

UnitingCare Australia welcomes urgent funding boost for frontline community services

UnitingCare Australia welcomes the Government's \$4.7 million funding boost for frontline community services, saying it will help more Australians access support as cost-of-living pressures continue to push households to the brink.

"Our emergency relief and financial counselling services see every day the toll financial hardship is taking on people and families across Australia, so we are relieved that the Government has listened and acted upon our calls for action," said Tamara Thomas, National Director of UnitingCare Australia.

"This funding means a single parent can put food on the table, a worker can access a fuel voucher to get to work, and a family in crisis can speak with a financial counsellor so that they can keep a roof over their heads," said Ms Thomas.

Data from the UnitingCare network shows targeted investments in emergency relief and financial counselling deliver tangible results. Following the Government's earlier \$11.7 million boost amid soaring fuel prices, unmet demand for emergency relief fell by 44 per cent from a peak of 73 per cent in January.

"Australia's safety net has been stretched thinner and thinner as demand has risen through a rough year of ongoing cost-of-living pressures and economic shocks. This funding will help more people access support when they need it most and prevent financial hardship from escalating further," said Ms Thomas.

"This funding comes at a critical time. As Australia heads into another extreme weather season, community services are seeing firsthand how heatwaves, floods and storms can push people already doing it tough, deeper into crisis," said Dr Andrew Montague, Acting CEO and Director of Communities at Uniting NSW.ACT.

"When extreme weather hits, demand for support rises, recovery takes longer, and frontline services come under increasing pressure. This investment will help ensure people can access practical support when they need it most, while ongoing funding would allow services such as ours to continue to respond to the growing challenges communities are facing year on year across Australia," Dr Montague said.

"While this funding is a welcome and important step, there is no end in sight for cost-of-living pressures, which is why we want to see sustained investment in emergency relief and financial counselling so that people can weather the storm of financial setbacks instead of becoming permanent crisis," Ms Thomas said.

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About UnitingCare Australia

UnitingCare Australia is the national body for the Uniting Church's community services network and an agency of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia. Through advocacy and by strengthening service provision, UnitingCare Australia gives voice to the Uniting Church's commitment to social justice.

The UnitingCare Network is the largest network of social service providers in Australia, delivering 5.8 million interactions annually across 1,600 service locations in urban, rural, and remote communities, with over 55,000 staff and 17,000 volunteers.

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