



Annual Report

Uniting WA 2023-2024

Uniting

At Uniting WA, we exist to inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice.

And we act with impact.

As a community services organisation of the Uniting Church Western Australia, we stand with people in need, walking alongside them every step of the way so they get the understanding and support they need to move forward.

Since 2006, we've worked to address the causes of vulnerability and disadvantage, and amplify the voices of those in the community who aren't being heard.

But we can't do it alone.

Backed by supporters, partners and funders, our team of more than 400 employees and 200 volunteers are proud to deliver a range of services that have a lasting impact on thousands of vulnerable Western Australians every year.

Acknowledgement of Country

Uniting WA acknowledges the First Nations People as the Traditional Custodians of this land on which we provide our services.

We recognise their unique and spiritual connection to Country and waters. We value the oldest continuing culture in the world and pay our respect to Elders past and present.

Cover Image: Uniting WA team members and guests at a Reconciliation Week 2024 event.

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Message from the Chair and Co-Chief Executive Officers.

As we reflect on the past year, we are humbled by the courage, compassion, and unwavering dedication demonstrated by our team in their support of the communities we serve. This year has brought challenges, but also opportunities to grow, adapt and continue moving forward with strength and purpose.

The ongoing cost of living and affordable housing crisis has pushed more people than ever into hardship, creating new and urgent issues for the communities we support. Families and individuals who were once able to manage are now struggling to make ends meet, facing difficult choices between basic necessities like food, shelter and utility bills.

At Uniting WA, we've witnessed firsthand the impact of these pressures. In response, we have expanded our reach, enhanced our services and advocated for change to address the root cause of these issues.

During the year, we've deepened our impact through bold and imaginative partnerships that remain grounded in compassion and respect for those we serve. These collaborations are built on the belief that by working together, we can better elevate the voices and strengths of those with lived experience to drive meaningful and lasting change.

Strategic milestones and highlights

As we continue to implement our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, we celebrate several key milestones including:

- The launch of The Together Program, a pilot collaboration between Uniting WA and Homeless Healthcare supported by Sisters of St John of God, Minderoo Foundation and Mercy Foundation to help mothers and their babies break the cycle of homelessness and separation
- A new regional office in Joondalup to meet the growing needs of individuals and families in the northern corridor
- Two awards at the 2024 WA Disability Support Awards, reflecting our commitment to innovative, person-centred support for people with disability
- The launch of Recipe for Change, a corporate team building experience designed to educate and empower participants while supporting Tranby Engagement Hub service users
- The introduction of a green fleet of vehicles equipped with cutting-edge technology to significantly reduce emissions and minimise our carbon footprint.

These milestones are not just reflections of our past year's efforts; they signal the progress we've made toward the vision set out in our three-year strategy. Every story in this report demonstrates the courage and compassion that define Uniting WA, as we work to create a more just society.

Honouring our people

We are immensely grateful for the incredible commitment shown by those who make up Uniting WA, including our dedicated team members, volunteers, partners and donors. Together with unwavering support from Uniting Church congregations, schools, colleges and Uniting Church in the City, we have collectively empowered thousands of West Australians to achieve transformational change in their lives.

This year, we were delighted to welcome Liam Roche and Ralph Addis to the Board. Liam, an experienced business leader with a 40-year career in media and manufacturing and Ralph, an expert in strategic leadership, organisational development and governance, bring a new depth of knowledge to Uniting WA.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Chris Hunt and Ron Chalmers, who stepped down from the Board after ten and six years of service, respectively. Chris has been a longstanding and valued Chair of the Finance, Property and Audit Committee, and made significant contributions to finance, risk management and compliance. Ron's contributions as the Board Deputy Chair and Chair of the Service Quality and Safeguarding Committee, as well as his expertise in disability services and government relations, will be greatly missed.

We are immeasurably grateful to our entire Board, whose contributions in expertise, time and insight ensure that Uniting WA remains resilient and well-positioned for ongoing success.

Looking ahead

As we look forward to the year ahead, we do so with renewed focus and optimism for the future. Our commitment to walking alongside the people we support to create lasting change remains steadfast, and we are eager to build on the momentum we've created.

We thank you for your continued belief in our mission and for being part of this journey. We invite you to read on and discover the remarkable stories and achievements that have defined Uniting WA this year.

Warm regards,



Erica Haddon
Chair, Uniting WA

Michael Chester
Co-CEO, Uniting WA

Jen Park
Co-CEO, Uniting WA

Our purpose, values and foundation.

Purpose

To inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice.

Values

Imaginative

We challenge convention, explore new possibilities and dare to dream for a better future.

Bold

We face injustice head on, standing up for what is right and true with confidence and strength.

Foundation

Christ invites us to serve humanity by creating an inclusive, connected and just world.



What we do.

We're here to make a positive impact on the individuals, families and communities we serve:

Homelessness Support

Helping people on their journey out of homelessness.

Transitional Housing Support

Providing shelter through transitional accommodation and support to find a permanent home.

Community Housing

Long-term affordable housing and support services for people on low incomes with a housing need.

Individualised Services

Personalised NDIS support for people with disabilities, mental health issues and individual recovery plans.

Children and Young People

Empowering children, young people and families to heal from their past trauma and develop to their full potential.

Strengthening Families

Supporting families to navigate everyday challenges through parenting skills and strategies for long-term resilience.

Financial Wellbeing

Supporting people experiencing financial hardship to meet their basic needs in times of crisis and build their financial resilience.

Disability Advocacy

Promoting and protecting rights of people with disability and those who identify as having a mental health issue.



Reach and Impact.

We support people experiencing complex challenges brought on by intergenerational trauma or situational crisis. This includes children experiencing vulnerability and families at risk of breakdown, as well as people who may be experiencing domestic violence, financial hardship or homelessness, those with disability or a lived experience of mental illness, and people reintegrating into the community.

91,796 presentations

at the Tranby Engagement Hub for crisis support and essential services

Homelessness Support

Crisis accommodation

- 42 people at Koort Boodja
- 11 people Return to Country

City of Stirling

- 35 people assisted



Street to Home

- 853 people assisted through outreach
- 114 people referred to other services

Homeless Engagement Assessment Response Team (HEART)

- **CBD** - assisted 250 people through outreach and 224 people under case management
- **North** - 19 people under case management

Community Housing

494 tenancies

In total across all Community Housing properties supporting all service pathways

- 312 properties across the housing and tenancy management portfolio
- 234 people across 221 properties in our Independent Living Program

Individualised Services

161

Participants accessing NDIS services

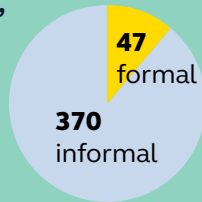
- 72 people assisted with Recovery Options
- 16 Participants accessing Positive Behaviour Support



Disability Advocacy

417

referrals to 'Your Say' Disability Advocacy



Financial Wellbeing

\$979,641 in client debt waived

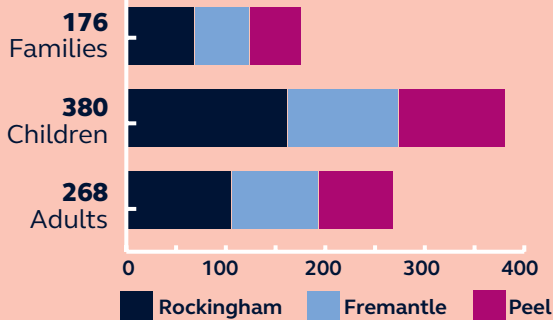
- Back to School assistance for 505 kids
- 1,051 financial counselling clients
- 282 Community Financial Wellbeing Workshops delivered to 4,056 people
- 1:1 Financial Coaching provided to 105 people

3,323 clients accessed \$715,587 through Emergency Relief

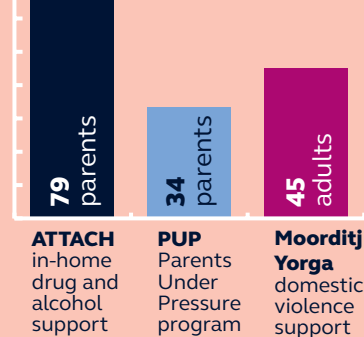


Strengthening Families

Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS)



Other Programs



3,051 cases supported with the Escaping Violence Payment program

Children and Young People



- **63 children and young people and 105 adults** in Children and Family Therapeutic Services and Children's Counselling Services
- **66 children and young people in** Out of Home Care

Reintegration

278 participants in our Reintegration programs

Transitional Housing Support

- **41 participants** assisted with our Housing Accommodation Support Service (HASS)
- **4 women and their infants** supported in The Together Program



Working together towards our strategic objectives.

