

UnitingCare SA Report

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The UnitingCare SA ministry team builds relationships between the Synod and aged-care, community services, hospital, relief centres and schools and colleges associated with the Uniting Church in South Australia. To strengthen these relationships, UnitingCare SA supports sound governance, risk management, financial sustainability and communications.

This report outlines the involvement of the UnitingCare SA ministry team and the associated organisations in the life of the Synod since the last UnitingCare SA report dated September 2024.

1. Mission

Jesus' mission on earth served the poor, healed the sick and welcomed the marginalised. As well as his teaching people his good news, Jesus' actions always were true to his message.

As a Christian community we are encouraged to focus upon both words and deeds.

Each of our organisations show Jesus' practical application of service. They are dedicated to educating and serving the wider community as outreaches of the Synod and the members of the Uniting Church in South Australia.

1.1 Organisations

At the time of writing, the organisations associated with the Uniting Church through UnitingCare SA are:

Schools/ Colleges	Aged Care/ Hospital	Community Service (cont'd)	Relief Centre Network (cont'd)
Annesley College*	Clayton Church Homes Incorporated	UnitingCare Wesley Bowden Incorporated [#]	Mt Barker Uniting Church
Lincoln College Incorporated	Eldercare Australia Ltd	UnitingSA Ltd [#]	UnitingCare Mt Gambier
Pedare Christian College Incorporated	Helping Hand Aged Care Incorporated		UCare Gawler
Pilgrim School Incorporated	Resthaven Incorporated	Relief Centre Network	Noarlunga Uniting Church
Prince Alfred College*	St Andrew's Hospital Incorporated	Bordertown Uniting Church The Hive	Uniting in Care Salisbury Incorporated
Scotch College*		Beulah Park Clayton Wesley Uniting Church	Taperoo – Lefevre Uniting Church
Seymour College Incorporated	Community Service	Enfield Encounter Church	Windsor Gardens Uniting Church – Good Neighbour Centre
Westminster School Incorporated	Uniting Communities Incorporated [#]	Glenelg UnitingCare Glenelg	Woodville Gardens – The Grove Uniting Church
	Uniting Country SA Ltd	Modbury Uniting Church [^]	UnitingCare Copper Triangle

* These schools are incorporated under Acts of Parliament.

These community service organisations also provide some aged care services.

[^] Discussions are being held with Modbury Uniting Church regarding their ongoing involvement in the Relief Centre Network.

UnitingCare SA is the interface between the above organisations and Synod. This involves many different conversations throughout any year, including an annual meeting focusing upon each organisation's governance and financial situation (referencing their audited financial report). A dialogue is facilitated that includes the organisation's highlights and successes, trends, challenges and risks. Items discussed in this meeting may also include the presentation of proposed constitutional changes and Board/Council appointments for organisations for whom the Synod acts as approving and/or appointing authority.

2. Sectors

2.1 Schools and Colleges

Leadership has been provided by many people across the Uniting Church schools and colleges. An outstanding and long-term contribution has been made by Mr Bruce Spangler AM who has moved on from the Chair of Annesley Junior School after 15 years on the Board. Bruce has seen Annesley through a number of challenges and has been ably replaced by Ms Kymberley Lawrence.

Mr Richard Hockney concluded his term as the Chairperson to the Council of Prince Alfred College and was replaced by Mr David Sanders. In addition, Dr Nigel Bean was elected Chairperson of the Prince Alfred College Advisory Committee in October 2025.

Overall, the last two years have seen a period of relative stability for our schools and their leadership.

The invaluable work of Schools Chaplains where they are in placement continues to be seen as a major link between the schools and the Uniting Church. The wellbeing of students, families and staff is supported through such pastoral care.

Facilitated through UnitingCare SA, the Moderator hosts the schools and colleges Principals at three meetings each year. Finding an opportunity for this group to network and informally share items of interest has benefit for all parties. In November 2025 a wider meeting of school leaders discussed racism in schools with Ms Tanya Hosch AM presenting.

