

Spring 2021

Supporter Newsletter.

Call us
1800 668 426

Visit
unitingvictas.org.au



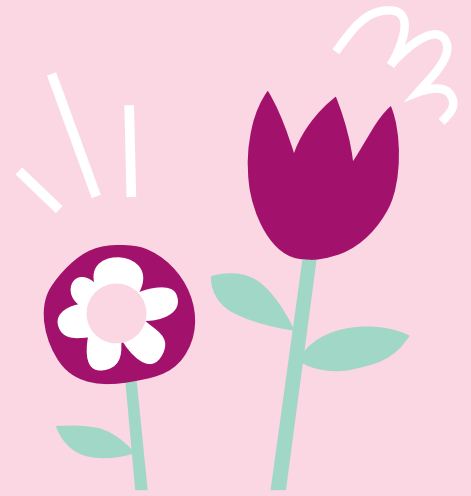
Uniting to make a difference.

Your compassion has the power to make real change. Together, we can continue to walk alongside people as they work towards a brighter future.

In this edition, you'll find stories of success in times of challenge. You can read an update about Sharon and Jhez, whose stories we shared in our Winter Appeal. You can also read about the opening of a new facility in Melbourne to support older women in crisis and the opening of a larger BreezeWay community meals service in Ballarat.

Uniting

Welcome to Spring.



Much has happened since our last newsletter in Autumn. Unfortunately, the one thing that has remained constant is the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to devastate individuals and families across Victoria and Tasmania.

On a positive note, we welcomed the Victorian Government's emergency relief and hardship funding announcement in June. This, along with your continued support, provides much-needed assistance to people in their time of need.

In the second half of last year, requests for food parcels doubled, while the number of people needing help with housing, clothing, paying the bills or other support services more than tripled.

We're especially pleased with the extra government support for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including temporary migrants and those on provisional visas.

This is a group that's been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, so making sure they're aware of, and receiving, the emergency support available to them is critical.

We are proud to have been acknowledged as a national leader for inclusion at the 2021 LGBTQ Inclusion Awards in May.

These awards recognise Australian organisations for reaching and exceeding benchmarks for inclusion, based on the Australian Workplace Equality Index and the Health+Wellbeing Equality Index.

For many years, as an organisation, we've been working towards improving inclusivity for all in our community.

We stand with LGBTIQ+ communities in continuing to advocate for social change.

We operate with a strong sense of justice and a commitment to those we walk alongside – no matter what their background or circumstances.

We couldn't do this without you. Thank you for your compassion and generosity.

I do hope you enjoy reading about how your support is making a real difference for people in their time of need.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bronwyn Pike".

Bronwyn Pike
Chief Executive Officer



Our purpose
To inspire
people
enl
communiti



A new lease of life for BreezeWay.

For 23 years, a dedicated team of staff and volunteers have served over 400,000 hot meals to Ballarat's most vulnerable people at our BreezeWay service in Dana Street.

We recently opened a larger BreezeWay service in Albert Street. This new building has space for up to 80 people to sit down for a meal. That's more than triple the capacity of the former dining room.

The new building is fully accessible and includes an emergency relief centre with a food pantry and facilities including showers, washing machines and clothes dryers.

All of this would not be possible without the invaluable support of the local community and people like you.

Our General Manager for North and West Victoria, Annette Kelly-Egerton says the new BreezeWay facility now provides a better service than ever before to the Ballarat community.

"The new BreezeWay is a sanctuary where people in need can drop in for a chat and something to eat in a caring and compassionate space," says Annette.

"As well as a hot meal, people can have a shower, a change of clothes and even connect with local housing and health support services.

"We're extremely grateful for the support and generosity of the Oliver Foundation, Rotary Club of Alfredton, S.J. Weir and Central Highlands Water, who have all helped make this project happen.

"The larger kitchen allows us to prepare more meals and provide hospitality training. There's also a social enterprise area, where we're hoping to offer employment and skill development opportunities in the future.

"We also have a larger food pantry and on-site staff providing a 'one stop shop' supporting people in a friendly, welcoming and safe environment."

Jill Oliver from The Oliver Foundation says they are thrilled to see the project come to life.

"We're proud to support this project, which focuses on some of Ballarat's most vulnerable people," says Jill.

"It's wonderful that people can sit here together again, share a meal, connect and be there for each other."

Pictured (left to right) Deb Robertson from the Rotary Club of Alfredton, Jill Oliver from the Oliver Foundation, Denise Lyons and Malcolm Roberts, both from the Rotary Club of Alfredton.



For more information about our community meals services, visit unitingvictas.org.au/community-meals



Thank you for transforming lives this winter.

As we move into warmer days, many people are still recovering from a long, cold winter.

The reduction in the JobSeeker payment earlier this year, combined with the end of JobKeeper, has seen more people slip into crisis.

