



Welcome to Uniting

Working to inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice.

Consumer Handbook

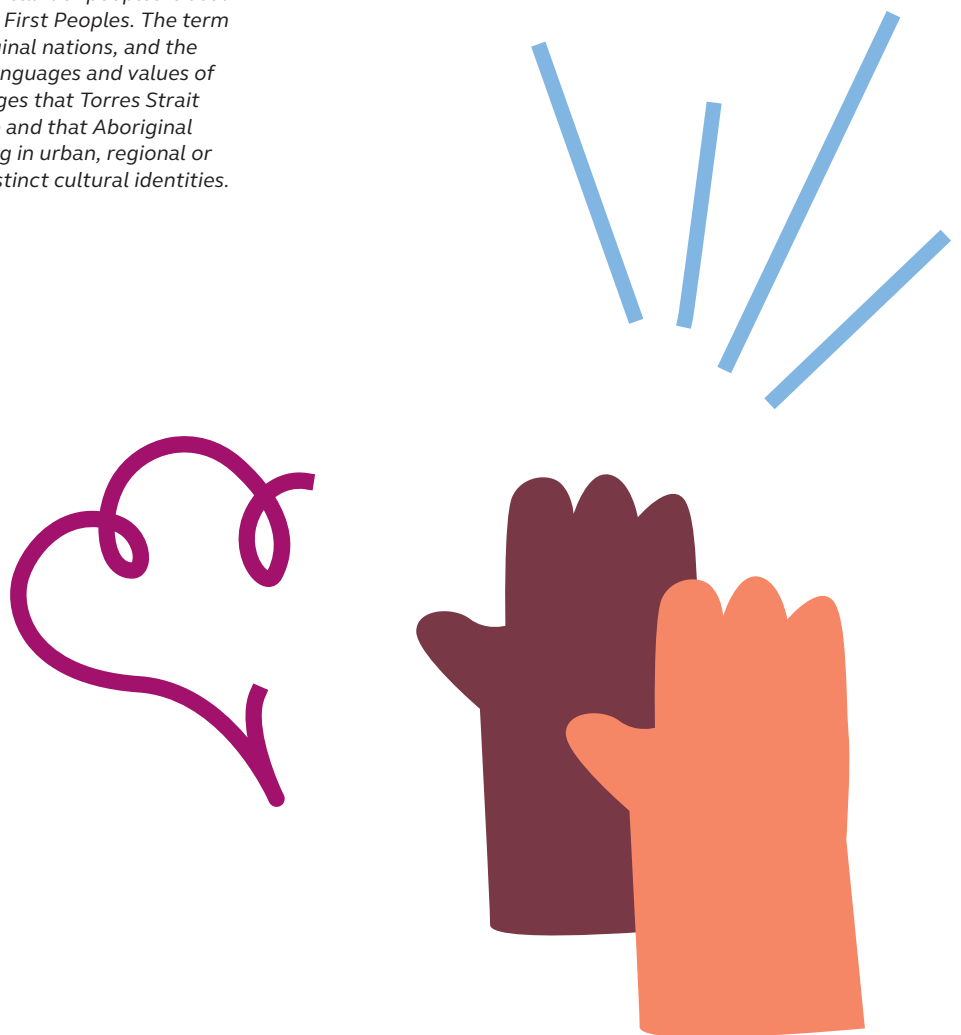
Uniting

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples*. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and original custodians of the lands and waters on which we all live and work.

We recognise the continuing sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over their lands and waters and their right to self-determination. We offer our respect to all Elders: past, present, and emerging..

** The term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is used in this handbook to refer to Australia's First Peoples. The term recognises the great number of Aboriginal nations, and the great diversity of cultures, histories, languages and values of these many nations. It also acknowledges that Torres Strait Islander peoples are a separate people and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in urban, regional or remote areas of Australia may have distinct cultural identities.*



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An accessible Word document version of this handbook is available here:
www.unitingvictas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Consumer-handbook-accessible-version.docx

Who are we?

Uniting is the community services organisation of the Uniting Church, delivering services and programs across Victoria and Tasmania.

We work in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Peoples and as the traditional owners and custodians of this land.