A national online network meeting of Uniting Church Schools has been held over the past three years. This group is bringing together a National Uniting Church Schools Conference in Brisbane in June 2026 titled "Uniting Connections 2026 – Faith, Flourishing and Leadership". This will seed healthy conversations about "What does it mean to be a Uniting Church School / College?".

2.2 Aged Care and Hospital

The new Aged Care Act was implemented on November 1 2025. After many years of advocacy, the reforms from the Aged Care Royal Commission were brought into being.

There has been some stabilisation of the workforce with increased wages and the supervision of nurses in place across every residential program.

Staffing for sites in country SA remains a significant issue (recruiting, retaining, housing etc).

There continue to be aged care issues to work through including step down referrals from hospitals, the implementation of care minutes in centres, the funding instruments which still require adjustment and the roll out of Support@Home packages and their funding.

Advocacy from UnitingCare Australia continues to be strong. Their network includes the 19 Uniting Church Aged Care CEOs across Australia. This group often provides feedback to relevant ministers and politicians.

The governance changes for aged care providers are as follows:

- Ms Stephanie Rozokos replaced Mr Mark Porter as the Chairperson of Resthaven after 20 years on the Board (14 of which as chair)
- Mr Michael Elias took over as CEO of Clayton Church Homes from Ms Jo Boylan in the middle of 2025.
- Ms Nicolle Rantanen took over as Chairperson of Clayton Church Homes from Mr Greg Adey in October 2025

The Chief Executive Officer of St Andrews Hospital, Stephen Walker wound up his contract at the end of 2024. Ms Eileen Sawyer replaced him and after 12 months moved on from the CEO role. St Andrews is currently recruiting for a new CEO and aims to have their nominee in place by the middle of 2026.

2.3 Community Services

Uniting Communities, Uniting Country SA, UnitingCare Wesley Bowden and UnitingSA all have extensive reach into the community. Their expansive program list is highlighted below. The geographic and population connection in SA is considerable. At a glance, these include:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| • Family services | • Gambling help services |
| • Children's services | • Emergency assistance |
| • Working with young people | • Homelessness support |
| • Supporting older people | • Social housing |
| • Domestic and family violence counselling | • Financial counselling |
| • EVP – Escaping Violence Payments | • No Interest Loans (NILs) |
| • Relationship counselling | • Employment and training |
| • Working with Aboriginal families and communities | • Supported employment |
| • Working with CALD communities | • NDIS services |
| • Mental health support | • Home care |
| • Crisis support through LifeLine | • Legal advice |
| • Counselling for alcohol and other drug use | • Advocacy |
| | • Community development |

In relating to these four large community service providers, UnitingCare SA is very conscious that they provide the services that meet people at their point of need. These needs might be financial counselling through UnitingCare Wesley Bowden, Aboriginal Community Connect from Uniting

Communities, Parent Pathways into training and employment at UnitingSA in Murray Bridge or the Children's Contact Service from Uniting Country SA in Port Pirie. The breadth of services is significant and aims to help individuals and families flourish in their community.

The community service programs serve a very diverse population across cultural, disability, mental health and family groups.

Rental affordability, the cost of purchasing a house or accessing some form of community, public or social housing is falling out of reach for more South Australians. People who are on benefits or low incomes are hit the hardest by exorbitant rent increases. They are having to make hard choices between putting food on the table or purchasing school shoes or keeping a roof over their family's heads. And the demand for our services is increasing even with double income families struggling to make ends meet.

The level of homelessness seen through the Relief Centres demonstrates that the need is great (and growing). People sleeping rough in church car parks, people being offered swags instead of rooms, homeless people sleeping in the sand dunes or under the jetties at our beaches; our services see all of these sorts of situations.

Uniting Country SA and UnitingSA have been leaders in the development of social housing developments in rural and metropolitan South Australia. Affordable housing and the ability to marshal all of our resources as a community to increase the supply of housing remains a significant missional need for UnitingCare SA.

