



Statement of Missional Intent 2025-2026

Intent (n): what one is determined
to do or bring about



Uniting Church
SYNOD OF NSW & ACT

Uniting

Uniting's foundation

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



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Introduction

This Statement of Missional Intent articulates Uniting's purpose, strategy and values to its collaborators, partners and stakeholders, including:

- The people we serve
- The Uniting Church in NSW and ACT – the Synod and the members, congregations and Presbyteries within the Synod
- Our people – Uniting employees and volunteers
- Government and the wider community.

Uniting NSW.ACT is a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) – a charitable organisation recognised under charity law and tax law, with its main purpose being the provision of relief from poverty or distress to support vulnerable people in need.

People are at the heart of everything we do, beginning with the people we serve, and including our employees, volunteers and the wider community. As we serve, we seek to disrupt the systems that create entrenched disadvantage.

Create a better future for more people and communities by disrupting entrenched disadvantage.

Uniting NSW.ACT contributes to the work and mission of the Uniting Church through social justice advocacy, community services and spiritual care to serve humanity and create an inclusive, connected and just world.

Our strategy reflects Uniting’s role in supporting the commitments identified in the Synod’s Future Directions.



October 2024

Strategy and purpose

Uniting NSW.ACT contributes to the work and mission of the Uniting Church through social justice advocacy, community services and spiritual care to serve humanity and create an inclusive, connected and just world.

The Uniting Church in Australia affirms that the pursuit of social justice is a shared responsibility of individuals, congregations, councils and the whole Church.

Uniting is committed to encouraging and supporting the Church to live out this aspect of discipleship, while also working directly on some specific social justice issues on behalf of the Church, as determined by the Synod.

We provide services for people through all ages and stages of life, and drive solutions to systemic issues so people experiencing disadvantage can live their best lives.

SOCIAL IMPACT
Drive solutions to systemic issues that prevent people and communities from living their best lives.

First Nations people and communities are strong, thriving and self-determining.

COMMUNITIES
Deliver more services to more places, supporting people and communities to thrive.



SENIORS
Enhance and evolve our support for seniors, particularly those experiencing social and economic exclusion.

Our strategy is enabled through

OUR TEAM
Being the best place to work, where employees thrive and feel safe and confident to be themselves.

TRANSFORMATION
Transforming the way we work to enable us to help more people in need.

INVEST FOR GOOD
Investing for social impact from sustainable funding sources.

In 2022, Uniting refreshed its 10 Year Strategy in response to the **Synod’s Future Directions Strategy**. Uniting’s purpose and mission, articulated in that strategy, is to:

“Create a better future for more people and communities by disrupting entrenched disadvantage.”

The Future Directions for the People of God on the Way

The commitments articulated in the **Future Directions for the People of God on the Way** and the associated resource framework is born of the mindset that prayer will be the foundation for all the Church's discussions and decisions about resourcing Future Directions. These Future Directions were formed in prayer and will only be fulfilled with humility to the living God, in and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Future Directions for the People of God on the Way renews the Uniting Church's commitment to sharing our hope in the Gospel with the communities of NSW and the ACT through worship, witness and service.

The Future Directions reaffirm the Synod's direction-setting commitments to:

A commitment to rural and regional ministry

A commitment to ministry with people in the first third of their lives

A commitment to walking together with First Peoples and to the covenant with Congress

A commitment to living cross-culturally as a multicultural, intercultural Church

An ongoing and active commitment to the stewardship of the earth

An ongoing commitment to working with presbyteries to organise ourselves to promote growth within and through our congregations



Foundations

Uniting's Christian foundations ensure clarity of purpose and a commitment to the values and ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia. These foundations in the Uniting Church not only shape Uniting's mission but also empower Uniting with a voice to prophetically challenge injustice, exclusion, and the systems that perpetuate disadvantage.

Proudly built over many decades through the faith, witness, foresight, and generosity of many congregations and individual members of the Uniting Church and its founding denominations, today Uniting celebrates the diversity of both our people and the people we serve. Uniting's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion - welcoming people of all faiths, and none - ensures ongoing renewal of its purpose through connection to the needs of the world today.

