



Hello!

Welcome to the Uniting Barwon Spring Newsletter 2022 – an opportunity for the volunteers and staff of Uniting Barwon to pause and share their successes, news, and updates.

Christmas Lunch

May your Christmas be filled with peace, hope and joy.

Uniting



Hopefully our volunteers have all seen the Christmas Lunch invitation via email or flier.

We would love to see as many of our volunteers as possible at our annual recognition event. For the first time in years, we can really celebrate together.

We have partnered with our friends at the Uniting Church in East Geelong who have generously allowed us to use their fabulous hall.

Please RSVP to **03 4210 1113** or to Elizabeth.hopkin@vt.uniting.org ASAP so we can firm up numbers for catering.

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VOYA 2022

Uniting Barwon are proud to announce that we have six Finalists in the Volunteer of the Year (VOYA) 2022 awards! A huge congratulations to

- **Colin Luttrell**
- **John O'Hara**
- **Tori Cain**
- **Iris Speare**
- **Fae Lovell**
- **Di Poeder**

Winners will be announced at the Awards Ceremony on Wednesday 2 November.



VOYA 2021 Winners



Outcomes from Volunteer Engagement Survey 2022

In March 2022, 333 volunteers took the time to be part of our first Volunteer Engagement Survey. This has generated a considerable amount of useful data and offered insights as to where we are as an organisation.

A particularly influential finding is the importance of our values, and the extent to which volunteers consider these to be reflective of our work.

Overall, we have seen some very positive results and identified areas needing improvement. Even though on average we had slightly lower results compared to Volunteering Victoria state averages, specific results within program areas demonstrated some significant strengths.



There are many ways you, your family and friends can get involved in Food for Families.

Find out more: foodforfamilies.org.au

Satisfaction

Our overall result was 3.93 out of 5 - slightly lower than the state average of 4.16.

These results highlight consultation with volunteers in relation to change at the organisation that needs to be reviewed. This also highlights that communication can be improved with volunteers.

Positively, volunteers are aware of their impact in communities and generally feel welcome and included.

78.6%

of respondents find volunteering with Uniting meets their needs and expectations

Safety

Our overall result was 3.96 out of 5 - slightly lower than the state average of 4.15.

These results highlight we need to communicate with volunteers about safety, wellbeing, and insurances to support them in their roles with us. Further work on handling of volunteer complaints and support mechanisms available should also be prioritised in our communications.

Positively, training and induction rated above the state averages in this domain.

79.2%

of respondents feel safe in the volunteering role.

Sustainability

Overall, sustainability was our lowest performing area with a score of 3.58 out of 5.

These results indicate people feel there are limited volunteers available to support consumer outcomes and programs currently. And a possibility of volunteer numbers declining into the future.

71.6%

of respondents believe programs are sustainable.

Norlane Emergency Relief

Our Spring Newsletter is the perfect opportunity to honour Graeme our gardener and to show our appreciation for all his hard work.

Anyone who has recently visited Norlane will have seen an incredible transformation. The overgrown jungle that used to surround our premises now looks much more like a well-tended and cared for garden. It has made a huge difference to everyone who comes to see us. Just about every staff member and volunteer has commented on how good it looks. The church congregation are thrilled and I know it means a lot to our consumers as it allows us to welcome them into a more respectful environment.

This has all been made possible by our volunteer Graeme who has worked incredibly hard, in all weather conditions, to pull out many, many weeds, trim, cut back, mow and even plant things. We now have some tomatoes and new beans to look forward to! Well done Graeme, we all think you are doing a great job!

Karen Mather, ER Co-ordinator, Norlane



Graeme, in the garden at Norlane





Uniting Christmas Cards

Our card designs are carefully chosen to reflect the joy and message of Christmas.

This year, we have increased the number of mixed packs in the range so there are 5 options to choose from which includes 3 mixed packs. Proceeds provide support to those doing it tough at Christmas.

Order online unitingvictas.org.au/christmas-cards/

Please note: Christmas cards ordered after the 13 December cannot be guaranteed to arrive prior to Christmas so please ensure you place your order early to avoid missing out.

