

### The grant or social service era

Responding to the needs of people within any community often commences in the informal or voluntary part of the community. Families see the need of their own family members, neighbours reach out to people within their social connections, and over time, these informal or voluntary responses become structured and enter the codified systems of community, including legal and financial systems. This model, of people coming together to meet a need, is in fact embedded in the legal model. Most social service organisations in Western Australia were formed under the *Associations Incorporation Acts* of 1895, and later 1987. The Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC) was established in 2013 and the new WA Associations Incorporate Act 2016 that takes effect on 1 July 2016 represent a positive attempt to demonstrate that Australia and Western Australia need to work

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<sup>2</sup> 59% of women compared to 71% of men.

together to ensure that ‘associations’ of people are given legal status in order to carry out social benefit, including charitable, purposes.

*Lotterywest’s History – A Proper Foundation*<sup>3</sup>, and *Inside the Welfare Lobby: A History of Australian Council of Social Service*<sup>4</sup>, tell detailed stories of the history of the social service sector in Western Australia, and across Australia. I’ve drawn from these and other sources to describe a few archetypal stories.

#### *Faith-based organisations*

In 1820s London, 25 year old Joseph Hardey<sup>5</sup>, his wife Ann, brother John and friend Michael Clarkson, hired the SS Tranby and set out for the Swan River Settlement. Hardey was a Wesleyan (Methodist) preacher, and upon their arrival, he preached both in Fremantle, and from their home at Tranby Cottage in Maylands. Hardey was also one of the founding members of Wesley Church in the Perth CBD, and from this base, he and many members of the forming congregation reached out to people in need across the Settlement. Since that time, the Methodist Church (later folded into the Uniting Church) has been consistently involved in providing emergency relief across Western Australia. Today, UnitingCare West provides many of these services from the Tranby Centre in Aberdeen Street, Perth.

#### *Self-help organisations*

In the mid-1950s, Frank and Gwen Anderson had few options for support with the care of their profoundly disabled daughter. The couple decided to make a public appeal in an attempt to connect with others in their situation. Less than a month later, the Mentally Incurable Children’s Association was formed. On 7 October 1956 the Nulsen Haven home, named after a supportive Minister for Health, was opened. It was the first of its kind in Australia. In 2016, Nulsen Disability Services continues to provide services to support children, teenagers and adults, with a focus on people with complex disability.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Place-based organisations*

Generally, place-based responses to need occurred later in Western Australia’s history, through the 1970s and 1980s. Examples include the Geraldton Resource Centre (established as the Geraldton Emergency Relief Organisation in 1984), and many neighbourhood centres, homemaker services and community kindergartens.

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<sup>3</sup> Lotterywest’s History – A Proper Foundation: A celebration of 75 years of the Lotterywest Commission in Western Australia, 2009

<sup>4</sup> Philip Mendes, *Inside the Welfare Lobby: A History of Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)* Sussex Academic Press, 2006

<sup>5</sup> <http://adb.anu.au/biography/hardy-joseph-2153>

<sup>6</sup> [www.nulsen.com.au/about-us/nulsen-history/](http://www.nulsen.com.au/about-us/nulsen-history/) (Accessed 4 May 2016)

Many place-based responses were supported with capital funding for Lotteries Houses and other neighbourhood centres funded through grants made possible by the innovative *Lotteries Act of WA (1931)*.

### *Organising the organisations*

By the mid-1950s, the social service sector in Western Australia was becoming a crowded space. Several community leaders, including Frank Cross, Chief Executive of the Chamber of Commerce<sup>7</sup>, came together to consider how the many organisations could ensure that their collective voice and values could be heard by the community, and by government. As a result of this work, the Council of Social Service of WA (WACOSS) was established in 1956.<sup>8</sup>

Over 40 other organisations have been established to represent or advocate for specific consumers and/or organisations in the social services sector. Known collectively as *peak organisations*, they include the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia, the National Council of Women WA, the WA Associations for Mental Health, and National Disability Services (WA Division).

### *Funding the work*

Generally speaking, until the 1970s, when the Western Australian government provided funding to community organisations, it came in the form of grants. Grants might be for the support of individual people (e.g. payments for children boarded out by the State), or block grants for other community or social purposes.

### *Children living out of home*

More than 35 organisations provided out of home care for children in WA in the 1970s.<sup>9</sup> Funding arrangements were often provided by the Department of Treasury, and funding allocation was often undertaken by collaborative practice. As an example, the Consultative Committee on Residential Child Care (CCRCC) was established as responsibility for child protection funding was moved from Treasury to the Department of Community Welfare (DCW). The Committee included an independent, Cabinet-appointed chair, and members from the community sector, DCW and Treasury. The Committee oversaw the establishment and monitoring of care standards, and made formal recommendations for the allocation of grants. At the time, engagement between government and community service providers balanced oversight and regulation with a significant amount of trust, innovation,

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Vivienne Lowndes, daughter of Frank Cross, 8 November 2010

<sup>8</sup> [www.wacoss.org.au/home.aspx](http://www.wacoss.org.au/home.aspx) (Accessed 4 May 2016)

<sup>9</sup> *Signposts: A guide for children and young people in care in WA from 1920, 2004*

codesign of services including some consumer engagement<sup>10</sup> and standard monitoring.

