A bright future

—

"This strategic plan requires us to realise the common good through partnership and inclusion. It commits us to both attend to todays presenting needs and to work for longer term social change, ensuring the best outcomes for our consumers today and into the future."

– Paul Linossier,
Chief Executive Officer

The strategy creates a decision making framework that ensures all major decisions taken by the organisation can be assessed against our goals, ambitions and outcomes, ensuring we are on track to realise our vision and effect real change for vulnerable people and communities.

Our commitment to annual reporting against the plan and the stated outcomes gives transparency to the journey and will foster accountability and a stronger sense of common purpose internally and with partners and stakeholders.

* Some names have been changed or withheld for privacy reasons.

Back cover top: Paul, who accesses community mental health services.

Back cover middle: Cooper and Ava, with early learning educator Angela.

Back cover bottom: Karyn and Jeanette, who volunteer to help with community outreach.

Tara, who attends the Horsham Community Childcare Centre.

For individuals

For families

For communities

Uniting

Uniting is the community services organisation of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania.

Strategic Plan
2018-2025

Real change for vulnerable people and communities.

Uniting

“This is a great representation of what can be achieved when a community comes together.”

Jeanette with her grandson, who volunteers at the Sunbury Drop In Centre.

Front cover image: Naomi* and her family, who access emergency relief.

Our Strategy

Realising our purpose.

To inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice.

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Learn more
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We acknowledge our role in colonisation and its profound impact upon First Peoples.

We are deeply sorry for this injustice, the trauma inflicted and its tragic impact.

Acknowledgement and healing

First Peoples

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Victoria's and Tasmania's First Peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we live and work.

We affirm the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people that enriches communities and society more broadly.

We are committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families, elders, communities and organisations to improve life outcomes, service provision and recognition.

Consumers past and present

We acknowledge that failure in our duty of care led to the mistreatment and abuse of some people in the care of Uniting and its founding agencies.

We commit ourselves to the provision of safe and culturally-relevant child and consumer services now and in the future.

The Uniting Heritage Service will lead the way in working toward the resolution of past wrongs and provide support to women and men who as children lived in these homes and institutions and were impacted.

Mick* who accesses mental health services to feel part of the community.

Changing lives and communities.

Changing how we work.

For the better.

Executive summary

People are important and change is possible. Our vision is to inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice, with particular commitment to vulnerable individuals and communities.

Our inaugural strategic plan paves the way forward for our organisation; building capability to ensure we are innovative, agile and responsive and able to effectively deliver on our purpose and create positive social change.

Our ambition is framed by two overriding objectives, 'Changing lives and communities' and 'Changing how we work'.

The strategic framework has emerged from deep engagement with our consumers, staff, volunteers and stakeholders – it is our collective voice. It drives our vision for the next three years and creates momentum to achieve our longer term goals.

Message from our Board Chair.

"We acknowledge the wisdom and depth of understanding from the diverse communities we serve, our consumers, our people, Church partners and other stakeholders that bring this strategic plan to life.

We are combining our strengths to have greater impact for our communities and the individuals we support—broadening and connecting our services in new ways to create an inclusive, connected and just world.

We have a grassroots understanding of the issues people face; we work in partnership with communities, government and many social sector organisations; and we have a broad range of services that offer specialist expertise and local knowledge.

Our strategic plan builds on these strengths and outlines the changes we want to effect by 2025, as well as the more specific steps we will take over the next three years. I commend it to you as an important part of our efforts as an organisation of the Uniting Church to realise justice in our time"

— Bronwyn Pike, Uniting Vic.Tas Board Chair.

Who we are

—

In standing with those who live at the margins, by strengthening our communities and by speaking out, we will create **a more just society**.

We are the carers, thinkers, doers, darers who strive to make a difference. A difference in everyday trials and triumphs, for people, just as they are.

Together we draw upon the voice deep within us and raise a collective cry that cannot be ignored. For us, enough is not enough. We want safer, fairer, brighter, better, for the people we stand beside.

To do this, we have to act with impact.

As an organisation of the Uniting Church, we celebrate our diversity and welcome all people regardless of ethnicity, faith, age, disability, culture, language, gender identity or sexual orientation. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as Australia's First Peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land on which we work. We welcome lesbian, gay, trans, gender diverse and inter-sex (LGBTIQ) people at our services. We pledge to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services.