As we reflect on our achievements, challenges and growth over the past year, we're reminded of the progress we're making towards achieving the goals laid out in our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

Delivering Services

We purposefully increase housing and accommodation assets and infrastructure options that are linked to services for people who require support.

Deepening Partnerships

We develop strategic partnerships to embrace current service delivery and realise new opportunities as a positive influencer in the sector.

Driving Sustainability

We demonstrate social impact aligned to our mission while remaining financially and environmentally sustainable.

Developing Capacity

We continue to invest, grow and develop our capability and capacity in relation to people, technology and processes.

Keeping families safe, together and thriving.

Uniting WA's Strengthening Families teams delivers services for people facing a range of challenges, including those experiencing family and domestic violence, parents with challenges that impact on their parenting and families who are involved in the child protection system.



Moorditj Yorga – Together Walking (Strong Women)

When Kerry* went into labour and neither her mother nor partner were available, she called her Uniting WA Support Worker Debbie, who rushed to the hospital and was by her side as she gave birth to a beautiful baby.

Such are the bonds forged in Uniting WA's Moorditj Yorga (Strong Women) - Together Walking program for First Nations women with experience of, or a risk of experiencing, family and domestic violence.

Last year, Moorditj Yorga supported 45 women through more than 40 group sessions. **The program provided over \$90,000 in financial support to assist women** to find safe accommodation and install security systems.

Uniting also supported women through legal proceedings, facilitated health and dental care, parenting workshops and helped them learn to drive, use power tools and cook healthy meals. The cumulative impact of this support has empowered the women, leading to better outcomes for children, families and communities. *not her real name.

93%

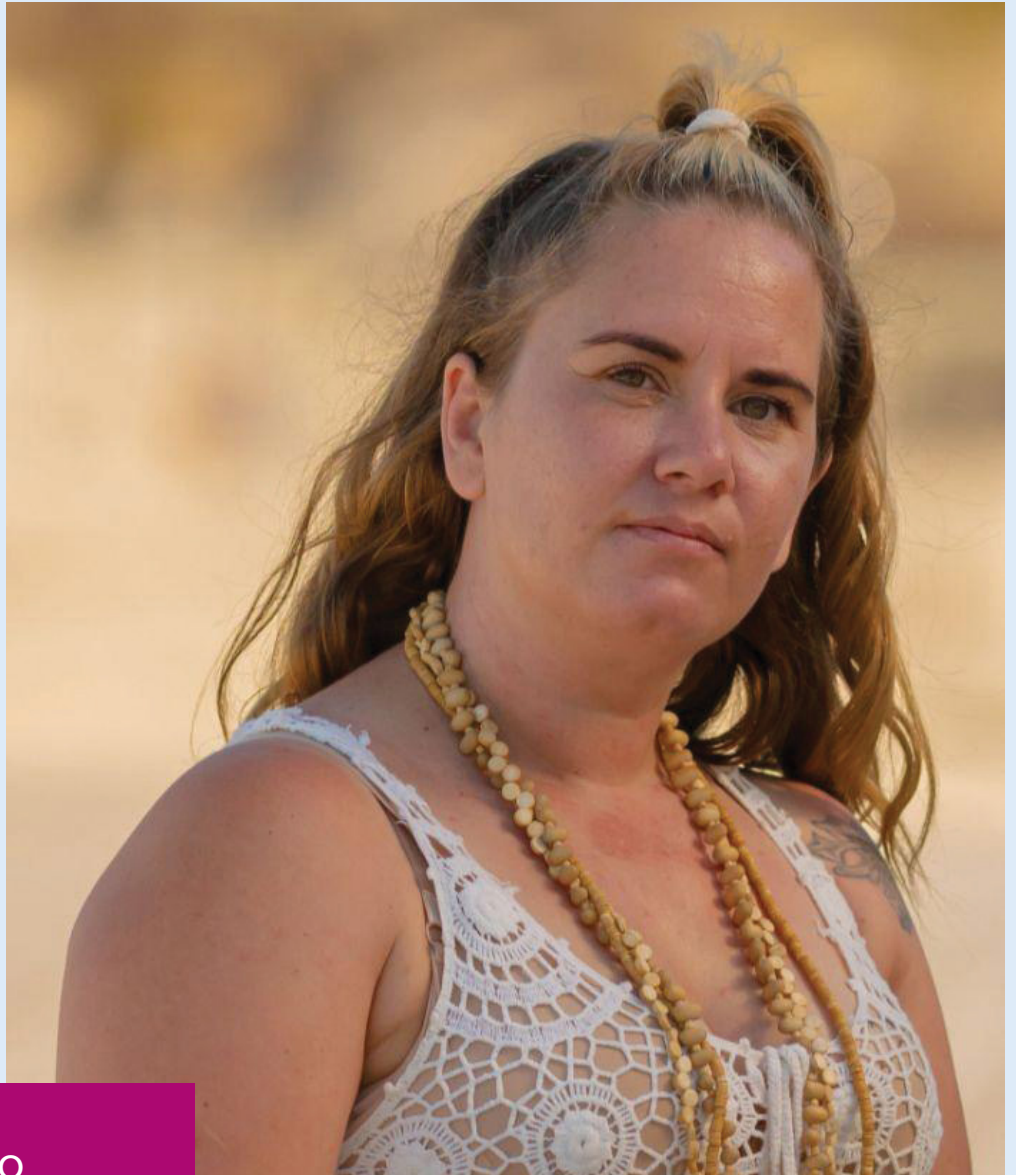
of clients made progress in terms of **safety, health and wellbeing.**

92%

of clients have made **progress in terms of their support networks.**



A Uniting WA team member at Moorditj Yorga



“When I come to the Moorditj Yorga group, I feel seen, heard & connected”

**Moorditj Yorga
participant, Nikki**

100%
**of clients would recommend
the Moorditj Yorga service
to friends and family.**

Helping people establish safety after violence.

In Australia, on average, a woman is killed by an intimate partner every 10 days.

Uniting WA works with a national consortium of UnitingCare Australia agencies to deliver the Federal Government's Escaping Violence Payment (EVP) program. In May 2024, the Government announced EVP will be funded as a permanent program, investing \$925 million over the next five years as the Leaving Violence Program.

Recognising that financial insecurity often becomes a barrier to leaving an abusive situation, EVP assists (predominantly) women who have experienced intimate partner violence, providing practical and financial support to establish a home free from violence.

Over \$200 million in support has been delivered nationally through EVP packages to date. There have been 5,400 Western Australians supported through the EVP since the program commenced.

More than 80% of EVP callers are self-referred – they have not been referred by a support service. This is particularly significant in a vast state like WA where it can be hard to reach services.