The Boards / organisations that have experienced changes in their chairperson or movement of their Chief Executive Officer in the period 2024-26 are listed below.

- Mr Peter Hollister was re-elected as Uniting Country SA Chairperson and Mr Paul Thomas elected as the Deputy Chairperson at their AGM 2025.
- Mr Nigel Hall was appointed as the Interim Chair of Uniting Communities late in 2024 and subsequently took on that role formally early in 2025.
- Mr Jeremy Brown took over from Mr Simon Schrapel as the Chief Executive Officer of Uniting Communities in the middle of 2025.

The leadership at both Board and Executive level has remained stable in both UnitingSA and UnitingCare Wesley Bowden.

UnitingCare SA thanks all of the chairs and Chief Executives of our large, diverse and complex organisations for their commitment and diligence to leading their Boards and organisations. Shaping the organisational mission, culture, quality, service provision and financial stability of their organisations provides a significant contribution to community services in SA.

2.3.1 Relief Centre Network

The need for food support and other cost-of-living supports remains significant and we expect this only to grow as the community is hit with increases in grocery and petrol prices exacerbated by the war in Iran. Relief Centres are seeing a new group of people, the working poor, who are unable to meet the rising costs even though working. Uncertainty around fuel supplies and the ongoing impact

on farmers and transportation services will continue to impact those who can least absorb these increases. Further adding to this stress is that the Government electricity rebate scheme ended December 2025 meaning the real cost of electricity is being felt, along with rising rentals and interest rates for mortgage holders

The Relief Centres operating under the banner of UnitingCare SA offer food relief, provision of goods and furniture, vouchers for pharmaceuticals, other shopping vouchers etc.

This network of centres primarily operates with support of food and cash donations from congregations and community members. Only two (2) centres receive Commonwealth funds to provide Emergency Relief. The other centres rely almost solely upon the goodwill of the community with some operating Op Shops to help cross subsidise the Relief work that they are doing.

The Relief Centre Network expanded to fourteen centres with the inclusion of The Hive-@-Bordertown, Clayton Wesley Uniting Church, and Windsor Gardens Uniting Church.

UnitingCare SA has worked with the Modbury Uniting Church Council who are considering their ongoing involvement in the Network as they are primarily providing pastoral support to a small regular group of people.

Demand is growing, supply is falling; the complexity of visitors is greater; and the staffing and coordination of centres relies upon an ageing volunteer workforce. All of these factors will need to be addressed to ensure longer-term viability for centres into the future.

2.3.2 Relief Centre Oversight Committee

Following a year-long review of the governance and operations of Relief Centres in 2023 and 2024, the Synod Standing Committee meeting of June 2024 determined to establish the Relief Centres Oversight Committee (RCOC) to support the long-term viability and sustainability of the Relief Network Centres.

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, guided by SSC approved founding documents, including By Laws, Measures of Success and Resources Board Review.

The RCOC exists and operates in a complex stakeholder landscape, involving Synod, Synod Standing Committee, Resources Board, governing entities (Boards or Church Councils), and relief centres as well as external bodies such as Local Governments, Councils and other support and homelessness organisations.

RCOC Membership (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 Centre 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 Committee in late 2025.

3. Advocacy

3.1.1 Disability Advisory Committee

Membership of the Disability Advisory Committee was approved at the December 2025 meeting of the Synod Standing Committee. At this meeting the Bylaws for the Disability Advisory Committee were also approved.

External Members

Mr Bruce Ind – Chairperson
 Prof Bart Bruehler
 Ms Bethany Whitta
 Rev Cate Baker
 Ms Elizabeth Iussa
 Dr Jenny Richards

Synod Staff Members

Rev Andrew Robertson, Associate General Secretary Placements & Safe Church
 Ms Anna Wilson – Graduate Disability Advocacy Officer
 Mr Mark Waters, Director UnitingCare SA
 Ms Linda Vinal, Called to Care Training Coordinator

Executive Support

Ms Johanne Manning, Administration Officer UnitingCare SA

Whilst the implementation of the Disability Access and Inclusion Policy and the employment of the Graduate Disability and Advocacy Officer remains the responsibility of the Placements and Safe Church Ministry Centre, UnitingCare SA has valued the chance to provide Executive support to this role. We also led the recruitment and selection of the membership for the Disability Advisory Committee that commenced in July 2025.

