Uniting AgeWell

Key points in this report for the period July 2014 to March 2016:

- Governance
- Strategy
- Consolidating Senior Services within Uniting AgeWell
- The continuing role of the UCA in the provision of aged care

1 INTRODUCTION

Uniting AgeWell (UA) (previously known as Uniting Aged Care) was established by Synod in 2004 as a core mission activity of the Church.

Uniting AgeWell continues to seek to work as an integral part of the Uniting Church of Australia (UCA), Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, with the ‘On the Way Together’ priorities of Discipleship, Leadership, Partnership and Risk Taking, integrated within all that we do. This report provides the update on the period July 2014 to January 2016 being the period since our last Synod report.

Our mission is to provide specialised services enabling older people to maximise their wellbeing, and access care when required.

With a strong Christian ethos originating through the establishment of our organisation by the Uniting Church of Australia, we ensure that our services are inclusive and accessible to people of all faiths and cultures.

We want older people to experience a sense of wellbeing, choice and independence at every age and stage of their lives, to feel valued members of their community and to have easy access to the services they need, to live the life they want.

It’s what we call ageing well.

Uniting AgeWell delivers senior services across Victoria and Tasmania.

Each year, we provide care and support to more than 7,000 people.

We deliver residential aged care, retirement services and community services.

These services are provided through the dedication and commitment of more than 2500 skilled personnel and more than 600 volunteers.

Many of our sites are co-located, making it easier for clients to access the care and support they need as their needs change.

Our first site was opened in 1947. Today, we have 44 sites operating across Melbourne, Geelong, Bendigo and southern and northern Tasmania.

Uniting AgeWell Values
Respect Partnership Wisdom Fairness Stewardship

Uniting AgeWell Service Model
Connect Being Assist Restore Care Palliate
As an agency of the Uniting Church in Australia, Uniting AgeWell has a long and proud connection with local church congregations.

Many of our communities were established by individual congregations responding to the needs of local older people more than 60 years ago.

These sites are located in five of the eight Uniting Church Presbyteries across Victoria and Tasmania.

The Uniting Church congregations continue to play a vital and important role in all Uniting AgeWell communities.

In 2004 the Uniting Church brought together aged care services in Victoria and Tasmania as one organisation, Uniting Aged Care.

In October 2013 the organisation was renamed Uniting AgeWell.

Our name signifies the importance of our connection to the Uniting Church in Australia, and that old age should be celebrated and enjoyed, by ageing as well as we can.

This ethos is reflected in the organisation’s vision to be a creative leader enabling communities to age well and individuals to live to their potential.

2 GOVERNANCE

Uniting AgeWell is authorised by Synod to operate under a Constitution which identifies its responsibilities and accountabilities. A skills-based Board has established six committees to advise it in key areas: finance, audit & risk, quality & safety, remuneration & nomination, property & development, and mission.

AgeWell Community Advisory Committee (ACAC)

In addition to the six established committees Uniting AgeWell recently decided to establish a new community advisory committee to help it plan and shape the future of the organisation’s services and the aged care system as a whole.

This committee, known as the AgeWell Community Advisory Committee (ACAC), is an exciting new initiative. Although common in the hospital and disability sectors, this is rare in senior services so this is a ground-breaking step in which Uniting AgeWell is a trail-blazer.

Information sessions were held in Victoria and Tasmania following advertising for expressions of interest for members. Attendance was both pleasing and encouraging with potential members having an amazing range of skills and interests.

Once the membership is approved, the members will participate in an orientation program prior to the first meeting early in the second half of 2016.

This new committee will provide important community and consumer feedback on the way in which we are providing services. The Board is committed to taking seriously the views and recommendations of this new committee. Jill Linklater, UA Board Member, will chair the committee; Jill is a registered nurse with broad experience of the acute, disability and aged care sectors.

The ACAC Member Handbook is available upon request in electronic and hard copy form.
Training and development of the UA Board members is recognised as desirable to facilitate best governance practice. UA pays for each Board member to attend the five day Directors course with the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), and then pays their annual membership fee. Each Board member is responsible for ensuring they comply with the AICD Continuous Professional Development program.

The Executive Director is appointed by the Board after consultation with the General Secretary, and is responsible for implementing the strategic direction of the Board and for the performance of the organisation. A skilled and experienced executive team reports to the Executive Director.

3 STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT RE – CONSOLIDATING SENIOR SERVICES WITHIN UNITING AGEWELL (SENIOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY UCA AGENCIES)

Further to our report to the Standing Committee in August 2015, and in February 2016 Uniting AgeWell (UA) remains firmly convinced that all services to seniors (residential aged care, community programs, packages, etc.) should be under the one administration rather than spread across a number of agencies. UA has the expertise, reputation and confidence of the government departments (state and federal).

In seeking to resolve this key strategic issue, we have engaged with the Standing Committee, the Major Strategic Review (MSR) and the UnitingCare Project Control Group (PCG) in a constructive manner, which has not been entirely to our satisfaction.

To this end we had proposed a motion to the Standing Committee as follows:

1. That all of The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust’s (Victoria and Tasmania) senior services for residential and community programs are managed by Uniting AgeWell, with an effective date of the 1st July 2016, noting this includes:
   
   1.1 Services funded under the Aged Care Act 1997 including Residential Aged Care and Home Care Packages (HCP)

   1.2 Community services funded under the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and State programs including:
   
   - The Home and Community Care (HACC) Program
   - The National Respite for Carers Program (NRCP)
   - The Day Therapy Centres (DTC) Program
   - The Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) Program (case management program)

We note we have not referenced retirement services, which include social housing, independent living units, and lifestyle villages as regulated under state legislation, in this proposed motion. We also note that the Standing Committee has established the Social Housing Project Control Group to pursue the UCA Victoria and Tasmanica Synod Social Housing strategy, and that UA is represented in the PCG.
Whilst we were unsuccessful in having the motion adopted, we look forward to continuing dialogue with other UC agencies as the future directions are clarified for all agencies operating within the senior services space area.