Uniting's foundation statement: **"Christ invites us to serve humanity to create an inclusive, connected, and just world"** shapes our strategy and actions, inviting the people of Uniting to join in the mission of God in the world as they serve. Uniting is committed to the formation of its leaders and employees. Uniting's Formation Framework integrates the values, behaviours and beliefs of the Uniting Church with the values, practices and culture of Uniting. Formation describes the intentional process which affects a person holistically (mind, body and spirit) to form their skills, relationships and the perspective they bring to their work.

Uniting NSW.ACT is governed by a Board constituted under the by-laws of the Synod. The Uniting Board has oversight of the purpose and goals of the organisation. The Mission Governance and Collaboration Committee (MGCC), a sub-committee of the Uniting Board, assists the Uniting Board in oversight and monitoring responsibilities over Uniting's mission and missional culture, and its alignment and relationship with the Synod. The MGCC also promotes and supports collaboration across other parts of the Uniting Church, and oversees the work in advancing Aboriginal self-determination, justice, reconciliation, inclusion, and engagement, and of Uniting's innovation, research, and advocacy priorities.

The Mission Directorate of Uniting works to bring the Uniting Church's vision and values to life through Uniting's culture, relationships and work. The provision of spiritual care, which respects and supports all people, is central to Uniting's purpose. The Chaplaincy and Pastoral Practice team within the Mission Directorate, provides spiritual care and Christian religious care for residents, clients and employees across Uniting's services. The team also includes Civil Chaplains who, supported by both Uniting and government funding, serve in hospitals, mental health services and prisons.

As part of the continuing witness of the Uniting Church, Uniting works to challenge injustice and the systems that impose and perpetuate disadvantage in our communities. Through the work of advocacy, research, media, government relations and social innovation, Uniting seeks to influence policy and drive positive change toward a more just society.

The courageous actions of Uniting Church people in generations past, continues to inspire Uniting's work today and the values that our people are committed to being - **compassionate, respectful, imaginative, and bold.**

In Luke 6:20-22, Jesus delivers four 'Beatitudes', which outline a series of blessings for the poor, hungry, and marginalised in society. By declaring that the poor, hungry, and sorrowful are blessed, Jesus is turning the world's understanding of power and wealth upside down. He is highlighting the inherent value and dignity of every human being, regardless of their social status or material wealth. In so doing, he challenges the societal norms that maintain and perpetuate inequality and calls for a radical transformation of our values and priorities. Jesus' approach to upending this inequity is one of love, compassion, and justice, calling us to stand in solidarity with the marginalised and to work towards creating a more just and equitable society.

Foundations in practice

Our values

Uniting's values are deeply rooted in the theology and ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia. These values are not just guiding principles, but an expression of the Church's call to serve others, especially people experiencing disadvantage. Shaped by the Church's witness and mission, Uniting's people strive to embody these values every day, while upholding an unwavering commitment to quality, safety, and service excellence.

In partnering with First Nations peoples and communities, we uphold the Church's commitment to facilitate justice, reconciliation, and self-determination, ensuring that our work continues to reflect the values that have long defined the Uniting Church in Australia.

Our values guide our work every day.

Compassionate

We are nurturing, generous and thoughtful in our words and deeds.

Imaginative

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

Respectful

We act with integrity, and open our hearts to all people without exception.

Bold

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

Our ethical principles

Our decision making is supported by our ethical framework:

Our ethics support our decisions.

Take **accountability** for making the biggest positive difference for people.

Give preference to the interests of the most **disadvantaged.**

Listen, understand and then act with courage, empowering people through **self-determination.**

Adopt and apply the highest professional **standards** within our constraints.

Address organisational **sustainability** so that we can continue our mission.

Seek **transparency** in communications with our stakeholders.

Acknowledge that our decisions seek **equity**, recognising that equity and equality are not always the same.

Our missional principles

Our missional principles connect people working in Uniting to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the theology and ethos of the Uniting Church. These principles are foundational to the formation of Uniting's people and guide our work and decision making every day. These principles also support Uniting's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, welcoming all people, exactly as they are.

Inspire people so that everyone is valued, particularly those most excluded.

The dignity of the human person

We recognise the essential worth and rights of every person, especially those whose rights are discounted or who are excluded from full participation in society. We affirm that people and their flourishing must be at the heart of all we do.