Importantly, organisations were considered to be relevantly independent of government. Typically, an organisation would source funding from its establishing community (churches, a geographic community), or from a client group<sup>11</sup>. Where they sourced government funding, it was rarely the case that organisations came into being to tap into existing funding, but to lobby to have funding sources created or increased. While grants included audit requirements and other forms of oversight, within those boundaries, organisations had considerable freedom to implement services as they saw fit.

For the most part, social service organisations established in the Grant Era were operating out of the norms of Bronfenbrenner's *microsystem*. Their interactions with individuals tended to be more relational (e.g. church-based organisations providing emergency relief). There was a degree of fluidity between who was providing a service and who was receiving a service (e.g. the founding families Nulsen Haven, who were both advocates and organisers, and recipients of respite and other support services).

Another important point is that organisations were specific, either in terms of their establishing community, or their service focus. Organisations were not interchangeable. For example, different churches might all provide emergency relief to the general community, but they sourced support from specific groups, and had different focusses in who they helped and how they helped them. Often there was intentional collaboration between organisations to ensure that scarce funds were used effectively and efficiently. Nulsen Haven and the Deaf Blind Society both supported people with disabilities, but were supported by different groups of people and provided services to different groups as well.

One way of understanding this era is to say that the primary relationship was between the organisation and the community they were part of. Government provided additional funds, supported the activities of the community organisations but had relatively little control over the service provided, and, in most cases, limited direct contact with individuals who were recipients of any services delivered.

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<sup>10</sup> Les Smith, Director of Methodist Children's Homes established a children in care network where young people were included in staff/carer recruitment and other decisions affecting their lives.

<sup>11</sup> eg idENTITYWA formerly CatholicCare was established in 1977 by parents within the Catholic Church

### **The contract or service sector era**

From the 1980s, important shifts occurred within government, and across non-government organisations undertaking government work. Both sectors experienced increasing levels of professionalization as more of their workforce came into their roles through the conduit of tertiary education. The levels of Government funding increased accordingly. Theories of outsourcing became important. While 'outsourcing' has been practiced in different ways, and at different levels of intensity over time, the notion that an organisation can, and should, outsource some activities in order to 'focus on their core role' has become so dominant as to appear inevitable or uncontroversial.

Over time, the relationship between government and social service organisations became more formal. Professionalisation of the workforce certainly contributed, as did the growth in size of both government and the community being served. Outsourcing also had a role to play, as the separation between 'direction' and 'doing' inherent in the model made clarity of roles and responsibilities desirable. Funds from government were managed through 'funding agreements', then 'service agreements', and financially 'service contracts' with organisations in the community service sector.

The 1980s and 1990s were shaped by consideration of rights-based agendas, and as a result, many of the not-for-profit organisations established in that period had an explicit focus on promoting or defending various aspects of human rights. The WA Citizen's Advice Bureau was established in 1963, and was the first of a number of Community Legal Centres (CLCs) directed at providing accessible legal services in WA. The Sussex St Community Law Service and the Welfare Rights and Advocacy Service both date from the late 1970s and set the direction in WA for Community Legal Centres. Through the early 1980s, the CLC sector matured such that the first State Conference was held in 1986. Today, there are 28 CLCs operating across WA, with many providing specialised advice on matters such as consumer law, tenancy, mental health and refugee matters.

While individuals have always moved between roles in government and the social service sector, overall, this era saw government gain expertise in contract management and project management but lose expertise in practice and community development skills, particularly within their funding and contracting areas. The primary relationship in the delivery of services into the community was between Government and Community Service organisation.

### **The individualised funding or Community Service Provider era:**

Since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have seen another change in how social services are delivered: allocated individualised funding. In its most extreme version, government relates solely to the person who requires the service. Clients select from a range of non-government service providers who are understood to provide broadly equivalent services. Often, in this model, service providers also include for-profit organisations.

Consumer Directed Aged Care and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are two examples. NDIS service recipients are advised that, depending on their goals, aspirations, needs and informal supports, their 'approved plan' may include funded supports. Clients are then able to choose who their support provider(s) will be, how the support is delivered, and how much control they want in managing their own plan. In this model of 'choice and control', the individual agency of clients is demonstrated. For social service organisations, however, the NDIS casts them as interchangeable competitors in a market, rather than, for example, independent organisations with, in most cases, parallel but not overlapping areas of expertise and focus. The work of the social service sector is, in this model, a commodity – a widget – that can be selected by consumers, paid for (and to a large extent, priced by) government, and delivered in a competitive market.

While the Federal Government has led the development of individual funding allocation, many WA Government agencies are now tightly controlling eligibility of clients for services, as well as the 'price' of the service to be delivered. In some situations, service delivery organisations are submitting competitive bids to deliver services for individuals.

The language of market is increasingly adopted, actuarial analysis of costs increasingly determines the level of available funds and the long term cost exposure for the funding government entity. There is also little clarity in the role/s of government agencies in the service system. Many State Government agencies fulfil the role of funder (contractor or purchaser); regulator; quality standards monitor and, in some cases, service provision competitor.

### **EFFECTS**

In my view, the present moment is characterised by three things:

Firstly, Government is now central to all community service delivery because it now controls regulation of providers; determination and administration of service

standards; and to a fair degree, service access through control of service eligibility criteria. While WA has continued to promote co-design of service models and the National Disability Insurance Scheme demonstrates an attempt to empower service recipients in service choice, the other controls weave a tight and almost impenetrable net around the centrality of Government control.