4 THE CONTINUING ROLE OF THE UCA IN THE PROVISION OF AGED CARE

UA also seeks affirmation from the Synod on the unresolved matter, as previously put to the Standing Committee, of the commitment of the Church to the ongoing continuity of Uniting AgeWell as a core mission of the Church to ensure that all internal and external key stakeholders can have confidence in future dealings with UA.

UA submits that care for the aged and vulnerable is core to the UCA mission. Paragraph 1 of the Basis of Union states “the Church of God is committed to serve the world for which Christ died”, and among those most in need of being served are the aged. Similarly Paragraph 3 of the Basis declares that “the Church’s call is…to be a fellowship of reconciliation”. Much of UA’s work through the AgeWell philosophy is precisely fostering that fellowship of reconciliation, building on the oft-repeated Biblical injunction to care for the stranger, the orphan and the widows in our midst.

The UA Board is firmly of the belief that there would be substantial reputational damage to the Uniting Church if the Synod chose to discontinue its work in aged care. This is particularly so in the light of the ageing profile of UCA members.

We refer you to the Mission paper (Attachment 1).

5 KEY HIGHLIGHTS ACHIEVED WITHIN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR UA ACROSS THE REPORTING PERIOD

The updated July 2015 to June 2017 Strategic Plan has been adopted. This plan forms the basis for deliverables across the 2015/2016 year for the executive and senior leadership teams.

This plan sets out six strategic imperatives. These are:

- That AgeWell is embedded in all our services
- That we are an expression of the Church
- That we are an innovative and sustainable organisation
- To empower our people and strengthen our culture
- That we move beyond compliance to excellence
- And we grow and develop our services

We refer you to Attachment 2 for the one page strategic overview as adopted in June 2015.
5.1 STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE 1 – AGEWELL IS EMBEDDED IN ALL SERVICES

AgeWell Components

We attach for your reference UA’s A Different Approach To Ageing booklet (Attachment 3) reflecting the UA AgeWell Strategy, highlighting the Uniting AgeWell Service model, and the six components of; AgeWell Connect, AgeWell Being, AgeWell Assist, AgeWell Restore, AgeWell Care and AgeWell Palliate.

Hard copies of the booklet are available upon request.

5.2 STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE 2 – AN EXPRESSION OF THE CHURCH

We are pleased to note that all our Residential sites are now supported with chaplaincy services and the following points are noted.

Current UA Chaplain Context

- 100% coverage of UA residential aged care communities – 20 residential aged care sites
- 14 chaplains currently employed with a cumulative 7.8 EFT
- Consistent position descriptions
- Consistent placement procedures in partnership with the Church
- Lay and ordained chaplains from five different Christian denominations
- $670,000 budgeted in 2015/16 for chaplaincy. Together with associated leadership and support system costs an indicative spend is approximately $1 million
- $3,000 budgeted in 2015/16 for the ListenWell project, to create volunteer pastoral care teams (PCVs) under the oversight of the chaplain
- seven out of 20 residential aged care communities have a volunteer pastoral care team with approx. 25 PCVs
- Chaplain networks provide peer support
- A Director of Mission position whose position description includes the support and development of UA chaplaincy
- An annual two day retreat for all UA chaplains
- An average chaplain availability of 14 minutes per week per resident or 33 residents per chaplain per day
- A bank of fill in chaplains available on call
5.3 STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE 3 – AN INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATION

Preliminary Financial Results for UA for the 2014/15 Financial Year:

The 2014/15 financial results, which have been audited for statutory year-end purposes, continue to reflect a positive and sustainable financial position for UA.

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The Uniting AgeWell Annual Report for 2014/2015 is available upon request in either electronic or hard copy form.

We will make available copies for your reference at the forthcoming Synod meeting.

5.4 STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE 4 – EMPOWER OUR PEOPLE, STRENGTHEN OUR CULTURE

UA Governance/Board and Committee Changes

Wendy Quinn was appointed as Board Deputy Chair from 1 July 2015 until the 2016 Annual General Meeting. Wendy is also Chair of the Mission Committee and an active member of the Kingston Uniting Church.

Anna Martiniello resigned her position on the UA Board and as Chair of the Property and Development Committee (PDC) effective 30 June 2015. Greg Flood was subsequently appointed to both these roles in August 2015 but unfortunately tendered his resignation in January 2016 citing unforeseen significant increases in work demands as the reason for his decision.

Libby Pallot ceased her term on the Board in March 2015 after a nine year term. Sabine Phillips commenced on the Board and the UA Audit and Risk Committee in March 2015.

Cathy Balding ceased her term on the UA Board 30 November 2015 after six years of contributing her extensive professional knowledge, expertise and insight to both the Board and as Chair of the Quality & Safety Committee.

Prof Alison Hutchinson commenced 1 December 2015 on the UA Board and became Chair of the Quality & Safety Committee. Alison brings to the Board her extensive skills and expertise in the ability to translate research into practice which will enhance Uniting AgeWell’s provision of senior services care. An induction session for Alison was held on 14 January 2016 and a UA Board member has been appointed to mentor Alison.

An effective Board induction process is in place, and all new Board members undertake the AICD Directors course. The opportunity for all Board members to participate in site visitation days has also been established, with the Board visiting Hobart sites on 26-27 May 2015, providing an excellent opportunity to meet with residents, family and staff and to obtain an enhanced insight into the services UA provides.

Board and Committee members were invited to attend the first of this year’s site visits on 28-29 January 2016. The two days were well attended and members felt the visits were well worthwhile. The next visit is planned for 7 April 2016 to some of the Western sites of Victoria.
5.5 STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE 5 – BEYOND COMPLIANCE TO EXCELLENCE

Accreditation – Residential Sites

UA operates 20 residential aged care facilities across Victoria & Tasmania. The key independent accreditation review of the operations of residential facilities is undertaken by the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency (AACQA), against four Aged Care standards (44 outcomes).

This is a rigorous process, which is based on a three year accreditation cycle. Across the 2015 UA have had 13 of our sites undergo the extensive independent audit process with all sites being successful in achieving the 44 outcomes. This is an excellent outcome with congratulations to all involved at site level and across UA.