Needs of the whole person

We recognise that human beings are whole people with their unique physical, social, psychological and spiritual needs and strengths.

Social and economic inclusion

We acknowledge the corrosive effects of inequality and affirm that the poor and the marginalised must be the focus of our particular concern.

Enliven communities so that all people contribute and have life-giving relationships.

Community wellbeing

We will actively seek conditions that enhance the good of all and which contribute to communal wellbeing. We recognise that to flourish people need to be a valued part of a community and engage in healthy and mutually life-giving relationships.

Unity

We inhabit one planet and affirm the mutuality and interdependence between all people, our fellow creatures and the earth.

Confront injustice to ensure all people are included as they are and have 'life to the full'.

Promotion of human rights

We affirm the inherent dignity and worth of every human person, which being created in the image of God bestows on them. Each person, therefore, has inalienable human rights, which we are bound to observe and safeguard.

Reconciliation

We need to listen, seeking to understand people and communities, as we strive towards inclusion of all races, cultures and religions and celebrate multiculturalism as part of our Uniting Church and Australian identity. This must include recognition of the rights and dignity of First Peoples and their unique place in our nation.

Solidarity

We will promote the active participation of those affected by injustice as we seek to influence social policy and confront the causes of inequality and disadvantage.

The work we will do

Our Chief Executive, Tracey Burton, writes:

“Uniting is 3 years into execution of our 10 Year Strategy to ‘create a better future for more people, communities and regions in need by disrupting entrenched disadvantage’. Progress in 2024 included ensuring many of the foundations needed to deliver the strategy are in place, together with our continued commitment to serving individuals, families and communities, often those most experiencing disadvantage.

Our efforts in 2024 have seen Uniting contribute towards disrupting entrenched disadvantage. Leveraging our reputation, footprint and experience across human services and communities, we are seeing Uniting's influence at the system level with changes to social policy across many areas in line with our systems aspirations, especially in Fair Treatment, where our investment in advocacy and partnerships has been long term. We have also established capabilities and foundations for long-term impact by deepening partnerships and building government relationships to enable our work in reducing the number of children in out-of-home care, removing non-financial barriers to participation in early learning, and successful transitions to independence for young adults leaving the out-of-home care system.

After partnering with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation Goodradigbee, we were pleased and proud to see 30 First Nations children, young people and their carers transition from Uniting's services, an important shift in the journey to self-determination for First Nations people.

‘People at the heart of everything we do’ stood out as a theme in 2024 both by way of our teams and the people we serve, and in relation to our achievements and challenges. We have balanced meeting significant operational realities, with longer-term investment in the faith formation of leaders across Uniting, targeted capability uplifts, some systems improvements and a continued focus on safety.”





Our services

Communities

Counselling and mediation

Mental health services

Homelessness services

Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC)

Disability services

Local Area Coordination (NDIS)

Helping people with disability, their families and carers to access NDIS and connect with service and supports in their community.

Early intervention services

Helping families address risk factors before they become more serious safety and wellbeing concerns.

Early learning services

Providing safe, inclusive, and nurturing early education environments that support children's development and prepare them for school and life.

Intensive Family Services (IFS)

Providing targeted support for families experiencing complex challenges, to help keep children safe at home and strengthening family functioning.

Youth transitions services

Supporting young people leaving state care, exiting the justice system, or experiencing homelessness to move towards independence through casework, education, training, and housing support.

Permanency Support Program (PSP)

An intensive in-home support program for families to prevent placement in out-of-home care from birth to 17 years old.

Foyer Central

A purpose-built accommodation and support service for young people aged 18-22 who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness, helping them access education, employment, and life skills training in a stable living environment.

New Parent and Infant Network (Newpin)

An intensive therapeutic program that works with parents whose children are in out-of-home care or at risk of removal, aiming to safely restore children to their families and break cycles of intergenerational trauma.

Seniors Services

Retirement and independent living villages

Residential aged care homes

Home and community care

Uniting War Memorial Hospital

Spiritual and pastoral care services

Our holistic approach to support

Uniting takes a holistic approach to supporting individuals and families, recognising that challenges like domestic and family violence are often interconnected with other areas of life.

