



UnitingCare SA Report

UnitingCare SA provides a link between the Synod and organisations, schools and colleges associated with the Uniting Church, as well as Church agencies. Governance and other matters relevant to the relationship between the Church and those organisations are administered by the UnitingCare SA ministry team.

The report that follows outlines the involvement of the UnitingCare SA ministry team and the associated organisations in the life of the Synod since the UnitingCare report was prepared in November 2020 for the Synod's Annual Meeting in February 2021. Team members have provided a brief review of what has been undertaken in the different aspects of our work together.

Staff changes and the continuation of COVID-19 resulted in significant impacts on the activities of the team and the UnitingCare network.

The last year continued to be a very challenging and very rewarding time for UnitingCare SA.

1. Staff

The UnitingCare SA team continued to offer their diverse gifts to the work of the Synod as this work is lived out through the organisations which are associated with the Synod.

Since the last report, there have been significant changes to staffing.

- **Rev Dr Tim Hodgson** **Executive Officer**
In September 2021 Tim resigned, effective from 7 January 2022. Tim returned full time to the Australian Defence Force, where his specialist skills in chaplaincy and moral injury are in demand.
- **Rev Dr Adrian Brown** **Interim Liaison Officer**
The Interim Liaison Officer role was established to carry out the Executive Officer's pastoral care and governance duties while that position is reviewed.
Adrian is highly skilled in governance, has extensive experience working with organisations (including, in some cases, as a chaplain), and is a longstanding member of the Advisory Committee of Prince Alfred College.
- **Emily Brodie-Tyrrell** **Synergy Manager**
In June 2021, Emily resigned from the part-time role of Synergy Manager, and then worked reduced hours until late September.

- Paul Wilkins** **Synergy Procurement Officer**
 Paul joined Synergy in November 2021 on a part-time contract basis. Although Paul decided not to renew his contract in February 2022, he continued working at reduced hours while a replacement was recruited.
 This operational role was transferred to the Resources ministry centre at the start of 2022.
- Julianne Rogers** **Events, Communications and Promotions Coordinator**
 Julianne left in December 2020. The role has been under review since that time. Some of the role's functions have been temporarily reassigned to the PA to the Executive Officer.
- Ann Cotton** **PA to the Executive Officer**
 Ann has continued in this role. During 2021 and 2022, she has supported the former Executive Officer, the Interim Liaison Officer, Synergy operations and fundraising appeals.

Following the departure of Rev Dr Tim Hodgson, and in liaison with Rev Dr Adrian Brown since his arrival:

- I (Rev Sue Page, Associate General Secretary) have managed UnitingCare SA's operations; and
- Rev Philip Gardner, Executive Officer, Placements and Safe Church, has managed staff matters.

Changes to the roles and operational matters are referred to in relevant sections of this report.

2. Governance

2.1 Reports to Synod Standing Committee

From the last annual report in February 2021 (written in November 2020) up until March 2022, UnitingCare reported on or recommended proposed resolutions to the Synod Standing Committee in relation to the following matters.

Topic		Reports/Resolutions
Governance	(Constitutions, Board/Council Appointments, Restructures and Reviews)	107
Organisations	(Relationships, Visits to Organisations, Changes of Key Staff, Remuneration of Directors, Parish Mission)	26
Royal Commissions	(Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse [including National Redress Scheme], Aged Care, Disability)	3
Events	(COVID-19 Emergency Relief Centres, Training of Chaplains)	5
Administration	(Changes to UnitingCare SA Staff, UnitingCare Australia, Synergy)	8

149

2.2 Recruitment from Congregations of Board Members for Organisations Associated with the UCA

UCA members are sought after for roles on the Boards/Councils of several organisations, schools and colleges associated with the Church. Boards and Councils seek people with professional skills or experience in a broad range of disciplines and/or industry sectors. Lived experience in various categories such as disability and diversity is also highly regarded.

The former Executive Officer approached several UCA members, inviting them to consider nominating for roles on Boards and Councils. This resulted in three people being nominated, with two being successful in gaining appointments.

However, it remains a very challenging task for Boards to meet their obligations to include qualified board members from the Uniting Church. In some instances, changes to constitutions have been forced because of this issue. It may be necessary to develop alternative approaches.

