

# Uniting For Homelessness

**An innovative collaboration for  
Western Australia's homeless people**



## Introducing *Uniting for Homelessness*

An innovative new project to support homeless people in their journey from homelessness to jobs and sustained permanent housing is being implemented in Perth.

***Uniting for Homelessness*** will, for the first time in Western Australia, introduce a collaborative, cross-sector approach to transitioning people from homelessness, into education, training and on to lasting employment. It aims to provide homeless people with a sustainable pathway out of homelessness and ensure that positive changes in their lives are enduring.

***Uniting for Homelessness*** aims to fill a significant gap in the current system of addressing homelessness. There are substantial resources already being invested in immediate issues facing homeless people in Perth, such as providing crisis accommodation, support for health problems and meeting hunger. However, the chronic poverty that characterises homelessness and the cycle of moving into and out of homelessness will not end in a sustained way for many without opportunities for education, training for those without qualifications and, most importantly, opportunities for sustained rewarding employment and the income that flows from that.

Individual organisations working in the homelessness field in Perth have recognised that they need to work together and establish a broader partnership, collaborating with education and training providers, and with business and social enterprises to meet the current gaps in the homelessness pathway to employment. They have created a collective approach that works across sectors and organisational boundaries and are now developing the infrastructure and seeking the capacity support to implement the bold plan.

***Uniting for Homelessness*** has adopted the Collective Impact framework as one that provides for structured collaborative action, complements existing support programs and designs tailor-made solutions specific to individual needs. It is based on a partnerships approach that sees people and organisations pooling resources to enact the changes that are critically needed in Western Australia.

The ***Uniting for Homelessness*** approach will result in skills development, jobs creation, employment for homeless people and procurement and work placement opportunities for business, as well as

exciting, socially meaningful recruitment options for new and existing social enterprises and small businesses.

Through a new way of working together, ***Uniting for Homelessness*** will make a real difference in strengthening the resilience and inclusiveness of our state.

## What is homelessness?

Homelessness is more than the man sitting on the footpath holding a cardboard sign, or the youth congregating under bridges with nowhere to go. Homelessness can be loosely grouped into three areas:

***Primary homelessness.*** All people without conventional accommodation: people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter.

***Secondary homelessness.*** People who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. For example, emergency or transitional accommodation, temporary stays with other households, or short-term boarding house accommodation (for 12 weeks or less).

***Tertiary homelessness.*** People who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis (13 weeks or longer) and whose accommodation situation is below the minimum community standard of a small self-contained flat.

## What does homelessness look like in Australia?

According to the 2011 Census:

- ❖ There are more than 10,000 homeless people in Western Australia, contributing to a total of 105,237 people classified as "homeless" in Australia.
- ❖ Primary homelessness (see above, *What is homelessness?*) accounts for six per cent of homeless people in Australia, with 17 per cent staying temporarily with friends or relatives, 17 per cent staying in boarding houses and 20 per cent in supported accommodation such as shelters, refuges and hostels.
- ❖ 60 per cent of homeless people are under 35 years of age.

In May 2014, Perth Registry Week, coordinated by Ruah in collaboration with other community and government partners, sought out those sleeping rough on the streets on a given night, surveying 168 rough sleepers. Of these, 118 were male and 41 of the 168 were aged 24 years and younger. For those aged 24 or younger, 3.2 years was the average number of years spent homeless, while for individuals aged 25 years and above, six years was the average length of time.

## Registry Week

The Registry Week concept was developed by Common Ground USA, an organisation that addresses chronic homelessness by engaging individuals who face the most difficult barriers to housing stability, and providing a range of housing and support services to end individuals' homelessness permanently. In Australia, the Australian Common Ground Alliance is informed by these practices and supports Registry Weeks in Perth, Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Hobart and Townsville.

Registry Week is a methodology to develop a registry of the needs of rough sleepers by identifying individuals who are frequently or permanently living on the street. This enables prioritisation of housing and support.

More than one-fifth of homeless people in Western Australia point to unemployment and financial difficulties as a key source of difficulty (Homelessness Australia, 2013). Currently, less than 20 per cent of homeless people find part-time or full-time employment after they leave support.

## Why is it time for a change?

Homeless agencies around Perth are doing a better job than ever and providing support to those in need. Homelessness is a complex issue often involving broken family relationships, poor education, violence, addictions, self-esteem issues and unemployment. No one organisation can effectively or holistically address the myriad of issues experienced by a homeless person.

And for all this complexity in the problems facing homeless people, what we do know is that, for many, the cycle of homelessness will not be resolved until sustained employment is achieved. While short-term issues are being resolved through the comprehensive work of agencies and not-for-profit

organisations, assisting people in exiting from homelessness indefinitely requires a new coordinated response.