Support for people experiencing domestic violence is embedded across many of our services—such as Newpin, the Permanency Support Program (PSP), and Intensive Family Services. These services address a wide range of needs, including mental health, counselling, housing support, education and training, parenting, and trauma recovery. This integrated model ensures that when people connect with Uniting, they are supported in all aspects of their wellbeing, with tailored, wraparound support that recognises the complexity of their circumstances.

Emma's journey: A path to healing and empowerment

Emma, a mother of two young children, found herself in a challenging situation. After enduring years of domestic violence, she made the courageous decision to leave her abusive partner. However, the trauma had left her struggling with confidence in her parenting abilities and facing the risk of her children being placed in out-of-home care.

Seeking support, Emma was referred to Uniting's Newpin program. At the Newpin centre, she was welcomed into a safe, nurturing environment where she could begin to rebuild her life. The program's holistic approach meant that Emma received comprehensive support tailored to her unique needs.

Emma participated in therapeutic support groups that provided a space to process her experiences and heal from past trauma. These sessions helped her develop emotional resilience and a deeper understanding of her own needs and those of her children.

In parallel, Emma engaged in parenting education programs designed to enhance her skills and confidence as a mother.



Through guided sessions, she learned effective parenting strategies, the importance of bonding and attachment, and ways to create a safe and supportive home environment for her children.

Recognising the impact of domestic violence on Emma's wellbeing, the Newpin program provided integrated support to address these challenges. She received counselling services that focused on recovery from abuse, strategies for maintaining safety, and rebuilding self-esteem. Additionally, Uniting connected Emma with legal assistance and housing services to ensure her and her children's ongoing safety and stability.

A vital component of Emma's journey was the peer support network she found within the Newpin community. Engaging with other parents who had faced similar challenges provided her with a sense of belonging and mutual understanding. These relationships became a source of encouragement and strength, reinforcing the progress she was making.

Over time, with consistent support and her own determination, Emma experienced significant personal growth. She developed a secure attachment with her children, gained confidence in her parenting abilities, and established a stable, violence-free home. The holistic support provided by Uniting's Newpin program not only helped in restoring her family but also empowered her to envision and work towards a brighter future.

Note: This narrative is a composite based on typical experiences of clients engaged with Uniting's services. It does not reflect the life story of any one person.

Uniting's housing strategy

Our housing strategy is a component of Uniting's broader 10 year organisational strategy.

It reflects Uniting's mission-driven commitment to social justice, focusing on providing safe, affordable housing to populations experiencing disadvantage. Currently, accommodation services are heavily focused on retirement living communities. The strategy will allow Uniting to expand its reach and address unmet housing needs across other regions, consistent with the 10 Year Strategy, ensuring the organisation can respond to new opportunities as they arise in areas of need.

Uniting's housing strategy aims to build communities for older people, particularly those experiencing economic and social exclusion in targeted regions, and young people leaving state care through various delivery models, including innovative and flexible approaches that leverage our experience in providing support services. A key component of the strategy is to create more affordable housing for seniors, by increasing the number of homes available for low-cost rental.

Fundamental goals

1. Grow rental housing for seniors and state care leavers
2. Deliver low-cost rental housing and support services business model
3. Leverage innovation and partnerships for sustainable housing

Accommodation services through both our Seniors Services and Property and Housing Directorates include:

- 700 senior tenants on limited incomes (80% of whom are in social housing) through the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF)
- 68 housing communities dedicated to low-cost rentals for seniors, which currently provide 1,224 rental units, and will expand over time to 1,699
- A significant proportion of low-cost rentals in existing retirement and independent living villages, including new builds (e.g. 12 of the 65 apartments in McRae-McMahon Place, 20%, are part of Uniting's contribution to the NSW Government's SAHF program
- 245 units that have been made available for rent by converting villages to low-cost rental units.

Uniting also provides accommodation services to clients through the Communities Directorate. These include:

- Youth transition clients
- Specialist disability accommodation
- Family violence accommodation.



New affordable independent living villas in Port Macquarie, constructed and managed by Uniting.



The Moderator of the Uniting Church, Rev. Mata Havea Hiliau, Rev. Geoff Smith of Parramatta Uniting Church and Rev. Ken Day of St Stephen's Uniting Church, and Troy Byrnes of Uniting's advocacy team met with the NSW State government's Health Minister's Office to discuss the Drug Summit, the report and their hopes for a speedy and bold response from government.