**Victoria**

- Kalkee Nangatta: Belmont, Geelong, Victoria
- Kalkee Murray: Belmont, Geelong, Victoria
- Condare: Camberwell, Melbourne, Victoria
- Tanderra: Camberwell, Melbourne, Victoria
- Noble Park: Noble Park, Melbourne, Victoria
- Strathdon: Forest Hill, Melbourne, Victoria
- Strath-Haven: Bendigo, Victoria
- Carnsworth: Kew, Victoria

**Tasmania**

- Strathglen: Berriedale, Tasmania
- Strathaven: Rosetta, Tasmania
- Strathdevon: Latrobe, Tasmania
- Lillian Martin: Mornington, Tasmania

Quality Review – Community Programs

Over the past year six of UA’s Community programs underwent a Quality Review through AACQA. This is a newly established and rigorous process, which is based on a three year accreditation cycle, where programs are measured against 18 outcomes. All the following UA programs successfully met all 18 outcomes.

**Victoria**

- Kalkee Nangatta: Belmont, Geelong
- Kalkee Murray: Belmont, Geelong
- Kingsville: Kingsville, Melbourne
- Noble Park: Noble Park, Melbourne
- Strathdon: Forest Hill, Melbourne
- Strath-Haven: Bendigo

**Tasmania**

- Strathglen: Berriedale
- Strathaven: Rosetta
- Strathdevon: Latrobe
- Lillian Martin: Mornington

UA has also been proactive in assisting other agencies with the Synod of Victoria & Tasmania to achieve accreditation under the new framework.
The UA Quality Framework

The UA AgeWell service model (Connect, Being, Restore, Assist, Care and Palliate) together with the UA Service approach (RISE – Responsive, Integrated, Safe and Effective) have been incorporated within our Quality framework.

5.6 STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE 6 – GROW AND DEVELOP SERVICES

Transition to Consumer Directed Care (CDC)

UA provides community services through home care packages to seniors across eight Department of Social Services (DSS) regions. For Victoria, we deliver in five out of nine regions: Eastern Metro, Western Metro, Southern Metro, Barwon, Loddon-Mallee (Bendigo), and in Tasmania we deliver in all three regions (Southern Tasmania, Northern Tasmania and North-West Tasmania).

The Government's deadline for transition of all current home care packages by 1 July 2015, to a consumer directed platform, was achieved. An excellent achievement across both direct service delivery teams, and the central office support teams.

To provide easy access to information for UA current and prospective clients, we have developed the Your Home Care Packages which is available in electronic and hard copy upon request.

ACAR Funding Round Preparation – CDC Packages 2015 Round

Considerable work was undertaken in partnership with key sister organisations within Victoria to advance preparation for the 2015 ACAR funding round, where UA worked closely with UC GNE and UC Gippsland. UA undertook the lead and also funded associated costs in development of the ACAR applications.

We anticipate that results of our application will be provided in March/April 2016.

My Aged Care Portal

Information for UA sites and services in regard to federally funded programs has been uploaded to the newly established Australian Government DSS My Aged Care portal, which is also known as the Aged Care Gateway for clients.

The Preston Project – Redevelopment of Lumeah (78 Bruce Street, West Preston)

The Preston redevelopment proposal, as approved by the UA Board on 28th April 2015, was presented to the Synod Finance Committee (SFC) on 12th May 2015, and subsequently approved at the UCA Property Trust meeting of 20th May 2015. Progress on required planning and project management is now underway. The development project, with an anticipated completion timeline of August 2018, will provide a 104 bed residential facility within the Preston congregation.

Renovation and construction of facilities

- A major refurbishment is currently underway at Condare Court in Burwood.
- A 28-bed extension is almost complete at Manor Lakes in Wyndham Vale.
- Detailed planning is proceeding on a proposal to develop the Hawthorn site for both residential aged care and independent living units.

ALLAN THOMPSON
Board Chair

VALERIE J LYONS
Executive Director / CEO

Uniting AgeWell Values
Respect Partnership Wisdom Fairness Stewardship

Uniting AgeWell Service Model
Connect Being Assist Restore Care Palliate
Uniting AgeWell - a Mission of the Uniting Church

Executive Summary:
Uniting AgeWell is an integral part of the Uniting Church’s participation in God’s mission with older people. It follows in the biblical tradition, Christian Church’s heritage and congregational responses to local mission opportunities to meet the needs of their older neighbours.

Uniting AgeWell’s mission focus is demonstrated by the importance of mission in its governance structure, its commitment to work within the structures and procedures of the Church and the presence of a Director of Mission as part of the executive team.

Uniting AgeWell is a distinctive and vital mission activity of the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania as evidenced by its:

- integrated service model covering residential care, palliative care, retirement units, public housing, community home care, day therapy, carer respite and respite accommodation;
- contribution to alleviating homelessness through our 50 social housing units in Tasmania;
- 10,676 community respite days in 2014;
- 40% concessional residents well above the industry average of 18%. In more affluent areas, our ratio of financially disadvantaged residents is generally significantly higher than mandated ratios and higher than our competitors;
- providing services to meet a wide range of needs in sectors that aren’t preferred by many other providers with 50% of our residential facilities operating in areas with a social disadvantage index less than the Australian average;
- engagement across the congregations and agencies of the Uniting Church;
- development of chaplaincy;
- integration of Uniting Church ethos and values;
- inclusive pastoral and spiritual care offered based on clients preferences.
A Vision for Mission with Older People

As Uniting AgeWell’s participation in God’s mission develops we are working towards:

- Each client (and the people who are important to them) thankful for the exemplary support they receive from the Church as they age well
- Each volunteer productively using their talents in service of the Church to expand our mission capacity
- Each staff member appreciating their role as part of the Uniting Church and demonstrating our values and the Uniting Church ethos through their work
- Each chaplain leading the spiritual and pastoral focus of our mission and inspiring staff and volunteers to maximise clients’ well-being: body, mind and spirit
- Each board, committee and executive team member grateful of our Church heritage and determined to maximise our contribution and mutual mission with other parts of the Church to extend our mission together
- Each congregation equipped with up to date information and education on ageing, dementia and palliative care by our collaborative efforts with Presbyteries and the Centre for Theology and Ministry
- Each congregation focusing one weekly worship service on seniors during Seniors Week each year
- Each service location promoting other parts of the church such as the UC Funds Management, Sammy Stamp and Share
- Each UA location and publication includes the UC logo or UnitingCare branding

1 Introduction

This paper focusses on the mission of God with older people and Uniting AgeWell’s role in this as an agency of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania of the Uniting Church in Australia. Drawing upon a range of theological thought, it aims to show how this understanding has developed from our understanding of mission, Biblical tradition, early church history and the foundations of the Uniting Church.