Other Uniting WA services strengthening families and communities

- Our **Intensive Family Support Service** offers parenting support to parents who have an open case with the Department of Communities (Child Protection)
- Our **Parenting under Pressure** program provides in-home support for families with children under 12 who are experiencing issues that may affect their parenting including depression, anxiety, substance misuse, family violence and financial stress
- Our **ATTACH** program for parents of children under 12 years who live with problematic drug and alcohol use.



Making a fresh start with EVP.

With a blonde bob, a cheerful, dimpled smile and three gorgeous children in tow, you would not guess that 23-year-old Claudia* is a survivor of domestic violence. She married her childhood sweetheart and at first, life was good. She brushed off what she now recognises as signs of coercive control. For example, her partner only gave her small amounts of money to buy food. They were always behind on their rent, yet he spent their money on cigarettes and alcohol. She tried to keep her home clean, but he left rubbish everywhere. If she spoke up, he became aggressive.

She eventually broke off the relationship but allowed him to see the children. One day, he broke into her home and attacked her.

With assistance from the Escaping Violence Payment (EVP) program, Claudia hired a skip bin and cleaned out the house so she could make a decent home for the children. She installed security. She immediately put aside some money from the EVP towards savings for a car. The EVP program also referred her to services so she could establish networks of support.

“I never thought the control would accumulate and end up in such violence where **I could have been killed.**”

Claudia, domestic violence survivor.
*not her real name

Saving lives and starting over

Ask Support Worker Taylah why she works in Uniting WA's Escaping Violence Payment (EVP) program and she'll tell you it's because she sees the difference it makes.

“I really feel this program saves lives.”

“Victim survivors don't choose to go into abusive relationships. The violence may escalate quickly, or it may occur over many months and years. The cycle of abuse can be difficult to escape, and finances can be one reason why someone may stay in the relationship,” said Taylah.

Taylah explains that EVP is not designed to solve domestic violence – that is a much bigger issue. But the program tailors solutions to where women are at.

“It can help them take the next step, such securing a new place, making a house a home or reestablishing personal belongings that may have been left behind when fleeing violence.”

“It might help with buying food or new uniforms to send the children to a new school. It's about working with women wherever they are at,” she said.

Supporting people of all abilities to live good lives.

Uniting WA's Individualised Services team supports people with disability, psychosocial disability and those who identify as living with a mental health issue.

A range of services are offered under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) which includes in home and community support, Supported Independent Living (SIL) and Positive Behaviour Support (PBS).

For people experiencing mental health issues who do not have NDIS funding, our Recovery Options team delivers the Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program funded by the WA Primary Health Alliance.

Uniting WA's Your Say Disability Advocacy program is a confidential service which promotes and protects the rights of people with disability and those who identify as living with mental health issues.

Our Supported Independent Living (SIL) homes for people with disability and psychosocial disability include properties in St James, Ballajura, Beckenham, Willagee, Secret Harbour, Lake Coogee and Medina, as well as Albany in the Great Southern. We also have new SIL homes coming soon in Riverton and Spearwood.

In 2023-24, we delivered
167,887 hours
of NDIS supports



161
Participants
Supported
by NDIS services

72
Participants
Supported
by Recovery
Options

16
Participants
Assisted with
Positive Behaviour
Support

417
Referrals
to 'Your Say'
Disability
Advocacy



The Individualised Services team at the WA Disability Support Awards

Award wins spotlight impact of Uniting WA's work in the community.

Uniting WA's Individualised Services team won two awards at the 2024 WA Disability Support Awards.

2024 Winner of Excellence in Rights Promotion Award

The Ballajura team was recognised for their outstanding dedication to supporting Barbara*, who has lived with her three housemates at her home for over 20 years, with support from Uniting WA.

In July 2022, Barbara faced a significant health challenge and was placed in palliative care. Her NDIS support was withdrawn, and she was to be placed in the Aged Care system due to her age. But Barbara did not want to move into aged care – she wanted to remain at home. So the Uniting WA team supported her to get her case to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) and championed her rights to self-determination. The team helped Barbara get her NDIS support reinstated and remain in her own home.

*not her real name

2024 Winner of Emerging Leader Award

Individualised Services Senior Manager Katherine Campbell won the Emerging Leader Award after being nominated by her peers. In particular, Kat was acknowledged as a champion for delivering inclusive housing for people with disability.

Kat also implemented Stakeholder Reference Group meetings at Uniting WA, where participants provide feedback on our services which are then linked into Continuous Improvement and Access and Inclusion Plans. The focus on service co-design aligns with our commitment to provide best practice support.

Feedback from a Recovery Options client:

“You treated me with the utmost respect and integrity, and you will never know how much that helped me to believe in me again. I truly have appreciated your professionalism, kindness and sincerity in allowing me to grieve and grow.”

Helping West Australians through financial hardship.

Uniting WA's Financial Wellbeing Services provide financial counselling to help people better manage their money and reduce their debt, and emergency relief to pay for urgently needed items. Our team also offers financial coaching and community workshops to increase financial resilience.

In the past year, the team has been fielding unprecedented requests for support as people struggle to cope with cost-of-living pressures.

Our Emergency Relief service supported over 3,000 clients with emergency financial relief vouchers to:

- Pay for rent, food and utility bills
- Pay for car registrations (people who are sleeping in their cars)
- Buy school supplies for children.

\$715,587 in emergency relief funding to West Australians in need

Uniting WA acknowledges funding support from Lotterywest and the Department of Social Services.



Members of our Financial Wellbeing Services team



Hon Dan Caddy
presents Lotterywest
Emergency Relief grant

In early 2024, Uniting WA welcomed the Honourable Dan Caddy MLC to present a \$550,000 Lotterywest Grant for Emergency Relief. He spoke about his visit in Parliament.

“On Wednesday, 3 April, if I remember my diary correctly, I was in Joondalup. I was fortunate to walk about three minutes from my office to see Uniting WA’s new offices.”

“We had a pretty substantial conversation at the end. I sat down with Jenny, who is a team facilitator, and Marlene, who is one of the emergency relief officers.”

“I sat there for probably about 45 minutes and listened to their accounts of not what they are dealing with, but what the people they are helping are dealing with, which was harrowing. It is super important for this government to put money towards helping those people when we can.” - **Hon Dan Caddy MLC**

During the year, Uniting WA Financial Counsellors saw **1,051 clients** and helped waive debt to the value of **\$979,641**.

Our Financial Coaches **held 282 workshops** in the community which reached more than 4,000 people.

In addition, another **105 people** opted for private **1:1 financial coaching**.

Our financial counselling services operate from five locations: Perth CBD, Yanchep, Scarborough, Butler /Carramar and Fremantle.

Addressing rising homelessness amidst a growing cost of living crisis.

Our outreach and homelessness support teams continue to meet increased demand, as more people, including families, are sleeping in their cars and experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Families experiencing homelessness, including single parents and two parent households with children, often have complex support needs which makes their situations more difficult to manage. An underlying mistrust of services and the added fear of Child Protection involvement often complicates the provision of services.

At the Tranby Engagement Hub, we're also seeing growing numbers of pregnant women and people aged 55+ seeking support.

Impact through outreach

A multi-agency partnership between the WA Government Department of Communities, St Patrick's Community Support Centre, Noongar Mia Mia, Indigo Junction and Uniting WA, along with former partner Wungening Aboriginal Corporation, the rapid response Homeless Engagement Assessment Response Team (HEART) has provided intensive, client-centred outreach support to a growing number of people experiencing homelessness in and around the Perth metropolitan area since 2021.

HEART is unique in its flexible, collaborative approach to service delivery, which allows it to more quickly identify, mobilise and respond to individual needs.

The HEART team engages 1:1 with people who have complex needs, identifying their immediate support and accommodation needs and then working side by side to help them stabilise and transition into safe, secure accommodation.

The HEART North team was recognised for their contribution as finalists in the Shelter WA Above and Beyond Award in September 2023.