Many people are coming to us for the first time, from international students who can't make ends meet, to mums and dads in secure jobs who suddenly find themselves out of work and struggling to pay the bills or put food on the table.

But you have made a difference for so many.

Thanks to you, so far nearly \$600,000 has been raised through this year's Winter Share Appeal.

Across Victoria and Tasmania, over 1671 people are being kept warm thanks to donations of blankets, swags and winter woollies.

An update on Sharon and Jhez

Sharon and Jhez shared their stories in our recent Winter Share Appeal.

Sharon (pictured left) moved to Australia in 2019 to marry her childhood sweetheart. But like so many, Sharon and her husband felt the strain of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When Sharon's marriage fell apart and she left the family home with her children, she was referred to our team in Shepparton where she was able to get the support she needed to get back on her feet. In fact, Sharon went on to secure a job with Uniting.

We are pleased to report that Sharon and her husband have reconciled.

"We are going to counselling to ensure we stay on track. We're thriving now. We're communicating well and we're very happy. Sometimes you need some expert help and advice to get you through a challenging time," says Sharon.

Sharon is still working at Uniting and has taken on a new role helping jobseekers upskill and find the right job for them.

"I can't thank Uniting enough. I received support in my time of need, and I've been able to turn a bad situation into a positive one," says Sharon.

Jhez reached out to our team 11 years ago when she was 7 months pregnant with her first child. Her relationship had fallen apart, and her finances crumbled. Jhez connected with Uniting and received food and housing support.

For his 10th birthday in February last year, Jhez's son Troy asked friends to donate to Uniting instead of buying gifts.

On Mother's Day this year, Jhez turned 40. She celebrated with family and friends.

"My husband treated me to a day out with friends, including a spa treatment and a night out in the city. I had a wonderful weekend surrounded by the people I love," says Jhez.

For more information about our support to multicultural communities, visit unitingvictas.org.au/multicultural-services



Thank you for your support during such a challenging time – your gifts will continue to transform lives.



Making an ongoing impact.

Supporters like you are the reason we continue to be there for people across Victoria and Tasmania in their time of need.

Geoff (pictured above) has been supporting Uniting's work for 25 years.

Geoff's family has a long association with the East Burwood Uniting Church, spanning over 150 years.

Geoff's great-grandfather was a founding congregation member of the Church. His parents were Sunday School teachers at the Church, and it's where he met his wife of 61 years, Beverley.

Geoff founded GP Graders – a company specialising in fruit grading and packing technology. The company has been manufacturing machinery for the fresh produce industry since 1963.

"I've been fortunate to be in a position to give back to the community," says Geoff.

"When I heard how many people in crisis were reaching out (to Uniting) for support and the number of volunteers who supported the service, I wanted to do something to help.

"I've been a supporter ever since. I've always had full faith that the money is used where it's needed.

"There are 3 things that can bring you undone in life through no fault of your own: loss of employment, divorce and illness.

"Any of these challenges can turn a person's life upside down and leave a hardworking person struggling.

"It's important for people to have a safety net like Uniting."

Giving regularly changes lives.

A regular monthly donation is simple to set up and can be paused at any time.

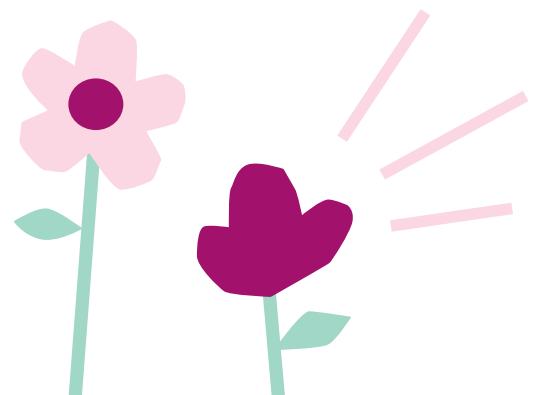
You'll receive a single tax-deductible receipt for all of your donations throughout the year.

For more information about becoming a regular supporter, please get in touch with our team.

Contact Supporter Services

T 1800 668 426

E fundraising@unitingvictas.org.au
unitingvictas.org.au/regular-giving





A safe space for older women in crisis.

Older women represent a growing proportion of people experiencing homelessness in Australia. We recently opened a new facility in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne to help support these women.

Marrageil Baggarook crisis accommodation facility offers a safe space for women to live while they receive assistance to secure long-term housing, as well as help with finances or mental health and any other support services they may need.

Marrageil Baggarook means “Divine Women,” and is a name given to Uniting by the Wurundjeri Community.

The project is the result of a partnership between the Victorian Government, Uniting Vic.Tas, the Uniting Church, Community Housing Limited and the Oak Building Group.

“This development has been a long time in the making with great dedication and advocacy from the Mountview Uniting Church congregation,” says Uniting Vic.Tas CEO, Bronwyn Pike.

“The church played a significant role in the planning of the units, with members generously donating their time to help prepare the submission for funding to the Victorian Government.

“Partnerships like this with congregations across Victoria and Tasmania are vital to supporting our work.

“These 8 independent living units have been decades in the making. It was a privilege to be in attendance and see it open its doors for the first time, especially as many people have worked so hard over the years to make it happen.

“Until now, there have been very few services available which provide a safe space offering both temporary accommodation and support services specifically tailored to older women.

“It’s rewarding to see a project which has been the subject of so much hard work and planning made a reality. We hope the facility will make a difference to the lives of many in the coming years.”

For more information about how we support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, please visit unitingvictas.org.au/homelessness-housing



A listening ear in a time of crisis.

Julia knows the importance of having someone who listens during a time of personal difficulty.

The retired teacher and social worker has been a Lifeline volunteer for over 25 years.

“Listening to people is an essential skill to have in this role,” says Julia.

“We’re not there to fix the problem.

“We listen, encourage and drop in the odd suggestion when possible.”

Julia first started volunteering with Lifeline in Melbourne in 1995.

When she moved to Ballarat 3 years later, she joined the local Lifeline team there.

Uniting Vic.Tas operates both the Melbourne and Ballarat Lifeline centres.

Julia has also volunteered as a prison chaplain.

“A close family member had mental health challenges, so it’s something that is important to me,” says Julia.

Julia has answered thousands of crisis calls.

But she likes to think of crisis in a different way to many.

“People often view the word ‘crisis’ as a negative,” she explains.

“But I see the word ‘crisis’ as meaning ‘crossroads,’ where you can choose your direction.

“I choose to see crisis as an opportunity to go in a better direction.”

When COVID-19 hit, Julia was no longer able to attend the Lifeline office.

Instead, she now offers support to fellow volunteers when difficult calls come through.

“I am also available for volunteers to debrief at the end of the session if they need to talk to someone,” says Julia.

“As a Lifeline volunteer, it’s important to talk to others, to look after yourself.”

After all these years volunteering, Julia says she is grateful for the many life lessons she has learned along the way.

“I’m learning all the time from the callers and from fellow volunteers,” she says.

“I have always been the one who gained. I joined because I thought I’d like to help other people, but through the training and from my peers, I’ve learned a lot more about myself.”

The photo accompanying this story is for illustrative purposes only. It is not a photo of the person featured in this story.



For more information about our Lifeline services, visit unitingvictas.org.au/lifeline

Changing lives.

Your support has the power to change lives.
Here's how you can get involved.

Send Christmas cheer

Uniting Christmas cards are now available. This year we have 5 designs, including 4 new ones, for you to choose from.

Proceeds from card sales will support people in crisis this Christmas. To order your Christmas card pack visit unitingvictas.org.au/christmas-cards

Food For Families

For 30 years, our Food For Families campaign has collected food to share with families and individuals doing it tough.

We want to support everyone who comes to us – but we can't do it alone. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, our emergency relief services across Victoria and Tasmania have experienced unprecedented demand.

We need your help all year round so we can continue providing food and other essential items to people in their time of need. Register today.

T 1800 668 426
foodforfamilies.org.au

Melbourne Marathon

We're encouraging people to run or walk for Uniting at this year's Melbourne Marathon event to help make a difference for people doing it tough.

We are one of the associated charities for this year's event, to be held on Sunday 10 October. There are 5 distances to choose from: 42.195km marathon, 21.1km half marathon, 10km run, 5km run and 3km walk. To register, visit melbmar2021.grassrootz.com/uniting-vic-tas

Coffee Cup Challenge

Join us for the Coffee Cup Challenge. By making a small sacrifice regularly you'll make a big difference for people in need.

You can join the challenge from 1 October, marking International Coffee Day, to 1 March, which is Pancake Day, or Shrove Tuesday as it is also known. On Pancake Day, or around that date, we encourage you to celebrate with pancakes or a morning tea.

All funds raised from the Coffee Cup Challenge will support people experiencing crisis, vulnerability, and disadvantage. Visit unitingvictas.org.au/coffee-cup-challenge for more information.

Pancake Day 2022 is Tuesday 1 March. Register your interest.

T 1800 668 426
E pancakeday.info@unitingvictas.org.au

Even the smallest
act of kindness
can brighten
someone's day.

Make a donation

Your generosity will help us provide essential services that are not covered by government funding. A gift today or a bequest for the future will make a positive and lasting difference to individuals, families and communities.

T 1800 668 426
unitingvictas.org.au/donate

Fundraise for us

There are so many new, safe and creative ways to stay in touch and raise funds for your local community. If you have found innovative ways to stay connected with friends and family we'd love to hear from you.

T 1800 060 543
fundraising@unitingvictas.org.au

Volunteer with us

Our 2400 volunteers are a vital and much loved part of our organisation. They give their precious time to help deliver our services. We rely on their support – and we're always on the lookout for more enthusiastic people.

unitingvictas.org.au/volunteer