Secondly, the role of social service organisations has been increasingly diminished. From initiators of responses to individual and community need, to working with government to respond to those needs, most not for profit service providers have been relegated to service providers in emerging or faux markets delivering services to eligible people.

Thirdly, and relatedly, most not for profit social service organisations are needing to review their character or identity – purpose plus people – as there is a much broader range of not for profit entities now that many are working as enterprises.

Fourthly, while it is not an explicit focus of my analysis, it is extremely important to note that across this history, many Aboriginal people have experienced the worst aspects of the human services system in Western Australia. For much of the grant era, they were explicitly denied the access to power and resources, and therefore denied full participation in the development of autonomous human service associations. In later eras, many Aboriginal people have experienced the ways in which the system 'does to' rather than 'works with' people.

## 2. WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM OUR HISTORY?

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### **WHO COUNTS<sup>12</sup>?**

While there are many possible explanations for the shift to individualised funding, one of the reasons is that we now have the technology to do so.

Our capacity, individually and collectively, to collect and analyse data has increased to a point that would have been difficult to imagine in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, we can run actuarial analyses on the comparative value of early intervention in the lives of children, rather than responding later in their lives. We can cross-reference data sets in ever more complex ways, both in order to understand situations, and to allow greater oversight or control of both organisations, individuals and resources.

Nevertheless, there remain real limitations on what data we can collect. We know that the data sets we work with are often flawed. Information may be recorded incorrectly or different data sets may use different definitions of similar items<sup>13</sup>. Further, we know that there are groups and individuals who, for various reasons, don't get counted. For example, people who are homeless or who move often, people who have limited or no access to information technology, and people in rural or regional areas. We also know that there are a growing group of people living in Australia who have no connection to the Government social service system, often because of visa requirements that allow them to be in Australia but preclude support from the Australian welfare systems<sup>14</sup>.

Australian history contains a very direct parallel for this situation, and it should warn us that 'not being counted' is not a small thing. Until the referendum in 1967, Aboriginal people were not counted in the Australian census. This was both a symbolic and practical form of discrimination. The successful referendum and resulting changes to the Constitution had an almost immediate impact in Western Australia, including changes in employment arrangements, the establishment of Aboriginal camps on the outskirts of various country towns and the amalgamation of the Department of Native Welfare and the Department of Child Welfare, to become the Department of Community Welfare in 1972.

In the same way that there are limitations on the data we can collect, there are also limitations on what we can do with that data once we have collected it. In many

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<sup>12</sup> The successful "Count me in" campaign by people with disabilities is testament to the importance of Who counts?

<sup>13</sup> For instance, definitions relating to Child Protection activities in the Report on Government Services.

<sup>14</sup> New Zealand citizens who worked in the mining industry.

contexts, it is enough that a data set gives a good approximation of a situation. For example, corporate marketing relies on surveys and focus groups. Extending the Pareto principle, it's often reasonable to assume that 80% of your customers will share 20% of possible views, and that by concentrating on this 80% of customers, a company can maximise their effectiveness and efficiency.

However, many social service organisations work with people in the 'other 20%'; people who are part of a minority, or whose life situations are uniquely complex. Similarly, there are parts of government where the aim is to serve not a proportion of the community, but all citizens. For example, if the Australian Electoral Commission provides voting options that cover only 80% of the population, they would consider themselves to have failed, as they would have disenfranchised one fifth of citizens.

The uncritical application of data collection or analytical approaches that are suitable for the for-profit sector may lead both government and the social service sector astray. While the Australian Bureau of Statistics makes significant attempts to be inclusive, other data sets are not as focussed on excluded populations.

The capacity to collect and analyse data has shaped our current moment, and it is not going to go away. But for the social service sector to live up to its purpose and aspirations, care must be taken to ensure that people count. That is to say, that when we collect data, we count all people. And when we analyse data, we don't merely deal with approximations and generalisations, but with the complex cases, the anomalous cases, and the data points with an asterisk against them; those cases are people too.

## **MARKETS AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

The National Competition Council was established in 1995 to implement the National Competition Policy. It was established with the support of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), following the presentation of the *Hilmer Report*. The terms of the inquiry that led to this report were directed at the further development of an 'open, integrated domestic market for goods and services by removing unnecessary barriers to trade and competition.'<sup>15</sup> Over the last 20 years, the Productivity Commission and the National Competition Council have both actively advocated for, and progressively implemented, a competitive approach to the delivery of social services, with the associated narrative of building markets. At times, it has seemed that markets and competitive approaches have been accepted as unequivocally positive goals. Reducing regulatory imposts, increasing choice and control for

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<sup>15</sup> <http://australiancompetitionlaw.org/reports/1993hilmer.html>, (Accessed 10 May 2016).

consumers, stimulating innovation and increasing efficiency have taken on the character of slogans.

Writing on the delivery of services such as health, law and order, education, justice and welfare in the present era, Jane Caro argues that, as markets in the West have become saturated, business is turning its attention to activities that used to be publicly provided.<sup>16</sup> Certainly it's clear that the for-profit sector continues to seek out new opportunities. In announcing the recent Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), one of more than 20 Free Trade Agreements to which Australia is a signatory, along with various multilateral trade agreements and processes, Trade Minister Andrew Robb argued that the TPP secured new commercial opportunities for Australia, and guaranteed access to the education, financial, legal, mining services, transport, telecommunications, health and tourism service sectors in TPP signatory countries. Given the reciprocal nature of these trade agreements, it is reasonable to conclude that those sectors of the Australian market are now open to businesses based in other TPP nations.

