

Relief Centres Oversight Committee Annual Report

This report was presented to the Synod Standing Committee on April 30, 2026.

1. Formation of the Relief Centres Oversight Committee (RCOC)

Following a year-long review of the governance and operations of Emergency Relief Centres in 2023 and 2024, the Synod Standing Committee meeting of June 2024 determined to establish the Relief Centres Oversight Committee with the following mandate.

“The mandate of the UnitingCare SA Relief Centres Oversight Committee will be to: -

- a) assist the Church to fulfil its mission in serving the community, in caring for people and in working for their welfare, including to enable the appointment of relevant staff (e.g. a Coordinator, deacon or chaplain).
- b) Oversee compliance with relevant legislation and policy and risk management practices.
- c) Assist in the development of local coordination for services
- d) Evaluate Relief Centres against the markers of success relating to sustainability and viability.
- e) Support accessing grants
- f) Distribute any resources (as and when they become available).
- g) Access relevant training for coordinators and volunteers
- h) Ensure adequate induction and training of staff and volunteers (e.g. especially in relation to mandated safety and food handling)
- i) Provide an on-boarding and off-boarding checklist for staff and volunteers to be checked as part of annual Governance reviews.
- j) Share templates for policy and procedures “

A set of By-laws were approved from which the key responsibilities are: -

- a) “That Relief Centres are active participants in God’s mission of providing support for those in need.
- b) That the Church actively participates in areas of advocacy which effect disadvantaged or vulnerable members of our community.
- c) That governing bodies, staff and volunteers within Relief Centres are able to articulate what it means to be a Church organisation and how their programs and services are congruent with the values and ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia.
- d) That there is increased coordination and cooperation between within the Relief Centres network and with other parts of the church, including agencies in association with the Uniting Church.
- e) That governance systems are in place which ensure

- I. appointments to governing bodies are timely and those appointed are adequately resourced,
 - II. constituting documents are adhered to and amendments are undertaken and recorded appropriately,
 - III. any relevant risk inherent in the Synod's relationship with Relief Centres is identified and managed responsibly.
- f) That researched policies are formulated to maximise the missional impact of Relief Centres
 - g) The approval of new Relief Centres, services and/or programs that enhance the achievement of the mandate ...
 - h) That Human Resources and Work Health Safety related policies and procedures are embedded in Relief Centres to ensure the safety of clients, volunteers and staff
 - i) That other such other responsibilities as the Synod Standing Committee shall determine from time to time are undertaken."

From the middle of 2024, UnitingCare SA set about recruiting a chairperson and seven (7) other RCOC members representing the interests of Presbyteries, the Resources Board, Relief Centres and a large community sector organisation in association with the Uniting Church.

This process was completed by the first quarter in 2025 and the work of the RCOC commenced.

The membership of the first RCOC as at April 2026: -

Mr Peter Murchland	-	Chair
Rev Di Holden	-	Wimala Rep
Mr Hamish Probert	-	PoSSA Rep
Ms Margreet Diment	-	Generate Rep
Ms Lyn Mitchell	-	Relief Centre Nominee City
Ms Deb Terrett	-	Relief Centre Nominee Country
Dr Harry Randhawa	-	Large Community Service Org Rep
Rev Robyn Caldicott	-	Resources Board Rep or Staff Delegate

Synod Staff Members

Mr Mark Waters	-	Director, UnitingCare SA
Ms Maria Maratos	-	Relief Centres Liaison Officer, UnitingCare SA

Executive Support

Ms Johanne Manning	-	Administration Officer, UnitingCare SA
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Due to Rev Justin Gutteridge moving interstate, Ms Margreet Diment took over as the Generate Representative on the RCOC in late 2025.

2. Chair's Summary – Peter Murchland

The Relief Centres Oversight Committee (RCOC) held its inaugural meeting in April 2025 as the first of four meetings held in 2025. With members across the state, we have operated in a mixed face-to-face / online mode, and have been well-supported by the UnitingCare SA Team (Mark Waters, Maria

Maratos and Johanne Manning). This has been a founding year for the RCOC and for the Team. All involved are pleased to have achieved more than we anticipated and look forward to contributing to the ongoing maturing of the RCOC, the Team and the Relief Centres over whom we have oversight in 2026.