***Uniting for Homelessness*** recognises that the “same old” approaches won’t work. Innovative new solutions must be devised and they must reflect the views and expertise of the major services operating in the homelessness space, as well as complementing existing programs. More than that, ***Uniting for Homelessness*** recognises that it is time for homeless support services to partner with business and social enterprises and with education and training organisations.

Just as a rowboat will steer off course unless all rowers are pulling together, sustainable solutions for homelessness will only work when the relevant sectors, organisations and individuals work in a collaborative manner, contributing their individual expertise to address homelessness together.

Western Australian civic society is in an exciting time of change, growth and innovation. New approaches to social funding, entrepreneurship and collaborative practices are gaining momentum. Lessons from the United Kingdom’s Big Society, the introduction of social impact investment models and the rise of social enterprises are all contributing to a new social fabric in the state, paving the way for addressing entrenched social issues with a new tool kit.

## Overview of the model

***Uniting for Homelessness*** is a new approach that has been co-designed by members of the United Way WA Homelessness Coalition to find sustainable solutions for the complex issue that is homelessness.

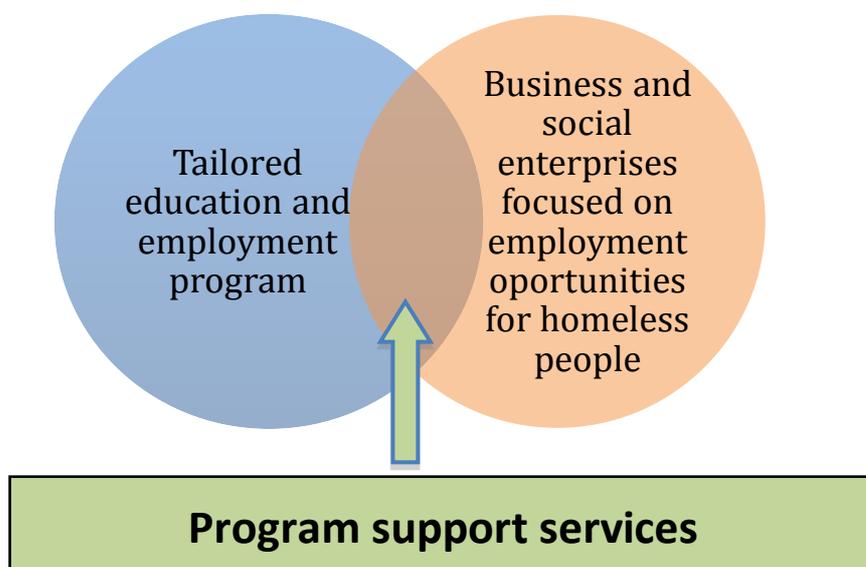
This approach recognises that:

1. Singular or individual interventions will not bring about lasting, positive change. Agencies or organisations can be limited by their resources or mandate. Only through structured **collaboration** and genuine cross-sector work can intractable social problems such as homelessness be addressed.
2. Disadvantage and social exclusion are steeped in **complexity**. In general there is never one reason behind poverty and homelessness, but rather a number of factors, often inter-related. However, work and the income that flows from it is fundamental.

The Coalition has determined that the best way forward is to transition homeless people into education, training, and on to employment through a tailor made program that focuses on employment outcomes, which includes partnerships with business and social enterprises.

**Uniting for Homelessness** will work with homeless people who are currently supported by social services but who do not have tenure of housing, to identify education, training and employment opportunities suitable for their individual circumstance. In the first instance, the education and training will be done through the Central Institute of Technology as a pathway to assist them to secure employment, particularly within social enterprises, corporate business and small businesses. Participants who are employment ready will be assisted and supported directly into employment opportunities. It is envisaged that a number of existing social enterprises will join the Coalition as partners, and there is opportunity to develop new social enterprises.

Underpinning this approach will be specialised staff who will work along the spectrum to provide all of the support required to maximise success for both individuals and businesses and social enterprises.



*The Uniting for Homelessness model*

The model reflects strategies identified in the Federal Government's White Paper on Homelessness (*The Road Home, 2008*), which set out a strategic agenda for reducing homelessness to 2020. It called for Australia's efforts to be 'urgent, as well as sustained'. The strategy was in response to

feedback that the complexity and diversity of homelessness demanded a comprehensive, collaborative and innovative response in order to make a real difference.

## The Australian Government White Paper on Homelessness

The White Paper, released by then Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP and former Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek MP, set headline goals of halving homelessness and offering supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who need it, by 2020. Interim national and state/territory targets were set to 2013, and a broad range of programs and actions proposed.

These related to:

- **Turning off the tap:** a focus on strategies to prevent those at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless in the first place. Those at increased risk include older people in housing stress, women and children leaving violence, Indigenous Australians and people leaving state care.
- **Improving and expanding services:** improving the service that those experiencing homelessness receive from both mainstream agencies and from agencies that deliver services specifically to homeless people. Agencies will also become more integrated to make it easier for homeless people to get all the services they need without having to repeat their story over and over again.