In a submission to a 2013 Review of Competition Policy, the Productivity Commission noted that while marketization and competition can lead to greater efficiency, caution must be exercised in applying these principles to some markets. For example, those markets where a high value must be placed on achieving equitable outcomes (where we're interested in the 20% or the 100%, rather than the 80%); or markets where market failure carries unacceptable consequences (such as, for example, the childcare sector or housing market). This warning is only just beginning to be heard above the cacophony of 'market' narrative.

## EFFECTS

From this, we can see three things:

1. Principles to do with markets and competition have been influential over the last generation in Australia;
2. Market principles need to be applied carefully to the social service sector, where they are applied at all; and
3. The pressure to adopt market principles in the social service sector is likely to continue to be high because of the drive to bring human services into mainstream economic activity.

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<sup>16</sup> Jane Caro, <https://www.facebook.com/salon/posts/10152869137531519> Downloaded 25 June 2015

### 3. CONTEXT AND CHARACTER OF MISSION BASED ORGANISATIONS

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The term *not for profit* has historically been used interchangeably with charitable organisation, public or social benefit organisation and non-government organisation.

The Productivity Commission reported there are more than 600,000 not for profit organisations. These organisations are usually social benefit focussed and increasingly self describe as Social Enterprises that are involved in trading activities with community and individuals accessing services that they purchase or are purchased by government funds on the person's behalf. Typically these organisations are Companies Ltd by Guarantee; Associations, Cooperatives or Trusts. Most have Public Benevolent Institution status.

In total, the Australian Charitable and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC) reports that there are currently 54,000 charities in Australia, and ten new charities are registered each week<sup>17</sup>.

Of these many charities, I would argue that only a few can truly be described as '*missional organisations*<sup>18</sup>'. A missional organisation is one that seeks to fulfil a purpose or a mission, irrespective of government policy or other external drivers. Missional organisations are not only responsive to the present moment or their current clients. They take seriously an attitude of stewardship – honouring the contribution of those who have come before, serving the interests of the broader community, and making decisions in light of future generations. There are, therefore, missional organisations that are entirely secular, as well as organisations such as UnitingCare West, that seek to fulfil a mission derived from a religious faith.

For missional not for profit organisations, the current operating paradigm presents clear challenges. There are a diversity of views regarding the purpose of mission-based organisations. For some, they are 'human-change agents'.<sup>19</sup> For some, they are purposed with providing a vision for the whole of society, as well as a safety net for the vulnerable and limits on some of the excesses of other systems.<sup>20</sup> Some go even further, and suggest that the role of the not-for-profit sector is to contribute to matters of meaning and hope, by posing challenging questions about 'what does it

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<sup>17</sup> Murray Baird, ACNC, interview 25 June 2016

<sup>18</sup> The use of the term 'missional' is problematic for many parts of the community especially many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as it is a term that is associated with the exclusionary policies of forced settlements and Stolen Generation policies.

<sup>19</sup> Peter F Drucker, *Managing the Non Profit Organisation: Principles and Practices*

<sup>20</sup> Lin Hatfield Dodds, National Director, UnitingCare Australia interview notes 25 September 2015

mean to be human,' and seeking to ensure that vulnerable people are not disappeared.<sup>21</sup>

In my view, the era of individualised funding desires a great deal less of missional organisations. It is enough that an organisation offers an efficient, risk-managed service - to do more is a choice. However, for mission based not for profit organisations to merely meet the expectations of the current paradigm is, I believe, to miss an opportunity and leave the community the poorer.

## **EMERGING THEMES FOR MISSIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

Four key themes emerged during my study leave that I believe will be relevant to mission based organisations including UnitingCare West, over the short and medium term:

1. Hope
2. Community
3. Coming hard times; and
4. The need to do more than is asked or expected.

Each characteristic of a mission based organisation is illustrated with an application statement to UnitingCare West.

### **Hope**

John Falzon, CEO of St Vincent de Paul, speaks of hope as being one of the unique contributions that not-for-profit community organisations can make in the communities where they work, demonstrating and contributing to hope for individuals and communities alike.<sup>22</sup>

Hope is certainly not a concept that is limited to faith based organisations. Many mission based organisations actively seek to ensure hope is part of the strengths based, consumer directed focus of their service delivery models.

For UnitingCare West and other faith based mission organisation it is also a central theological theme of the Christian faith, as well as being an element of UnitingCare West's Vision Statement. The men and women who set the original direction for UnitingCare West set the organisation a specific challenge: to grapple with being a hopeful organisation, to bring hope to others, and to explore and enact a specifically Christian hope for and in the community of WA.

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<sup>21</sup> John Falzon, Chief Executive St Vinnies interview notes 25 September 2015

<sup>22</sup> Interview with John Falzon, Canberra Sept 2015

## **Community**

Since its inception, UnitingCare West has increasingly adopted a focus on working with and in groups or communities.

One of the challenges for an organisation of being dual focussed, community and individual, is dealing with the unintended consequences of delivering Government tendered contracts or individual funding that is directed to specific aspects of the community. For instance, community playgroups have been established in various communities by community members and supported by the Playgroup Association<sup>23</sup>. Government agencies provide funding for similar services on three to five year contracts. Usually, these contracts are implemented without due consideration of the existing community provided activities. The better resourced approach usually means that the community provided service struggles to survive or ceases; and at the end of the contract, the government funded service ceases and the community capacity to restore a community delivered service has also ceased.