We have been guided by our founding documents, including By Laws, Measures of Success and Resources Board Review, giving us a sense of the purpose for which we have been established and some guidance as to how we might operate. There are two particular features of how the RCOC has “found its feet” in 2025, by:

- Taking a first principles approach to the relief centre ecosystem of which we are but one part, by using various frameworks to test our understanding and approach to operations
- Using a scenario-based approach to appreciating issues being faced in different parts of the ecosystem. Here the UnitingCare SA Team have developed anonymised scenarios that are grounded in practical issues such as ACNC non-compliance, lack of engagement or low levels of demand. This has allowed the RCOC to explore a range of principles and approaches that might be taken.

In taking a first principles approach, we expect this will provide Standing Committee and Synod greater confidence that the full range of issues requiring our attention will be progressively addressed, and that through taking a different lens, we have effectively applied an assurance process to the original framing of the intent in establishing the RCOC. Several elements are now complete and can be described as achievements in 2025, with others being progressed further in 2026. In this summary, we briefly describe the purpose and outcomes of each element. The final, approved outputs are referenced and provided as attachments to this report.

Stakeholder Landscape

It was evident at the outset that the RCOC exists and operates in a complex stakeholder landscape, involving Synod, Synod Standing Committee, Resources Board, governing entities (Boards or Church Councils), relief centres, a network of relief centres and the RCOC itself. Attachment A provides a diagrammatic representation of the landscape, including a representation of the manner in which the inter-conciliar nature of the councils of the UCA layer across the landscape. It is necessary to understand this landscape in order to be clearer about where responsibilities lie, and in particular, to be clear about the responsibilities that this committee can reasonably exercise.

Responsibility Matrix

The RCOC has taken the responsibilities articulated in the By Laws and applied the RASCI technique which distinguishes between the following roles and involvement in decision-making:

- a) Responsible
- b) Accountable
- c) Supporting
- d) Consulted
- e) Informed

For each stakeholder type, we have identified their role type against each of the responsibilities included in the By-Laws (see Attachment B).

In 2026, we will be undertaking further work in applying:

- a risk management framework, consistent with the Synod framework, to activities within our purview
- a policy / procedure framework
- an output / outcomes / indicators framework

The outputs of each element will be shared with other stakeholders, enabling the RCOC, Synod Standing Committee, Resources Board and Synod to have greater confidence that management and governance responsibilities are being exercised appropriately across the entire Relief Centre Ecosystem, and to show how the “Measures of Success” are being managed through a number of different mechanisms, including:

- Stronger local governance
- Sharing and learning through the Relief Centre Network
- Periodic visits and reviews by the UnitingCare SA Team
- More consistent and effective policies and procedures
- Application of proven governance and management frameworks

In terms of progress in this area, there has been:

- Greater sharing of knowledge and expertise amongst relief centres
- Improved attention to basic governance principles (e.g. ACNC and other compliance matters)
- Easier fulfilment of incident reporting obligations and WHS responsibilities
- Increased interest and participation in network meetings
- Greater clarity around the boundaries of the ecosystem (e.g. advising one “centre” that they are really a pastoral support mechanism, not a relief centre)

We expect that we will identify other areas requiring our attention in 2026 will emerge through our attention to more effective risk management within the Relief Centre Ecosystem.

As Chairperson, I would like to place on record my appreciation for the creative and energetic engagement of each member of the RCOC, and for the ongoing support to our effective operation by the UnitingCare SA Team.

3. Director’s Report – Mark Waters

At the time of writing this report, it is impossible not to think about the current pressures upon cost-of-living due to spiralling fuel prices. The flow on effect that this will have in increasing prices of food and other consumables is going to be significant. While the work of the RCOC is about improving governance, structures and long-term sustainability, the current environment provides a timely reminder that our mission is about people and the genuine needs of people which may lead to an increase in demand and a stretching of supply.