We celebrate diversity and value the lived experience of people of every faith, ethnicity, age, disability, neurodivergence, culture, language, gender identity, sex, and sexual orientation.

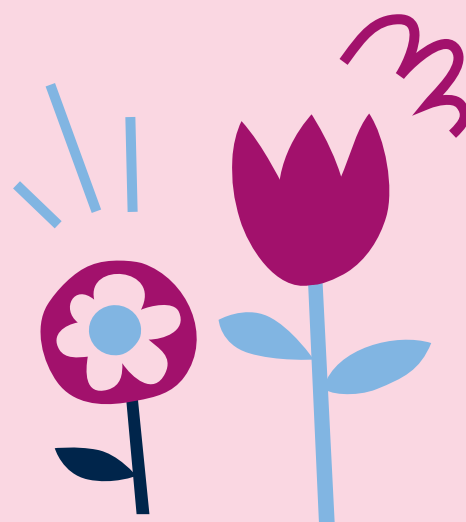
We welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and non-binary, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQA+) people at our services. We pledge to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services.

The work we do is all about giving people the support they need to live happy and meaningful lives. We are committed to being people-focused and rights-based.

Child safety commitment statement

All children and young people have the right to feel and be safe and connected to their lands, sea and culture. Accordingly, Uniting commits to:

- Doing all in our power to safeguard children and young people from all forms of abuse, harm, neglect, discrimination, or exclusion
- Providing culturally safe environments where children and young people are respected, nurtured, and cared for
- Ensuring we report abuse or allegations of abuse, harm, and neglect to the appropriate authorities
- Ensuring policy, practice and decision making which affects the safety of children and young people focuses on the importance of child safety.



Message from the CEO

When you come to Uniting we become partners and you are at the centre of what we do.

This handbook sets out our commitments to our consumers and carers. The handbook is a clear statement of your rights and responsibilities.

You will receive this handbook when you start services or possibly at service review. You can get a copy of this handbook at all Uniting sites or online.

Your privacy is important to us. The handbook explains how we handle and use your personal information.

We always welcome and value your feedback, compliments, suggestions, or complaints. The handbook explains ways to tell us what you think. It also has information about asking for support from others to help you give us your feedback.

We understand that people who come to us may have experienced trauma. So we use a trauma-informed approach to support you to feel safe and promote healing.

Thank you for your trust in us. We hope you will get the best out of your time with us..



Bronwyn Pike
Chief Executive Officer



Our purpose

Working to inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice.

Our values

Imaginative

We challenge convention, explore new possibilities and dare to dream for a better future.

Respectful

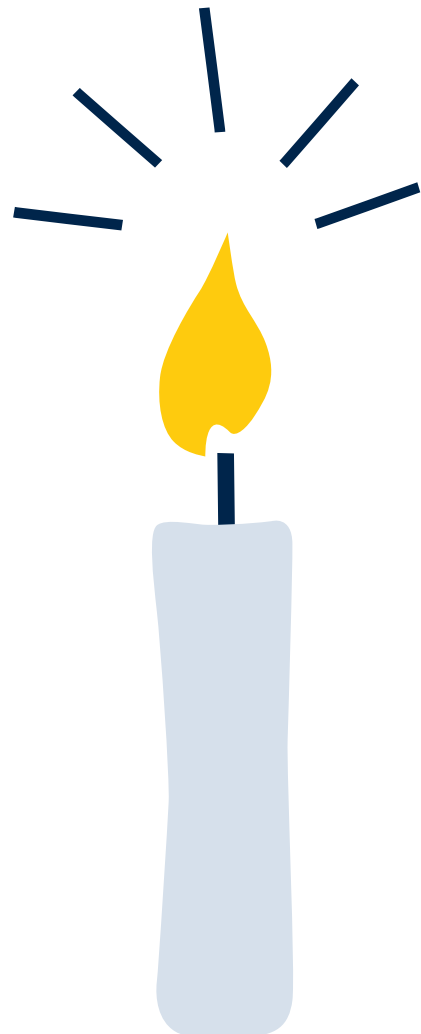
We act with honesty and integrity, and open our hearts to all people without exception.

Compassionate

We are nurturing, generous and thoughtful in our words and deeds.

Bold

We face injustice head on and stand up for what is right and true with confidence and strength.