UnitingCare West has developed and adopted a Service Centre strategy in an attempt to ensure collaboration with community partners. It provides a sound basis for:

- Developing robust, long-term funding and support relationships with individuals, businesses and local governments in Service Centre catchments;
- Creating integrated service responses to the specific needs (and existing capacities) of the communities where we work;
- Journeying with clients and communities over the long-term, with the intention of supporting the kind of deep change that lasts; and
- Effective engagement with Uniting Church congregations.

## **Coming hard times**

At the same time as the number of people in need is diversifying and growing, the resources necessary to respond to that need are becoming hard to source, and harder to maintain at sustainable levels. These trends are expected to be relatively long-standing. The downturn of commodity prices, the globalisation of business, the increase in piecework and casualization of the workforce and the impact of digital disruption means that there is no indication that they will reverse any time soon.

## **Doing more than is required or expected**

Missional organisations are faced with the unique dilemma of living the combination of their value and mission proposition. UnitingCare West's staff, volunteers and leadership group are regularly faced with the difficult question of how – and in some cases if – we should go the extra mile.

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<sup>23</sup> David Zarb, Playgroup Association, WA 29 June 2016

All missional organisations must have a response when faced with decisions such as:

- Whether and when to keep working with clients who fail and sometimes don't tell the truth;
- Where to focus our energy and resources, particularly when Government funding runs out or is non-existent; and
- How to work respectfully with people from many cultures and with many different expectations and needs.



Uniting  
Care West

#### 4. ROLE OF NOT FOR PROFITS AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

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It became clear during my study leave that this shift in focus for the not for profit sector will mean that the infrastructure to engage active citizens is going to need to be redesigned. I believe missional organisations are the starting point for this next stage. Mission based organisations, associations, cooperatives and trusts have choices as to how they respond to the current environment. Their intentional response has the potential to build a strong base for moving into the next iteration of Australian community

Tighter financial constraints and unsettled global politics are, in my view, likely to reinforce the drive to marketisation and individualisation of service delivery, as governments seek to control costs and risk. In turn, these will reinforce the primacy of governments as agenda-setters, and controllers of who is eligible for services and what kinds of services they are eligible for.

We are likely to see a tightening in the definition of citizenship as a growing group of people are moved out of eligibility for citizenship and related social services. In the past few years, people who have worked and paid taxes in Australia and people born overseas but adopted in Australia have found that their eligibility for services or Australian passports have been removed by administrative and regulatory changes.

The not for profit sector has a range of choices available to it. Some choices will intentionally activate citizenship<sup>24</sup> while others will only have indirect benefit.

#### **DOING THE CURRENT PARADIGM WELL**

Beyond delivering effective and efficient services, there are five key areas I believe the social service sector should concentrate on in seeking to operate in the current paradigm:

1. We must count well. As data collection and analysis shapes more of our policy and practice, we must ensure that, as far as possible, people are not 'disappeared' by the way we count, and that in our analysis, we are thoughtful about the use of approximations and generalisations.
2. We must track the money. We must be disciplined in understanding how we contract, fundraise, employ and manage people, take on financial risk, manage cash flow, assess our costs, cross-subsidise, etc. Every area of money management in the social service sector has become potentially complex, and requires care and intentional decision making.

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<sup>24</sup> Active Citizenship – philosophy that citizens should work towards the betterment of their community through economic participation, public, voluntary work and other such efforts to improve the life of all citizens.

3. Organisations need to actively set, and possibly publish, goals for return on investment and other financial outcomes. Most for profit providers will only remain in a service market if they achieve acceptable returns, usually more than 12%. Most not for profit entities still work to 2-5% return (effectively just maintaining sound financial governance) and the vast majority of Non Government Not for Profits will be achieving 6-8% return.
4. We must actively seek opportunities to demonstrate good governance and positive alignment with purpose.
5. A theme that runs through all of the above relates to technology. We must ensure that our information technology systems are adequate to the organisational task, not just rely on Government data portals. Social media and progressive tools for engaging with all of the community are critical.

### *Citizen engagement*

Not for profit mission based organisations need to focus on being an attractive place for people of like mind to join their activities by

1. Educating the community on the contribution of missional organisations
2. Enabling active engagement of a wide range of community contributions including focussed volunteering opportunities
  - Corporate – HR development; Corporate philanthropy; Government agencies
  - purpose related – environmental sustainability, church volunteers
  - developmental opportunities - people recently unemployed; service learning opportunities
3. Engaging in local communities to ensure people understand the situation of all people within their community not just those of like mind and economic status.

### **SHAPING THE FUTURE PARADIGM**

We are in the situation we are in for a reason; there are benefits to emphasising choice and control for individuals, market values such as efficiency, the collection and analysis of data, etc. However, as I have noted above, I believe that there are problems with the current paradigm that have the potential to result in negative consequences for vulnerable people and the social service organisations that seek to serve them, and by extension, the culture of the community in which we live.

It will therefore not be enough to do good work within the current paradigm. All not for profits, and particularly missional organisations, have an opportunity, and in my view a responsibility, to reshape our systems, assumptions and practices.