In recruiting the RCOC and bringing on new staff in March 2025 with Maria Maratos commencing as the Relief Centres Liaison Officer, there has been a consolidation and strengthening of the purpose, direction and planning for the relief work in the Uniting Church.

The Relief Centres Network has developed and is growing in numbers. It now numbers fourteen (14) with five (5) of those being peri-urban or country services and nine (9) based in the metropolitan area. The summary of the current Relief Centres is attached as Attachment C. There is still some potential for more growth while some centres may review and not wish to maintain their involvement in the Network.

To manage the fluctuations of recruitment, selection and growth or decline, a comprehensive set of “onboarding” and “offboarding” processes have been put in place (designed against the measures of success documentation in the RCOC’s By-Laws).

It has been pleasing to be able to oversee a steady flow of resources (based upon demand) to Relief Centres. The introduction of the John Lodge Trust Fund which was established as a result of a generous bequest to alleviate poverty is helping to extend the resources available to Relief Centres

4. Relief Centres Liaison Officer’s Report – Maria Maratos

A structured and consistent approach to the Relief Centres Liaison Officer role has been integral to strengthening governance and fostering effective relationships across the Relief Centre Network (RCN). Ongoing support from the Relief Centre Oversight Committee (RCOC) has been provided through established quarterly meetings, complemented by additional strategic discussions with the RCOC Chair. This collaborative governance arrangement has enhanced clarity regarding the operating environment and enabled a comprehensive understanding of the end-to-end stakeholder landscape supporting the RCN.

During 2025, formal quarterly meetings were established with both the RCOC and the RCN. These forums supported regular communication, shared oversight, and coordinated decision-making across the network. In addition, face-to-face site visits were undertaken, providing valuable insights into the individual contexts, operational models, and service delivery challenges of each relief centre.

Governance Review interviews were completed with five centres during the reporting period, with the remaining reviews scheduled for 2026. This governance framework supports structured self-reflection and self-assessment by centres, informed by the submission of annual reports. The subsequent interviews provide an opportunity to acknowledge achievements and community impact, while also examining organisational viability, governance maturity, and long-term sustainability. The Governance Review process is underpinned by principles of Continuous Quality Improvement, supporting ongoing development and risk mitigation across the network.

Engagement in the Food Relief Community of Practice, facilitated by the Department of Human Services, has enabled meaningful collaboration with key external partners, including Foodbank, SecondBite, OzHarvest and Food on the Table. A series of site-based and off-site meetings provided a platform to formally acknowledge and thank partners for their continued support of relief centres,

while also identifying opportunities to extend and strengthen this support across additional centres within the network.

Broader engagement with food relief organisations such as The Food Centre (Gepps Cross), MarionLIFE and Pathways (Clovercrest) has contributed valuable environmental scanning insights. These discussions have highlighted emerging community needs and anticipated sector-wide challenges, informing strategic planning and future service delivery considerations.

Over the next 12 months, the focus will be on strengthening organisational capacity and sustainability across individual centres, while supporting the strategic growth of the Relief Centre Network throughout South Australia.

5. Governance and Finance Reviews

UnitingCare SA has worked with all Relief Centres to implement a formal process of an annual review. For some Centres, they had been involved in previous Governance and Finance Reviews. For a number of Centres, this is a new process.

As part of signing up to the Network, it was clear to all Centres that they would be participating in such a Review. The Review takes the form of a written report that looks at successes, areas of improvement, risks and finances. A formal interview is then held with the Relief Centre Coordinator (and where applicable, their committee or sub-committee Chairperson). For Centres that haven't participated in reviews previously, there will be training and support offered to ensure that the review experience is seen as a positive one.

These reviews are to be held on a rolling basis across the year so that part-time staff are not burdened by having to complete all reviews within a three-month window. Maria Maratos has now taken on full responsibility for these Governance Reviews. It is anticipated that Maria will complete three to four reviews per quarter across the year.

Following Continuous Quality Improvement principles, the Governance and Finance Reviews should be seen as constructive conversations with no surprises that will help Relief Centre Coordinators to set realistic and developmental goals as to how their Centre can continue to improve.

