

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UnitingCare unveils its new vision

UnitingCare will create one of the largest community service organisations operating in Victoria and Tasmania under a new single governance structure aimed at strengthening its ability to support people in need throughout the two states.

It comes after a decision by the Uniting Church's Synod Standing Committee (SSC) last year to establish a single skills-based Agency Board which will govern 18 UnitingCare agencies and Wesley Mission Victoria (WMV). The Board will be supported by regional advisory committees, local support groups and clinical governance committees. Currently, the agencies and Wesley Mission Victoria are all governed by individual boards.

Alternative models of support are being considered for smaller agencies. A model of support for congregations and presbyteries currently providing local or regional community services will be developed.

At the weekend the SSC approved the appointment of former Victorian State Health Minister Bronwyn Pike to chair the single Agency Board. It also appointed a further four initial directors to the new Board.

"I am deeply honoured that the Uniting Church has asked me to chair this new organisation as I share their commitment to making Victoria and Tasmania fairer, compassionate and inclusive," Ms Pike said.

UnitingCare Project Control Group (PCG) Chair Bob Hodges said the new governance structure will build on UnitingCare's reputation as leaders of the provision of high quality community services across both states.

"It will make the work of client facing staff more effective by creating a structure that helps them to share ideas and learn from the innovative work currently being undertaken throughout the organisation." Mr Hodges said.

UnitingCare agencies and WMV operate in metropolitan, regional and remote parts of Victoria and Tasmania offering a broad range of services and advocacy to support thousands of vulnerable people.

With a combined annual budget of approximately \$237 million, 3,500 staff and 4,000 volunteers, UnitingCare and WMV's services include emergency relief, financial counselling, housing and homelessness services, employment services, early childhood services, child, youth and family services, disability services, mental health services, non-residential aged care, alcohol and other drugs services and Lifeline.

Ms Pike said UnitingCare agencies have supported vulnerable Victorians and Tasmanians for decades and have been a voice for social justice in our community.

As one unified agency of the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania this vital work will now be expanded and strengthened as we address the new challenges in caring for people in great need," she said.

The new single Agency Board will assume governance when all funders have formally agreed to service contracts continuing under the proposed new structure. This is expected to occur before the end of the year.

The new Board will have up to 11 members including the Chief Executive Officer as an executive director.

Following handover of governance, it will be business as usual in the first instance for all agencies, with existing CEOs reporting into the new executive structure.

Existing boards will be encouraged to remain in place to assist with the transition to the new governance structure.

“We would like to continue to work alongside our current boards who will play an invaluable role in providing input and advice to the new Agency Board,” Mr Hodges said.

“On the day of handover, there will be no change to the work that each agency is delivering in local communities. The same people will provide the same services to the same clients at the same locations as they are today.”

Mr Hodges said major funders had been notified of the proposed changes.

“Our largest funder is the Victorian DHHS and we are working closely in partnership with them to provide the information they require.”

“UnitingCare embodies the Church’s ethos of compassion and care for the vulnerable within our communities.”

ENDS

Brief profiles on the new Board appointments follow

To arrange an interview with Bronwyn, or for any further information contact:

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ENDS

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BOARD APPOINTMENTS-BRIEF PROFILES

Board Chair

Bronwyn Pike is a Principal Consultant with BizConsult, where she provides strategic planning, executive mentoring and NGO support.

She is also currently working with UnitingCare NSW/ACT, the NSW/ACT Uniting Church Synod and the AFL Industry Education Committee.

Bronwyn is a current Board member and Chair of Western Health and Renewal SA, president of the Australian College of Educators, Chair of the advisory committee for the RMIT Centre for Urban Research and a Board member of UnitingCare NSW/ACT, as well as a former Board member of Wesley Mission Victoria.

Prior to these roles, Bronwyn was the State member for Melbourne and Victorian Minister for Housing, Aged Care, Community Services, Health, Education, Skills and Workforce Participation. Her 13-year parliamentary career included 11 as a Minister.

Before entering parliament in 1999, Bronwyn was the Director of Uniting Church welfare programs in Victoria, which provided children, youth, family and aged care services as well as social justice advocacy.

Board Members

Four additional Board members – Mark Heintz, Phillip Morris, Robyn Batten and Allan Thompson – have also been appointed.

- Mark is a current Board member and Chair of Lentara UnitingCare
- Phillip is a current Board member of UnitingCare Tasmania and a member of the UnitingCare Network Project Control Group
- Robyn is the Executive Director of Australian Regional and Remote Community Services and Blue Care Queensland. She is the former Chief Executive Officer of Uniting Aged Care (Vic/Tas).
- Allan is a current Board member and Chair of Uniting AgeWell (Synod of Vic/Tas). Allan was also an inaugural Board member and Chair of Connections UnitingCare, an inaugural Board member and Chair of UnitingCare Tasmania and a Board member and Chair of Wimmera Community Care (now Wimmera UnitingCare).

Further appointments will be announced in coming weeks.