Western Australia, and the WA not for profit sector, are in a strong position to do this work. Many not for profit organisations were strengthened by an injection of funding from the WA Government in 2011/12. Working with the State Government towards shared objectives for people in the WA community, through structures such as the WA Partnership Forum, has been a focus for more than a decade. Given recent announcements by the Leader of the Opposition, there is good reason to believe that this approach will continue to be supported on a bipartisan basis.

### **Why reshape the current paradigm?**

The current paradigm, particularly as a result of the ascendancy of market principles, tends to separate people into those who 'do' and those who 'receive'; those who sell and those who buy; those who produce and those who consume. This kind of specialisation is accepted as leading to more efficient use of resources.

For most people, this separation does not apply across all domains; they may be producers at work, and consumers of entertainment, for example. However, many clients of the human services sector have fewer opportunities to exercise agency as 'doers' or producers. Arguably, individualised funding models are intended to counter this. However, individually-funded clients are still framed, largely, are consumers of services. In contrast, among the self-help, faith-based and place-based organisations of the grant era, there was more fluidity between those who established and ran organisations, and those who received services from them.

There are at least two problems with market-driven specialisation:

Firstly, we are missing out on the abilities and strengths of some people. I believe that people are made to be creative agents in the world, and it does damage to them, and to our community, when some people are denied that opportunity because of the way we design our systems.

Secondly, our systems and organisations are likely to be less resilient when we pursue deep specialisation. Clarity of purpose is good; I believe it is incredibly important for organisations to know why they exist and what they are seeking to achieve. But a missional organisation that isn't engaging deeply with its client base is likely to make poor decisions about service design. A missional organisation that doesn't pay attention to politics, or technology, or culture, is likely to miss shifts that will affect their clients and the organisation itself. A missional organisation that hires only within certain skill sets, or life experiences, or cultural backgrounds, is also going to miss things, and make missteps.

Not for profit organisations operating in the individualised funding era are working at the logical end of market driven specialisation. As interchangeable providers of government-designed services, they are likely to exist only as long as they are competitive (and only as long as they stay solvent). Market principles would suggest that this is a good thing – ‘a feature, not a bug’, driving efficiency and innovation. However, not for profit organisations, and particularly missional organisations, are not mere producers of widgets. Their effectiveness is built not only on efficient service delivery, but on relationships, culture, and importantly, trust – between the organisation and donors, clients, contractors and the community. These things are not easily built, and when an organisation folds, what has been built is likely to simply disappear.

Where market principles drive competition and specialisation, I believe missional organisations should be pursuing interdependence between people, and between organisations and people. This is a more complex aim. It is founded in respect for the value of all people. It is consistent with the values of people from many faiths, as well as paradigms such as secular human rights. It is also consistent with long-term economic stewardship and risk management, as it increases the resilience of people and organisations.

#### *Citizen engagement*

Missional organisations pursuing interdependence will engage in multi-directional communication.

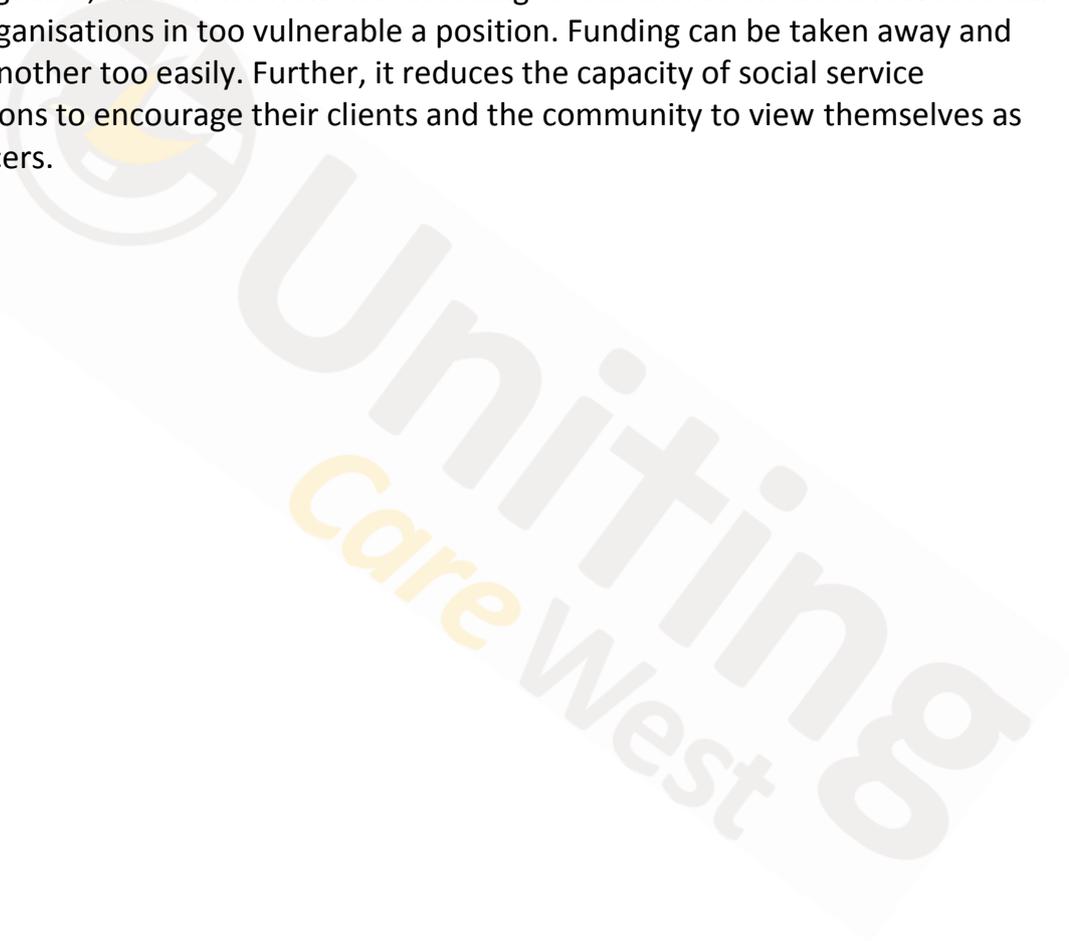
- We will work to help citizens understand the whole picture – facts and human stories, in all their complexity.
- We will work to recognise common ground among organisations and between people.
- We will advocate for individuals. We will also work to counter the drive towards individualisation that sometimes obscures systemic issues or unintended consequences.