The services we provide and the way we work strives to be human-centred and rights-based, as recognised and articulated in international declarations, treaties and covenants that aim to ensure peace and equality among all peoples.

Our values guide our thoughts, decisions and actions and unite us in how we get things done.

Imaginative	We challenge convention, explore new possibilities and dare to dream for a better future.
Respectful	We act with honesty and integrity, and open our hearts to all people without exception.
Compassionate	We are nurturing, generous and thoughtful in our words and deeds.
Bold	We face injustice head on and stand up for what is right and true with confidence and strength.
Our foundation	**Christ invites us to serve humanity by creating an inclusive, connected and just world.**

Looking back

Across two centuries we have responded to the changing needs of people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage — with our earliest work dating back to 1881.

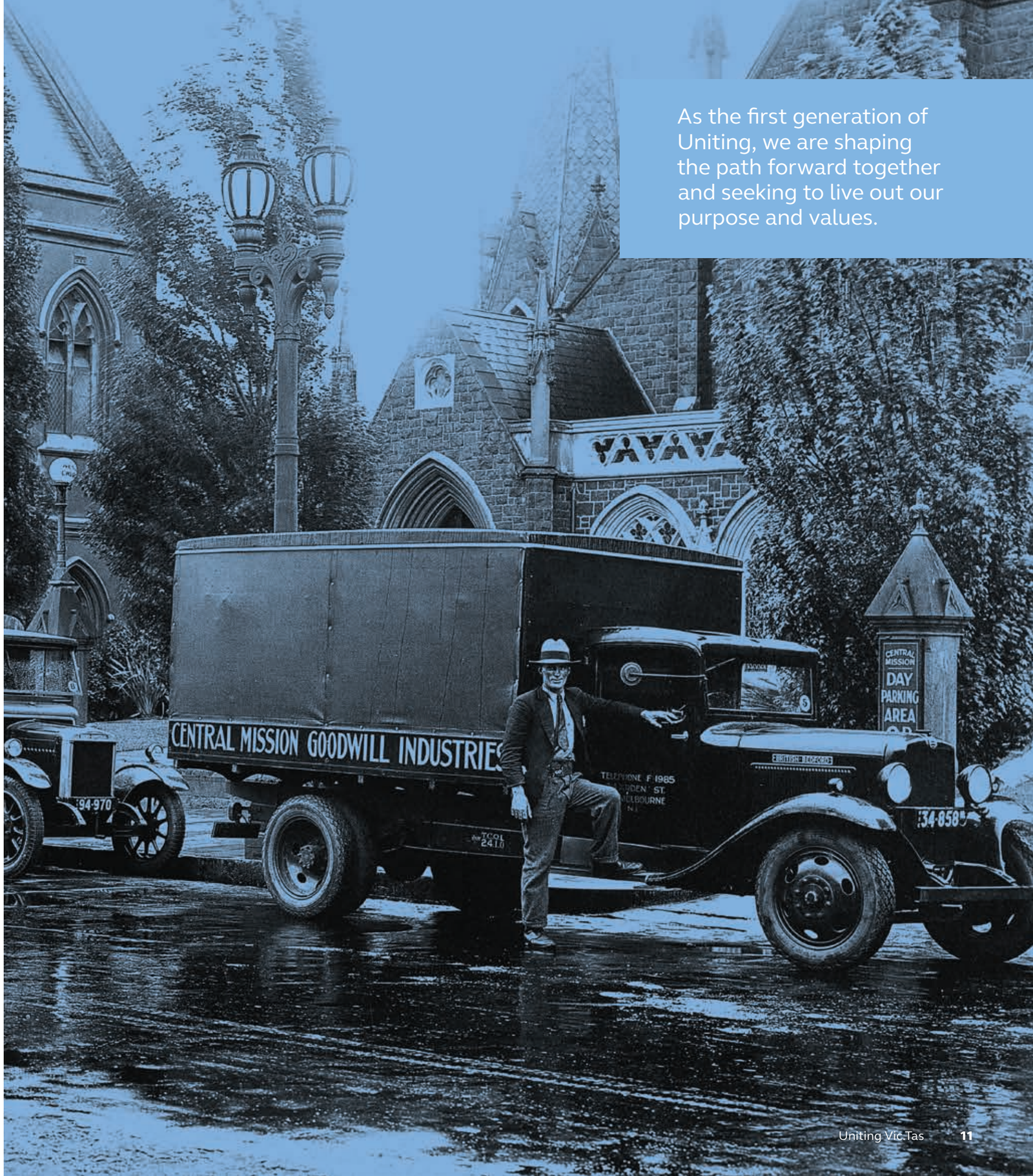
Acknowledging our shared history and building upon the grass-roots presence of the Uniting Church allows us to respond with integrity to the shifting paradigms in community service policy and delivery.

