

## **“We are the Uniting Church in Australia”**

### **Series One: Our Story**

#### **“Supporting Communities”**

##### **Anthea Pavy**

We're often asked by the community, “Are you a part of the Uniting Church?” and staff are always able to answer that with a “Yes, we are part of the Uniting Church.”

##### **Colleen Geyer**

In 1977 when the church was formed we made a statement to the nation. We would stand for the marginalised and the disadvantaged, we would look and talk about the wise use of our resources, we would stand for issues and talk to governments about those issues if we felt they were important, and I don't see that that is in any way, shape or form against who we are as a movement of God either.

##### **Lin Hatfield-Dodds**

So the Uniting Church has a large presence in community services across the country. We have 40,000 staff whose work is supported by 30,000 volunteers. Close to a 3 billion dollar a year turnover. And we touch the lives and provide services and supports to 1 in 8 Australians in any year. The services that we deliver range from early years to the very old, so we deliver services to children, young people, families, Australians living with a disability, and older Australians in any sense you can imagine.

##### **Anthea Pavy**

So those values around caring for people, around valuing people, respecting people, seeing people develop and reach their full potential, which are, I think, generally seen in the community as the values of the church, are very important.

##### **Colleen Geyer**

What's so amazing about the community services of the church today is that when you go back into their history you'll find that they started mostly in congregations.

##### **Margaret Logan**

I'm a member of Ringwood Uniting Church who have a very strong social justice focus and I decided as I retired I should do some volunteering with Wesley. It gives me satisfaction to the fact that I'm actually trying to help somebody that's less fortunate than I am and put something back into the community where they, it can help them really.

##### **Maidie Graham**

I'm a social worker, that's my training, and I co-ordinate the crisis programs in our homelessness service. The response we provide is by listening to people's stories and then responding in a compassionate way, in a way that's not judgemental and providing people with some real information. And often the options aren't great, because one of the big challenges we have is the lack of affordable housing. And we're dealing with issues of poverty, so people don't really have enough money to survive on.

**Anthea Pavy**

UnitingCare Wesley CountrySA was actually, has its origins right back as far as 1912. We've got sites in Port Lincoln, in Whyalla, in Port Augusta, Cooper Pedy, and then we head off out east to Peterborough, and through to Clare and Kadina. We believe strongly in a compassionate, respectful and just society that will allow people to flourish, and that's the sort of thing that really, a lot of people that come to work for the organisation, they come with those very beliefs, #00:20:44-8# that they want to be a part of something that sees people develop into the best that they can possibly be and the best that they want to be.

**Ruth O'Grady**

We have 176 volunteers in the agency and they're able to do a variety of tasks.

**Bernardo Luteria**

There's different things I do. I cut up old clothings. If they're not good enough to be put out in the shop for sale I'll cut them up as rags and bag them up and sell them.

**Larry Jeffries**

There's a high school group that comes here, and they are currently building a dirt circuit car. It's a little bit of an incentive to get them to re-engage back at schools, that works fine. There's quite a huge diverse group, like there's probably, from 15 to, I think the oldest person here is nearly 90.

**Maidie Graham**

I think it's always a privilege to hear people's stories and hear about the ways that people have been resilient in some really difficult situations and how they've got through all of that. So it's not just "I want to feel good by doing good things with people who are struggling or disadvantaged" but we're in a position where we can use that information to advocate for some change.

**Colleen Geyer**

What I love about it is that we are committed to being authentically a movement of God in this country of Australia.

**Maidie Graham**

My image of God is a God who does, is standing there with the people who are the-most disadvantaged in our community, wherever they are, whatever form that takes. And its part of the work the Uniting Church does and I guess is the way the church shows how it cares for people in the community is often through its agencies

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