#### *Building community*

In my view, the approach with the most likelihood of success is to situate our missional organisations into specific places. This is the approach UnitingCare West has adopted with its Service Centre Strategy. Over time, UnitingCare West will establish seven Service Centres across metropolitan Perth and the south-west region of Western Australia. Each Service Centre will provide a range of services that will be delivered in an integrated way. Each Service Centre will also seek to build connections with local Uniting Church congregations, local governments, businesses and community groups. The purpose of this strategy is not only to take some of the complexity out of accessing services for our clients. It is also to build a sense within

our organisation and within the community that we are interdependent; that both need and the capacity to meet that need exists in essentially the same place.

A place-based strategy will not work for all participants in the social service sector. Drawing from the lessons of the past, my view is that a sound alternative is to choose specificity of client groups. While current government funding approaches can encourage the belief that all social service providers are more or less interchangeable, I am of the view that acceding to this characterisation leaves social service organisations in too vulnerable a position. Funding can be taken away and given to another too easily. Further, it reduces the capacity of social service organisations to encourage their clients and the community to view themselves as co-producers.



## APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONS AND PRINCIPLES FOR BOARDS AND LEADERSHIP TEAMS

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The following questions and principles were developed to guide UnitingCare West in establishing organisational distinctives that are true to the purpose, vision and mission of the organisation, enabling the further development of a clear identity moving forward into the next decade.

They are included in this paper to provide a starting point for similar discussions in other organisations.

### QUESTION 1: WHAT?

The Constitution and Mission establish that UnitingCare West will *deliver services* and *work with people and communities*. This clearly leaves the organisation with space to make choices about exactly what service mix it will provide.

*What services should UnitingCare West provide?*

*What new services should UnitingCare West provide?*

*If resources are tight, how do we decide what services to stop providing?*

*Should we run some services for the purpose of cross-subsidising other services?*

### Principles to guide a response:

- While our focus will continue to be on those most in need, a service-mix that only focusses on crisis and high-need may not be the best model to see those people belong and thrive.
- Deep belonging and thriving is most likely where we see clients as people who will become part of the 'functioning' community, and those who serve as those who need.
- We may need to stretch – to do more than we're asked, or more than others think is 'reasonable'.
- We need not be afraid to not do everything. UnitingCare West is not the only provider of services in the communities we work in. Partnerships with other organisations and opportunities for people who have received services to make a contribution are more likely to ensure a thriving, inclusive community.

### QUESTION 2: WHERE?

The Constitution provides that UnitingCare West will 'deliver...services...within the geographical area of the Synod of Western Australia.' This clearly leaves a great deal of geographic choice to the organisation in terms of where we concentrate our activities. However, there are also groups or communities of need or communities of

the Church. UnitingCare West is now a mature enough organisation to ask the more complex question about communities of place and need.

*Which communities?*

*Do we concentrate on developing a full service offering in some communities (Service Centres) first, or work on many communities (Service Centres) at once?*

*What do we do with funding opportunities that don't align with the Service Centre Strategy?*

*Do we shape our choices in light of where the need is? Or where the resources (e.g. congregational support) are? How do we respond to supporting refugees?*

*Should we, or can we, consider international opportunities? For example, the Uniting Church is actively involved with the church in Indonesia and China. Aged Care providers are already working in China and UnitingCare West has been approached to work with communities in Sri Lanka and in Indonesia.*

### **Principles to guide a response:**

- If we value community, being a distinctively 'Uniting Church' organisation, and undertaking a significant leadership role within Synod, we must give serious consideration to where we are seeing engagement and support from particular Uniting Church congregations. There is potential for 'virtuous circles' in many aspects of our operations if we align with congregations that are moving in the same direction as UnitingCare West.

### **QUESTION 3: WHO?**

#### **Funding/Supporting**

*Are there any organisations we won't contract or partner with?*

*Are there contractual terms that we won't accept (e.g. terms that seriously compromise clients' privacy)?*

#### **Clients**

*Are there people we won't accept as clients?*

*What is our response when a client has had (many?) chances before, and not made good use of them?*

*What is our response when a client no longer receives funding? Or no longer receives enough funding to cover the level of support we have previously given? Will we cross-subsidise? In what circumstances?*

*Do we accept that government funders make the final decision in whether someone should be eligible for services we provide, or how much support they need?*

### **Principles to guide a response:**

- Does a particular organisation, contract or contractual term compromise *belonging* or *thriving* for individuals or communities? If so, UnitingCare West should not engage.
- The principle of forgiveness can be thought of as being in tension with the aim of seeing people 'thriving'; at some point, people will be stunted in their thriving if they are continually shielded from the consequences of their choices.
- Consistent with the Biblical principle of forgiving more than the 'accepted' amount, UnitingCare West should almost certainly continue its current practice of working with clients, even where they have not made good use of previous support.