In practical terms, it describes how this understanding is embedded in Uniting AgeWell’s purpose, understanding of ageing, AgeWell philosophy, organisational model and practice of service delivery with older people. By noting how the current governance, ethos and work of Uniting AgeWell resonates so strongly with its Christian and Uniting Church foundations, it argues for Uniting AgeWell to be considered an integral part of the mission of God for the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania of the Uniting Church in Australia.

1 Uniting AgeWell – A Different Approach to Growing Old, 2012
2  **Uniting AgeWell’s Understanding of Ageing**

God offers fullness of life to everyone without exception. The Christian Church follows Jesus’ compassion for those at the margins. Uniting AgeWell, as part of the church, seeks to enable older people to live fulfilling, wellness-focused lives as they age.

In the earliest writings of the church, people who are ageing are given honoured status because of their wisdom of life experiences. This is true in many cultures. Indeed, older age is often marked by a deepened spiritual appreciation of life and a heightened awareness of the value of community. Increasing life expectancy in the 21st century provides additional opportunities for people who are ageing to contribute their accumulated wisdom and experience for other’s spiritual benefit in both active and receptive ways.

The Christian Church believes that all human beings are created “in the image of God” and have a capacity to relate to God, the giver of life, by living with each other in communities of mutual support. Jesus proclaims the love and compassion of God towards all people and offers the promise of wholeness described in John’s gospel as “Life in all its fullness”.

Uniting AgeWell is committed to enabling people of all cultures and faiths to live a full life and to age well to their fullest physical and cognitive potential. This reflects the Christian affirmations of the intrinsic worth of all human beings, the intention of wholeness for each person and the teaching of Jesus about love, compassion and hope for all people. Uniting AgeWell is guided by Christian faith and values - respect, partnership, wisdom, fairness and stewardship. Australian culture tends to idolise youth, beauty and productivity, often at the expense of people who are ageing.

In contrast, Uniting AgeWell:

- Commits to continually renew its understanding of older people and their capacity to live and age well;
- Affirms the integrity and worth of all people regardless of their age;
- Seeks to enable all people using its services in the wider community and in our residential communities to share a relationship with God, if they wish, and meaningful connections with the many people around them;
- Acts with integrity and compassion towards all people, regardless of their age;
- Celebrates the unique gifts, stories and wisdom of older people; and
- Advocates for and with older people, speaking against injustice, oppression and anything which diminishes, dehumanises or marginalises older people.²

3  **God’s initiative**

“Since the massive contribution of David Bosch, it has been abundantly clear that mission is never the mission of the church. Mission is God’s, and we, the church are called to be the instruments or agents (not the exclusive agents however) of God’s mission in the world. This means that mission is always the initiative of God, as God

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² Uniting AgeWell, A Uniting Church Understanding of Ageing 2014
reaches out into creation, calling people to participate in the reign of God and to live Kin(g)dom values.”\(^3\)

God’s purposes are sometimes carried out by “outsiders” like King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon who Jeremiah sees as an instrument that God uses. Jer 27:6 reminds us that God’s mission is bigger than the church, the church being just one of the agents of God’s mission.

“Mission is not a project or a program that God does because of something else; it is an expression of who God is.”\(^4\)

The booklet, “Understanding the Practice of Mission Motivated Development” summarises mission as:

“Mission assumes that everything has its beginning in God; that there is an overarching purpose – God’s purpose for all creation; that there a sending pattern – God sends the Son, God sends the Spirit, God sends the church… that the one sending another has authority to do so; that there is a task for those sent, a task that addresses God’s purposes; that the one in authority knows about a person or community, part of or all of creation, who will benefit by receiving those sent and the task that person or group will perform.”\(^5\)

4 **Biblical Tradition**

The Hebrew Scriptures regularly reminded God’s people in the Law\(^6\) and through prophets’ words to protect, offer hospitality and advocate for widows. In those patriarchal times without the security of a husband or dutiful sons, widows were particularly vulnerable at whatever age they became widows.\(^7\) Stories such as the book of Ruth and the hospitality of the widow at Zarephath for the prophet Elijah emphasise God’s interest in the security and communal acceptance of widows.

Jesus of Nazareth, preaching in a synagogue quoted Isaiah’s vision of a reversal of fortunes for the marginalised\(^8\), praised a widow’s small temple treasury contribution\(^9\) and ministered with older people.\(^10\) This affirmation of each person’s value regardless of the existing social hierarchy, is repeated in the Apostle Paul’s declaration that “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”\(^11\)

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\(^3\) Rev John Rickard, Mission an Inclusive Approach, 2000
\(^4\) Rev Rod Horsfield, Thoughts on Mission, 2008
\(^5\) Understanding the Practice of Mission Motivated Development, 2013
\(^6\) E.g. Dt 10:14, 24:17
\(^7\) E.g. Ezek 22:7 and Jer 7:6
\(^8\) Isa 61: 1 – 2
\(^9\) Mark 12: 41 – 44
\(^10\) E.g. John 5: 1 – 9
\(^11\) Galations 3: 28
Early on, the fledgling church recognised the need to ordain, or set apart, people with particular gifts for particular activities, as in the case of Acts 6, in response to the neglect of the Grecian widows.

5 Early Church History

A distinctive feature of the early Christian church was its inclusion and support of widows and the poor. The History of the Church, written by Eusebius in the 4th Century CE emphasises this in quoting a letter from Cornelius, bishop of Rome to Bishop Fabius of Antioch in 251 CE, “more than fifteen hundred widows and distressed persons” were being cared for by the local congregation.