Today we are more than 8,000 people delivering hundreds of services accessed nearly 200,000 times each year across Victoria and Tasmania. We work across the full spectrum of community services, intervening early to help people avoid crisis, as well as supporting those who live life at the margins.

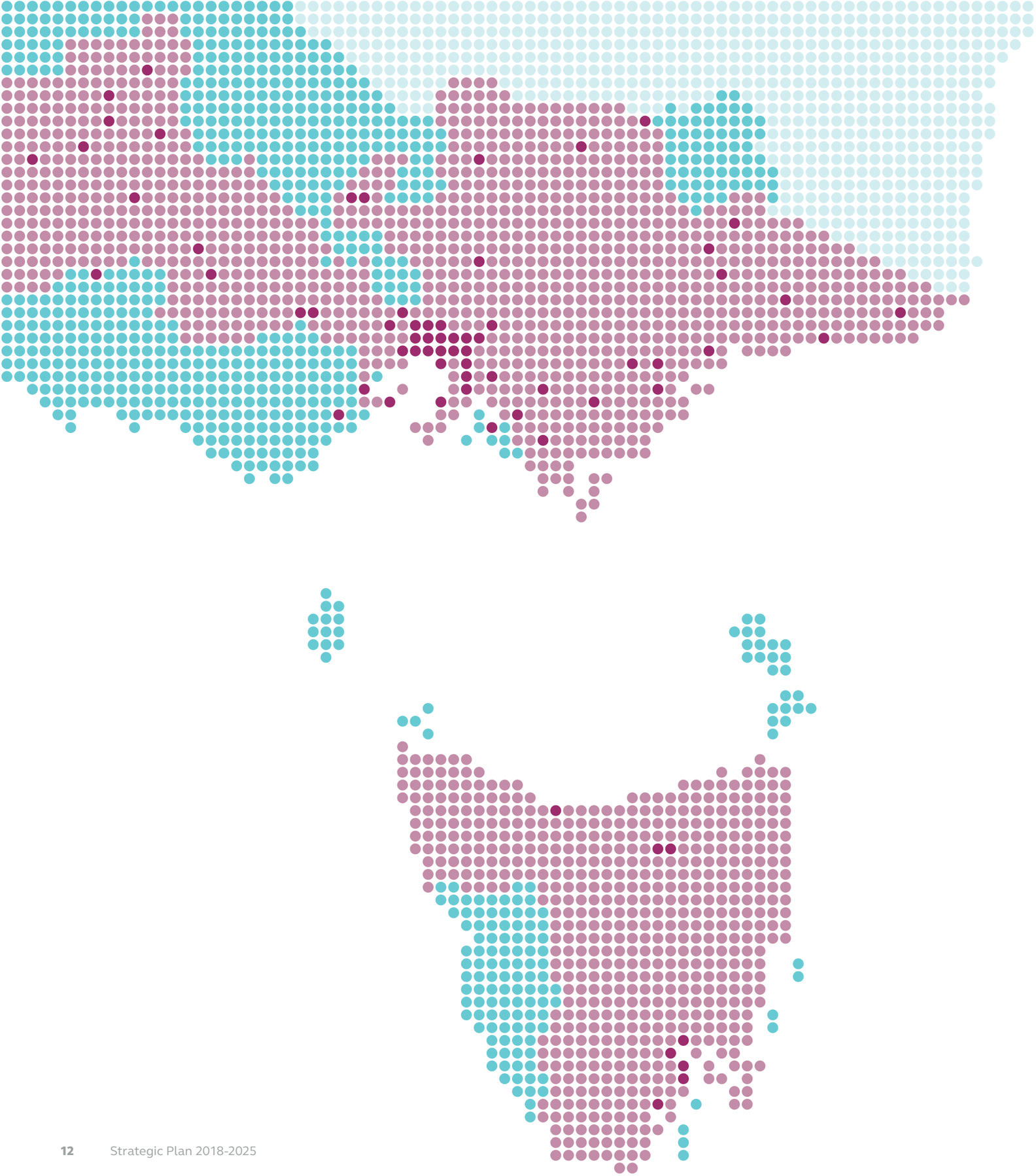
A unique opportunity presents itself for us to strengthen our work in creating positive social change in the communities we work alongside. This is why 24 Uniting Church entities have joined together as Uniting Victoria and Tasmania (Uniting).

