



Welcome to Uniting Vic.Tas

Working to inspire people, enliven
communities and confront injustice.

Consumer Handbook

Uniting

Who we are

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

We have worked alongside local communities across both states for over 100 years. We deliver a broad range of services in the areas of child, youth and families, community wellbeing and capacity building, housing and homelessness, alcohol and other drugs, mental health, disability, early learning, and aged and carer.

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 ethnicity, faith, age, disability, culture, language, gender identity, sex and sexual orientation. We welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) people at our services. We pledge to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services.

The services we provide and the way we work strive to be human-centred and rights-based, as recognised and articulated in international declarations, treaties and covenants that aim to ensure peace and equality among all peoples.

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Message from the CEO

When you access a service through Uniting, we enter into a partnership which has you at its centre. This handbook sets out our commitments to you. You may have received this handbook when starting to receive services or at any review. Extra handbooks are available through local Uniting sites.

You will find in the handbook a clear statement of your rights as a Uniting consumer, as well as your responsibilities. Your privacy is important to us and the handbook states how we handle and use any personal information you provide.

We welcome your feedback, suggestions or complaints, and we explain several ways to send them to us. There are also details of advocacy services available if you are looking for support to express your views.

Thank you for putting your trust in 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.

Compassionate

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

Respectful

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

Bold

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



What we do

The right support empowers people with the information, tools, resources and skills they need – when they need it most. People experiencing disadvantage, social isolation or marginalisation need reassurance and tangible support.

We work in partnership with consumers to build capability and confidence, so they can journey towards a brighter, healthier and happier future. It's about giving people the support they need to thrive.

We walk alongside people who are:

- Experiencing homelessness, who are looking for understanding and practical support
- Experiencing mental health issues, who want to connect with people and feel part of the community
- Recovering from the effects of drug and alcohol use
- Living with disability, who want to engage with their community and make their own choices in employment and the supports they receive
- Growing older who want to stay active, maintain their independence and enjoy life
- Caring for someone and needing expert advice and additional supports to better care for themselves and their loved ones
- Looking for meaningful employment, by providing access to training and support and connecting them with opportunities
- Newly arrived in our community and who need a warm welcome and safety
- Ready to take the next step in their child's early education in a safe and nurturing environment
- In childhood and adolescence to help them thrive in learning and life
- Needing tailored support to keep their family safe, together and thriving.



Child, Youth and Families



Community Wellbeing and Capacity Building



Housing and Homelessness



Alcohol and Other Drugs



Mental Health



Disability



Early Learning



Aged and Carer Services



Business and Social Enterprises

Our service offering varies across different areas. Go to unitingvictas.org.au to check services available near you.

Your rights and responsibilities

Your rights

As a Uniting consumer, you have the right to:

- Be treated with respect and dignity and feel welcome regardless of ethnicity, faith, age, disability, culture, language, gender identity or sexual orientation
- Be provided with services in a safe and secure environment free from abuse and neglect
- Be given information on your rights and responsibilities in an accessible language and format
- Have your privacy and confidentiality respected and protected
- Have access to your personal information held by Uniting
- Be informed, consulted and encouraged to take an active role in decisions made about you
- Make complaints in the secure knowledge that they will be listened to respectfully, taken seriously and responded to promptly
- Give feedback on ways in which you believe Uniting and its programs and services can be improved
- Access a support person or advocate.

Your responsibilities

As a Uniting consumer, it is your responsibility to:

- Treat other consumers, staff and volunteers with dignity and respect and behave in a non-violent, non-threatening manner
- Participate in any activities in accordance with the policies, rules and guidelines of the service
- Attend scheduled appointments or notify staff members in good time if you are unable to attend
- Work towards the achievement of any plans and goals you have agreed to
- Not be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs
- Not bring any illegal items or substances onto Uniting premises
- Have regard for your personal safety and that of others
- In an emergency, follow reasonable clear directives from Uniting staff.

Ensuring that you understand your rights and responsibilities is central to our commitment to provide quality services.

Protecting your privacy

Uniting is committed to keeping your personal information private.

We won't share information about you or your family with anyone outside Uniting without your permission, unless we are legally or ethically obliged to. We are bound by the Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth) and supporting state laws.