3.2 Justice, Mission and Theology

As an outcome of the 2023 Mission Review, the Justice, Mission and Theology (JMT) Committee was formed (subsuming the former Public Theology and Mission {PTM} Committee).

Responsible to the Mission and Leadership Development Board (MLDB) the JMT is progressing conversations in the Uniting Church around loneliness, gambling, Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Climate Change etc.

Covenanting is at the heart of all of the sections of the MLDB Strategic Framework and remains a priority component of UnitingCare SA's work.

The Director, UnitingCare SA took on the chairing role of the Community Connections Collective in 2024 for one year. This group is promoting the capacity for church to operate in the public square. The Collective held a successful Conference "Weaving Lives Together" in August 2025 with Rev Karina Kreminski from NSW being the keynote speaker.

4. Appeals, Donations and Bequests

4.1 Pancake Day

Building on from previous years, the Pancake Day Launch event for 2025 was held in Hindmarsh Square and in 2026 on the forecourt of Scots Church, corner North Terrace and Pultney Street. The 2026 event coincided with Adelaide University's O-week resulting in a high volume of exposure to a younger generation. Approximately 50 Litres of pancake mix sizzled and flipped on the RAA's community barbecue. Scots Church also hosts an International Student Saturday Club, and the Pancake Day launch event gave students an opportunity for non-confrontational entry into the church and introductions to some of the Saturday Club members. A great Win-Win opportunity.

It is pleasing that many of the regular fundraisers were keen to support us again this year. Our mascot, Penny Pancake was a big hit, visiting two school events to raise awareness, as well as funds. Fundraising for 2026 is continuing until the end of June, after which we will be able to report on funds raised. These funds will be distributed among our 18 UnitingCare SA organisations and relief centres.

We would like to thank our sponsors, UC Invest, RAA, Romeos, Foodland, Coles – Churchill Road, and Costco for their generous support of the Launch event.

4.2 ACHA – UnitingCare SA Hamper Packing Day

Over the past 3 years the staff of the Adelaide Community Healthcare Alliance (ACHA) across their three private hospitals (Ashford, Flinders and Memorial) contributed to food and financial support for the Christmas Hamper Appeal. In 2025, food collection sites included Annesley Junior School, Westminster School, Church of the Trinity Goodwood, Pilgrim Church, U-City, Coro Uniting, Synod Office and UCLT. Packing of 300 Christmas Hampers was held at the Ashford Hospital training rooms providing a central location for the delivery of goods and collection of packed hampers for distribution to six of the Relief Centre Network sites. Centres that did not receive hampers were offered funding from the John Lodge Trust Fund to subsidise hamper distributions in their areas.

We are grateful for the assistance and contributions from the staff and Managers of ACHA, the congregations, students and families who assisted in this program. The extent of the goods gathered, and the generosity shown by all brought smiles to many people's faces at Christmas time. We would like to especially thank Rev Liz Dyson, ACHA Chaplain (resigned 31 March 2026) for her contribution to the assistance and support of this program at ACHA group of Hospitals.

4.3 Uniting Church SA Relief Fund

The Committee members of the Uniting Church SA Relief Fund are Rev Andrew Robertson, Rev Sue Page, Mrs Wendy Perkins, Mr Andrew Fechner, Mr Mark Waters. Executive Support is provided by Ms Johanne Manning, Administration Officer UnitingCare SA. This Committee has oversight for the following funds:

- Prison Chaplaincy Fund
- Mental Health Chaplaincy Fund
- Refugee Support
- SA Bushfire Appeal
- Exceptional Circumstances Fund
- UnitingCare Emergency/Flood Relief Fund
- John Lodge Support

In 2025, the Uniting Church Relief Fund made small grants available from the UnitingCare Emergency/Flood Relief Fund for regional churches to hold community engagement events/ seed funding to support communities impacted by drought, fire, flood and the impacts of natural disasters like the Algal Bloom events. Three applications were made during 2025, Tumby Bay, Cowell and POSSA (a series of BBQ events). This fund has been advertised widely via E-News and applications are still open.