Uniting WA HEART team members with Minister for Housing and Homelessness, Hon John Carey MLA



Guest at a Reconciliation Week 2024 event.

40% increase in transitional accommodation referrals for people 55+ over the past 2 years

The oldest person we supported this year was **90 years old**

In February 2024, Tranby recorded its highest ever number of daily service users, **with 440 people accessing support.**

Partnerships on the beat

A partnership with WA Police has fostered essential rapport between people sleeping rough and law enforcement. Through regular interactions and joint initiatives, the team has built trust and understanding which has facilitated an open dialogue about the challenges faced by the rough sleeping community. This had led to collaboration between Uniting WA, WA Police and other Safe Perth City Initiative agencies, and the delivery of culturally appropriate responses.

Finding solid ground

A collaboration between Uniting WA and Wungening Aboriginal Corporation has seen many Tranby service users successfully engage with Wungening's award-winning Solid Ground program. Facilitated by lived experience leaders from Wungening, program participants collaborate to share stories, support one another and co-design counselling sessions.

Strength through community: women supporting women

The Women's Group at Tranby offers a safe place for women to come together and share their experiences, while also building their capacity. The group runs activities like painting, mindfulness and even karaoke, and also provides access to 1:1 financial counselling via the Uniting Financial Wellbeing Services team.



Gary's path home began with Tranby.

From Darwin to Perth to Albany to Brisbane, to Townsville and Cairns then back to Perth, Gary travelled and couch-surfed after the break-up of a long relationship. A self-proclaimed loudmouth, he was always quick to find friends on his regular visits to Tranby Engagement Hub.

From Tranby, Gary was referred to the Uniting Homeless Accommodation Support Service (HASS).

"I was always welcomed by the staff at Tranby, I felt at home there... the goodness of Tranby is the goodness of Uniting," said Gary.

Gary decided after some time to return to Country, relocating to Southern Cross with his daughter. While living in Southern Cross, Gary received a call about a public housing unit now available for him. His Uniting support workers had kept his name on the waitlist.

"It's the Tranby staff, they insisted I keep my name down for public housing," said Gary.

"And when this social housing home came up, they made me come and see it and I walked in and there was a banana tree in the backyard there and I just knew it was home. I was home. "

Stock image for
illustrative purposes



Finding a way forward.

Uniting WA's Reintegration services support men to develop the skills they need to adjust to life after lengthy periods of incarceration. Last year, Our Reintegration team worked with 278 men both pre- and post-release to adjust to life in the community.

With the support of the Reintegration team, John, a program participant since 2015, secured full-time work in a regional area after his release in May 2024. The job came with housing, a car, and opportunities to build his skills. However, John found himself struggling with feelings of isolation and loneliness.

John's case worker helped him identify some local activities to foster community connections, which led to him meeting Freddy, a pup rescued from mistreatment. John decided to foster and train Freddy. The two developed an inseparable bond and John now has a man's best friend of his own, which is helping significantly with his adjustment back into community life.

At home with Uniting.

As a Tier 2 Community Housing provider, Uniting WA provides accommodation and supports to people within Uniting WA services pathways and to clients supported by other agencies.



This year our community housing team supported **494 tenants including 116 new tenants across 312 properties**

What our clients tell us:

- 90% feel more settled in general
- 90% feel more secure and stable about their housing
- 79% feel safer.

Independent Living Program

Uniting WA also provides supportive housing for people through the Independent Living Program (ILP). ILP adopts a supportive landlord model for people who identify as living with severe, persistent mental illness:

- Helping tenants make individual plans to achieve their goals
- Organising social activities to foster community connection between tenants
- Providing a regular tenant newsletter for important updates and contacts
- Organising tenancy forums for feedback and continuous improvement
- Providing capacity building workshops – including managing finances or quitting smoking.

97% of ILP tenants are satisfied with their accommodation and support on the program.

Feedback from ILP partners

“I just wanted to thank you for the service provided to my client and to remind you that the job you do for clients with a mental illness is refreshing and valuable. This is the second time I have been fortunate enough to have a client accepted into an ILP property and the second time I have been impressed by every stage of the process.” - Mental Health Worker from Department of Health.



Home at last.

Bernie experienced homelessness on and off for 40 years before finally finding a stable home for the first time in her life through Uniting WA.

Bernie lived through family trauma as a child and by age of 16, she had run away from home, surviving by sleeping on friends' couches or in parks. Her mental health worsened as the years went by, and alcohol and other substances became coping mechanisms. She became stuck in a relentless cycle of finding temporary accommodation in hostels and refuges, only to lose it.

It was not till Bernie was referred to Uniting WA's Independent Living Program a few years ago that she found herself empowered to turn things around. With new-found support to maintain not only her tenancy but also her health and wellbeing, Bernie began setting goals and building the confidence and capacity to live independently in the community. She enjoys the social gatherings that Uniting WA organises for tenants and thrives knowing she has a team of support behind her.

"I don't know that my gratitude shows enough but I can't speak highly enough of the Uniting WA staff," says Bernie.

Paving the path home through empowerment.

Our Homeless Accommodation Support Service (HASS) provides tailored case management and up to 12 months of transitional accommodation support to people facing homelessness. More than just a safe place to stay, HASS empowers people to build the skills and confidence needed to secure and maintain long-term, stable housing.

Uniting Homeless Accommodation Support Service (HASS) team members work alongside clients to create a case management plan that builds on their strengths and supports them to develop the skills they need to live independently. They actively seek opportunities to facilitate self-directed community integration and personal growth, and help people address issues associated with transitioning into life after homelessness.

HASS team members advocate on their client's behalf and meet weekly for 1:1 case management, while also supporting attendance at workshops and programs offered by Uniting and other organisations to build capacity and confidence.

The Together Program

The Together Program was launched on 1 November 2023 to support women experiencing homelessness through their pregnancy and into the second year of their newborn's life.

A collaboration between Uniting WA and Homeless Healthcare, the program provides stable accommodation and wrap around support to help create a safe and nurturing environment for mothers and their children to thrive.

The Together Program is possible because of the generous support of Sisters of St John of God, Minderoo Foundation and Mercy Foundation.

Older women are one of the fastest growing cohorts of people experiencing homelessness.

In early 2024, a Uniting property was designated to house older single women in the HASS program. The Philanthropy team successfully secured donations to fully furnish the property, and the finishing touches are being added to welcome the first resident.

The Together Program outcomes

- 4 women and their babies welcomed into the program
- 39 referrals
- 4 homes refurbished with new furniture, food and essential starter packages
- 100 health check-ins
- 46 case check-ins.



Kayla's journey towards a brighter future.

Instead of the giddy elation some might feel in the moment they discover they're pregnant, Kayla felt uncertainty, fear and resignation. She knew that without a secure home, it was unlikely she would be able to keep her son.

Through the social worker at the maternity hospital, Kayla was put in touch with Uniting WA Case Worker Emma Rose from The Together Program. The stability of secure accommodation combined with regular check-ins and ongoing support and guidance has been life-changing for Kayla.

When she isn't caring for her son, Kayla volunteers at church, plays soccer and visits friends. When she reflects on her past, Kayla stresses the importance of services like The Together Program.

"I don't know what would have happened, but I think it's the best thing that my son has been born into this and can get a good start... hopefully this shows future mums that it can happen for them too," said Kayla.

Laying the foundations for children to thrive.

We remain focused on delivering trauma-informed, therapeutic care that seeks to understand and respond to the unique and evolving needs of each child at home, at school and in all other aspects of the child's life.

Following recent State Government reforms, Uniting WA expanded its Out of Home Care services to support more children and young people. Working in partnership with the Department of Communities, new Group Foster Care and Temporary Care homes have been brought online to cater for the nuanced needs of children and families in the Out of Home Care system.