What we do at Uniting

We strive to make a difference for individuals, families and communities.

We walk alongside people:

- Looking for crisis support to get through difficult times
- Experiencing homelessness and looking for safe and secure housing
- Needing additional help to keep their family safe, together and thriving
- Who want support to manage their mental health
- Recovering from the effects of drug and alcohol use, and want to access treatments to get their lives back on track
- Living with a disability, who want meaningful connections in the community
- Helping their children to access early learning in a creative and nurturing environment
- Caring for someone, needing advice and support so they are better able to care for themselves
- Looking for meaningful employment, by providing access to training and job opportunities
- Newly arrived, needing safety and a welcoming community
- Seeking to better understand their past, having spent time in childhood care.

Partnering with consumers

Consumer partners play an important role at Uniting. We partner with consumers and carers in different ways and at different levels. Our consumer partners and staff work together as equals to design and improve services. It is through these partnerships that consumers influence, direct, or decide what we do and how we do it.

Examples are:

- a collaboration process to design or review and improve a specific program
- membership on committees and steering groups making decisions about how Uniting operates
- consumers involved in training or presentations to staff
- consumer participation on recruitment panels.

We are interested in partnering with you at Uniting. Please get in touch if you want to know more. Call us on 03 9192 8100 or visit our website: unitingvictas.org.au/consumer-partnerships



Your rights and responsibilities

Your rights – what you can expect from us

As a Uniting consumer, you have the right to:

- Be treated with respect and dignity and feel welcome regardless of ethnicity, faith, beliefs, age, disability, neurodivergence, culture, language, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics
- Be referred to by your preferred name and correct pronouns, including protecting your gender and sexual identity as required
- Receive services in line with Uniting's policies in a safe and secure environment without abuse and neglect, violence, and preventable injury
- Have information about your rights and responsibilities in a language and format that you understand
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Access to your information held by Uniting
- Be informed, and involved in decisions that affect you, including planning and goal setting
- Have decisions that affect you explained to you
- Give feedback about how you think we can improve our services
- Make complaints that we listen to respectfully, take seriously and respond to quickly
- Have information about external advocacy and complaints services
- Access a language or Auslan interpreter
- Have a support person or advocate
- Refuse, decline or withdraw from services at any time
- Receive information about other services and support options.

We commit to helping you understand your rights and responsibilities.

Your responsibilities – what we expect from you

As a Uniting consumer, it is your responsibility to:

- Treat other consumers and our workforce with dignity and respect regardless of ethnicity, faith, beliefs, age, disability, neurodivergence, culture, language, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics
- Take part in activities according to the policies, rules, and guidelines of the service
- Go to scheduled appointments or tell staff members within 24-hours if you can't come
- Work towards the plans and goals you have agreed to
- Not be negatively affected by alcohol or drugs during appointment times
- Not bring any illegal items or substances onto Uniting premises
- Take care of your own safety and do not put others in danger
- In an emergency, follow instructions from Uniting staff
- Not be violent or threaten people
- Let us know if you wish to decline or withdraw from services.

If you cannot meet these commitments, we may not be able to offer you our services and programs.

Your safety and wellbeing

The safety and wellbeing of all people we work with is important to us. That includes being physically, emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically safe.

Uniting works hard to keep all people we work with safe from harm and protected from

abuse. We aim to provide trauma-informed services and care environments. We provide safe workspaces and make sure we have good safety practices and systems in place.

If you have any concerns about your safety or wellbeing, or should ever feel unsafe, please let us know.

How we prevent harm and manage incidents

An incident is when someone is harmed or could have been harmed (also known as a near miss). Harm can be anything that causes you damage or injury. It may come in many forms including physical, emotional, or psychological damage.

Uniting has strong systems to prevent harm to you and others. We report and investigate incidents, and we take action when things have gone wrong.

We want to know as soon as possible if you know about an incident that involves Uniting. You can:



Speak to your main contact, or if you are not comfortable doing that, then ask to speak to the program manager or the Quality team by calling 03 9192 8100.



Write to the Quality team at 130 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000, or email consumerfeedback@unitingvictas.org.au.



Complete the feedback form at the back of this handbook.



Contact an advocacy service from the list on page 13 of this handbook for advice.