## Education and Training

The tailored education and employment program will be an individualised, person-centred approach that combines education, training, and assistance with pre-employment preparation, work experience, cultural training and on-the-job support, with the goal of the attainment of meaningful employment.

## Why look to social enterprises and businesses for employment?

The identification of social enterprises as potential partners and employers recognises their increasing relevance in our society and is a strategic approach, given the social mandate of most social enterprises. Businesses, too, are consistently using social procurement to support enterprises involving homeless people, and this is an area of growing relevance in the private sector.

Social enterprises:

- a. Are led by an economic, social, cultural, or environmental mission consistent with a public or community benefit
- b. Trade to fulfill their mission
- c. Derive a substantial portion of their income from trade
- d. Reinvest the majority of their profit/surplus in the fulfillment of their mission.

In Perth, the number of social enterprises is consistently increasing. Examples include Mad Cap Café, run by people living with mental illnesses, Space Cubed, a co-working, collaboration and innovation space on St Georges Terrace and the Northbridge eatery 1905, employing people with a mental illness or disability.

Encouragement of social entrepreneurship in Perth is on the rise. The School for Social Entrepreneurs opened in Perth late last year, with the first alumni from the Accelerator Program graduating in May.

A new breed of businessperson is extending the purpose of profitable, sound business from a traditional economic focus to an innovative vehicle for tackling entrenched social issues and contributing positively to civic society. It is expected that in coming years, the social enterprise sector in Western Australia will continue to grow and foster unique, niche ideas for meaningful social change.

### **Program support services**

Specialised staff will work across the whole program to provide the necessary supports to maximise the opportunities for success of the individuals and enterprises. The program will assess the needs of the individual and develop a tailor made program that will work towards the individuals desired employment goals. The program will look at whether the individual is work ready, in which case it will support the individual into employment, remaining involved for a period of time after they obtain employment to support both the individual and the employee. If the individual requires pre-employment support, then the individual will be supported through education and training opportunities with the view to gaining meaningful employment.

## What will success look like?

Within three years, *Uniting for Homelessness* will have:

1. Developed a successful model of work, providing homeless people with a pathway to sustainable employment.
2. Verified and assessed the model during Year One of the project.
3. Successfully engaged with identified homeless people.
4. Provided homeless people with appropriate and sustainable employment opportunities. [Up to 50% of primary homelessness participants in sustainable employment after one year on the program].
5. Up to 50 per cent of secondary homelessness participants in permanent housing after completion of the program.
6. Developed successful and ongoing partnerships with a considerable number of existing social enterprises in Perth.
7. Explored the potential for creating new, dedicated social enterprises to not only provide employment opportunities for participants in the project, but potentially provide an ongoing source of income to ensure sustainability of the project.
8. Explored options for ongoing funding.

## What else is happening in the homelessness 'space'?

*Uniting for Homelessness* is a new initiative that offers an approach unique to the sector. It does not seek to be a crisis response model, and will complement existing programs.

In Perth, the *Street to Home* program provides support for rough sleepers and people with complex needs. A range of agencies assists with the provision of outreach and housing support workers to help those in need to obtain and sustain independent accommodation and work through health and emotional issues. *Street to Home* will be a primary referral source for ***Uniting for Homelessness***.

In March this year, the Foyer Oxford project was officially opened in Leederville. Foyer Oxford will provide housing for 98 young people, including 24 parents and their children, in a purpose-built building on the Central Institute of Technology campus.

Elsewhere, homelessness approaches are following a Collective Impact framework. For example, in Sydney the *90 Homes for 90 Lives* initiative in Woolloomooloo is working to solve homelessness in an area which, at the time the project started in 2010, had the highest concentration of rough sleepers in Sydney. This was despite the significant number of organisations providing services in the neighborhood. With initial thinking driven by United Way Australia and the City of Sydney, *90 Homes for 90 Lives* was developed to include a group of cross-sector stakeholders with a shared interest in providing a permanent exit from homelessness.

Other initiatives, such as the annual Vinnies CEO Sleepout, help to raise awareness of the issue of homelessness.

## Background to collaboration

In 2012, United Way WA decided to start a conversation around what it perceived to be a glaring gap in the pursuit of solutions to homelessness – the transition of homeless people to education and employment.