Uniting's intention to disrupt entrenched disadvantage

At the heart of Uniting's mission and purpose is a bold intention: to challenge and break cycles of entrenched disadvantage and help build a more just and equitable society.

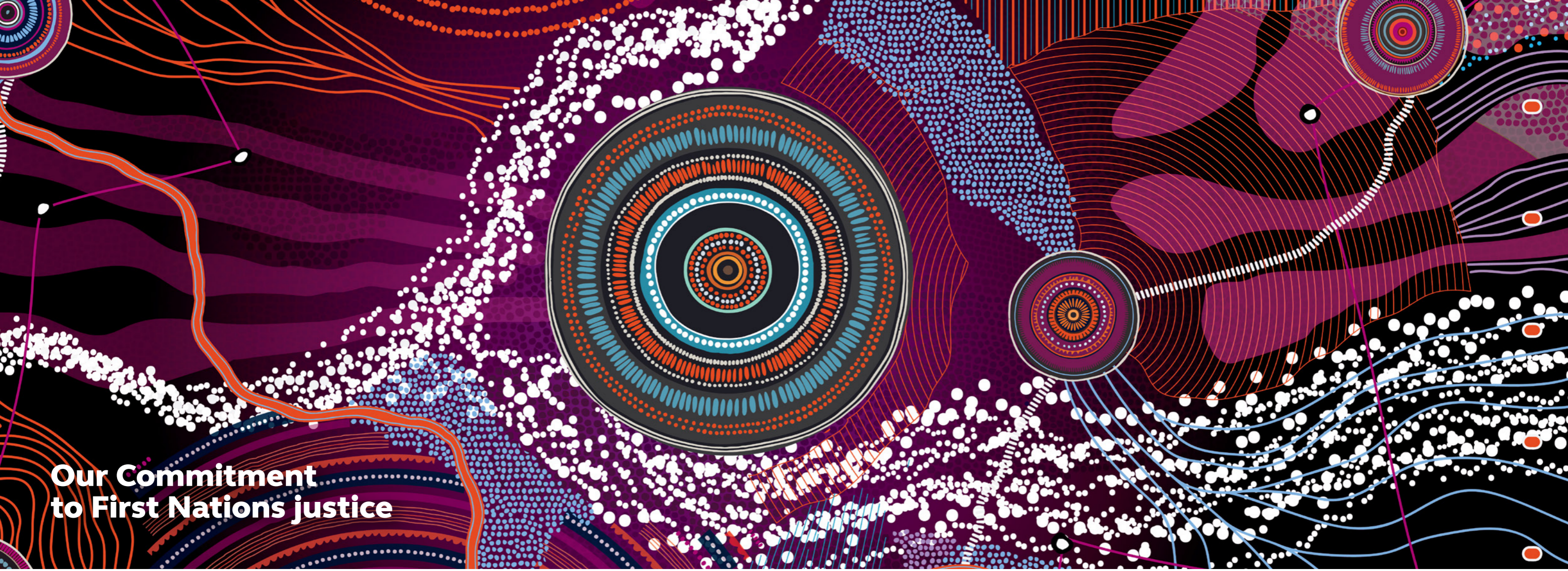
This work is grounded in the identity and mission of the Uniting Church and continues to be shaped by the priorities and commitments of the Synod.

Uniting holds a unique place in the community through our integration of practical support and work to create systemic change. We support people and communities facing complex challenges – offering care, support and services where the need is greatest – while also seeking to address the broader systems and structures that create and reinforce disadvantage.

Our approach combines four key levers for change: advocacy, thought leadership, partnership, and innovation. These are applied to ensure that we are not just meeting immediate needs but influencing long-term change.

This commitment is shaped by theological insight, grounded in research and evidence, and strengthened by deep engagement with individuals and communities. It reflects our heritage as a faith-based organisation and speaks to our ongoing responsibility to uphold the Church's vision to serve with compassion, justice and inclusion.

Our goal is to drive solutions to systemic issues that prevent people and communities from living their best lives.



