

The Advocate

Newsletters for supporters and clients of UnitingCare Harrison

Edition 1 2017



Supporting people to live the life they choose under the NDIS...

UnitingCare Harrison assists people to take charge of their own lives.

We have been doing this in Melbourne's Eastern region for more than four decades.

In this current economic climate and rental market, more people than ever are coming to us.

Many of these people are already homeless and in crisis when they walk through our doors.

The generous support of individuals, organisations and corporate supporters enables us to offer both crisis and longer-term assistance to those in need.

Please support our mission with a donation.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a new way of providing individualised support for people with a disability. The NDIS will change the way that disabilities are funded.

Since 1 July 2016 the NDIS has been rolled out progressively across the state.

UnitingCare Harrison will continue to provide much needed services and support to assist people to pursue their goals and aspirations for independence under the NDIS. All of our programs assist with the development of independent living skills.

An example of the fantastic outcomes that can be achieved are Craig and Josh. They were strangers when they embarked on the Individual Development Program (IDP). Both men had been living at home with their families and had no plans about where to live, or with whom, once they had completed the program. As soon as Craig and Josh met they were instant buddies. Both men share common lifestyles, each has a part-time job and must travel to work and within the community independently. When the program finished, Craig and Josh knew they wanted to live independently in a share house together, in Craig's words, to "live like I want to" and put into practice their newly developed independent living skills. Their families supported the idea and advocated with a local real estate agent for the men to take the next big step and obtain a private rental unit close to shops and public transport.

They were excited to move into their new rental property with a third person from the community. Four nights a week Harrison staff support Craig, Josh and their new housemate with menu planning and cooking, shopping, cleaning and

laundry tasks. Once a fortnight, a Harrison support worker provides opportunities for the men to participate in leisure activities, which includes bush walks, swimming, golf and going to see bands play.

This can be the reality for so many people under the NDIS and UCH Disability Services will provide the support to enable them to do it. People will also need support to find their own housing, as the NDIS doesn't provide this for 94% of the people eligible for NDIS packages. Long-term accommodation for people with a disability is a significant problem.

UnitingCare Harrison has joined with Metro Access City of Knox to establish the Eastern Disability Housing Network as a forum for the exchange of ideas regarding housing options for people with a disability. People with disabilities, their families and service providers are welcome to attend our bimonthly meetings.

For more information about UnitingCare Harrison Disability Services or the EDHN, please contact Jenny Tomlin, Disability Services Manager, on 03 9871 8700.

If you would like more information regarding the NDIS in Victoria, please go to the NDIS website at: <https://ndis.gov.au/about-us/our-sites/VIC.html>





From Sharon's desk

Welcome to our first Edition of the Advocate for 2017. It never ceases to surprise me how fast time passes. It seems like only yesterday hampers were packed and donations of food and gifts were being prepared by the UnitingCare Harrison team of staff and volunteers in readiness for Christmas.

We are forever grateful to our volunteers and donors for supporting us in the work we do. In 2016 we received a \$40,000 grant from SHARE and donations of food and money from members of the community which enabled us to provide food assistance, bedding, hygiene packs and crisis accommodation to almost 3000 people who came to our Agency for emergency relief. In this edition you can read about some of the fantastic contributions made during the lead up to Christmas by community donors, corporate volunteers and our Youth Homelessness Team. We also showcase what can be achieved through the support of our Disability programs and our vision for the future under NDIS.

2017 is shaping up to be a year of growth and change for UnitingCare Harrison as we continue our work, look for new opportunities to support people and join forces with 21 other UnitingCare Agencies to become Uniting.

We will continue to keep you informed of important changes as they happen. We welcome any questions you may have. Please contact us if you want to:

- speak with a UnitingCare Harrison staff member on 03 9871 8700
- visit www.unitingcareharrison.org.au for updates
- email enquiries@harrison.org.au with questions
- write to us at PO Box 4503 Wantirna South VIC 3152.

We are grateful for your ongoing support and look forward to continuing our work.



Sharon Wolstenholme
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Thank you

On a Thursday morning in late November a team of enthusiastic and hard-working managers from the **Commonwealth Bank – Eastern Region** arrived ready for a day's work to transform our grey, drab, concrete warehouse into a fun, inviting and magical "Santa's Cave" for parents to visit.

The Executive team from the Commonwealth Bank had been looking forward to the day since August when it was scheduled in for their Corporate Volunteering commitment. The team excelled, not only on the day, but with a follow up large donation of \$1,750 from a fundraising event.

We say a huge thank you to the staff from The Commonwealth Bank, as we were able to make Christmas so much brighter for many parents and children in eastern Melbourne – TOP EFFORT!



The Christmas Appeal Wrap Up

We were able to provide and assist over 530 local families with the UnitingCare Target Christmas Appeal. Our great team of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers and staff worked over the 4 weeks in December in Santa's Cave spreading some joy, goodwill and supporting parents going through a tough time.

We had some amazing examples of the local community and businesses getting on board for The Christmas Appeal. One such group, Chicks for Charity, "adopted" some families, (our clients) and made up stunning hampers full of toys, gifts and vouchers for the whole family. When these hampers were delivered to our office it bought tears to the eyes of two of our Support Workers as they knew what it would mean to their clients. The families who received the Christmas hampers were "in shock and speechless" and one young lady "was over the moon" with her special present - they simply could not believe that another local family who didn't know them could be so generous and caring.