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 should make contact with UnitingCare SA.

2.3 Constitutions

Whether large or small, all organisations are governed according to their constitution, rules and regulations or by-laws. During 2021 and 2022, the Synod Standing Committee approved changes to the governing documents of five organisations. Some changes involved significantly updating the documents to reflect current business practices and language, while others were relatively minor administrative updates.

UnitingCare SA staff consulted with each of the organisations as they discerned the changes to be recommended to the Synod Standing Committee for approval.

Several other organisations are considering changes to their governing documents.

An ongoing challenge is where an organisation seeks to move to become a company limited by guarantee. Organisations are increasingly being drawn to do so because the Federal Government requires this in order to access certain grant monies. The challenge is for the organisations to be supported in this while ensuring that they retain their constitutional links to the Uniting Church.

3. Organisations

Currently the following organisations associated with the Uniting Church relate to the Synod through UnitingCare SA.

Schools/Colleges	Aged Care/Hospital	Community Service	Small Organisations
Annesley College*	Clayton Church Homes Incorporated	Uniting Communities Incorporated	UCare Gawler Incorporated
Lincoln College Incorporated	Eldercare Australia Ltd	Uniting Country SA Ltd	Uniting in Care Salisbury Incorporated
Pedare Christian College Incorporated	Helping Hand Aged Care Incorporated	UnitingCare Wesley Bowden Incorporated	UnitingCare Copper Triangle
Pilgrim School Incorporated	Resthaven Incorporated	UnitingSA Ltd	UnitingCare Glenelg
Prince Alfred College*	St Andrew's Hospital Incorporated		UnitingCare Kapunda
Scotch College*		Other	UnitingCare Mt Gambier
Seymour College Incorporated		ACHA Health [#]	
Westminster School Incorporated		MediaCom Education Inc [∅]	

* These schools are incorporated under Acts of Parliament.

ACHA Health is connected to the Synod through the appointment of a Board member. Several years ago, there was a formal relationship with The Memorial Hospital, which is a now part of ACHA Health. Contact is being made with the organisation to establish a formal relationship through UnitingCare SA.

∅ For convenience, MediaCom Education Incorporated reports to the Synod through the UnitingCare SA reporting mechanism but it is not technically part of the UnitingCare SA network.

UnitingCare SA is the interface between the Church and each of these organisations. This involves many different conversations throughout any year, including an annual report and conversation that addresses each organisation's governance and financial situation. This annual conversation is triggered by the presentation of each organisation's audited financial reports following the end of the calendar or financial year, according to the structure of the fiscal year. Part of this interface also includes the presentation of proposed constitutional changes and Board/Council appointments for organisations for whom the Synod acts as approving and/or appointing authority.

During 2020, the usual formal reporting and review cycle was not completed due to the extra demands and restrictions resulting from COVID-19. However, an appropriate level of contact with each organisation was maintained. In 2021, the level of engagement with organisations increased. Annual governance reviews were completed with nearly all of the organisations.

In addition to the longstanding UnitingCare associations, during 2020 relationships were established with several congregations to provide emergency food relief. Eight congregations which were not previously associated with UnitingCare became "UnitingCare Emergency Relief Centres". Some of these centres and

their local Church Councils are now considering whether to formally establish UnitingCare organisations with their own constitutions or by-laws. In February 2022, one of those congregations discerned that they would not continue as a UnitingCare Emergency Relief Centre due to low demand in their area. However, that congregation continues to provide emergency food hampers to people in need when required.

In March 2022, Rev Dr Adrian Brown was commissioned as Interim Liaison Officer to provide pastoral care and governance support to organisations until a new Executive Officer is in place. The pastoral and relational aspects of each organisation's association with the Uniting Church are valued by both the organisations and the Church. Adrian has met with the leaders of several of the organisations, schools and colleges.

Following are comments on each of the sectors, examples of how the mission of the Church is lived out through various organisations, and changes in leadership.

3.1 Sectors

3.1.1 Schools and Colleges

The operation of schools and colleges was significantly impacted by COVID-19. However, sound management resulted in positive financial outcomes for most of the schools and colleges.