During the year, 8 children in our care were supported to reunify with immediate and extended family.

In response to the expansion of Out of Home Care services, we undertook a recruitment campaign for Residential Youth Support Workers that encouraged people to consider a career where you'll matter more – with a team that supports you to make a difference to the lives of children in care. The campaign ran across radio, social media and search, resulting in dozens of applications and a team of motivated new starters.



Specialised Foster Care

We're collaborating with a number of new foster carers who provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and young people with complex needs due to trauma, illness or disability, and who aren't able to remain with their biological families.

“Our wonderful carers provide more than just a home; it's a sense of stability and a safe space for healing and growth that helps the children navigate the challenges they face.”

- Jess Arrowsmith, Operations Lead - Children and Young People Services

Striving for culturally appropriate care

We actively support children and young people in our care to connect to culture and community:

- Support to attend cultural events in the community like NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week
- Access to regular cultural connection groups, camps and yarning circles
- Connecting to Country through nature, including bush walks and bush tucker food
- Facilitating check-ups at First Nations health centres for young people to engage with culturally appropriate healthcare providers
- Facilitating ongoing, safe and meaningful contact for young people and their immediate and/or extended family members.



Uniting WA team members

Your Say Disability Advocacy: Protecting people's rights.

Uniting WA's Your Say is a confidential Disability Advocacy program to promote and protect the rights of people with disability and those who identify as living with mental health issues. We stand with someone or speak on their behalf to make sure their rights are being heard.

In the last year, the Your Say team received 417 referrals, representing an eight-fold increase in demand over a five-year period.

Advocating for a mother's needs

Jennifer* was referred to the Your Say team due to challenges she was experiencing raising her two small children, while needs relating to her intellectual disability were not being met through her NDIS plan.

Your Say Advocate, Vernon, called an urgent multi-disciplinary team meeting and documented the disability supports Jennifer required, including occupational therapy, a nutritionist, exercise physiology, mental health support and cleaning services. Vern helped Jennifer find a local Support Coordinator who helped put the required services in place.

Without advocacy support, Jennifer was at significant risk of having her children removed from her care, deteriorating mental health and losing her stable accommodation.

Jennifer's case was closed with a happy family and a well-utilised NDIS plan. *not her real name.

Your Say client feedback

"Uniting WA has gone above and beyond and I can't thank you enough for your expertise, empathy and efficiency. It's been completely life changing for the client." - Senior Case Worker

“We invite bold and compassionate companies seeking to make a social impact to partner with us to address community needs. With your generous support, we’re able to make a real difference to the lives of the most marginalised people in WA by addressing the causes of vulnerability.”

Jen Park and Michael Chester,
Co-CEOs, Uniting WA



Creating connections that count.

We held our inaugural Connections that Count event in March 2024, bringing together supporters to learn about three domestic violence and homelessness services for women run by Uniting WA.

Thanks to generous supporters HLB Mann Judd and MinterEllison, our guests were treated to stunning views overlooking Elizabeth Quay and The Esplanade. In “Shark Tank” style format, our audience heard presentations about three important Uniting WA programs and were then invited to pledge their support.

We created connections and raised more than \$6,000 to support services:

- **The Together Program:** transitional housing and supports for mothers experiencing homelessness and their babies.
- **Wyn Carr House:** a soon-to-be-completed transitional housing facility supported by wrap around services for older women who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- **Moorditj Yorga:** a support program for First Nations women who have experienced or are at risk of family and domestic violence.

Helping communities thrive.

Philanthropy is a major force behind Uniting WA's ability to uplift communities. While we receive government funding for essential services, it is the generous support of donors—whether through financial contributions or in-kind donations—that allows us to go the extra mile for our clients and communities.

The generosity of philanthropy helps communities thrive:

- **\$1.2 million** via three donor grants for Uniting WA's pilot The Together Program, helping keep mothers and their babies together and out of homelessness
- **\$100,000** for food supplies, repairs and a new Food Rescue van at Tranby Engagement Hub for people experiencing homelessness
- **\$40,000** for the refurbishment of Uniting WA's crisis accommodation facility, Koort Boodja
- **\$60,000** towards the redevelopment of Uniting WA's Wyn Carr House, a transitional accommodation and support service for older women experiencing homelessness
- **\$12,000** for community housing program furniture
- **\$17,000** in housing maintenance and furniture for our disability accommodation services
- **\$8,000** for children and young people play therapy resources.

The things money can't buy

- The joy of children in Out of Home Care programs who received laptops, play equipment, furniture and free tickets to major outings like the circus, cricket games and a visit to Eagles HQ
- The delight of Individualised Services Participants enjoying a Christmas celebration
- The gratitude of domestic violence victim-survivors who participated in capacity-building workshops.

Stay updated on all we achieve with your support by subscribing to our newsletter.





Uniting WA team members and guests at Koort Boodja community morning tea

Koort Boodja community liaison.

Uniting WA held a community morning tea for local residents, community partners, team members and clients of our crisis accommodation facility, Koort Boodja, to acknowledge the significant role community connection plays in running this essential service.

The Koort Boodja team regularly liaises with neighbours to mitigate any concerns and ensure the smooth operation of the service.

Koort Boodja, which means “heart, land” in Noongar language, is a low-barrier crisis service providing temporary accommodation and intensive 1:1 support for people experiencing homelessness.

Uniting WA acknowledges a Department of Communities grant to carry out site improvements at Koort Boodja, including better safety and security, landscaping and new furnishings.

Building sector capacity to respond to child sexual abuse.

2021 Australian of the Year, Grace Tame, captivated conference participants at the 2024 WA Child Sexual Abuse Therapeutic Treatment Services (CSATS) and Indigenous Health Services (IHS) roundtable event.

Ms Tame commended Support Workers in the sector for their dedication under challenging conditions and emphasised the difficulties survivors of sexual abuse and their families face in navigating the system.



Grace Tame at CSATS and IHS roundtable event

Organised by Uniting WA and Phoenix Support and Advocacy Inc, the two-day event was attended by over 200 Western Australian sector delegates from locations including Geraldton, the Pilbara, Bunbury, Broome, Roebourne, Carnarvon and Peel.

The CSATS IHS roundtable offered clinicians the chance to network and learn from each other's experiences within their very specialised area of practice.

Uniting WA acknowledges the Department of Communities for providing funding to run this sector capacity building event.



Members of Uniting WA's CAFTS team with keynote speaker Grace Tame

Advocating to drive systemic change.

Highlighting funding priorities.

At a pre-State Budget press conference in February 2024, Uniting WA Co-CEO Michael Chester joined Shelter WA CEO Kath Snell in urging the State Government to boost funding for homelessness services, following the release of statistics by Shelter WA showing soaring demand for homelessness services in Western Australia.

The Hon John Carey MLA's subsequent announcement of a \$92.2 million funding boost for homelessness services was welcome news.

Amplifying unheard voices

August 2023: Uniting WA attended Parliament House in Canberra to present a Submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into the worsening rental crisis in Australia

October 2023: Uniting WA Submission to the Department of Social Services on the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Financial Wellbeing Collective

Uniting WA, along with Anglicare WA, is a lead agency of the Financial Wellbeing Collective (FWC). The FWC is a collective of organisations across the Perth metropolitan area, offering help and advice to people experiencing financial hardship. Services include emergency relief, financial counselling, financial and small business coaching, energy coaching and community education.

Demand for Energy Ahead energy coaching continues to grow. In-home audit appointments are fully booked weeks ahead, and we have brought on two new Community Engagement Officers to deliver community workshops from Geraldton to Albany and as far east as Kalgoorlie.



Team members at an Energy Ahead workshop



Uniting WA Co-CEO, Michael Chester and Shelter WA CEO, Kath Snell in a pre Budget call for an urgent boost to State Government funding for homelessness services.



Uniting WA team member at a Reconciliation Week 2024 event.

89% employee satisfaction rating

The primary drivers of this rating were: supportive colleagues, culture and leadership

- 2024 Uniting WA Employee Engagement Survey

People of Uniting WA.

A shared commitment to social impact.

At the heart of Uniting WA is a dedicated team of more than 400 employees, supported by a network of more than 200 volunteers with a shared commitment to support the most vulnerable people in our community.

Uniting team at a glance

Our strength is our diversity and we embrace it in all its forms, recognising the value of unique perspectives and experiences.

419 Team members	8 Board members
169 Full-time	4 Executive leaders
192 Part-time	19 General and senior managers
58 Casual	217 Volunteers
7 Identify as First Nations Peoples	6,364 Hours volunteered

Shaping our inclusive future

We were delighted to welcome First Nations Cultural Advisor, Tony Calgaret, to the team in late 2023. Tony provides a First Nations lens on the work delivered by Uniting WA, helping to inform cultural awareness and literacy among team members.

Tony has collaborated with internal teams to develop new initiatives which are culturally responsive to First Nations service users, and he also leads the development of the Uniting WA First Nations Strategy.

Tony's 40-year career has included more than 20 years in Federal and State Government departments including Centrelink and (now) Department of Communities, as well as 10 years managing his own consultancy and six years in the Out of Home Care sector.

He was also instrumental in establishing the Bunbury-based Southern Aboriginal Corporation and Noongar Language and Cultural Centre.

Celebrating 25 years of service at Uniting WA

As a Support Worker with decades of experience, Linda Gebbetis finds nothing more satisfying than successfully advocating on behalf of her clients. It's the ongoing desire to help clients lead their best lives that keeps Linda motivated and passionate about her work at Uniting WA, even after 25 years.

Starting out as a carer working with vulnerable children, Linda went on to secure full-time work when the agency she worked for merged with others to become Uniting WA (then UnitingCare West) in 2006.

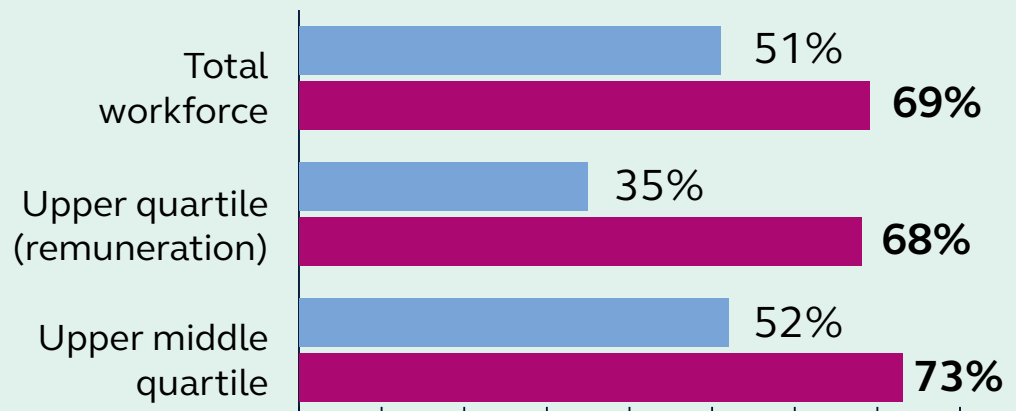
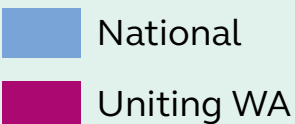
Linda was supported to complete her Certificate III and Certificate IV in Community Services and went on to become a supervisor across a number of Uniting WA homes.

"I have gained a lot of valuable knowledge and it's an awesome organisation to work for, I love my job and still find it both challenging and rewarding." said Linda.

Addressing gender inequity

A recent Gender Equity Report from the Federal Government's Workplace Gender Equality Agency found that Uniting WA is actively addressing the gender pay gap and achieving positive outcomes for women in leadership roles.

Percentage of women

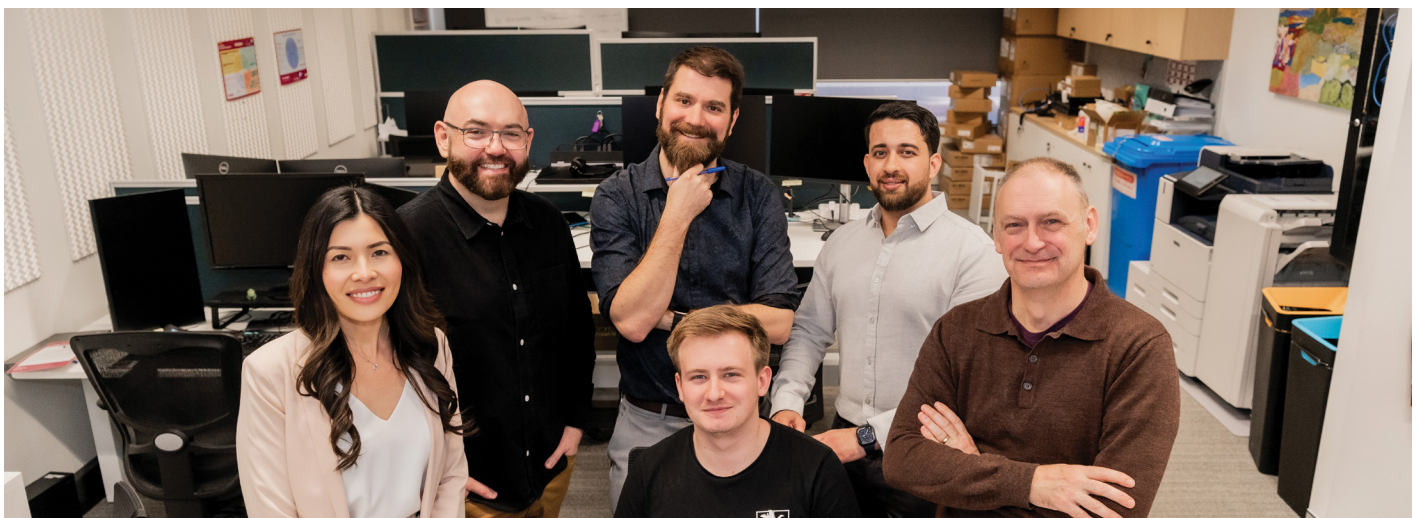


Ensuring sustainability for the future: Uniting WA's ICT strategy.

Our digital strategy continues to grow and evolve, utilising technology to enhance operations and service delivery. Over the past two years, the Digital and Change Management teams have completed over 30 projects.

Alongside the Information Communication Technology (ICT) service desk, a data and systems team now analyses data to improve decision-making in services and operations. Additionally, a newly established Change Management Office will oversee the transition of teams through new processes and systems.

Key achievements this year:	Description	Benefits
New finance system	Streamlines financial processes, reduces manual errors, provides real-time financial insights	Improved financial accuracy and insights
Social housing platform	Fully integrated housing management system with a powerful suite of tools	Exceeds regulatory requirements, gains insights into operations, facilitates exemplary customer service
Enhanced HR system	Automates many HR functions	More efficient and responsive People Services department
ICT network and infrastructure renewal	Ensures a secure and robust network	Supports the needs of a fast-growing organisation





Both images:
ICT team members

Sustainability in action.

New Joondalup Office

Meeting the growing needs of the northern suburbs

Uniting WA opened a new office in Joondalup in June 2024, offering a variety of services for children and families, people experiencing domestic violence, and those seeking mental health recovery coaching, financial counselling and emergency relief funding.

The new Joondalup location offers more convenient access and welcoming, fit-for-purpose spaces to better meet the growing needs of the local community.

Green fleet

Driving efficiency and protecting our planet

Uniting WA proudly launched a new Green Fleet of hybrid vehicles in August 2023, which are now used daily by our team.

Achieving a range of up to 900 kilometres, the vehicles are significantly reducing emissions and minimising our carbon footprint.

Despite global supply chain challenges, the Green Fleet now makes up almost 30% of our total fleet, with five more vehicles set to arrive next year. This transition is providing environmental benefits as well as cost savings for the organisation.



Uniting WA team members with one of our green fleet vehicles



Uniting WA Co-CEOs with Member for Joondalup Emily Louise Hamilton MLA



Uniting WA Joondalup office

Better Together with First Nations peoples.

In October 2023, Uniting WA embarked on the development of a new Uniting WA “Better Together” First Nations Strategy led by its newly-appointed Cultural Advisor, Tony Calgaret. Team members from across the organisation nominated to volunteer their skills, knowledge and time to the development of the strategy.

The Better Together First Nations Strategy aligns with the targets and outcomes of the Federal Government’s Closing the Gap strategy. When completed and endorsed by Uniting WA’s Board, it will be a guiding document for the delivery of services to First Nations people.

“My role is to assist my Uniting WA colleagues to put a First Nations cultural lens on our work and ensure we are culturally responsive to First Nations users of Uniting WA services.”

- Tony Calgaret, Cultural Advisor, Uniting WA

Safeguarding and quality.

In May 2024, 22 senior leaders and Board Members attended a “Right on Board” workshop delivered by Dr Alan Hough PhD, Adjunct Professor from the Living with Disability Research Centre at La Trobe University. The workshop provided valuable insight into governing and managing with a focus on human rights, quality and safeguarding.

Uniting WA is a member of the UnitingCare Safeguarding Community of Practice. This national forum provides opportunities to collaborate with other UnitingCare service providers across Australia to share lessons learned and best-practice insights to maximise our effectiveness.

And we’re upskilling our workforce to safely and respectfully support the increasing number of people who are experiencing family and domestic violence.

From the top down, Uniting WA is firmly committed to building a culture of practice excellence and continuous improvement, ensuring that all of the services we deliver are safe, effective, connected and person-centred.



Cooking up a recipe for change.

Uniting WA launched a unique team-building and social impact activity, Recipe for Change, this year.

Recipe for Change offers community and corporate groups the opportunity to learn about the challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness, speaking with people with lived experience and team members who work on the ground. Participants then take part in a fun team-building challenge to create and cook nutritious meals which are served to Tranby service users the following day.

Recipe for Change is not just about camaraderie and team building. The sessions challenge preconceived notions of homelessness, shedding light on the complex interplay of factors that contribute to it—such as financial hardship, mental health issues, domestic violence and the lack of affordable housing.



202
Participants
and aspiring
chefs

1,080
meals cooked
for Tranby
Engagement
Hub

5 Lived
Experience
Advocates
who shared
their stories

almost
\$40,000
raised for vital
programs at
Uniting WA

Feedback from Recipe for Change participants:

“Thank you so much for hosting our team yesterday, we all had an awesome time supporting the work that Uniting WA does for those in the community.” Imdex

“Recipe for Change seamlessly blended team building with purpose, strengthening our team while making a difference in our community.” Australian Gas Infrastructure Group

“In a small way, we helped a fantastic community organisation that offers a broad range of critical support for the vulnerable and disadvantaged, yet at times struggles to provide these life-saving and life changing services. But I can’t help thinking the benefit to us - as individuals and an organisation - is in reality probably even greater. From a company perspective there are so many positive layers to this hands-on style of corporate giving.” HLB MANN JUDD

Both images:
Participants at a 'Recipe
for Change' workshop



Volunteers enliven our communities.

Last year, 217 Uniting WA volunteers delivered 6,364 hours of service across various programs, averaging 34 hours per volunteer annually.

Our volunteers offer their support across a range of roles including administration, mentors in Group Foster Care homes, operating Food Rescue vans and cargo carts, and helping in the kitchen at Tranby Engagement Hub.



A Uniting WA volunteer at Tranby Engagement Hub

What our volunteers say:

“I absolutely love volunteering at Uniting WA, I love everything about it.” - Maddie

“I love volunteering for Uniting WA because I feel like I am a part of something bigger than myself.” - Vicki

“I love volunteering with Uniting WA because it gives me a sense of purpose and I get satisfaction from helping those in need.” - Kate

What our clients say about our volunteers:

“I love seeing the volunteers do what they do, they feed us very well.” - Daniel

“I always know that I am going to get the support I need in the kitchen when the volunteers are on.” - Sharlene

“I don’t think you could ever have enough volunteers, they lower the anxiety, they bring up the spirit.” - Michael



Uniting WA team members and Lived Experience Advocates

Amplifying the voice of lived experience

Uniting WA integrates the voices of clients and leverages the insights of those with lived experience to drive advocacy and systemic change.

Influencing hearts and minds

We work with a pool of Lived Experience Advocates who share their experiences and valuable insights with community, corporate and school groups.

Advocates with lived experience of homelessness talk to young leaders of tomorrow at Wesley College's Katitjin program and they also help run the Recipe for Change team building days at Tranby Engagement Hub, where community and business groups learn about homelessness.

Making Uniting WA a more supportive landlord

As a Community Housing provider, Uniting WA has established regular channels for feedback via Uniting Tenant Advisory Forums. The feedback is used to improve the support we provide, which assists tenants' wellbeing and helps them sustain their tenancies.

Improving support for people with disability

Uniting WA runs quarterly Stakeholder Reference Groups, which bring together NDIS Participants to give feedback about improving the services they receive. In 2024, the reference groups contributed to re-designing Person-Centred Plans.

Inspiring people.

Uniting WA opens the doors for students to immerse themselves in activities that build an understanding of the issues affecting our community, fostering compassion and social responsibility in the leaders of the future.

Uniting WA has been supporting the Katijin program at Wesley College for 16 years. The program culminates with students holding a social justice photography exhibition at the end of each term. Uniting schools also support our fundraising efforts through their Cozy Toes Sock and Cards that Count appeals.

We are delighted to partner with:

- Wesley College
- Scotch College
- Tranby College
- St Stephens College Duncraig
- St Stephens College Carramar
- Presbyterian Ladies College (PLC)
- Methodist Ladies College (MLC)
- Penrhos College.

Thank you for your generous donations:

- **\$15,705** from Uniting schools
- **\$20,652** community and congregations
- **\$75,532** raised through community engagement in total.



Wesley College social justice photography exhibition



Uniting WA team members with gifts from our Christmas Toy Appeal

Brightening Christmas for families in need.

Thanks to the dedication of over 80 volunteers, our Christmas food drive collected and packed more than 8,000 items, enabling us to distribute 480 food hampers to individuals and families facing financial hardship during the holiday season.

The Christmas Toy Appeal, which supports families in need and children in our foster care and family group homes, provided over 200 gifts.

Guiding the organisation.



Erica Haddon
Chairperson



Alison McCubbin
Deputy Chair



Ralph Addis CA GAICD
Board Member



Jane Barker
Board Member



Ron Chalmers
Board Member (Retired)



Isabel de Jesus
Board Member



Lisa Fini
Board Member



Chris Hunt
Board Member (Retired)



David Kyle
Board Member



Liam Roche
Board Member



Alison Xamon
Board Member

**The Uniting WA Board oversees our direction and governance.
The Board is appointed by the Uniting Church Western Australia Synod.**

Meet our Executive and Management Team



Michael Chester
Co-Chief Executive Officer



Jen Park
Co-Chief Executive Officer

Justin Bunter
Chief Financial Officer

Sue Thomas
Chief Governance Officer

Ross Bentong
General Manager,
Organisational Solutions & ICT

Simon Bibby
General Manager,
Performance & Employee Relations

Troy Morse
Former General Manager,
Property & Assets

Jennifer Snell
Former General Manager,
Service & Quality

Simon Tiverios
General Manager,
Property & Assets

Rhiannon Wright
General Manager,
Services and Social Impact

Alisha Aitken-Radburn
Senior Manager,
Advocacy

Annette Boyle
Former Senior Manager,
Community Engagement & Education

Jess Brodie-Hall
Senior Manager,
Communications & Engagement

Fiona Cafferty
Senior Manager,
Children & Young People

Katherine Campbell
Senior Manager,
Individualised Services

Danni Evans
Senior Manager,
Homelessness Support

Vanessa Gwerder
Former Senior Manager,
Reintegration

Michelle King
Senior Manager,
Individualised Services

Gertie Murphy
Senior Manager,
Risk & Compliance

Narelle Morgan
Senior Manager,
People Services

Louise Naylor
Senior Manager,
Community Housing

Tara Seaward
Senior Manager,
Strengthening Families

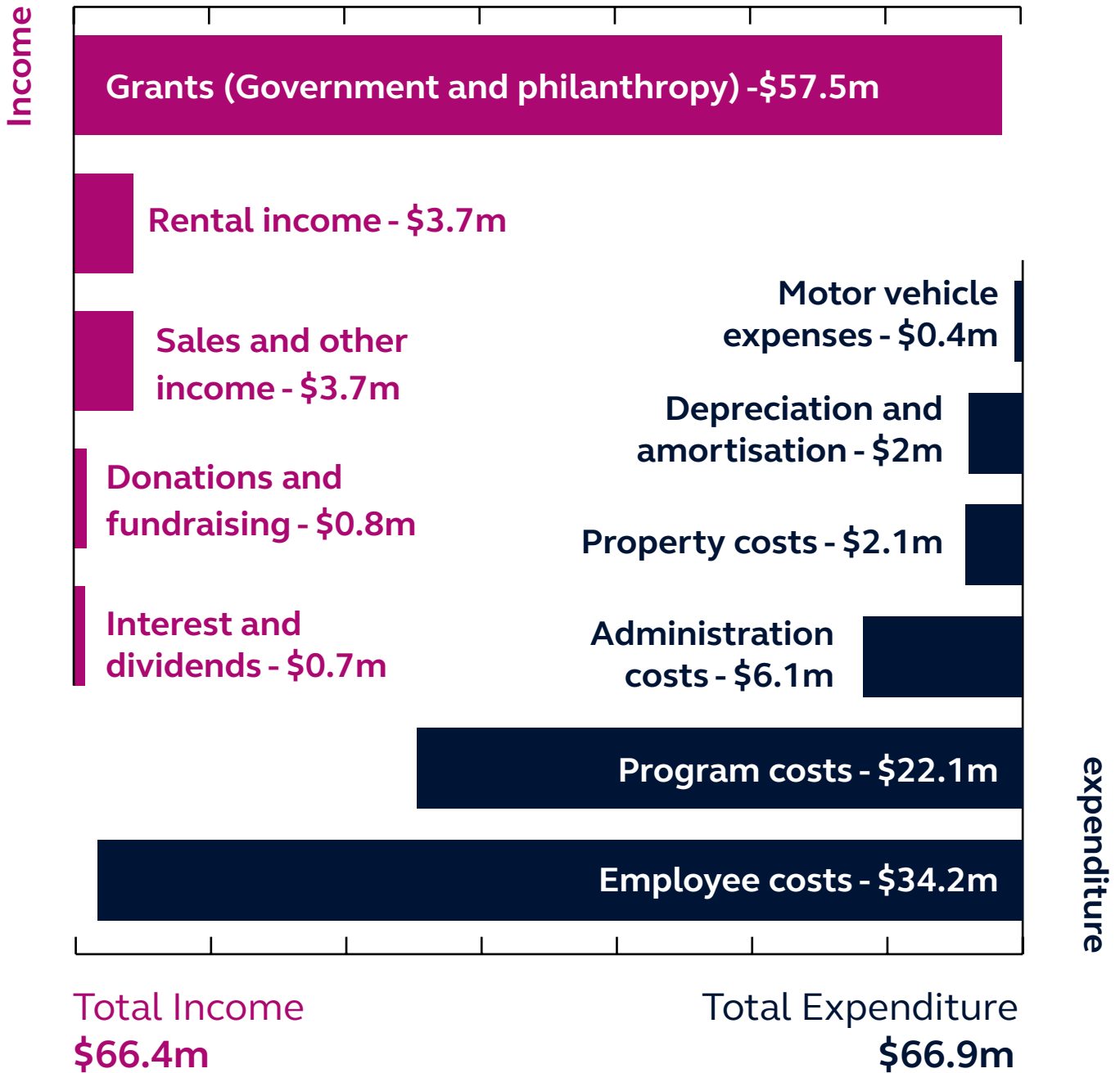
Balbeer Sidhu
Senior Manager,
Financial Wellbeing

Roland Soo
Former Senior Manager,
Finance

Erin Tunnicliffe
Senior Manager,
Transitional Housing

Emma White
Former Senior Manager,
Transitioning from Homelessness

Financial summary.



Uniting WA People
Services team members



Our partners and supporters.

We acknowledge the dozens of community and corporate partners whose contributions of time, energy, skills, in-kind assistance, pro bono support and generous donations have had a transformational impact on the people we serve. Thank you.

Major funding bodies

We recognise and extend our gratitude to our key funding partners.

Commonwealth Government

- Department of Health and Aged Care
- Department of Social Services
- National Disability Insurance Scheme.

WA Government

- Department of Communities
- Department of Health
- Department of Justice
- Lotterywest
- Mental Health Commission
- WA Primary Health Alliance.

Local Government

- City of Stirling.

Major philanthropic funders

- Mercy Foundation
- Minderoo Foundation
- Sisters of St John of God
- Stan Perron Charitable Foundation
- Uniting Church in the City.



Guests at our inaugural
'Connections that
Count' event



Together we can do more.

Learn more about how you can get involved at unitingwa.org.au

Volunteer

Our amazing volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. We need volunteers in all kinds of roles and locations. We also welcome groups as part of corporate volunteering days. Help us build furniture and play equipment, paint, landscape and do so much more to enliven communities.

E: volunteers@unitingwa.org.au
P: 1300 663 298

Team building

Learn first-hand about the issues surrounding homelessness and take part in a purposeful team building exercise, where you'll cook meals for Tranby Engagement Hub service users.

E: partners@unitingwa.org.au

Foster care

If you've got mumness or dadness to spare, please consider opening your hearts and homes to children in need. You'll find details about the support you'll receive as a Uniting WA foster carer on our website, or get in touch via email for more information.

E: fostering@unitingwa.org.au

Donate

Your donations help maximise the impact of the services we provide to the most vulnerable in our community. Any gift, no matter how big or small, makes a difference. Please consider making a bequest in your will or fundraising for our services.

E: partners@unitingwa.org.au
P: (08) 9220 1222

Partner

Partner with Uniting WA to maximise value for your organisation or brand while championing social justice issues to improve the lives of people facing hardship.

E: partners@unitingwa.org.au
P: (08) 9220 1222

Uniting WA Co-CEO, Jen Park
with guests at Koort Boodja
community morning tea



Contact Us

If you'd like to find out more about our organisation and work, please contact us at:

P: 1300 663 298

E: hello@unitingwa.org.au

Postal address

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Perth WA 6838



[@unitingWA](#)

Learn more at

unitingwa.org.au

ABN 75 467 729 203