Youth Having A Christmas Ball and What's on in 2017

As the New Year ticks past February it's timely to reflect how Uniting Care Harrison's Youth Homelessness and Adolescent Support programs supported some of our communities most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people during 2016.

Traditionally, Christmas is a difficult time of year for our young people due to limited family support, social isolation and reduced ability to connect with the community.

Last Christmas Uniting Care Harrison (UCH) aimed to reduce this seasonal anxiety and sadness by introducing new activities to our programs designed to build resilience, increase confidence and reduce the incidence of social isolation.

This year our team came up with some new ways to celebrate a year of achievements with our clients.

Our Youth Homelessness clients were invited to "Bubble Soccer"- an activity where participants were inside giant rubber "Zorb" balls, followed by lunch. Our Adolescent clients attended the "High Ropes" course in Belgrave. This involved completing challenging climbing activities high amongst the trees. The Young Parents group were treated to a day at Chesterfield Farm to learn about farm life. The children, their parents and one particular staff member enjoyed tractor rides and feeding the animals. The day's activities concluded with a BBQ lunch complete with bonbons, Christmas hats and cheesy jokes.

What was pleasing at each activity was the commitment of young people to "have a go" at activities which often challenged each participant. It was encouraging to watch young people connecting to community activities, meeting people and discovering strategies to overcome adversity - skills that can be transferred into everyday living.

We have received very positive feedback from our days and look forward to designing more activities to promote healthy lifestyles, positive wellbeing and improving links to the community and others.

LOOKING FORWARD - we are geared up and ready to go for a big 2017.

We look forward to working with young "at risk" people, families who are struggling and young people who have nowhere to call home.

Our aim for 2017 is to continue to improve educational, employment and skill-development opportunities for young people, whilst improving their access to services and the community and ensuring they have a voice.

We aim to address key health issues, promote healthy eating, holistic wellbeing, develop independent living skills and ultimately reduce welfare reliance as we move through the year.

As always, UCH relies on generous donations to provide items such as fresh fruit, bread and basic essentials to youth households.

Moreover UCH consistently aims to provide best practice outcomes, innovations, incentives and out-of-the-box thinking to ensure we can provide our young people and adolescents with the tools and resources needed to thrive.



Thank you

We would like to acknowledge and thank our supporters over the last few months.

Bakers Delight - Wantirna Mall
Bayswater South Primary School
Billanook Primary School - Montrose
BMX Club - Knox
Brumbys - Studfield
Bushy Park Produce
Centrelink staff - Boronia
Chicks for Charity
Commonwealth Bank of Australia
Croydon Hills Primary School
Croydon North Uniting Church
Curves Gym - Ferntree Gully
Epworth Eastern - Box Hill
Ferntree Gully Uniting Church
Foodbank
Grill'd - Knox
Heathmont Inter-Church Help
Heathmont Uniting Church – The Empty Christmas Tree
IGA - Wantirna Mall
Kool Kidz on Wellington – Rowville
Lilly Patches - Boronia
Lowes – Knox
Maroondah Chiropractic
Rotary – Knox
Second Bite
SHARE Appeal
Simba Global
SJ Display Group
Target - Eastland
Target - Knox
Wesley Uniting Church Knitters - Box Hill

Thank you

to members of the **Knox BMX Club**, who generously donated presents and toys for the Christmas Appeal, which went towards assisting over 530 local families in need.



Congratulations Joyce—100 years!

On Thursday 15th December, about 30 of Joyce Evans' friends from Sandringham Uniting Church gathered to celebrate her 100th birthday. Joyce lives at Wesley Grange Village adjacent to the Church, where a celebratory lunch was held that day. It was prepared by a few members of the family, who also helped serve. Amongst the attendees were the Church Minister and the Deputy Mayor of Bayside Council, who both gave appreciative speeches and congratulated Joyce on her achievement at reaching the century. Joyce gave a spirited reply and thanked everyone for attending.

Several days later she was the honoured guest at a lunch at Cerberus Restaurant, Black Rock with her 42 descendants, and swapped many nostalgic stories of the past with the family.

Congratulations and Happy Birthday Joyce, from everyone at UnitingCare Harrison.

Hear About Us

Our team of speakers have been busy visiting churches and community groups across Melbourne to share stories of the lives changed through the work of UnitingCare Harrison.

We would enjoy coming to speak to your group or workplace about the work we do and the difference it makes to our local community.

If your group wants to hear about the work of UnitingCare Harrison, please contact us on (03) 9871 8700 or email enquiries@harrison.org.au.

Volunteer With Us

Our amazing team of volunteers are an integral part of UnitingCare Harrison.

They are involved in a diverse range of activities. Nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something to aid us in our mission.

Please consider offering your time or skills to help us to assist people to take charge of their own lives.

If you are interested in volunteering opportunities, please call Jane Davoren on (03) 9871 8700.



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Would you like to make an online donation?

Visit
www.givenow.com.au/unitingcareharrison

All Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

A receipt will be issued.