The move of Year 7 to high school from the start of 2022 resulted in lower student numbers at primary schools. Schools and colleges with Reception to Year 12 undertook some restructuring during the last four years since the change was announced.

Schools and colleges have continued to support the mission of the Church. Some have partnered with community service organisations for joint activities, and have supported other schools during times of need.

3.1.2 Aged Care and Hospital

The aged care sector and hospitals continued to be affected by COVID-19. Fortunately, in SA the impact on aged care has not been as significant as in some other states. However, it is acknowledged that some aged care providers associated with the Uniting Church suffered cases of COVID-19 in their homes, and some residents subsequently died. The aged care providers continued to look after their residents with dignity and compassion while adhering to strict protocols required by Government and in the context of staff recruitment becoming exceedingly difficult. Recruitment has been hampered by the delays in implementing the Royal Commission's recommendations about remuneration in aged care.

St Andrew's Hospital was affected by periodic limits on elective surgery and other requirements and restrictions. Chaplains continued their integral role within the delivery of holistic care for patients and support for staff.

3.1.3 Community Services

Community service organisations make valuable contributions to their local communities. Particularly since early 2020, organisations have been called on to carry out their mission under difficult circumstances.

During 2021, UnitingCare Emergency Relief Centres, which are mainly staffed by volunteers, provided prepared meals or food items for about 200,000 meals. That effort supported thousands of people.

More than just meals, they also provided a wide range of other services, including goods from op shops and financial planning. Importantly, they made a positive contribution to the lives of clients by welcoming them into the centres.

Many community service organisations associated with the Uniting Church provide a broad range of services. Some are NDIS providers, some provide counselling, and some provide family and domestic violence support. Others include aged care among their suite of services.

Government funding is available to many – but not all – of the organisations. They all rely on donations, and some receive fees for a range of services.

A small amount of funding is provided to some of the organisations through Pancake Day fundraising events.

3.2 Mission

When Jesus shocked the establishment by daring to eat with “sinners” he was making it very clear that service and justice was an integral part of what it meant to practise the Gospel in the community. This has flowed on through the centuries and become an aspect of what it means to be part of the Uniting Church and, before that, its antecedent churches.

In South Australia we have a rich history of serving the community and promoting justice in a variety of ways, especially through the organisations which come under the umbrella of UnitingCare.

Each of the 30 organisations (including emergency relief centres) is committed to serving the wider community as outreaches of the Synod and the members of the Uniting Church in South Australia.

These organisations go about their work and are able to tell their stories which directly reflect the ethos of the Uniting Church.

It might be a husband, separated from his dementia affected wife because of the health requirements of COVID, who needs to be valued and supported. It is reaching out to the lonely and those who feel discarded by society. It is making opportunities for indigenous students to be provided with educational opportunities denied them by the tyranny of distance. It is supporting a student going through the challenges of being transgender, and caring for international students unable to return home who are being separated from their families for more than a year. It is reaching out to tired and distraught nurses and doctors overwhelmed by the demands of the pandemic. It is providing a safer pathway for those who struggle with their mental health

and who need their anxiety eased. It is working to provide housing for people unable to access public housing, or lighting up the day of aged care residents with a poetry reading. It is also working to provide emergency relief for people unable to access support, during a time of growing need in the face of reduced food and human resources. It is collaborating with local councils and other community service organisations to optimise the services available. It also means having a sense of humour, as when one UnitingCare volunteer cleaned up at the end of the day and discovered that an overabundance of suds emerged from the dishwasher, such that the suds went a lot further than intended!

Stories mentioned above were contributed by Helping Hand Aged Care, Prince Alfred College, St Andrew's Hospital, Uniting Communities, UnitingCare Glenelg, UnitingCare Taperoo, UnitingCare Wesley Bowden and UnitingSA.

The stories are significant because they provide a human face to need, as UnitingCare organisations reach out to the community through health, schools and colleges, aged care, community services and emergency relief. Each of them is doing "our work", which is God's work.

Watch as these stories come to life in various communications from our Church during the coming months.