This focus on the vulnerable has been addressed by the church over the centuries according to its context. Referencing early Methodism’s focus, Rev Alistair Macrae stated:

“The Jesus who shaped John Wesley, was himself shaped by the old prophets who taught that the health of a society was measured by the way it treats its poor. Not by GDP or share indexes but by the way the most vulnerable and needy have access to what is necessary to human flourishing.”

Christian activists such as William Wilberforce and here in Australia, Carolyn Chisholm, provided a prophetic voice as they addressed social issues, sometimes despite the church’s reticence to face such issues. Many of our congregations employ a similar prophetic voice in their advocating for older people in their communities.

6 Basis of Union

“The Church, as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, confesses Jesus as Lord over its own life; it also confesses that Jesus is Head over all things, the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity ... The Church’s call is to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself.”

Councils and agencies of the church, including Uniting AgeWell, understand themselves to be such “an instrument” as they enjoy seeing Christ “work and bear witness to himself” through mission with older people. God’s mission is the coming “reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation.”

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12 Rev Alistair Macrae, 2008
13 The Basis of Union of the Uniting Church in Australia, 1992 para.3
14 Ibid
7 Uniting Church Calling

The Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches all had a theological and missional heritage which called for expression of the Christian faith through both word and deed. The Uniting Church inherited and continues this tradition. In its inaugural Statement to the Nation in 1977, the Uniting Church affirmed that: ‘Christian responsibility to society has always been regarded as fundamental to the mission of the Church. In the Uniting Church our response to the Christian gospel will continue to involve us in social and national affairs.’

The Statement concluded: ‘We pledge ourselves to hope and work for a nation whose goals are not guided by self-interest alone, but by concern for the welfare of all persons everywhere — the family of the One God — the God made known in Jesus of Nazareth the One who gave His life for others.’

“The commitment of the Uniting Church in Australia to community service flows from its understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament and the responsibility for social action and justice they contain

The Uniting Church in Australia proudly shares the tradition of the Christian Church, and exists to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Through the word and teaching of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the gospels, the foundations are laid for the Church’s understanding of its mission in community services. Jesus’ ministry challenged people to give more serious attention to the nature of service to one another”

8 Church Foundations

Many of our predecessor Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian, presbyteries, parishes or congregations initiated local ministry with older people in a variety of forms. Meals for people in their homes, home maintenance, providing independent living units and residential aged care for older people are common responses to God’s promptings and their decision to participate in God’s mission.

“Often, community services in the Uniting Church have grown from a grass-roots response to community need by local churches. ‘The Church engages [in the work of community services] because of its belief that the work of healing, growth and liberation is God’s work in the lives of people and in the life of the world.” Community services are therefore necessarily embedded within – and influenced by – the identity, vision and values of the church itself especially at a time when governments were not attuned to the needs of older citizens except in relation to the age pension.

The founding committee of Strath-Haven in Bendigo responded to their community’s needs with determined foresight insisting upon rooms with ensuites at a time when this was not standard or specified. Despite pressure from Methodist Homes to

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15 Uniting Church in Australia Statement to the Nation in 1977
16 UnitingCare, “Faith Foundations”
17 Colleen Geyer, Transforming Mission in Faith-Based Community Services, 2010
reconsider, the resultant delay and additional fundraising required, their vision, years ahead of its time, was realised and continues to benefit White Hills Haven and Strath-Haven today.

The vision and remarkable commitment of congregations in creating places of security and hospitality for older people is the foundation upon which the work of Uniting AgeWell continues. Many congregations offer worship and pastoral care at several aged care communities nearby - Uniting Church or not. Across all Uniting AgeWell communities, over 700 volunteers include a high percentage of Uniting Church members demonstrating a continued local involvement that has withstood the tensions and grown since the Synod decisions of 2003 and 2004.

There is a strong continuing legacy of bequests and donations from Uniting Church members, former residents and friends of Uniting AgeWell and it precursors entrusting significant resources for the provision and development of senior services into the future.

In response to the increasing demands placed on age care facilities by the new 1997 regulations and although not explicitly stated in the Synod resolutions of 2003 and 2004, there was a clear understanding within the committees and councils charged with discerning the future of the Uniting Church aged care services that this area represented at that time a key component of God’s mission for the Uniting Church. Hence the establishment of Uniting Aged Care, and then Uniting AgeWell in 2013.

The appointment of dedicated chaplains has increased rather than diminished local congregational involvement as chaplains encourage and coordinate local ministers’ and volunteers’ engagement in the life of the aged care community. Local Uniting Church members “ownership” of their closest Uniting AgeWell community remains strong in many places as they continue to understand these communities as part of the mission of God, with their congregation and themselves, together with Uniting AgeWell, as agents of that mission.

9 Distinctive Uniting Church Mission

Uniting AgeWell’s mission with older people presents opportunities to express the distinctive characteristics of the Uniting Church of ecumenism, social justice, inclusion, reconciliation, multiculturalism and ecumenism.

Speaking of UnitingCare QLD Colleen Geyer (2014) says, “With its mission firmly grounded in the beliefs, actions and commitments of the Uniting Church, and clearly aligned to its business priorities, then mission encompasses all we do.”

John Wesley’s injunction, “And always, go, not only to those that need you, but to those that need you most”18 is demonstrated by Uniting AgeWell providing 50 social housing units, offering 10,676 respite nights in 2014 and welcoming 40% of our residents as supported Residential Aged Care places, compared to the government requirement of around 18% depending upon region.

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18 The eleventh rule of a helper in “The Large Minutes”, John Wesley, 1791
While UA’s value of stewardship keeps UA focussed on its financial sustainability, our community managers give a priority to responding to the needs of individuals whose situation precludes them from the for-profit sector of the aged care providers.

*In Launceston in 2013 our manager responded to a request to accommodate a homeless man who was being discharged from hospital with no other provider willing to accommodate him. By carefully understanding and meeting his need we have enabled this resident to continue to age well with us ever since.*

Free from a primary focus on the financial bottom line that accountability to shareholders or private owners requires, UA as a not-for-profit provider, is able to focus its efforts strongly on God’s mission while ensuring the financial sustainability of all that is does.