 <p>1 Australiana (Mixed Pack 1) Wreath sentiment: Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year Kookaburra sentiment: Wishing you all the joys of Christmas</p>	 <p>2 Bauble and Tree (Mixed Pack 2) Bauble sentiment: Season's Greetings and best wishes for the coming year Tree sentiment: Wishing you every happiness this Christmas and throughout the New Year</p>	 <p>3 Holly (Mixed Pack 3) Green Holly sentiment: Warmest wishes for a wonderful Christmas and Happy New Year Red Holly sentiment: May the festive season bring only happiness and joy to you and your loved ones</p>
 <p>4 Nativity Sentiment: May joy be your gift at Christmas and may hope and love be your treasures in the New Year <i>"The Magi opened their treasures and presented the baby Jesus with gifts..." Matthew 2:11</i></p>	 <p>5 Peace Dove Sentiment: A wish for peace and happiness at this Christmas season and throughout the New Year</p>	<p>Each pack of 10 cards is only \$11</p>



Update

Hello Everyone!

There have been lots of changes in Retail since our last newsletter. As a result of a Uniting restructure, Retail has moved from the North and West Victoria, Tasmania and Early Learning Division of Uniting to the newly created Partnerships, Training and Enterprise Division. This means that Retail will now be in a different Division from the other Uniting services in Barwon. We will however continue to work very closely together. Retail's new Divisional General Manager is Shannon Bell, see the getting to know you article on Shannon in this newsletter.

In September, the Uniting Geelong West, Highton, Norlane and Point Lonsdale Opportunity Shops, the Grovedale Logistics, maintenance, sorting, warehousing and volunteer support team and the Werribee Opportunity Shop merged to form the new Barwon and Werribee Retail Team.

Also in September, the Uniting Senior Manager for Retail Heather Thompson retired. Heather did a great job establishing the Uniting Retail area bringing together Uniting's Opportunity Shops across Victoria. During Heather's time as Senior Manager, a point-of-sale system that covers all Uniting Op Shops was introduced, along with rewards cards and gift cards, and the first of Uniting's larger format stores were established including the stores at Geelong West and Werribee. A big thank you goes to Heather for all the support that she provided to the retail teams across Victoria during a very challenging time. Heather will be replaced by Jacob Miller. Jacob started on Monday 3 October, see the getting to know you article on Jacob in this newsletter.

Sadly, the Uniting East Geelong Opportunity Shop closed in July. The East Geelong Op Shop was established in 1993 and was the first of the Uniting Opportunity Shops in the Barwon area. The East Geelong Op Shop gave Uniting Barwon valuable experience in the operation of Opportunity Shops and contributed to the confidence to open other shops, including the shops we have today at Geelong West, Highton, Norlane and Point Lonsdale. A big thank you to everyone involved with the East Geelong Op Shop over the years and thank you for your contribution to Uniting and the Barwon Community.

As many of you may already know, Uniting has recently been advised by the Uniting Church that the Church site at 10 Wendover Avenue Norlane is to be sold. It is expected that the Uniting Barwon Emergency Relief and Housing and Homelessness Programs and Opportunity Shop, the Uniting Church Congregation, and the Anam Cara Program, which are all run from the site, will have to leave the site by the end of December 2022. All Programs and the Congregation are currently looking for new sites in Norlane from which they can continue their essential services to the local community.

Until our next Retail Update All the Best to Everyone.

Des Younghusband, Uniting Team Leader- Retail Barwon and Werribee

Join us on Facebook for the latest Uniting news.

facebook.com/UnitingOpShops

facebook.com/UnitingVic.Tas

Uniting Barwon Facebook group

facebook.com/groups/271428035066879



Uniting Board Visits Barwon

Visit to Grovedale

A Board visit is an important connection between the work we do on site and the strategic decisions the Board must make. The tour was an opportunity to orientate a small number of new and existing Board members to the importance of our services, and to meet the people who make everything happen on the ground. For that reason I think we achieved our purpose and got the message across. I know those Board members will take a strong positive recollection of the visit with them, the need in the local community, and the dedication of staff and volunteers. All very good things when they come to make a decision on backing the continuation of our services in the Geelong area.