This privacy policy sets out general information about how we manage your personal information and how you can contact us to access and update the information we hold about you.

What is personal information?

Personal information is defined as any information which identifies or potentially identifies an individual, such as name, address, date of birth, health and medical information, or family details.

How we collect personal information

We collect information from you in a private, confidential way and make sure you feel safe to share your information. We may also receive information from referring agencies or government bodies such as the Department of Health and Human Services.

When collecting information, we will take reasonable steps to let you know why we are collecting it, who we will give it to and how we will use or disclose it. You can withdraw or alter your consent at any time.

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

Where practical, Uniting will respond to a request for you to access our services on an anonymous basis – though it may not always be possible for us to support you in this way.

Why we collect personal information

Your personal information will only be used for the purposes for which it was collected. Its use will be directly related to providing Uniting services and activities, such as assessing your eligibility to access certain programs and services, or to tailor services to meet your needs. We will ask for your consent if we need to share your personal information with other services or organisations.

Disclosure of your personal information

We do not disclose sensitive information about you unless you agree or would reasonably expect us to disclose it. Please refer to our full Privacy Policy at unitingvictas.org.au/privacy for details on what we consider as 'sensitive'.

There are situations where Uniting is required by law to disclose information without your consent. These may include, but are not limited to, when we believe that there is a concern regarding an individual's life, health, safety or welfare, for family violence protection or assessment purposes, where we have a legal obligation to provide information, or when we are required to report critical incidents to our funding body.

Protection of your personal information

Uniting will store your personal information in a safe and secure environment. We will take all reasonable care to ensure the confidentiality of your information and to protect it from misuse, loss, or interference.

We will only keep personal information for as long as it is required, after which time it will be disposed of securely. In accordance with the Notifiable Data Breach Scheme, Uniting will notify you if your personal information has been involved in a data breach likely to result in serious harm. If we are unable to contact you, then we will post a notification on our website that an eligible data breach has occurred.

Accessing your personal information

Uniting strives to ensure that all the personal information we hold is relevant, accurate, complete and up to date. You have the right to access your personal information held by Uniting. You also have the right to correct the information held about you, unless there is a sound reason under privacy legislation for Uniting not to allow this.

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

Privacy Officer
Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited
130 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Vic 3000
Tel: (03) 9192 8100
Email: privacyofficer@vt.uniting.org

Depending on the nature of your request, we may ask you to verify your identity. If access is denied, you will be informed in writing by the Privacy Officer. Uniting will take all reasonable steps to provide access to the information you request within ten days and reserves the right to charge for any reasonable costs incurred in complying with your request.

Updating your personal information

Please contact us if your details have changed or if you think there is something incorrect with the information we hold about you.

Privacy complaints

If you believe your privacy has been breached or you have a complaint about how Uniting has handled your personal information, please contact us in writing. Complaints can be lodged by contacting the Uniting Privacy Officer. We are committed to addressing and responding to all complaints in a timely manner.

Feedback, compliments and complaints to Uniting

Uniting is committed to providing quality services and recognises that your feedback provides valuable information to help us improve the services we provide.

Compliments and suggestions

We welcome compliments and suggestions to help us continue providing quality services. Where appropriate, we'll forward compliments to appropriate staff and management and provide you with the outcome of any decisions made regarding your feedback and suggestion(s).

Complaints

If you wish to lodge a complaint, Uniting will make sure you are not penalised or denied any services.

We're committed to resolving your complaints. If you make a complaint, we will:

- Investigate the complaint and keep you informed throughout the process
- Act with fairness and objectivity and manage the complaint with professionalism and courtesy
- Provide you with a response on completion of our investigation.

If you still feel the issue hasn't been resolved to your satisfaction, you can raise your concern with one of the external advocacy/ complaint services listed.

Ways to provide feedback

If you have a complaint or want to provide feedback about our services, you can do so in the following ways:

- Speak 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
- 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
- Email consumerfeedback@vt.uniting.org
- Complete the online feedback form at unitingvictas.org.au

Surveys and focus groups

There will also be opportunities to provide further feedback via the following channels:

- Focus groups
- Phone surveys
- Exit and annual surveys.