10 Advocacy

Advocating for the rights of older people, Uniting AgeWell is better informed as a player with first-hand experience of the challenges and opportunities that exist. Our advocacy is based upon the positive ageing paradigm which is the foundation of our new AgeWell philosophy and theological understanding of ageing.

“The church must also articulate clearly and powerfully the bigger yes that lies behind everyone. Yes to life, to peace, to justice, to that which builds community and inclusion. That’s why I love being part of a Uniting Care agency. Those gospel values are at the heart of what we seek to do. In our policies, programs and priorities we seek to articulate a clear yes to life and a prophetic no to that which diminishes life. I would like to hear our voice more clearly in the public space. Our culture wants to confine the religious life to the private domain and we should resist this vigorously. But whatever we say should be tempered by due humility; and it should, in the case of social policy matters, for instance, be based on evidence rather than mere assertion. If we are to be taken seriously in the public space and the corridors of influence then our voice must not be one of strident assertion but careful research and clear communication.”

Uniting AgeWell’s theology of aging affirms that The Christian Church believes that all human beings are created “In the image of God.” Our value of respect, honouring the whole person – body, mind and spirit, runs counter to dominant themes in society and industry’s trends towards seeing older people as consumers or units to be serviced and reflects a life affirming understanding.

UA advocated for improvements to the integration of services for older people supported in their homes based upon UA’s research and its relationship with people receiving our services. Our advocacy flows from our experience, grounded in the

19 Uniting AgeWell 2012
20 Rev Alistair Macrae, 2008
21 Uniting AgeWell 2014
realities of people’s lives and the impact of government policies. This is expressed by face-to-face meetings with government, through UnitingCare nationally and through our involvement in industry organisations such as Leading Age Services Australia and COTA (formerly Council on the Ageing).

11 Uniting AgeWell

Uniting AgeWell is a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) which gives it significant tax benefits and for which it must meet the requirement that: *The Agency is established for the principal objective of relieving poverty, suffering, sickness, disability, helplessness and distress by providing aged care services, disability services and other health care services for the benefit of people in need of relief.*

Our vision begins: ‘Uniting AgeWell: the Church at Work’. A ‘Key Direction’ in the current Strategic Plan is: ‘Be an expression of the Church’, with three stated outcomes of:

1. The Church’s relationship with UA is well established among Councils and congregations;
2. UA Chaplaincy services strengthened;
3. Christian values are demonstrated in the work of the organisation throughout Victoria and Tasmania.

UA works to achieve these outcomes by:

- Utilising a Mission Committee to advise the UA Board;
- Including a Director of Mission within the Senior Executive Team to ensure the first strategic direction is implemented throughout UA;
- Increasing the resourcing of chaplains to coordinate spiritual and pastoral care for our communities’ residents, families and friends, to conduct worship and engage with the local Church. (Currently 15 chaplains serve our 22 communities);
- Working with the Synod Placements Committee for the recruitment of chaplains and with presbyteries for their placement, supervision and Code of Ethics requirements;
- Celebrating the stories of our founding congregations, denominations and agencies in the “10 Years Working Together” history booklet;
- Conducting regular joint worship services with congregations with an involvement or potential involvement with our communities. (The Parkmore congregation conducts weekly Sunday worship in the chapel at our Strathdon community);
- Participating in Presbytery meetings and committees where appropriate, particularly the 5 presbyteries in which our communities and services operate;
- Membership of the Synod Leadership Team (through the UA Executive Director), the UnitingCare Agencies Collaboration Strategy and the UnitingCare CEOs’ forum;

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22 Uniting AgeWell Constitution, clause 4.1
• Staff annual training days in which at least 40 minutes is devoted to our vision, the Uniting Church and our values.

Rev Allan Thompson as Chair of the UA Board brings to the role his wealth of experience of ministry across the range of councils and agencies of the Church, helping to ensure that UA standards of governance reflect the Synod’s expectations.

As they relate to our community clients and residents, our staff often respond to their deeper needs by going the extra mile in their own time. They act with compassion demonstrating inherently their belief in Christian values and a commitment to exceeding the minimal accreditation and legal requirements of government.

“I hope that’s how you see yourselves doing what you do in order to resist a shrinking and trivializing of the human.” … to quote Rowan Williams. “We want to keep open all those doors that a lot of people want to close with functionalist, materialist, narrow, boring, reductionist views of human existence.”

Last Christmas, staff at our Kalkee residential aged care community in Geelong, arranged a Christmas lights excursion for residents. A community bus and two maxi taxis were arranged, the night staff made sure the residents were dressed and ready by 8 pm, four wheel chairs were strapped in and the convoy took off. The four accompanying staff volunteered their time, and the residents’ joy as the lights lit up their faces, the buzz as they returned and the memories they shared, made it all worthwhile.

12 Mission Committee

Wendy Quinn, a UA Board Member and member of the Rowallan Park UCA congregation, chairs the UA Mission Committee, which meets quarterly to advise the Board.

The Mission Committee exists to:
• Provide advice and understanding of the mission imperatives, ethos, theology and processes of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA);
• Assist the Board align UA activities with UCA mission imperatives and engage in programs and partnerships which are consistent with these imperatives;
• Assist the Board to understand the implications of UA being an agency of the UCA;
• Assist the Board in the development and maintenance of creative relationships with congregation and councils of the UCA;
• Assist the Board in the development and maintenance of creative relationships with congregations and councils of the UCA.
• Inform the Board on UCA mission imperatives (e.g. compassion, justice, equality, love) and initiatives for consideration in the formulation and implementation of UA’s Strategic Plan;
• advise the Board on means by which Board, staff, and users of UA’s services can better understand the values and ethos of the UCA;
• provide advice to the Board on opportunities to advance such matters as:

23 Rev Alistair Macrae, 2008
• A theology of ageing
• Understanding the ethos of the UCA
• Ethical behaviour
• Relationships between UA and congregation and presbyteries
• Opportunities for congregational mission that intersect with the work of UA.\(^{24}\)

13 Perceptions of UA’s mission

The latest staff satisfaction survey results indicated that 96% of responses agreed or strongly agreed with; ‘I have a good understanding of the mission of UA’ and 84% agreed or strongly agreed that ‘One of the reasons I work for UA is because of the organisation’s values.’