Our commitment is to integrate services across agencies and programs, partnering with key stake-holders and working towards co-creating more holistic solutions for communities.

The process of change and integration will see us realise our potential as stronger teams, with one purpose and reaching towards one vision.



As the first generation of Uniting, we are shaping the path forward together and seeking to live out our purpose and values.



What we do today

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By partnering with our consumers to offer support and build on their ability and confidence, together we can journey toward a brighter, healthier and stronger future.

We are there for people experiencing homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction or mental illness. We support people with disability to make their own life choices in the community, in employment and in their home. We assist older people to maintain their independence and enjoy life. We offer access to training and meaningful employment. We're proud to welcome and support newly arrived people in our community. We empower people with the support, information, skills and tools they need.

The breadth and depth of our work, from early childhood to aged care, provides an opportunity to break down traditional service silos and reinvent the idea of place-based service integration, driven by consumer aspiration.

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The services we offer span Victoria from Albury-Wodonga in the north, Mallacoota in East Gippsland, to the Wimmera and across Tasmania.

- Aged and Carer Services
- Disability
- Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Employment Services
- Business and Social Enterprise
- Mental Health
- Child, Youth and Families
- Resilient Communities
- Early Learning

Exploring the strategic context

Navigating change

Current reforms in the community services sector are changing the way people access services and how funding is organised. And these reforms create tensions between, on the one hand place-based and marketised services, and on the other between targeted and more comprehensive approaches.

These changes play out in the context of changing demographics, poverty, growing inequality and isolation, mounting distrust in institutions, increasing expectations of consumer value, fiscal pressures and government policy reform, technological advancement and climate change and extreme weather events.

Moving forward

These were the key drivers in the decision to join 24 entities to form one organisation — Uniting.

As we integrate our work we will carefully balance the competing priorities inherent in managing current services and building effective and sustainable systems and capability. We are emboldened to transform our community services through creative and timely responses to community, funding body and sector changes.

Our strategic plan acknowledges our heritage and the transformation required to positions us constructively to successfully engage and adapt to our consumer and stakeholder needs.

External Forces

- Changing demographics
- Sector changes
- Mounting distrust in institutions
- Climate change and extreme weather
- Growing inequity and isolation
- Increasing expectations of consumer value
- Government policy-making
- Fiscal pressure and poverty
- Technological advancement

What consumers want

The voice of consumers must play an active role in their own health and wellbeing and in the development of services to support them. Before developing our strategy we asked people what was important:

Targeted services
Offer the right kind of help, when I need it most."

Safety
I need you to acknowledge and respect my trauma and make me feel safe when I deal with you."

Participation and inclusion
Give me a platform to talk to you. Hear what I have to say. Bring my voice alive in your organisation."

Place-based service and accessibility
Make it easy and seamless for me to access your services in my community."

Ethical principles
You are ethical in every sense of the word."

Innovation
You exceed my expectations when you focus on my needs, today and in the future."

Advocacy and education
Make my voice heard to create change where it matters most—for all humanity, everywhere."

...

Steve and Kris's children Adam and Kate attend St Andrews Kindergarten to socialise with other children.

Our strategic framework

We have and will continue to truly listen and respond to the voices and experiences of the people we stand beside. Our strategic framework articulates those voices by recognising their differing requirements, so we can adapt our service response and facilitate stronger engagement with governance and decision making.