Overall, UnitingCare SA comes to this compliance work based upon a positive “can do” mindset where all participants are valued and encouraged to grow and develop. Mostly the “carrot” approach works but on some occasions the staff team has had no hesitation in enforcing the “stick” to ensure that compliance occurs.

6. Funding Streams

- a. John Lodge Trust Fund (JLTF) Stream 1 – 2025 saw two (2) distributions from the JLTF to the Relief Centres. The JLTF Bequest exists to assist people who are experiencing poverty and discrimination. Centres submit their data quarterly and they were then allocated funds. There will be two (2) more allocations in 2026 with potentially a further \$250,000 to be distributed through the Centres.

In addition to the JLTF Stream 1 funding to Relief Centres, the Uniting Church has also allocated funds for individuals and families known to congregations who are experiencing hardship – JLTF Stream 2.

- b. Emergency Relief Fund – There is a generic distribution of funds received through the Emergency Relief Fund (the church's funding stream that attracts Donatable Gift Recipient {DGR} status). As well as an equitable distribution from here, there are some donors who tie their gifts to particular centres. This helps those centres to expand their capacity (e.g. support extra meals, hire a Coordinator etc).
- c. Pancake Day – a further allocation is made equitably from the funds received for Pancake Day. This can be another \$10,000 or more per annum that is shared amongst the Relief Centres.
- d. Other – Relief Centres are encouraged to seek other local partnerships and donations. Service clubs such as Lions or Rotary can be very supportive for particular projects. Local congregation members donate goods or cash to the Centres as well. Local businesses are often helpful with cash or in-kind donations. Some centres, using the additional funding, have developed partnerships with pharmacies that have been highly effective in helping visitors access medications etc. Some Local Councils are also generous in supporting our Centres.

7. Data

We note a slight increase in numbers in the first quarter of 2026 from the same period last year (17,110 up from 16,598). Three (3) new Centres came into the Network in the third quarter of 2025 adding approximately 320 guests per quarter. Over the last two quarters, the Grove – Woodville Gardens Uniting Church has added more accurate data in relation to the additional adults and children for whom they collect. Numbers attending UnitingCare Glenelg have dropped over the last three quarters due to disruptions caused by the tram upgrades along Jetty Road. We are expecting this centre will attract more guests now that the upgrade is complete. Some Centres have reported that with increased funding from the John Lodge Trust Fund (JLTF), there has also been an increase in expectation and demand. The first round of funding from JLTF was received by centres in August 2025. Funding from the JLTF is based on the number of visits as well as the number of people for whom they are collecting.

Interpretation of the figures supplied by Relief Centre Coordinators varies as each centre has an individual community-needs driven approach for supplying relief. So inherently there is some variation on how their manual data collection is being interpreted by Centre Coordinators. Specific data from each of the Relief Centres can be supplied by request to UnitingCare SA.

We are looking forward to the implementation of an online standardised data collection application which will provide us with access to improved point-in-time reporting. Staff at UnitingCare SA will be able to access this data without having to request it from the Centre Coordinators. Relief Centres will

need to record their data as guests access their services which may require some training of their staff.

8. Goals for the next 12 months

Over the next 12 months, the primary focus will be on strengthening people resources and reinforcing compliance across all centres.

A key priority is succession planning for both coordinators and volunteers. This includes investing in targeted training opportunities, such as Mental Health First Aid and managing difficult visitor interactions, to better equip teams for the challenges they face.

Supporting coordinators to recruit, train, and retain a larger and more diverse, particularly younger, volunteer base will remain critical.

In parallel, there will be a strong emphasis on implementing best practice policies, increasing incident reporting, and enhancing Workplace Health and Safety standards.

Finally, fostering a culture that values feedback and continuous Quality Improvement will be central to development efforts, encouraging both centres and their visitors to actively engage in ongoing improvement processes.