Partnering with consumers

By drawing together the lived experience of our consumers with the expertise of our staff, we can create greater change for the people and communities we support.

Consumer partnerships drive a culture of valuing others, of shared power and an environment of trust where feedback and new ideas are welcome. To help us build a consumer-led organisation, we developed our Consumer Partnership Framework in 2018 to bring together consumers, their carers, families and our staff to best design and deliver our services.

External advocacy and complaints services

You can ask a family member, friend, or an independent advocacy/complaint body to help you in putting forward your views to Uniting.

Independent advocacy agencies play an important role in ensuring the rights and interests of consumers are respected and safeguarded. They can provide you with information and support in representing your views to Uniting and ensure that your concerns are heard and responded to.

There are a range of advocacy and complaints services. The one most appropriate for you will depend on the service(s) you access.

Aged & Carers

Aged Care Quality & Safety Commission

1800 951 822

info@agedcarequality.gov.au

agedcarequality.gov.au

Carers Australia

1800 242 636

carersaustralia.com.au

My Aged Care

1800 200 422

myagedcare.gov.au

Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)

1800 700 600

opan.com.au

Seniors Rights Victoria

Information and support relating to elder abuse

1300 368 821

info@seniorsrights.org.au

seniorsrights.org.au

Employment Services

National Customer Service Line (NCSL)

Addressing concerns regarding employment services providers

1800 805 260

nationalcustomerserviceline@jobs.gov.au

jobaccess.gov.au/complaints/ncsl

Disability Services

Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS)

For users of Disability Employment Services (DES) & Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs)

1800 880 052

jobaccess.gov.au/complaints/crrs

Disability Services Commissioner

1800 677 342

complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au

odsc.vic.gov.au

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

1800 035 544

contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au

ndiscommission.gov.au

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline

1800 880 052

crrs@workfocus.com

jobaccess.gov.au/service-providers/making-complaint-and-reporting-abuse-and-neglect

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)

1800 800 110 (free-call from landlines)

feedback@ndis.gov.au

ndis.gov.au

Office of the Public Advocate

1300 309 337

publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/about-us/contact-us



Child, Youth and Family Services

Commission for Children and Young People

1300 782 978
childsafec@ccyp.vic.gov.au
ccyp.vic.gov.au

Department of Health & Human Services

1300 884 706
complaints.reception@dhhs.vic.gov.au
dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-complaint

Commissioner for Children and Young People Tasmania

03 6166 1366
childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au
childcomm.tas.gov.au

Department of Communities

1300 135 513
complaints.caf@communities.tas.gov.au
communities.tas.gov.au/about-us/contact-us



Early Learning

Department of Education & Training – Early Childhood

1300 307 415
enquiries@edumail.vic.gov.au
education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complaintslanding.aspx

Education and Care - Department of Education Tasmania

03 6165 5433
ecu.comment@education.tas.gov
education.tas.gov.au/about-us/contacts/



Mental Health

Mental Health Complaints Commissioner

1800 246 054 (free-call from landlines)
help@mhcc.vic.gov.au
mhcc.vic.gov.au



Homelessness Services

Council to Homeless Persons

1800 066 256 (free-call from landlines)
has@chp.org.au
chp.org.au

General contacts

Ombudsman Victoria

03 9613 6222
1800 806 314 (regional only)
ombudsman.vic.gov.au

Ombudsman Tasmania

1800 001 170
ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au
ombudsman.tas.gov.au

Department of Social Services (DSS) Complaints

1800 634 035
complaints@dss.gov.au
dss.gov.au

Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

1300 079 413
humanrights@vcat.vic.gov.au
vcat.vic.gov.au

Consumer Affairs

1300 55 81 81
consumer.vic.gov.au/contact-us

Health Complaints Commissioner

1300 582 113
hcc@hcc.vic.gov.au
hcc.vic.gov.au

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

1300 363 992
enquiries@oaic.gov.au
oaic.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.

If you would like to view this handbook in another language, go to unitingvictas.org.au and choose the translate tool at the top of the page, or ask a staff member to print a translated copy for you from our website.

We can organise an interpreter for you if needed.

Learn more

unitingvictas.org.au

Get in touch

9192 8100

consumerfeedback@vt.uniting.org

Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited

ABN 81 098 317 125



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