“Our positive experience of dealing with Lillian Martin [UA residential aged care community in Tasmania] over the last 15 months since our mother moved into care: We are a fairly well-organised family and three of us visit her on a roster. Each time one of us visits we send a brief email to the others summarising the situation and our experience. Our combined database consists of hundreds of experiences where either the kitchen staff, the Carers or the nursing staff have gone out of their way to be particularly kind, thoughtful and generous to our mother or others in the care of Lillian Martin. It is a significant managerial achievement to establish a solid culture of kindness and client centred behaviour. We are very grateful for the high standard of care our mother receives.” - Ian Mcdivett\(^{25}\)

Many Uniting Church members understand their engagement with older people through UA as a natural extension of their membership of the Church, its mission and their life of witness and service. Others, less engaged, ask why aged care is part of the Uniting Church’s mission?

Uniting AgeWell is now a leading not-for-profit provider of aged care services in Victoria and Tasmania with an annual turnover of approximately $140 million for the year ending 30 June 2014. It offers a full range of services including residential aged care with a focus on those near the end of life, independent living accommodation, community day programs and community aged care packages. UA operates 21 residential sites and 1,450 beds throughout metropolitan Melbourne, Geelong, Bendigo, and Northern and Southern Tasmania, and employs approximately 2,200 people.

Distinctive aspects of our seniors’ services include the contribution to alleviating homelessness through our 50 social housing units in Tasmania, the provision of over 10,000 respite days for members of the community and the 40% of residents on a concessional rate in our residential communities. We provide services meeting a

\(^{24}\) Mission Committee Terms of Reference 2013
\(^{25}\) Emailed correspondence, used with permission
wide range of needs in sectors that aren’t preferred by many other providers with 50% of our residential facilities operating in areas with a social disadvantage index less than the Australian average. In more affluent areas, our ratio of financially disadvantaged residents is generally significantly higher than mandated ratios and higher than our competitors.

Eleven residential aged facilities are co-located with retirement units and UA offers 555 home care packages. UA’s range of aged care services is rare in the industry. Few organisations offer such an integrated model from the time a person first considers care in their home to their important last days on earth. This integrated approach supports a person’s entire ageing journey rather than cherry picking those stages which may lead to higher profits.

UA’s residential communities specialise in higher levels of care and palliative care ensuring a continuity of relationship and community for those who enter our communities. Our positively-framed AgeWell philosophy resonates with government and older people who appreciate being encouraged to make the most of each day, to enter into an experience of renewal, focussed on ability, not disability. Our spiritual heritage enables us to bring our theology of ageing to life with people every day.

14 Conclusion

With Uniting AgeWell/Uniting Aged Care now being ten years old (and with predecessor organisations reaching back over many decades), it could well be appropriate for God’s mission for the Church in the area of services for the aged to be revisited. The kinds of questions raised include:

- Is there a continuing need in our society for services to be heavily focussed on disadvantaged people who are ageing?
- Is the new wellness-focused approach of Uniting AgeWell one which needs continuing advocacy and investment by the Uniting Church in Australia?
- Does the Uniting Church have a significant responsibility to influence our society’s values and culture in relation to people who are ageing and the services they need?
- Is the not-for-profit sector an essential part of the provision of a full range of services for all older persons in need of such services?
- Is the principal objective of Uniting AgeWell (quoted above in section 11) still a concern for the Uniting Church?

Uniting AgeWell strongly believes the answer to each of the questions is a resounding: “Yes” for the reasons presented in this paper.
References:

Uniting AgeWell – A Different Approach to Growing Old, 2012
Rev Rod Horsfield, Thoughts on Mission, 2008
Understanding the Practice of Mission Motivated Development, 2013
Basis of Union of the Uniting Church in Australia, 1992
UnitingCare Faith Foundations, 2013
Colleen Geyer, Transforming Mission in Faith-Based Community Services, 2010
The eleventh rule of a helper in “The Large Minutes”, John Wesley, 1791
Colleen Geyer, A Reflection on Mission, 2014
Chris Walker, Towards a Theology of Mission, A paper submitted to the UCA Assembly Standing Committee, June 2010,
Uniting AgeWell Constitution, revised 2014
## Uniting AgeWell Strategy

### Our Vision
**Uniting AgeWell: the Church at Work.**
A creative leader enabling communities to age well and individuals to live to their potential.

### Our Mission
Uniting AgeWell provides specialised services enabling older people to maximise their wellbeing and access care when required.

### Our Values
- Respect
- Wisdom
- Stewardship
- Partnership
- Fairness

## Uniting AgeWell Strategies

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<th>Strategic Imperative Two</th>
<th>Strategic Imperative Three</th>
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<tr>
<td>AgeWell is embedded in all services.</td>
<td>An expression of the Church.</td>
<td>An innovative and sustainable organisation.</td>
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<th>Strategic Imperative Four</th>
<th>Strategic Imperative Five</th>
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<tr>
<td>Empower our people, strengthen our culture.</td>
<td>Beyond compliance to excellence.</td>
<td>Grow and develop services.</td>
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## Uniting AgeWell Service Model

**“A different approach to ageing”**

- **AgeWell Connect**
  Supporting you to engage with your community, remain active and celebrate life with others.

- **AgeWell Being**
  Encouraging wellbeing of body, mind and soul.

- **AgeWell Assist**
  Providing support, services and assistance to lead the life you want.

- **AgeWell Restore**
  Accessing therapies and assistive technology to restore and maintain your health and wellbeing.

- **AgeWell Care**
  Offering you a continuum of care and support when and where you need it.

- **AgeWell Palliate**
  Providing dignified end of life care in the setting you want, honouring the spirit within.

## Uniting AgeWell Desired Future

- **Every Person, Every Day**
  The AgeWell model of connect, being, assist, restore, care and palliate is the foundation of all we do.

- **The Church at Work**
  Strong church relationships strengthen the AgeWell journey.

- **Sustainability**
  Successful financial, social and environmental practice, enables Uniting AgeWell to achieve its vision and mission.