### **QUESTION 4: BENEFIT?**

*What does success look like? Success for individual people and success for communities?*

*How will we measure whether we're doing what we intend to?*

*How does UnitingCare West ensure that our work "does no harm"?*

### **Principles to guide a response:**

- UnitingCare West will always engage with the people accessing services, both in the design of services and in the measurement of impact or success. Currently, UnitingCare West uses the Outcome Star to achieve the individual measurement of success.
- UnitingCare West will measure success according to agreed industry standards but will also be actively engaged with shaping these measurement tools.
- The voice of the individual client will be actively promoted by UnitingCare West in a range of community and sector forums, including where social policy changes may harm people.

APPENDIX 2: CASE STUDY – UNITINGCARE WEST  
REVIEW OF A FAITH BASED MISSIONAL ORGANISATION CULTURAL IDENTITY

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In considering the Constitution, Mission and Vision Statements of UnitingCare West, we find key answers to questions about what UnitingCare West is to do, and who we are to work with.

### **UnitingCare West’s Constitution**

UnitingCare West’s establishing Constitution identifies the main purpose of the organisation (the Agency) as follows:

‘The principal object and purpose of the Agency is to deliver a range of quality community services and programs within the geographical area of the Synod of Western Australia which are responsive, accessible and relevant to the needs of those groups and persons who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged, and which include early intervention and prevention activities.

In fulfilling this object and purpose, the Agency will:

- a) Be and remain an agency of the Uniting Church in Australia
- b) Operate as a Christian organisation and as an integral part of the Uniting Church in Australia demonstrating through its operations the centrality of worship, witness and service, and the particular ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia
- c) Undertake a significant leadership role within the Synod of Western Australia and the broader community services industry in Western Australia in activities including social advocacy and the influencing of social policy; work in close co-operation with community service agencies and other agencies of the Uniting Church in Western Australia and national; engage with industry bodies, governments, other non-government community service agencies, business, media, other relevant institutions and service users in order to advance the objects and purposes of the Agency; and,
- d) Adopt any additional object from time to time of a public benevolent nature and consistent with the principal object and purpose. ‘

The Constitution provides an initial answer to three key questions:

<i>Question</i>	<i>Answer</i>
What does UnitingCare West do?	Deliver services
Who does UnitingCare West primarily work with?	Those groups and persons who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged
How does UnitingCare West work?	As a Christian organisation

	<p>Specifically, as a Uniting Church organisation</p> <p>As a leader in Synod of the Uniting Church in WA</p> <p>As a leader in the broader community</p>
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### UnitingCare West's Vision

The organisation's Vision of '*Hope, Justice and Opportunity for all*' explains, at least in part, *why* UnitingCare West does what it does:

<i>Question</i>	<i>Answer</i>
Why does UnitingCare West do the work it does?	<p>To see hope <b>for all</b></p> <p>To see justice <b>for all</b></p> <p>To see opportunity <b>for all</b></p>

### UnitingCare West's Mission

UnitingCare West's Mission Statement has been developed over the last ten years through consultation with a broad range of stakeholders including staff, volunteers and people accessing services provided by UnitingCare West.

The organisation's original Mission Statement was ***to support, serve and empower those people most in need***. In the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, a renewed Mission Statement was adopted, as follows: '***UnitingCare West works with people and communities so those most in need can belong and thrive.***'

UnitingCare West's current Mission Statement refines the answers given by the Constitution and Vision Statement regarding questions of 'What' and 'Why'

<i>Question</i>	<i>Answer</i>
What does UnitingCare West do?	Work with people and communities
Why does UnitingCare West do the work it does?	<p>So that most-in-need people can belong</p> <p>So that most-in-need people can thrive</p>

### Applying the Constitution, Vision and Mission

Importantly, the Constitution establishes an inherent complexity in *how* UnitingCare West does its work. To deliver services as a Christian organisation, and specifically, as an organisation that demonstrates the particular ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia, requires us to deal with the rich depth of Christian theology and practice through a Uniting Church lens, and to grapple with how that may apply to our work.

As an example, consider our Mission to see that *those most in need can belong and thrive*. On its own, that Mission is one that could be adopted by almost any service organisation. However, if we are to be faithful to our Constitutional call to work as a distinctively Uniting Church, Christian organisation, we might begin to think of ‘belonging’ not just in terms of inclusion in the social and economic life of Western Australia, but as a foretaste or model of the kind of belonging that the Christian message offers – a belonging not predicated on our achievements, but freely offered as a gift.

In mining this understanding, we may find not only that we are challenged in how we work with people who are ‘in need’, but also with our staff and supporters. Our perspective on people would be characterised by a teaching that all of us are both humbled and raised up by God’s view that all people matter.

Similarly, in thinking about ‘thriving’, we could engage with the Biblical idea of *shalom*. This word is often translated as ‘peace’, but the idea encompasses ‘wholeness’ or ‘completeness’ – of all things being ordered and functioning as they’re best made to be. ‘Thriving’, then, might be considered a foretaste or model of the *shalom* – where people and communities embody wholeness.