Protecting your privacy

We keep your information private. This helps us keep you safe by preventing unauthorised people from having access to your information.

We won't share information about you or your family with anyone outside Uniting without your permission, unless the law says we have to. *The Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)* and other state laws tell us what we must do.

The Uniting Privacy Policy:

- Explains how we manage your information
- Says how you can contact us to access and update the information we hold about you.

Refer to our website or ask a staff member if you would like a copy of our privacy policy.



What is personal information?

Personal information is any information which identifies or might identify an individual, such as your name, address, email, phone number, date of birth, health and medical/health information, or family details.



Protection of your personal information

We will keep your personal information safe, secure, and confidential. We will protect your information from misuse, loss, or interference by having secure systems and processes.

We will keep and dispose of your personal information in a secure way and we will follow the Australian Privacy Laws.

We will tell you if your personal information is part of a data breach if the breach would cause you serious harm. If we can't contact you, we will announce the data breach on our website.



Collecting personal information

Your personal information will only be used for the reason it was collected originally. When we collect information, we will take reasonable steps to let you know why we are collecting it and how we will use or share it.

We will use your information specifically for providing Uniting services and activities, such as assessing your eligibility to access programs and services, or to tailor services to meet your needs. We will ask for your consent (permission) if we need to share your personal information with other services or organisations.

We may also collect information that we receive from other agencies or government bodies.



What if you don't want to give us your personal information?

You can choose to stay anonymous. If we can, we will try to provide our services without needing your name. But we might not always be able to help you.



Disclosure of your personal information

We do not disclose (share) personal information unless you agree or would reasonably expect us to.

We will ask for your consent if we need to share your personal information with other services or organisations.

You can withdraw or change your consent at any time.

There may be times when the law tells us to share information without your consent, for example, when we:

- Are aware of family violence and/or child safety concerns
- Are worried about someone's safety, health or welfare
- Must report critical incidents to our funding bodies.



Accessing your personal information

We try hard to make sure that all the personal information we hold is relevant, accurate, complete, and up to date. You have the right to access your personal information we hold. You also have the right to correct the information we hold unless the law says we can't.

Requests for access to information should be made to the Uniting Privacy Officer.

Depending on the type of request, we may ask for proof of your identity. If we can't give you access, the Uniting Privacy Officer will tell you in writing.

We will take all reasonable steps to provide access to the information you request within 30 days. There may be a cost to respond to your request.



Updating your personal information

Contact us if your details have changed or if you think the information we hold is not correct.



Privacy complaints

If you believe your privacy has been breached, or you have a complaint about how we have handled your personal information, contact the Uniting Privacy Officer.

Privacy Officer
Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited
130 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Vic 3000

Tel: 03 9192 8100

Email: privacyofficer@unitingvictas.org.au

Feedback, compliments, suggestions and complaints to Uniting

Uniting is committed to providing quality services to the communities and people we serve.

Your feedback provides valuable information to help us improve the services we provide.

Compliments or suggestions

We welcome all feedback, including compliments or suggestions to help us provide quality services. Where appropriate, we'll forward compliments and suggestions to appropriate staff and management. We will make all efforts to share with you the outcome of any decisions made about your feedback or suggestion.

Complaints

If you make a complaint, we will:

- manage the complaint in a fair and professional way
- make sure you are not disadvantaged in any way
- investigate the complaint, keep you informed throughout the process and tell you about the outcome
- if you're not happy with the outcome, you can ask for help from one of the external advocacy or complaint services listed.

Ways to provide all feedback

If you want to provide feedback including compliments or suggestions, or you have a complaint about our services, you can:

- Speak to your service contact at Uniting.
- If you are not comfortable speaking with your main service contact, ask to speak to a program manager or the Quality team. You can contact the Quality team by email consumerfeedback@unitingvictas.org.au or by calling 03 9192 8100
- Complete a feedback form and:
 - Hand it in at your local Uniting site, or
 - Post it to:
Quality team
Uniting Vic.Tas
130 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Vic 3000
- Complete an online feedback form which you can do anonymously. Visit unitingvictas.org.au/feedback/
- Email consumerfeedback@unitingvictas.org.au
- Complete exit and other surveys or reviews
- Take part in consumer focus groups.