Our ambitions	Our goals	Building our capability	Outcomes for the future
Rights and participation Prioritising disadvantage Best start in life Safe families Reducing harm from alcohol and other drugs Changing disability and mental health provision Working in partnership Reconciliation and redress Evidence and advocacy	Safe, comprehensive and effective consumer-directed services that are valued by consumers Place-based, integrated solutions that build on family and community strengths to tackle inequality	Changing lives and communities	Life outcomes maximised Inclusive, just, thriving and connected communities enabled Injustice confronted, and public policy influenced
	Organisational culture and practices that ensure we are just, effective, efficient and accountable	Changing how we work	Impactful and mutually beneficial partnerships supported Sustainable organisation known for its strong identity, culture, capability and systems

Changing lives and communities.

Our ambitions

Contemporary Australia is characterised by inequality and a diminished concern for human rights. We cannot expect people to contribute to their community when they are worried about where the next meal is coming from or where they will sleep that night.

Rights and participation	Expand housing options and pathways to employment to increase community contribution.
Prioritising disadvantage	Prioritise discretionary resources to support the least advantaged regional and metropolitan communities.
Best start in life	Support children and families in their early years to ensure the best foundations for adult life.
Safe families	Ensure women receive an early and appropriate response to family violence, assure safety for these women and their children, and see to their perpetrators engagement in effective rehabilitation programs. Work with families to encourage properly supported settings for their child's care.
Reducing harm from alcohol and other drugs	Focus on delivering alcohol and other drug support services and integrate this practice knowledge into more of our service offerings.
Changing disability and mental health provision	Adapt our service approach based on our consumers' aspirations.
Working in partnership	Work with the Uniting Church and our sister agencies to identify opportunities to deliver the best possible community and consumer outcomes.
Reconciliation and redress	Work in ways that foster self-determination for our First Peoples and effect meaningful reconciliation in our organisation and the communities we work in. Implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, along with those of the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations, 'Betrayal of Trust' report.
Evidence and advocacy	Combine evidence-based learning with the lived experience of our consumers to inform robust advocacy and public engagement.

Changing how we work.

Our goals

As a trusted partner, we work with consumers, communities, funders, government and the community sector to deliver:

1	Safe, comprehensive and effective consumer-directed services that are valued by consumers.
2	Place-based, integrated solutions that build on family and community strengths to tackle inequality.
3	Organisational culture and practices that ensure we are just, effective, efficient and accountable.

Building our capability

Together we will build on our capability to deliver consumer-centric, quality services.

Changing lives and communities	Gaining deep insight into the needs of consumers and communities will enable us to build innovative prevention and early intervention strategies while listening to consumers to embed research, monitoring and evaluation.
Changing how we work	Developing efficient systems and platforms, new partnership models and strong financial management are key to enabling our committed staff and volunteers to deliver quality services now and in the future.

For the better.

Outcomes for the future

Our performance indicators measure our success and the impact that achieving our goals will have on people and communities.

Life outcomes maximised	• Consumer participation is embedded in all service, management and governance systems • All services report clear consumer outcomes and satisfaction against an agreed outcomes and satisfaction measurement framework • All services are delivered to a clearly articulated consumer value proposition and service model.
Inclusive, just, thriving and connected communities enabled	• An innovative community strengthening model is rolled out in 2-5 communities • In each community or place where we work we report clear community and civic outcomes against an agreed community and civic outcome framework • Refocused service delivery to disadvantaged and high growth communities in Victoria and Tasmania.
Injustice confronted and public policy influenced	• All policy and advocacy campaigns report measurable outcomes against an agreed influencing outcome framework • Representation on key sector Boards and initiatives, government committees and local bodies reports clear outcomes against an agreed representation framework • Past residents and consumers report high satisfaction with the responsiveness of our Heritage Service.
Impactful and mutually beneficial partnerships supported	• All service and sector partnerships report clear partner and sector outcomes against an agreed partner and sector outcome framework • At least 5 major collaborations/partnerships are maximising the social impact of partner Uniting Church entities. Refocused service delivery to disadvantaged and high growth communities in Victoria and Tasmania • Evidence, data and insights are embedded in all service, management and governance systems.
Sustainable organisation known for its strong identity, culture, capability and systems	• Staff and volunteer surveys report positive engagement with managers, teams and the organisation • Enabling systems are integrated into the Uniting Operating Model • All services are integrated into the Uniting Operating Model • Services and projects meet performance and sustainability targets • Public reporting and transparency creates a high degree of confidence and trust.