Peter Murchland, Chair

Relief Centres Oversight Committee

30 April 2026



Mark Waters, Director

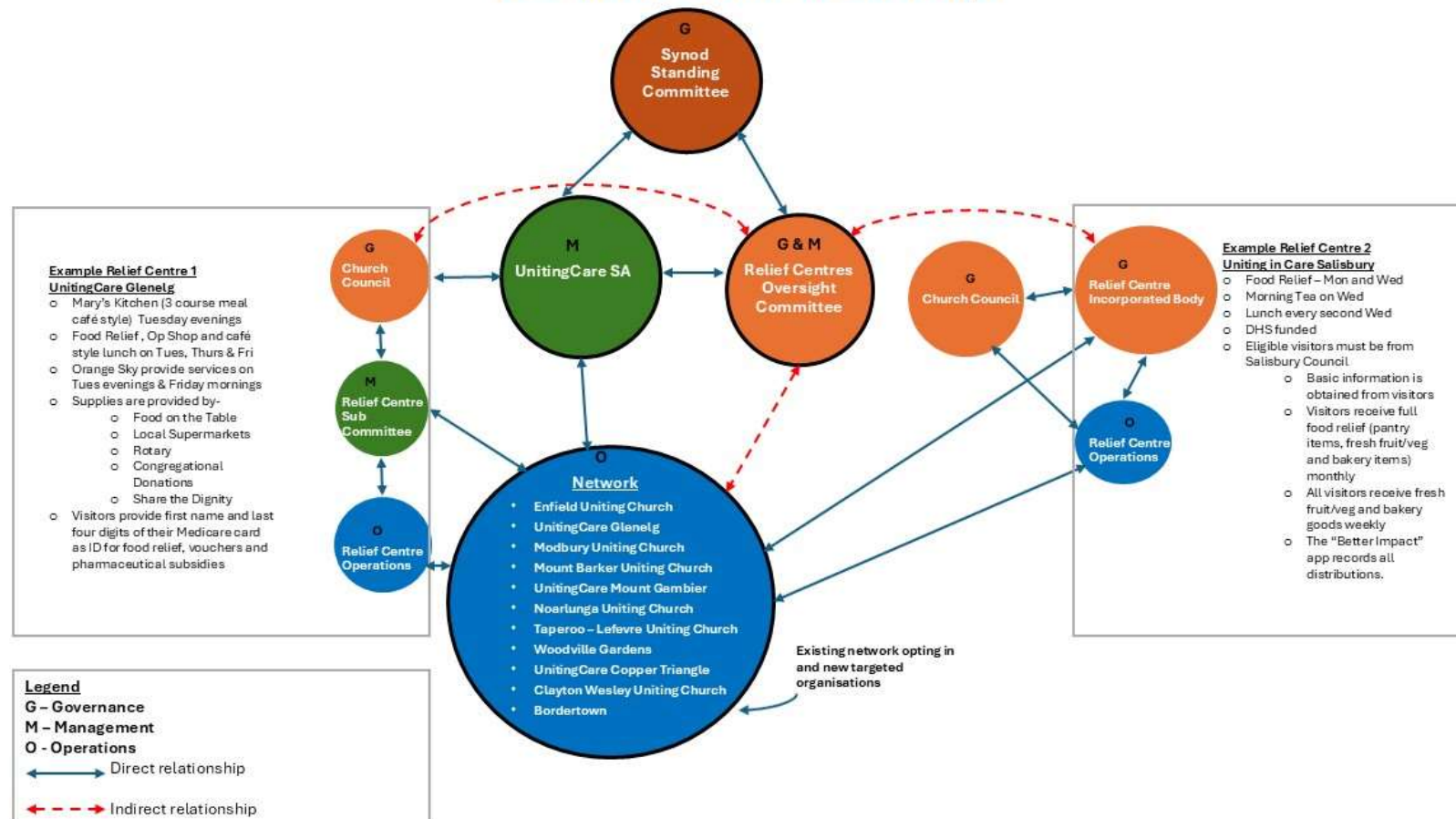
UnitingCare SA



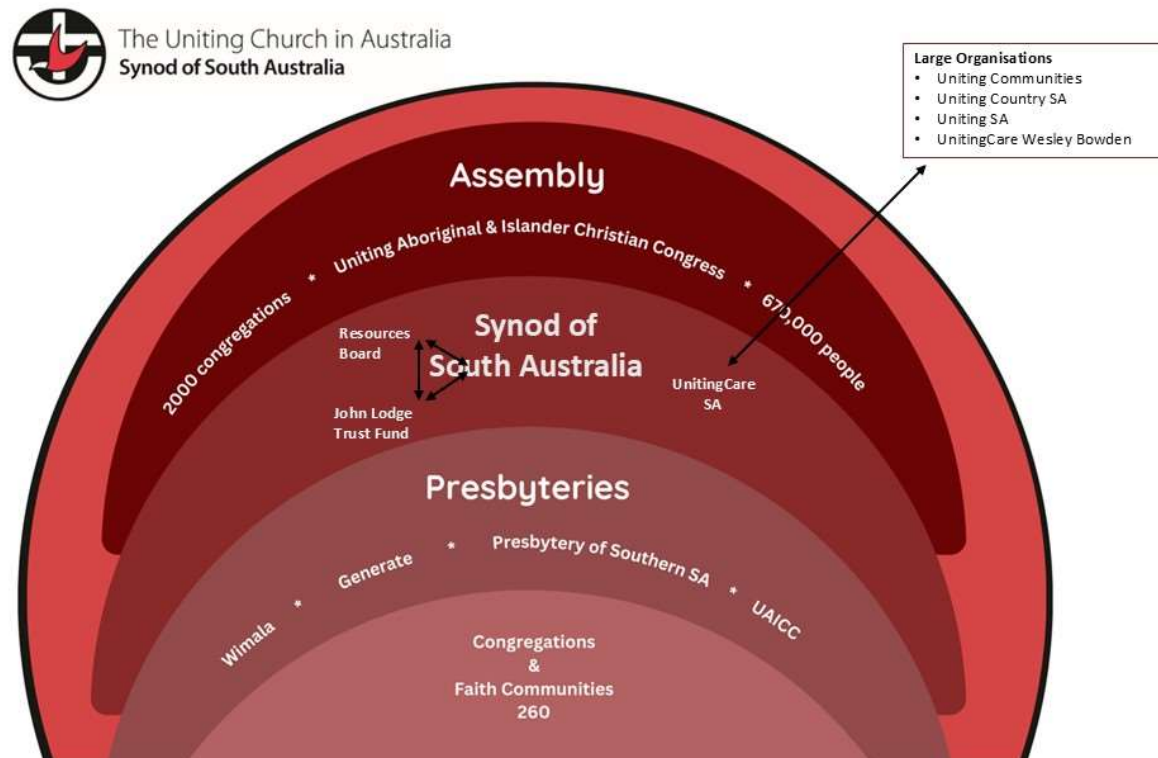
The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

Attachment A (1)

Stakeholders and Inter-relationships



Attachment A (2)



Attachment B

Relief Centre Oversight Committee Responsibility Matrix

RASCI

(R=Responsible, A=Accountable, S=Supports, C=Consulted, I=Informed)

Identifier	Responsibility / Outcome	Synod Standing Committee	Relief Centre Oversight Committee	UnitingCare Director	UnitingCare Team	Relief Centre Network	Relief Centre Governing Bodies	Relief Centre Management	UnitingCare Agencies
a)	That Relief Centres are active participants in God's mission of providing support for those in need.	I	I	I	I	S	A	R	I
b)	That the Church actively participates in areas of advocacy which effect disadvantaged or vulnerable members of our community.	C	A	R	S	C	C	I	C
c)	That governing bodies, staff and volunteers within Relief Centres are able to articulate what it means to be a Church organisation and how their programs and services are congruent with the values and ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia.	I	I	S	S	S	A	R	S
d)	That there is increased coordination and cooperation within the Relief Centres network and with other parts of the church, including agencies in association with the Uniting Church.	I	A	S	S	S	S	R	R
e)	That governance systems are in place which ensure								
e) I.	appointments to governing bodies are timely and those appointed are adequately resourced,	I	A	S	S	I	R	I	
e) II.	constituting documents are adhered to and amendments are undertaken and recorded appropriately,	I	A	S	S	I	R	S	
e) III.	any relevant risk inherent in the Synod's relationship with Relief Centres is identified and managed responsibly.	I	A	R	S	A	C	I	
f)	That researched policies are formulated to maximise the missional impact of Relief Centres	C	A	R	S	C	C	C	C
g)	The approval of new Relief Centres, services and/or programs that enhance the achievement of the mandate...	I	R	A	S	I			
h)	That Human Resources and Work Health Safety related policies and procedures are embedded in Relief Centres to ensure the safety of clients, volunteers and staff	I	I	A	S	S	A	R	
i)	That other such other responsibilities as the Synod Standing Committee shall determine from time to time are undertaken.	A	R	S	S	I	I	I	I
	= Responsibility/Outcome - to focus on								
	* RASCI model usually allocates one "A" and one "R" per entity								