4.3.1 UnitingCare Emergency Relief Fund

The UnitingCare SA Emergency Relief Fund was established in May 2020 to help equip Uniting Churches to offer food relief to their local communities. This donations to this fund of \$2 and over are Tax deductible.

In 2024, \$15940 was received in donations. In 2025, donations quadrupled to \$64386. This jump in donations has been primarily due to UnitingCare Glenelg – St Andrews By-the-Sea Uniting Church proactively seeking donations to support their Relief Centre.

4.3.2 John Lodge Trust Fund

During 2004, Mr John Kenneth Hyde Lodge (28 July 1932 - 10 January 2023) approached the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of South Australia, expressing a desire to leave the majority of his estate to the Uniting Church with the express wish that the income from his estate be used to alleviate person(s) in extreme circumstances by virtue of those in poor health or living conditions or those who have been the subject of cruelty or discrimination on the grounds of their culture, religion, sex or race; and are unable to obtain significant aid from any other readily available source.

Stream 1 – two distributions were made to the UnitingCare Relief Centre Network members of \$76,500 in July 2025 and November 2025, shared according to visitor presentations at their centres. This funding has enabled our centres to assist people in need with food and prepared meals, clothing, pharmacy vouchers and webster packs, metro tickets, Christmas gifts and toys.

Stream 2 – assistance is available to anyone experiencing poverty, presenting at a South Australian Uniting Church, via an application that is supported by two Uniting Church Leaders. Applications are reviewed by the John Lodge Trust Committee, with decisions made quickly to assist addressing the need of the applicant.

Stream 2 Application 1 – approved up to the value of \$2000 to replace stolen fridge and install deadlocks.

Stream 2 Application 2 – approved \$1630 for 16,000L water and carting for a semi-rural family dependant on rainwater.

If you would like more information on the John Lodge Trust Fund – Stream 2 please [Click here](#)

John Lodge Trust Fund Committee Members

Mr Mark Waters - Chairperson	-	Director, UnitingCare SA
Mr Bronte Wilson - Executor of the Will		Past Moderator
Rev Peter Morel		Moderator
Ms Amy Duke		Member

Executive Support

Ms Johanne Manning	Administration Officer UnitingCare SA
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5. UnitingCare Australia

UnitingCare Australia is the national peak body for the UnitingCare network. It advocates on aged care legislation, financing and workforce issues, First nations peoples and the ability for people to address cost-of-living pressures. It maintains a strong network of CEOs across all of our

organisations. It liaises with UnitingCare entities (including separately incorporated organisations associated with the Church) in each Synod and represents those entities in its advocacy work.

The SA Synod is represented on the UnitingCare Australia Board by the Director, UnitingCare SA, Mr Mark Waters. The Board meets twice face to face each year with at least 4 -5 other online meetings held throughout the year.

6. Staff

The UnitingCare SA team is made up of a small and dedicated team under the leadership of Mark Waters. Maria Maratos joined the team on 17 March 2025. She brings to the team gentle people management skills and has a strong background in organisational auditing.

Mr Mark Waters	Director 0.8 FTE
Ms Maria Maratos	Relief Centre Liaison Officer 0.7 FTE
Ms Johanne Manning	Administrator/PA to the Director 0.9 FTE

7. Governance

7.1 Reports to Synod Standing Committee

In the reporting period September 2024 to 4 June 2026, UnitingCare reported on or recommended proposed resolutions to the Synod Standing Committee in relation to the following matters.