Other advocacy and complaints services

You can ask a family member, friend, or an independent advocacy/complaint body to help you give us your feedback.

Independent advocacy agencies play an important role in protecting your rights and interests. They can help you give us your feedback and make sure we hear and respond to your concerns.

There are different advocacy and complaints services depending on what help you need. If services do not have specific contacts listed, then refer to 'General contacts' section below.

Carers

Carers Tas

Phone: 03 6144 3700

Email: peak@carerstasmania.org

www.carerstas.org

Carers Vic

Phone: 1800 514 845

Email: reception@carersvictoria.org.au

www.carersvictoria.org.au

Disability Services

Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS)

Phone: 1800 880 052

www.jobaccess.gov.au/complaints/crrs

Disability Gateway

Phone: 1800 643 787

Email: disabilitygateway@benevolent.org.au

www.disabilitygateway.gov.au

Disability Services Commissioner (Vic)

Phone: 1800 677 342

Email: complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au

www.odsc.vic.gov.au/

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline

Phone: 1800 880 052

Email: hotline@workfocus.com

www.jobaccess.gov.au/complaints/hotline

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

Phone: 1800 035 544

Email: contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au

www.ndiscommission.gov.au

Early Learning

Department of Education & Training – Early Childhood

Phone: 1300 307 415

Email: quality.assessment.regulation@education.vic.gov.au

www.vic.gov.au/make-complaint-early-childhood-services-regulatory-authority

Education and Care – Department of Education Tasmania

Phone: 1800 816 057

Email: ServiceCentre@decyp.tas.gov.au

www.decyp.tas.gov.au/about-us/contacts

Employment Services

National Customer Service Line (NCSL)

Phone: 1800 805 260

Email: nationalcustomerserviceline@jobs.gov.au

www.jobaccess.gov.au/complaints/ncsl

Other advocacy and complaints services (cont.)

Family services

Commissioner for Children and Young People (Tas)

Phone: 1800 000 123
Email: childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au
www.childcomm.tas.gov.au

Commission for Children and Young People (Vic)

Phone: 1300 782 978
Email: contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au
www.ccyp.vic.gov.au

Department for Education, Children & Young People (Tas)

Phone: 1800 816 057
Email: ServiceCentre@decyp.tas.gov.au
www.decyp.tas.gov.au

Department of Families Fairness & Housing (Vic)

Phone: 1300 884 706
Email: feedback@dffh.vic.gov.au
www.feedback.dhhs.vic.gov.au/layout.html#/DFFH

Kids Help Line

Phone: 1800 551 800
Email: admin@kidshelpline.com.au
kidshelpline.com.au
www.kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/webchat-counselling

Homelessness

Council to Homeless Persons (Vic)

Phone: 1800 066 256
Email: has@chp.org.au
www.chp.org.au

Homes Tasmania (Housing Connect)

Phone: 1800 800 588
Email: Businessops@homes.tas.gov.au
www.homest Tasmania.com.au

Housing

Consumer, Building and Occupational Services (Tas)

Phone: 1300 654 499
www.cbos.tas.gov.au

Crisis Accommodation (Vic)

Phone: 1800 825 955
www.services.dffh.vic.gov.au/getting-help

Homes Tasmania (Tenancy and maintenance)

Phone: 1300 665 663
Email: tenancyservices@homes.tas.gov.au
www.homest Tasmania.com.au

Housing Registrar (Vic)

Phone: (03) 7005 8984
Email: housingregistrar@dtf.vic.gov.au
www.vic.gov.au/housing-registrar

Tenants' Union of Tasmania

Phone: 03 6223 2641 or 1300 652 641
Email: info@tenantstas.org.au
www.tutas.org.au

Tenants Victoria

Phone: 1800 068 860
Email: admin@tenantsvic.org.au
www.tenantsvic.org.au

Mental health

Access Mental Health Helpline (Tas)

Phone: 1800 332 388
www.health.tas.gov.au/health-topics/mental-health/tasmanias-mental-health-system/access-mental-health-helpline

Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (Vic)

Phone: 1800 246 054
Email: help@mhwc.vic.gov.au
www.mhwc.vic.gov.au

Victoria Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAC)