UnitingCare SA Relief Centres

Find assistance at a Uniting Church near you

ENCOUNTER CHURCH - ENFIELD

Relief Centre - Tues 10 am-12 pm

08 7120 7837

jennyw@encounteradelaide.com.au

UCARE GAWLER

Relief Centre & Op Shop Tues

– Thurs 9.30 am – 3 pm **08**

8522 4522

ucare@internode.on.net

UNITINGCARE GLENELG

Relief Centre & Op Shop

Tues, Thurs, Fri 11 am – 1.45 pm

Evening meal- Tues 6.00 pm

Orange Sky Laundry

Tues 5.30 – 6.30 pm &

Fri 10.30 am – 12.00 pm

08 8295 1771

office@standrewsuc.org.au

MOUNT BARKER UNITING CHURCH

(Dunn Memorial Uniting Church)

Food pantry - Mon 10 – 12 pm, Wed 10 – 1.30 pm,

Fri 10 – 12 pm, Sun 11 am – 8 pm

Café - Wed 10 am – 1.30 pm

Evening meal- Sun 6.00 pm

08 8391 2513

minister@mtbarker.ucasa.org.au

UNITINGCARE MOUNT GAMBIER

Relief Centre - Mon 10 am – 2.30 pm

08 8725 5377

unitingcare_mtg@bigpond.com

THE HIVE - BORDERTOWN UNITING CHURCH

Relief Centre/ Op Shop- Tues & Sat AM

Furniture Wed & Sat 11 am - 2pm

0457 447 503

thehiveatbordertown@gmail.com

NOARLUNGA UNITING CHURCH

Relief Centre - Mon – Fri 9 am – 11.30 am

08 8384 3868

noarlungauca@gmail.com

UNITING IN CARE SALISBURY

Relief Centre - Mon & Wed 11 am – 2 pm

Morning Tea - Wed 11 am – 1pm

08 8258 2675

uicsalisbury@bigpond.com.au

TAPEROO – LEFEVRE UNITING CHURCH

Relief Centre - Tues 11 am – 1 pm

Coffee - Fri 8.30 am – 1 pm

Op Shop - Fri 9am – 1pm

08 7120 6558

lefevre@internode.on.net

WOODVILLE GARDENS

The Grove Uniting Church

Food Relief - Tues 12.00 – 1.30pm

Community Garden- Tues 9 am – 12pm

Op Shop- Wed & Fri 9 am – 2 pm

0412 107 105

jerema.g@hotmail.com

CLAYTON WESLEY UNITING CHURCH

Op Shop - Mon to Fri 10 am – 4.00 pm

Hope's Cafe Wed to Fri 10.00 am - 3.00 pm

08 8331 9589

admin@claytonwesley.ucasa.org.au

UNITINGCARE COPPER TRIANGLE

Kadina Office – Mon to Fri

8821 0300 or 1300 067 777

Emergency Financial Relief (NILs Loans)

Emergency Relocation Assistance Christmas

and Emergency Hampers.

OP Shop – Last Sat. of Month

Walleroo Op Shop **0409 965 562**

Mon – Fri 1.30 – 3.30, Sat 9.30 – 11.30

For more info

<https://sa.uca.org.au/unitingcare-sa>