Topic		Reports/Resolutions
Governance – Organisations / Entities	Constitutions, Board/Council Appointments, Restructures and Reviews, MoUs	101
Discussion topics	Polity and Ethos for Board Members, Mission & Informal Chaplaincy Survey, Our Vision for a Just Australia, Stronger Fairer Australia for All, Disability Advisory Committee, John Lodge Trust Fund, Social Housing	17
Administration	Changes to UnitingCare SA Staff	1
		121

7.2 Entity Governance and Financial Reviews

Since October 2024, UnitingCare SA has conducted a total of 28 Governance and Financial Review meetings with the Uniting Church Schools, Aged Care Services, St Andrew's Hospital and several of the UnitingCare Relief Centres, meeting with each on an annual basis. There are three organisations whose constitution states that a formal governance review is not required. In these instances, other

informal annual discussions are held with their CEOs around the governance and financial viability of the organisation.

Reviews of the centres in the Relief Centre Network have been expanded to include all 14 centres. Ms Maria Maratos is currently conducting meetings with each Relief Centre Coordinator, along with the Church Council Chairperson and Treasurer.

7.3 Recruitment of Board Members for UnitingCare Organisations

It is recognised that the work of UnitingCare SA is relational. In building strong relationships with 31 organisations in association with the Uniting Church who are all independently governed in one way or another, it is understood that the best links are made through social capital.

Many Boards are moving to adopt the standard wording that all Board members support the polity and ethos of the Uniting Church. The Synod Standing Committee has backed this trend with the direction to ensure that Memoranda of Understanding (which are not legally binding documents) are in place, therefore acknowledging that the relationship has pre-eminence.

A number of Boards maintain a position for the Moderator or their delegate.

UnitingCare SA is working with the Associate General Secretary, Governance and Operations to develop appropriate training resources for Board members upon the Polity and Ethos of the Uniting Church.

As always, UCA members are encouraged to consider whether they or someone they know would be interested in serving the Uniting Church in this rewarding role. Interested people are encouraged to make contact with UnitingCare SA.

7.4 Constitutions

Whether large or small, all organisations are governed according to their constitution, rules and regulations or by-laws. From September 2024 to February 2026, the Synod Standing Committee approved changes to the governing documents of three organisations, namely UnitingCare Wesley Bowden, Helping Hand Aged Care Inc, and Lincoln College. UnitingCare SA staff consulted with each of the organisations as they discerned the changes to be recommended to the Synod Standing Committee for approval. The Synod Standing Committee also noted the changes in the Seymour College constitution.

UnitingCare Wesley Bowden went through a successful merger in 2025 with Aspire Recovery Connections. They have also consulted with the Synod Standing Committee about their aspirations to become a Company Limited by Guarantee as they seek to take on further acquisitions and mergers.

8. Conclusion

The past two years have seen a steady stabilisation of the work supported by UnitingCare SA. has been focused upon getting Relief Centres organised for a more sustainable future. There is a genuine sense that there has been a steady hand on the tiller as we have:

- navigated the commencement of the Relief Centre Oversight Committee (RCOC) so that they can provide independent views upon UnitingCare SA's work
- strengthening of the Relief Centre Network
- introduced the John Lodge Trust Fund distributions
- improved data collection tools in order to make the payments from the JLTF based upon demand more precise.

The need for connections in the community, social isolation and loneliness keep arising as issues affecting mental health in our society.

The next emerging issue that has been discussed at Synod Standing Committee is housing as it relates to affordable rental, cost-of-living issues, availability of social and affordable housing and homelessness.

In reporting to the General Secretary, the level of trust and communication generated between the Director Uniting Care SA and Rev Philip Gardner is greatly appreciated.

UnitingCare SA believes in being transparent and mutually accountable for our work and outcomes. We want to celebrate the rich involvement of volunteers and coordinators in delivering services to people in need. UnitingCare SA aims to be constructive and collaborative in all of its partnerships and relationships. We strive to foster good relations and add value across all parts of the Synod and into the wider church. By doing this we see that people's genuine needs can be met.

Mark Waters

Director, UnitingCare SA

June 2026



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia