

A collection of highlights. A message of hope.

Celebrating 30 Years
1993-2023

As part of celebrating our 30th anniversary, we collected stories and reflections through a widely distributed survey, short video vignettes and in-depth interviews. This is a summary of what we collected.

Greatest achievements

Strong and influential advocacy and relationships with Government underpinned by front-line experience and a united voice of the UnitingCare network. This is further amplified and validated through the lived experience of people who are marginalised and disadvantaged.

Building a united network and identity that operates as a collective to achieve influence and impact with Government and to improve service delivery and collaboration.

Recognised as a strong national voice for justice representing Uniting Church community services.

Reforms achieved together with the network in areas of aged care, treasury, employment, social services and early childhood education and care.

“The moment that I remember with most satisfaction sitting on the national body was one day when Anne Cross from Queensland put up a hand and said, ‘We’ll do it.’ She was saying that they would take on the services that had failed or were close to failing in the Northern Territory with the collapse of Frontier Services...they did it: full of grace, full of generosity, they did it with a little bit of help from the rest of us. And they’ve done a fabulous job. It’s that moment that I recognise the real significance of a national entity like UnitingCare.”

Peter Worland
Past CEO Uniting NSW.ACT

“A while back we had some NDIS issues. We’d applied to conduct more services and some three and a half, four months down the track, despite repeated attempts...trying to get in touch with the NDIA – absolutely no luck. I drafted a letter to UnitingCare Australia, chatted about the issue and within two weeks, the problem was resolved. That was an absolute godsend for me. It was fantastic and really reinforced to me the important work that UnitingCare Australia does.”

Dr Harry Randhawa
Chief Executive and Director, Uniting Country SA

“One of the key achievements of UnitingCare Australia has been to advocate strongly and positively for ‘ageing to our full potential’. And against the backdrop of the Aged Care Royal Commission this was so important. There’s no doubt that UnitingCare Australia has had a significant and influential impact on governments and other key stakeholders. Facilitating the creation of a unified peak body for aged care was another extraordinary achievement of which they can be very proud.”

Chris Stewart
Chief Executive Officer Helping Hand

Memorable experiences and highlights

Seeing stories and experiences of people in our services being shared with policy makers and included in submissions that created a deeper impact on our advocacy.

National Pancake Day events raising money for our local services provision.

Our work during the Rudd/ Gillard Government on a range of important social policy measures from the implementation of the Equal Remuneration Order, aged care reform, Springboard employment program to the establishment of the ACNC (Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission).

Attending the UnitingCare Australia 2022 Leaders Forum in Canberra which was both informative and an opportunity to meet more network colleagues face to face.

Real results achieved together as a network in aged care advocacy surrounding the Aged Care Quality and Safety Royal Commission such as increased funding and a wage increase for workers.

UnitingCare Australia's leadership in the creation of ACCPA (Aged Care and Community Providers Association) resulting in a single national peak body for aged care in Australia.

The relationships formed and expertise shared through the various working groups facilitated by UnitingCare Australia.

Network collaboration and strong advocacy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

“There's lots of achievements over those 30 years. One that I've actually played a bit of a role in, is around a really punitive public policy: the approach to welfare payments in Australia with the cashless debit card. This new government has been able to actually overturn a part of Australia's history, which has been a very sad one. One, which was both racist in its nature, but also one that controlled the lives of far too many people and took away their agency.”

Simon Schrapel
Chief Executive, Uniting Communities

“Some of the (best) experiences I had with UnitingCare Australia was (due to) the (great) diversity and connection, shared learnings and respect. And in giving a voice to service providers of some of the most vulnerable people in our community. We met with influential bureaucrats and ministers. We were able to share the stories of individuals and how policy was impacting on some of the people in our community. Service providers highlighted the positives of policy, but also some of the challenges. And I think that drawing on that experience was very valuable in helping shape policy of the future.”

Libby Craft
Past CEO Uniting SA

“...(One of the) memorable experience(s) of my time working with UnitingCare was trying to tell a senate committee inquiring into poverty in Australia that poverty is a human rights issue. There was a lot of pushback from the committee for that, particularly from the Chair, but we managed to stand our ground and make our point.”