- **Empowered People, Enabling Communities to Age Well**
  Staff and volunteers are equipped to effectively and consistently deliver the AgeWell service model.

- **AgeWell Service Excellence**
  Exceeding consumer expectations beyond compliance.

- **Working Together**
  Uniting AgeWell is recognised as an advocate, innovator and influencer in enabling older people to lead the life they want.
At Uniting AgeWell, our focus is on supporting older people to experience a sense of wellbeing, choice and independence at every age and stage of their lives; to feel valued members of their community and to have easy access to the services they need to live the life they want.

It's what we call ageing well.
About Uniting AgeWell

As an organisation of the Uniting Church, Uniting AgeWell has a long history of providing residential and community services for older Australians in Victoria and Tasmania. Many of these communities were established by individual congregations responding to the needs of local older people more than 60 years ago.

In 2004, these services were brought together as one organisation, Uniting Aged Care, now known as Uniting AgeWell. Our name proudly shows the strong connection to the Church and its beliefs, as well as representing a positive view of ageing in the 21st century.

Uniting AgeWell is a practical expression of the Church at work. Our vision is to be a creative leader enabling communities to age well and individuals to live to their potential.

Our values of respect, partnership, wisdom, stewardship and fairness shape and inform all that we do.

With services available throughout metropolitan and regional Victoria and Tasmania, Uniting AgeWell provides a range of options to support a person’s health and wellbeing, including:

- Residential care
- Independent and assisted living
- Home care
- Social support
- Therapy programs
- Respite

At Uniting AgeWell we aim to:

- Concentrate on what you can do and connect you to your passions and interests
- Focus on choice, independence and ‘doing with’, rather than ‘doing for’
- Promote wellness, wherever you are on your life journey
- Encourage wellbeing of body, mind and soul
- Give you support and high quality clinical care as needed
A different approach to ageing

The AgeWell philosophy is built on the recognition that people want to grow old in their own community. To be as independent as possible and have purpose. And to be valued and make a contribution.

AgeWell recognises the different stages of the ageing process. These are reflected in the services you may choose to support your goals, while offering service continuity and peace of mind as your needs change.

Our aim is to support everyone on their individual ageing journey through choice, autonomy, flexibility and community.

The Uniting AgeWell Service Model has six elements: Connect, Being, Assist, Restore, Care and Palliate.

**AgeWell Connect**
Supporting you to engage with your community, remain active and celebrate life with others.

**AgeWell Being**
Encouraging wellbeing of body, mind and soul.

**AgeWell Assist**
Providing support, services and assistance to lead the life you want.

**AgeWell Restore**
Accessing therapies and assistive technology to restore and maintain your health, independence and wellbeing.

**AgeWell Care**
Offering you a continuum of care and support when and where you need it.

**AgeWell Palliate**
Providing dignified end of life care in the setting you want, honouring the spirit within.
Keith George had dreamed of returning to the skies in a Tiger Moth ever since he got his private pilot’s licence in 1952. Thanks to the Wishing Well program, the active 88-year-old fulfilled his wish when he soared over the Yarra Valley in the 1930s aircraft. His family was there to celebrate his achievement and could see the delight on his face.

“I just thought about me and looked to the land below, and loved it when he did steep turns this way and that way. It was almost a Godly feeling to be up there in the air, in control.”

There can be many challenges on the ageing journey. Uniting AgeWell is committed to supporting older people on this journey and enhancing their feelings of wellbeing.

Through innovative programs that promote physical, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, we work with clients and their families to ensure the needs of body, mind and soul are met.

From progressive dining experiences, supporting a person to realise a life dream through the Wishing Well program, pastoral care and social and support groups, to music therapy and physical strengthening programs, AgeWell being is achieved differently for each person. Our focus is on meeting the choices, needs and preferences of each individual.

Connection to family, friends, community and social networks is important in every stage of life, but remaining connected can be more difficult for older people.

AgeWell connect recognises the importance of maintaining these social connections, or helping to establish new ones, offering trusted services, information and transport. Whether a person is living in their own home or as part of a Uniting AgeWell Community, we support everyone to access social and leisure activities and encourage and value their contribution.

This could be through community gardens, social groups, fitness classes, craft workshops or just a drink during happy hour with other residents in the on-site bar or café.
Mima Mitchell is full of energy and enthusiasm. She attends a unique Uniting AgeWell gym program and as a result feels stronger and more agile.

The Helsinki University Research (HUR) gym program uses specially designed air resistance exercise equipment and smart card technology tailored to support older people to maintain and regain fitness levels.

“I am so impressed with the gym. It’s a managed program where you can just do it at your own pace,” the 78-year-old says. “It’s all geared to your body by the exercise physiologist, and it’s good to have other people around to support each other.”

Remaining active as we age is an essential ingredient to maintaining physical health and mental wellbeing.

AgeWell has a range of restorative services that can assist you to regain or maintain your strength and resilience, whether you live at home or in supported care. These include exercise programs, aids and equipment, strength and resilience training, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, podiatry, memory support and education.

Group sessions at our day therapy centres give the added benefit of restoring your wellbeing in a social setting, helping to build confidence, independence and happiness.

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Living an independent life is important for Jim Cameron. But so is knowing care and support is there if and when he needs it. That’s why he chose to move to Uniting AgeWell Kingsville, an integrated retirement living and residential care community. Jim receives weekly in-home support and his late wife accessed day respite and care at the Uniting AgeWell Seniors Club. And when the time comes, Jim knows he can make an easy transition to residential care.

“I think the best thing I did was moving here, I never regretted it,” he said. “I suppose there’s pros and cons of living anywhere – I can’t think of a con about being here.”
We’re here to help

Choosing the right service to meet your needs is an important decision and having access to the information you need to make that decision is vital.

The Uniting AgeWell team can inform and guide you. Tell us what you want and we will do our best to make it happen.

Our integrated service hubs make it easier for you to access services and provide excellent continuity of care and support, giving you great peace of mind.

Uniting AgeWell services are available across Melbourne, Bendigo, Geelong and northern and southern Tasmania.

For a full listing of locations and services, visit unitingagewell.org or to find out more call the Uniting AgeWell team on: 1300 783 435