3.3 Changes in Leadership of Organisations

During 2021 and 2022, several organisations have announced changes in leadership.

Several Board chairpersons have completed their maximum tenure and retired, or have chosen to step down. Chairpersons have significant responsibility in directing the culture and mission, as well as financial stability, of organisations. The valuable contributions by chairpersons in leading their Boards and working with the chief executives, principals or coordinators are acknowledged. New chairpersons have been welcomed as they have either joined the Boards or taken on new leadership roles.

Since mid 2021, four organisations have welcomed new chief executives. Mr Dan Aitchison commenced as chief executive of Clayton Church Homes in July and Ms Helen Sheppard joined UnitingCare Wesley Bowden as chief executive in September. For Uniting Country SA and UnitingSA, the previous chief executives (Mrs Anthea Pavy and Ms Libby Craft) retired after having been in their roles for well over a decade, and with the organisations for more than 25 years. Those chief executives left their organisations in good shape to move to a new era under the leadership of Dr Harry Randhawa and Ms Jenny Hall respectively.

During the second half of 2021, two colleges announced leadership changes. Prince Alfred College's headmaster, Mr Bradley Fenner, will retire in June 2022. Mr David Roberts, from Newington College in Sydney, has been appointed as Headmaster from Term 3. Scotch College's principal, Dr John Newton, will return to the United Kingdom at the end of 2022. At the time of writing this report, recruitment was underway for a new principal. The current headmaster and principal have both been at their colleges for about eight

years. Their leadership during the significant challenges of the past two years has seen both colleges achieve positive outcomes, both financially and by their students.

4. Fundraising Appeals

Until the end of 2020, administration and promotion of appeals was carried out by the Events, Communications and Promotions Coordinator. Following the resignation of Julianne Rogers, in 2021 responsibility was temporarily transferred to the Executive Officer's PA.

4.1 Pancake Day

Despite COVID, in 2021 UnitingCare Pancake Day events were held by 61 congregations, organisations and groups. Of those, 22 groups were not associated with the Church. They included public and independent schools, Girl Guides groups, child care centres, craft groups and businesses. Over \$13,700 was raised and distributed among 19 UnitingCare organisations and emergency relief centres to support people in need in SA. About 40% of funds were allocated to specific organisations and centres by donors.

Many groups provided positive feedback about their Pancake Day experiences. Leaders at some primary schools and Guides groups enjoyed teaching students and members about serving others and raising funds to help people in their local and broader communities through UnitingCare.

This year, many groups have once again held Pancake Day events, although some have been disrupted by COVID. The leader of a Girl Guides unit which is a regular supporter of Pancake Day wrote that, due to COVID, only a few Guides were able to attend on the Pancake Day fundraising night. However, the Guides agreed to boost their support by contributing some funds they had previously raised for their unit.

As a result of the departure of the Events, Communications and Promotions Coordinator, in 2021 and 2022 the focus of activities has been on administration of funds, with promotional activity scaled back.

4.2 Christmas Appeal

Funds totalling \$26,000 were received from the 2020 Target Christmas Appeal and allocations were offered to 18 organisations. The Board of one of the UnitingCare organisations, which receives Government support for some of its programs, realised that some other emergency relief centres were really struggling to meet the needs of their local communities. That Board generously decided to donate their allocation of Christmas Appeal funds to other organisations.

In April 2021, Target notified UnitingCare Australia that it was ending the 30 year Christmas Appeal partnership. The appeal had raised over \$4 million in funds as well as thousands of gifts for people in need around Australia, and we appreciate Target's support during those years.

UnitingCare Australia, in consultation with the Synods, decided not to hold a Christmas appeal in 2021.

4.3 UnitingCare Emergency Relief Centre Fund

The UnitingCare SA Emergency Relief Centre Fund was established in May 2020 to help equip Uniting Churches to offer food relief to their local communities.

During 2021, \$15,650 was distributed to emergency relief centres. Most of the funds were allocated to specific centres by the donors. The remaining funds were allocated equally among the centres.