Rev Dr Elenie Poulos
Board member Uniting NSW.ACT, past National Director UnitingJustice Australia

Our common bond

Our Uniting Church commitment to compassion and service driven by social justice and love for all.

A call to live Christ's gospel in practical ways through community services.

A belief that our advocacy and input into government decision making and social and economic policy achieve better outcomes for the communities we serve.

A common purpose to positively impact the lives of people who are marginalised in society.

Our shared vision for a just, connected and caring society in the way of Christ.

“I think the common bond we have as a network...is really inspired by Jesus as a social disruptor. He was always fighting for inclusion, always fighting to make the world a better place for vulnerable people, as I believe we are all trying to do as well.”

Tracey Burton

Chief Executive/Executive Director Uniting NSW.ACT

“Not only do the community services agencies and outreach activities of the church have a common bond from simply being part of the Uniting Church in Australia, they also share a sense of collective identity in striving to be bold and courageous in who they are and what they do. For people doing it tough...”

Chris Hall

Past Chief Executive Officer Juniper, past CEO UnitingCare West, past CEO Wesley Mission (Perth), past Director Uniting Missions Network



Our collective identity

Generosity
Unwavering **Change**
Diakonia **Caring** Prophetic
Love **Uniting** Solidarity
Compassion **Together** Passion
Voice Philanthropic **Dignity**
Community Advocacy



Hopeful



The dove



Caring hands

“For me, a standout example of the network at work was the response to the failing aged care services in the Northern Territory in Northwest Australia, you know, a decade ago. Whilst UnitingCare Queensland and Juniper in Western Australia did the heavy lifting on assuming responsibility...I think what was important was that the network already existed and could be mobilised when it was actually needed. We were together in asking and answering the question, ‘If not the church, who would step up to provide services?’”

Anne Cross

Past Chief Executive Officer UnitingCare Queensland

Hopes for the future

Opportunity to continue to work collaboratively with a focus on becoming leaders in providing new service models for vulnerable communities, and innovative solutions in social and economic issues that affect the nation.

Continuing to strengthen our collective voice and shape public policy in Canberra.

Ongoing collaboration and networking to better serve vulnerable people and communities.

Expanding our service reach and support as a faith-based network.

Seeing the network as an embodiment of the movement of God, not an accompaniment to it.

Creating an even stronger culture and reputation that continues to attract talented people to influence for the common good.

Walking together with First Nations People.

To look at how to unlock underutilised assets held by the Uniting Church to make an extraordinary and multi-generational impact on homelessness and housing insecurity in Australia.

Tapping into the vast intellectual property to develop resources for mission and helping the Assembly in governance reform.

Continued growth, reach and scope as a visible mission of expression of the faith and values of the Uniting Church.

Steadfast and authentic in our service delivery grounded in our mission and mandate while being courageous as we encounter significant barriers – environmental, cultural, financial, theological.

The Church will need to be more agile and encompassing as services become more relevant to community than traditional church.

Service to be seen as mission. It is time for this mission to shape and inform the future of the Uniting Church.

“Happy 30th anniversary, you deadly mob. So proud to be part of the justice narrative with you all. Now with strength from my ancestors and elders from forever and beyond. Stay deadly.”

Alison Overeem

UnitingCare Australia Board Member, Manager Leprena
Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC)
Lutruwita Tasmania

“I’ve been absolutely pleased to see the leadership with a new strategic plan that reflects the importance of people with disability in the Australian community and how we can foster their inclusion and independence through greater financial and social reform.”

Kane Blackman

Chief Executive Officer Good Sammy Enterprises

“We are called to journey together to serve the poor, to shape a just society for the marginalised. The Uniting Church and the UnitingCare Network are not two but one. In many ways, we are legally, financially connected, but above all, we are called to mission with God in and for the world.”

Rev Dr Ji Zhang

Past Uniting Church in Australia Assembly Theologian-in-Residence