Phone: (03) 9380 3900
Email: reception@vmiac.org.au
www.vmiac.org.au

General contacts

Consumer Affairs (Tas)

Phone: 1300 654 499
www.cbos.tas.gov.au

Consumer Affairs (Vic)

Phone: 1300 55 81 81
www.consumer.vic.gov.au

Department of Social Services (DSS) Complaints

Phone: 1800 634 035
Email: complaints@dss.gov.au
www.dss.gov.au

Equal Opportunity Tasmania

Phone: 1300 305 062
Email: office@equalopportunity.tas.gov.au
www.equalopportunity.tas.gov.au

Health Complaints Commissioner (Tas)

Phone: 1800 001 170
health.complaints@ombudsman.tas.gov.au
www.healthcomplaints.tas.gov.au

Health Complaints Commissioner (Vic)

Phone: 1300 582 113
Email: hcc@hcc.vic.gov.au
www.hcc.vic.gov.au

Office of the Public Advocate (Vic)

Phone: 1300 309 337
www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au

Office of the Public Guardian (Tas)

Phone: 1800 955 772
Email:
public.guardian@publicguardian.tas.gov.au
www.publicguardian.tas.gov.au

Ombudsman Tasmania

Phone: 1800 001 170
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au
www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au

Ombudsman Victoria

Phone: 1800 806 314
www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au

Privacy Commissioner within the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

Phone: 1300 363 992
Email: enquiries@oaic.gov.au
www.oaic.gov.au

Tasmanian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (TASCAT)

Phone: 1800 657 500
Email: tascat@tascat.tas.gov.au
www.tascat.tas.gov.au

Victims of Crime Commissioner (Vic)

Phone: 1800 010 017
Email: enquiries@vocc.vic.gov.au
www.victimsofcrimecommissioner.vic.gov.au

Victims of Crime Service (Tas)

Phone: 1300 300 238
Email: victims@justice.tas.gov.au
www.justice.tas.gov.au/victims/services/
victims-of-crime-service

Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

Phone: 1300 079 413
www.vcat.vic.gov.au

Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)

VEOHRC can be contacted regarding the following:

- Disability rights
- Older people's rights
- Employee and workplace rights
- Racial and religious rights
- First Nations people's rights
- Women's rights
- LGBTIQA+ rights
- Youth rights

Phone: 1300 292 153
Email: enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au
www.humanrights.vic.gov.au

The future is bright.

When we respect our history, unite toward achieving a common purpose and share common values, a collective spirit is born.

This gives us the foundation to dare to reach further than ever before and be informed by the voice of our consumers and communities to drive real, positive social change.



Join our community

To keep up to date with the latest news across Uniting, we invite you to join our community and follow us on our social media.

Find us on Facebook/LinkedIn/X

- facebook.com/unitingvic.tas
- linkedin.com/company/uniting-vic-tas
- x.com/unitingvt

If you would like the information on our website in another language, go to unitingvictas.org.au and choose the translate tool at the top of the page. Ask a staff member if you would like a printed copy of this handbook.

We can organise an interpreter for you if needed.

Published October 2023.

Visit

unitingvictas.org.au

Get in touch

03 9192 8100

consumerfeedback@unitingvictas.org.au



Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited
ABN 81 098 317 125



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

Let us know what you think.

Feedback, compliments and complaints

Your feedback is valued and helps us to improve our services.

Uniting is constantly striving to provide the best support and services we can. You can provide feedback, compliments or complaints by speaking to your main contact at Uniting. If you are not happy with the outcome, or if you are not comfortable speaking with your main contact, then contact the program manager. Or you can provide feedback by completing the form below, emailing consumerfeedback@unitingvictas.org.au or completing the online feedback form at unitingvictas.org.au/feedback.

Feedback

Date

The service or program that my comments relate to is:	Location of service:
Tell us about your experience:	
.....	
.....	
.....	
.....	
.....	

Personal details (or you can stay anonymous)

Name	
Address	
Suburb	Postcode
Email	Phone
Do you need an interpreter? <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes Preferred language	
Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin? <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say	
Are you happy for your name and personal details to be passed on to your program worker? <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> Tick if you would like to be contacted further about your feedback. Preferred contact: <input type="radio"/> Phone <input type="radio"/> Email