4.4 Synergy

Synergy is a collective buying group, established by the Synod. It combines the buying power of 17 Uniting Church associated organisations in the aged care, health care, community, school and church sectors to obtain the best value for money from suppliers. Synergy currently manages 16 contracts valued at over \$25m per annum. Contracts cover the categories of facilities management, energy, health and aged care services and business services. Aside from procurement and contract management, Synergy also runs events throughout the year to bring member organisations together to network, collaborate and learn.

A review of Synergy's operations began in 2018 and included legal advice about the structure of the operations, as well as drafting of a business plan, charter and more contemporary agreement documents. Following consultation with the Synod Standing Committee and the Resources Board, an external review of the contracts was commissioned. The external reviewer provided positive feedback on the value of Synergy to the Uniting Church and the organisations associated with the Church. This included financial savings through economies of scale as well as time saved by having the contracts centrally negotiated. The Synod Standing Committee and Resources Board also considered intangible aspects such as value of the relationships between the Church and the organisations.

Synergy's operations were transferred to the Resources ministry centre in January 2022. This enables better management of the financial aspects of the contracts. UnitingCare remains the ministry centre which manages the pastoral care aspects of the relationships with the organisations associated with the Church.

In June 2021, Emily Brodie-Tyrrell resigned as Synergy Manager. Emily kindly continued working one day a week until the end of September to finalise the renegotiation and renewal of major contracts.

In November 2021, Paul Wilkins joined UnitingCare as Synergy Procurement Officer on a contract basis to continue managing the contracts. Paul left the role during April 2022 when recruitment was well underway for a new person to manage and administer Synergy. This role is now part of the Resources ministry centre.

5. UnitingCare Australia

UnitingCare Australia is the national body for the UnitingCare network. 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 Synod is usually represented on the UnitingCare Australia Board by the Executive Officer of UnitingCare SA. While that role is vacant, Moderator, Mr Bronte Wilson has been appointed to represent the Synod.

6. Royal Commissions

6.1 National Redress Scheme

The National Redress Scheme was established by the Australian Government in response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Twelve schools, colleges and community service organisations associated with the Uniting Church participate in the National Redress Scheme through UCA Redress Ltd.

Claims lodged through the National Redress Scheme are administered by the Placements and Safe Church ministry centre.

6.2 Aged Care Royal Commission

On behalf of the Assembly, UnitingCare Australia is coordinating the Uniting Church's response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (the Aged Care Royal Commission).

Several South Australian aged care providers which are associated with the Church have joined a national network of Uniting Church aged care providers. They are actively participating in UnitingCare Australia's advocacy.

UnitingCare Australia is a member of the Australian Aged Care Collaboration, and the National Director of UnitingCare Australia, Ms Claerwen Little, is Chair of the AACC.

6.3 Disability Royal Commission

On behalf of the Assembly, UnitingCare Australia is coordinating the Uniting Church's response to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (the Disability Royal Commission).

A Synod Task Group was formed in 2020. Members of the Synod Task Group are Rev Cate Baker, Bruce Ind, Rev Peter McDonald, Steve Roder and Linda Vinall. Rev Dr Tim Hodgson was also a member until his resignation.

Bruce now chairs the Synod Task Group and represents the Synod on the National Task Group. The Synod Task Group met in July 2021. They discussed matters which were referred by the National Task Group, the nexus between the Task Group's work and the Safe Church Unit, and their own experiences in this area.

7. Conclusion

In some ways, the lives of UnitingCare SA and the organisations associated with the Church have seen turmoil during 2021 and 2022. Significant changes have occurred in some organisations and within UnitingCare SA.

In other ways, the lives of UnitingCare SA and the organisations, schools and colleges have continued to roll on – not quite “business as usual”, but achieving their key missions and objectives. While procedures and staffing might have changed, the focus has been firstly on the dignity of those we serve through God’s mission in collaboration with our colleagues, and secondly on carrying out the duties which are most important to our roles.

While we continue to be challenged, we are, nonetheless, rewarded as we serve God and those around us. We give thanks for the continuing commitment of the various bodies which serve the Church through serving the community.

Rev Sue Page

Associate General Secretary

spage@sa.uca.org.au

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Rev Dr Adrian Brown

Interim Liaison Officer, UnitingCare SA

abrown@sa.uca.org.au