Jerry Ham, Group Manager, Housing, Homelessness, Crisis and Social Support

Visit to Geelong West

We also had a positive visit to our Geelong West Op Shop from three members of the Uniting Board during their whirlwind visit in October. Tour guide Shannon Bell reported that the Board members greatly enjoyed their visit and were enthusiastically conveying to their Board colleagues the virtues of Op Shops as demonstrated at Geelong West!

Congratulations to Andrea Dollman, Manager at Geelong West, for her inspiring leadership of the retail volunteer team and her creative flair in the store. If you haven't visited yet, it's time you did! Thank you to all our retail volunteers across our five stores in Barwon and Werribee for your commitment to raising funds and awareness for our Barwon Emergency Relief (ER) Programs—which our equally committed ER volunteers dedicate themselves to. Thank you all!

Elizabeth Hopkin, Co-ordinator of Volunteers



Linda McCrorey, Alistair Macrae, Jessica Hateley-Browne

THANK YOU to my team – Jan, Kai, Sandy and Sandra

A huge shout out and thank you to my incredibly diligent admin and database support team. Many of you will have connected with Jan, Kai and Sandy. Together, they have assisted many new and existing volunteers with applications, police checks, working with children checks and so much more. Congratulations to Kai on his new job! We hope to still see Kai occasionally over the coming months. Thank you to Jan for a concerted few weeks of training with Sandra, and welcome to Sandra, newest member of the team! We appreciate Sandra's willingness to learn the role and to take it on while Jan is away. Safe travels to Jan as she heads off on an exciting holiday abroad! And thank you to Sandy for her continued support. I am very lucky to have such dedicated volunteers helping me with the smooth running of the Uniting Barwon Volunteer Program.

Elizabeth Hopkin, Co-ordinator of Volunteers

Housing and Homelessness

Pets in the Park

I would like to give an update on the Geelong Pets in the Park Program. As our Norlane site is being sold, we need to find a new location for the program. Our last clinic for this year will be on Saturday, 5 November. We hope to find a new location and resume in February 2023. Northerly Aspects featured Geelong Pets in the Park for their cover story recently, which was a great opportunity to get the word out into the community.

Regarding the housing and homeless program for Barwon, my contract runs out on the 31 December 2022. Hopefully Uniting will be able to secure more funding after that date.

Lyn Fitzgerald, IAP Housing and Homelessness

'Can't afford to live' as rising costs hit most vulnerable.

New research from Uniting Vic.Tas has uncovered the devastating impact the rising cost of living is having on Victoria and Tasmania's most vulnerable.

The 'Can't afford to live: The impact of the rising cost of living on Victorians and Tasmanians on low incomes' report, which was carried out by Uniting Vic.Tas and Swinburne University's Centre for Social Impact, was launched today as part of Anti-Poverty Week.

The Uniting report lays bare the crippling effect the rising cost of living is having on the most vulnerable low-income earners across both states.

Read the report unitingvictas.org.au/cant-afford-to-live-as-rising-costs-hit-most-vulnerable/



'Can't afford to live'

The impact of the rising cost of living on Victorians and Tasmanians on low incomes

October 2022

Erin Wilson
Chantel Churchus
Thomas Johnson



Uniting



Getting to Know You - Shannon Bell, General Manager

What is your current role and what are some key things you do at Uniting Vic.Tas?

General Manager Partnership, Training and Enterprise, responsible for Retail, Lifeline, Employment Services, Enterprise - Partnerships & Development, Fire & Clay Disability Social Enterprise, Uniting Registered Training Organisation.

Describe yourself in one sentence

A country boy at heart who is easy-going and enjoys a good laugh, being around my family, and being creative.

What is your career background (where did you come from)?

I have been working with Uniting for almost 20 years. I started as an Art Therapy student on placement at Uniting Metro Drug and Alcohol Service. Over the years I have worked in various management roles across Uniting, including Alcohol and Other drug treatment, Training, Child Youth and Family, Youth of Home Care, and Project Management.

What was a career defining moment for you or your biggest career highlight?

I played a key role in the creation, implementation, and expansion of the Non-residential AOD rehabilitation model. Catalyst is a successful, national award-winning evidence-based 6-week non-residential rehabilitation program. The success of the Catalyst programs provided the model for commissioning 9 new programs state-wide as part of the Victorian "Ice" Action Plan.

What is your favourite part about working at Uniting Vic.Tas?

Definitely the people. Working closely with colleagues and consumers to foster a better quality of life and real social change.

Who do you look up to as a role model (who influences you)?

I have had several amazing mentors in my life, everyday people with big impact: Mum and Dad, Jim Carlton, and Trevor King.

To finish off on a lighter note; if you could be reincarnated into any animal on earth, what would you like to be and why?

I think a Koala would be nice.... Eat, Sleep, Repeat. They are so cute and cuddly too.



Getting to Know You –

Jacob Miller, Senior Manager, Retail

What is your current role and what are some key things you do at Uniting Vic.Tas?

I am Senior Manager of Retail, and as I sit here and write this, I am on Day 1 – so it is a journey of learning! I have worked in Op Shops since high school and love discovering treasured goods and treasured people so you are sure to see me around!

Describe yourself in one sentence

Quirky, bright, unique, driven, jazz, gin, food! Not so much a sentence but a snapshot!

What is your career background (where did you come from)?

I have spent the last two years working for Hobart City Mission, setting up one of the largest charity stores in the country. Hobart is my hometown so it was nice to be able to head to Tassie and share the skills I've learnt. I have worked with lots of charity retailers in Australia and the UK and bring to Uniting fresh eyes, lots of energy and a love for what we do!

What was a career defining moment for you or your biggest career highlight?

There are two for me. The first was when I decided to return to Charity Retail. I had been working in Youth & Education for a few years but I missed the buzz, and the adventure so I set my eyes on being back in Op Shops and aiming to create the very best and most fun experiences for volunteers, customers and employees. The second was in November 2021 when I turned a dream of opening an Op Shop for 24 continuous hours into reality! At Hobart City Mission we celebrated diversity, art, culture and recycling with live music, performance, discounts and 24 continuous hours of op shopping to mark our 1st Birthday! It was a huge success and reminded me of why I love Op Shops – a space for all to come together.

What is your favourite part about working at Uniting Vic.Tas?

Well, as it is only day one, I will have to say the smiles. Everyone has greeted me with warmth and kindness! But I came to Uniting because of the vision and values – bold, imaginative, respectful, and compassionate.

Who do you look up to as a role model (who influences you)?

Queer Icons, Aboriginal Elders, Fashion Icons, Retail Superstars. JVN, Palawa People, Iris Apfel, Mary Portas.

To finish off on a lighter note; if you could be reincarnated into any animal on earth, what would you like to be and why?

Well, I love the look of ducks and collect duck Bric-a-Brac but I think maybe a squirrel is more me. Rushing around, often in fancy surrounds, looking cute, bulky to stay warm and with the ability to smell good food under a foot of snow!



U-learn

Thank you to everyone who has logged on to ULearn and commenced the training modules. A reminder for those of you who need an off-line version we have hard copies available for each site.

Uniting does not expect you to undertake training modules outside of your usual volunteer shifts or time commitment and we will continue to encourage you to complete the modules/reading within your regular shifts.

Help is available.

Contact the Volunteer Services help line by emailing volunteers@vt.uniting.org or phoning 0421 943 030 during business hours or ask your Team Leader or IT savvy fellow volunteers.

Local Feedback

Thanks to Carolyn Kerger from the Highton Op Shop for her feedback that the *manual was interesting reading, especially the unconscious bias section.*



Volunteer Vacancies

We have urgent volunteer vacancies across Op Shops and Emergency Relief programs.

Please spread the word to family, friends, neighbours and colleagues.

For all volunteer enquiries please contact Elizabeth Hopkin:

Email: Elizabeth.hopkin@vt.uniting.org

Call: **03 4210 1113.**

**Thank you, Barwon
volunteers**