Our Commitment to First Nations justice

We are committed to the process of reconciliation with First Nations peoples and will continue to implement Uniting's First Nations People and Place Strategy that acknowledges historical injustices and commits us to work towards creating a more equitable future.

This commitment is consistent with the Uniting Church in Australia's statements on reconciliation, and with the Synod of NSW & ACT's commitment to walking together with Australia's First Peoples, and to the Uniting Church Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

Our First Nations People and Place Strategy is built on five pillars:



Our People – grow our First Nations workforce and ensure First Nations staff are empowered to enrich their career experiences and capabilities



Our Capability – invest in enhancing our cultural capabilities to be a culturally safe, responsive and empowering employer, partner and service provider



Our Leadership – establish strong governance, including leadership practices that uphold our integrity and accountability to First Nations people and communities



Our Partners – purposefully invest in genuine and respectful partnerships with Aboriginal communities to promote and grow place-based and First Nations led responses



Our Impact - elevate the First Nations agenda and impact systems empowering First Nations people and communities through innovations, advocacy and research

Through delivering this strategy, we will:

- Improve the transition of services to Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)
- Continue our advocacy through membership in the Raise the Age campaign
- Grow our First Nations workforce and empower enriched experiences and capabilities via First Nations workforce strategy, retention strategy, and tailored development opportunities and career pathways
- Enhance cultural capabilities through a whole-of-organisation First Nations Capability Framework, expanded cultural appreciation learning programs for all staff, and the implementation of Aboriginal Service Delivery Principles
- Ensure healthy partnerships with Aboriginal communities to enable and grow place-based and First Nations led solutions through a new First Nations Partnership Framework, increased procurement from First Nations organisations, and engagement with First Nations communities in our property developments
- Embed strong governance including leadership practices, governance frameworks, shared accountability, and increasing our people leaders' cultural capability across the organisation
- Elevate the First Nations agenda and empower First Nations people and communities through innovation, advocacy and research, e.g. Voice to Parliament, ACCO Accelerator, and the development of First Nations research methodologies.

Key early learning advocates, service providers and NSW social services leaders have successfully urged the Federal Government to include solutions to the non-financial barriers to early learning.



Our strategy for systems change

Uniting recognises that to truly disrupt entrenched disadvantage, we must work to change the systems that create and sustain inequality.

Across all our work, we use our key capabilities – innovation, advocacy, thought leadership, and partnership – to pursue the following system changes:

- **Early Intervention – every child in early learning** - Every child in NSW participates in early childhood education and is school ready by the age of 5
- **Early Intervention – reducing entries to OOHHC** - The number of children in out-of-home care is reduced and the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is reduced by 45%
- **Youth transitions** - All young people leaving state care have appropriate accommodation and are engaged in education or employment by 25

- **Seniors** - All older people have access to care and support to live safely, be healthy and stay connected, for longer
- **Fair Treatment** - Possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use is decriminalised and investment in treatment, especially in rural and regional areas, in NSW and ACT is expanded
- **Climate change** - Uniting and the communities we are a part of leave as light a footprint on the environment as possible, and the impacts of climate change do not perpetuate disadvantage
- **First Nations People and Place Strategy** - First Nations people and communities at Uniting and beyond are strong, thriving and self-determining.

As we move into Horizon 2 (2026-2029) of Uniting's 10 Year Strategy, our focus will be on the following key areas of work, which all contribute towards driving systemic change and disrupting entrenched disadvantage.



Every child in early learning

Every child in NSW participates in early childhood education and is school ready by age of 5.

Every child deserves access to quality early learning which lays the foundation for lifelong wellbeing, learning and opportunity, yet many children experiencing economic and social exclusion face significant barriers to participation.

In Horizon 1, Uniting celebrated the achievement of the abolition of the Activity Test and formed significant partnerships with Goodstart, AbSec and Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC). In Horizon 2, Uniting will continue to shift the early learning narrative and policy response to focus on addressing the non-financial barriers that still prevent children from accessing early learning, including childcare deserts and inflexible delivery models. Our approach also includes piloting new early learning models designed to meet the needs of families and communities facing the greatest disadvantage.



Reducing entries into out-of-home care

The number of children in out-of-home care is reduced and the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is reduced by 45%.

Too many children are removed from their families and communities, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, who remain dramatically over-represented in the child protection system.

We are working in partnership with others to shift the child protection system, from one focused on risk and compliance, to one that prioritises prevention, child and family wellbeing, and long-term outcomes. This shift must be accompanied by changes to how the system is designed, funded, and evaluated.

Our key areas of focus include:

- Advocating for increased investment in early intervention, quality family preservation models and restoration services that keep families safely together.
- Working with peak bodies and other providers to engage with government ministers and departments on the need for systemic reform that centres on child wellbeing.
- Increased investment in ACCOs and enabling the development of a quality First Nations-led family support system. This includes Uniting playing a proactive role in transitioning our own services to ACCOs and using our experience and work with partners like Goodradigbee and AbSec to advocate for enhanced government support to achieve successful transitions.
- Funding Aboriginal-led models of support, including investing in new innovations co-designed with First Nations communities, implementing Aboriginal Service Delivery Principles across our own services, and using these learnings for thought leadership.
- Funding place-based approaches, including continuing to support sharing and learning across organisations that practice place-based work and investing in our own innovations and collaborations to try, test and learn and achieve positive impact.
- Collaborating with other organisations and government to shift commissioning approaches to enable more relational and strengths-based practice across the system.



Youth transitions

All young people leaving state care have appropriate accommodation and are engaged in education or employment by 25.

Young people leaving state care deserve the same opportunities, support, and sense of belonging that all young people need to thrive. Too often, they face unstable housing, limited access to education and employment, and disconnection from support systems.

In Horizon 2, Uniting will continue to focus on:

- Collaborating with partners to increase access to support housing solutions for young people leaving care, such as Foyers, headleases and other models that combine housing with wraparound support.
- Advocating for coaching support in out-of-home care from the age of 15, building on the lessons from our integration of the Extended Care Pilot into out-of-home care for the next service commissioning cycle, influencing service delivery beyond Uniting, across the sector more broadly.
- Shifting the narrative, around young care-leavers, to reflect a strengths-based approach, the importance of society continuing to be their “village”, and recognition as a ‘priority population’ with priority access to services, starting with universities.
- Advocating for greater transparency and certainty around Aftercare payments, as a way of creating supported housing models, and to also give young people agency and empowerment over their futures.



Seniors

All older people have access to care and support to live safely, be healthy and stay connected, for longer.

Every older person deserves to age with dignity. As Australia’s population ages, the need for inclusive, accessible, and sustainable models of care and housing become increasingly important.

In Horizon 2, key areas of work include:

- Now that Uniting has achieved a single representative body for aged care providers and the aged care funding reforms have been legislated, we will focus on building partnerships with retirement village operators. This will allow Uniting to systematise conversion of retirement villages into affordable retirement rentals, as a solution for older people experiencing housing insecurity, so all older people can age in place.
- Advocating for changes to the aged care accommodation supplement, so older people without means to pay, can continue to receive priority access to residential aged care services when needed.
- In collaboration with organisations like the Council on the Ageing (COTA), we will advocate for better solutions for older people experiencing poor mental health, social isolation and loneliness.



Fair Treatment

Possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use is decriminalised and investment in treatment, especially in rural and regional areas, in NSW and ACT is expanded.

Drug dependency should be treated as a health issue, not a criminal one, and Uniting continues to lead efforts to shift the response to drug use from punishment to care and treatment.

Following the recent NSW Drug Summit, the focus of the Fair Treatment campaign in Horizon 2 will be:

- Reframing the decriminalisation narrative to better reflect compassion, care services and evidence-based treatment.
- Achieving concrete improvements to the NSW Diversion system, ensuring people who use drugs are directed toward care and support, not the justice system.
- Securing the permanent implementation of drug checking, including expansion to community-based drug checking services.
- Expanding existing needle syringe programs in Lismore and Western Sydney to include small, supervised injecting spaces, helping reduce harm and connect people to health services.
- Opening of a new rehabilitation service in Dubbo, increasing access to care in regional NSW.
- Advocating for police to carry naloxone or having it available in their first-aid kits, ensuring emergency responders are equipped to save lives.
- Securing increased investment in treatment, including short-acting injectable synthetic opioid treatment, building on the outcomes of our Feasibility of Opioid Injectable Treatment (FOPIT) trial.
- Continuing to reflect and respect the voices of people with lived experience, through our ongoing Fair Treatment Reference Group.





Climate change

Uniting and the communities we are a part of leave as light a footprint on the environment as possible, and the impacts of climate change do not perpetuate disadvantage.

Uniting recognises that climate change is not just an environmental issue – it is a justice issue. Communities facing the greatest disadvantage will be those most affected by the impacts of climate change.

Uniting, alongside the Uniting Church, has established itself as a respected voice in the climate justice space, having been invited to the Pacific Islands Forum and the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference in Azerbaijan.

Our Horizon 2 focus will now be on:

- Working with Renew Australia for All, to advocate for a national transition to clean energy, that ensures no community is left behind.
- Seeking an enduring solution for people in the Northern Rivers region, who continue to live with the long-term effects of climate change-related disasters.
- Implementing our organisational roadmap to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040. This includes progressively increasing our use of green power, ensuring 5-star energy ratings on commercial buildings, further energy reduction and generation measures, and increasing our fleet's proportion of electric and hybrid vehicles.
- Continuing to increase the impact of our Uniting Climate Action Network and deepen our partnership with the Pasifika community, while actively engaging Uniting employees and congregations in climate justice work.



First Nations

First Nations people and communities at Uniting and beyond are strong, thriving and self-determining.

Our commitment is grounded in deep respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, and in our responsibility as a Uniting Church organisation to walk alongside First Nations communities in the journey toward truth, justice, and healing.

In Horizon 2, we will build on the foundations of our First Nations People and Place Strategy and focus on:

- Continuing to proactively transition services to ACCOs.
- Developing First Nations leadership through ongoing investment, to empower our Ngumbadal Network and sustainably elevate First Nations voices within Uniting's decision-making processes. This ensures that diverse leadership thrives and drives meaningful change in our organisation.
- Implement Uniting's First Nations Partnerships Framework and Cultural Capability Framework to enhance our cultural capability and strengthen partnerships with First Nations organisations. These frameworks ensure that our engagement is respectful, informed, and aligned with the needs and aspirations of the communities we service, ultimately contributing to more effective and sustainable outcomes.
- Continuing to innovate and advocate to reduce the over-representation of First Nations children in care, by exploring new solutions and challenging existing systems. We aim to provide culturally responsive support, that protects family unity and community wellbeing, ultimately leading to better outcomes for First Nations children.

Stronger together: Shared advocacy priorities with the Synod

The Synod of NSW & ACT has resolved that Uniting undertake public advocacy on its behalf, with focus on:

- Climate action
- First Nations justice
- Fair Treatment campaign.

There is a strong role for the Moderator and the Church in relation to these advocacy areas, and Uniting's Advocacy Team works closely with the Synod to bring powerful, faith-led voices into public dialogue.

For example:

- The Moderator regularly acts as a media spokesperson for advocacy on both Fair Treatment and climate action.
- In 2024, over 15 congregations across NSW came together in prayer for drug law reform.
- Among other congregation engagement activities in 2024, the Uniting Climate Action Network (UCAN) held its second Uniting Climate Conference: Faith in a Better Future, where the Moderator delivered a powerful address. The event brought over 140 Uniting Church members and allies together in person and online.
- Uniting joined and actively participated in the Raise the Age coalition campaigning to increase the age of criminal responsibility and protect children from harmful justice system involvement.

As we move forward, Uniting will continue to provide advice to the Synod on advocacy priorities, offer congregations meaningful opportunities to participate in advocacy work, as well as equip Church members and communities with resources to support advocacy work in local contexts.

Reporting on Uniting's ongoing progress in these areas will be undertaken annually to the Uniting Board and the Synod Standing Committee.

From the Moderator of the Uniting Church in NSW.ACT, Rev. Faiimata Havea Hiliau:

“One of my greatest highlights since taking on the role of Moderator (in September 2023), is the advocacy work I have undertaken with Uniting. The passion, determination, and fervour that my Uniting colleagues bring to their roles is contagious, and it is evident that it is so much more than a job for them. They thirst for, and relish in, the pursuit of justice – which rings true to the call of the Gospel ‘to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with God.’”





Uniting Church
SYNOD OF NSW & ACT

Uniting