*“We could see that the problem was not just the fact that people were homeless, but that nothing was being done to address the longer-term issue – getting them into jobs. A lot of effort was going into the housing issue ... but without a job and a source of income, housing becomes an ongoing challenge.”*

- Sue Dixon, Chief Executive Officer United Way WA

The eagerness of various organisations within the private, not-for-profit and academic sectors to join United Way in addressing this gap resulted in the formation of the *United Way WA Homeless Coalition*, a collective made up of representatives from:

- ❖ United Way WA
- ❖ Bankwest
- ❖ Herbert Smith Freehills
- ❖ The UWA Business School Centre for Social Impact (UWA CSI)
- ❖ Ruah Community Services
- ❖ Foundation Housing Ltd
- ❖ St Bartholomew’s House
- ❖ St Vincent de Paul Society
- ❖ HOPE Inc
- ❖ Central Institute of Technology

In its first 18 months of working together, the Coalition collectively contributed more than 2000 hours towards discussing, researching and co-creating solutions for homelessness. Seed funding was provided by Coalition partners and an experienced sector consultant was recruited.

Collective decision-making was an integral part of the process, particularly around consolidating which area of homelessness should be tackled by the project.

The Coalition's Strategic Business Plan has identified a number of initiatives that will see the project functional by 2015. Various committees within the Coalition are working on issues such as governance, funding and employment strategies.

The three phases of ***Uniting for Homelessness*** include:

1. Development of the approach
2. Implementation
3. Ongoing funding

With development of the model now in place, the Coalition is progressing with implementation, with the first year of the project about to commence.

The group sees the Collective Impact framework as being an ideal model on which to base its work.

## The Collective Impact framework

Collective Impact is a term coined by American researchers John Kania and Mark Kramer in a paper published in the Stanford Social Innovation Review in 2011 to describe social change that is characterised by a genuinely collaborative and coordinated approach.

Based on five core principles, it is a proven framework for fostering long-term, measurable, large-scale social change. The five principles are:

1. A common agenda
2. Mutually reinforcing activities
3. A shared measurement platform
4. Continuous communication
5. A backbone or secretariat to coordinate the project

***“Collective Impact occurs when organisations from different sectors agree to solve a specific social problem using a common agenda, aligning their efforts and using common measures of success.”***

**- Kania and Kramer, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011**

The success of Collective Impact is based on the premise that individual interventions are often not enough to tackle society's wicked problems. The framework has been adopted throughout the world to address issues such as poverty, obesity, education challenges, early childhood development, mental health and environmental degradation.

In complex issues such as these, solutions are generally emergent and can evolve through collective decision-making and iterative processes forged through using measurement as a feedback tool.

In Collective Impact projects that have been successful – that is, brought about long-term, positive social change – there have generally been one or more pre-conditions in place before the project was initiated. These include: urgency for change, strong leadership and adequate funding. In Western Australia, Collective Impact WA has found that a collaboration mindset and measurement literacy are also important pre-conditions.

The United Way WA Homelessness Coalition recognised the urgency for change – that existing programs were not creating sustainable pathways out of poverty and it was visibly increasing in WA; harnessed the leadership being shown by Coalition members and is developing a sustainable funding model. The Coalition is committed to collaboration, with representatives from across different sectors sharing their expertise and resources towards the common goal. The group understands the emergent and complex nature of this partnership and the need to further develop measurement platforms and literacy to continually guide the collaboration.

In developing and implementing *Uniting for Homelessness*, the following principles apply:

Collective Impact Framework	
<p><b>1. A common agenda</b></p>	<p><i>All participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions*.</i></p> <p>The Coalition worked together to identify a common goal for tackling homelessness in the Perth CBD: <b>Helping homeless people transition from homelessness to employment.</b></p> <p>The vision of <i>Uniting for Homelessness</i> is: To create rewarding, sustained employment for homeless people within an 8km distance of the CBD of Perth.</p>
<p><b>2. Mutually reinforcing activities</b></p>	<p><i>Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.*</i></p> <p><i>Uniting for Homelessness</i> sees complementary, coordinated and non-duplicative programs and services providing: specialist homelessness and other support, training, education, employment (social enterprises, small businesses), resources (government, business, philanthropists), and governance/management (Coalition, backbone organisation).</p>
<p><b>3. Shared measurement platform</b></p>	<p><i>Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.*</i></p> <p>The Centre for Social Impact at The University of Western Australia is the Research and Evaluation Partner of <i>Uniting for Homelessness</i> and will provide resources to support the ongoing monitoring of the project and progress towards goals.</p>
<p><b>4. Continuous communication</b></p>	<p><i>Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build</i></p>

	<p><i>trust, assure mutual activities, and create common motivation.*</i></p> <p><i>Uniting for Homelessness</i> will build relationships and trust within the project and with broader collaborators through consistent and credible communication.</p>
<p><b>5. Backbone or secretariat</b></p>	<p><i>Creating and managing Collective Impact requires a separate organisation with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organisations and agencies.*</i></p> <p><i>Uniting for Homelessness</i> is an independent entity that will be the backbone for the project. It will keep the focus clear, harness the energies and resources of the various partners, ensure the project is working towards goals and act as the repository for all collective information and data.</p>

*\*Adapted from Collective Impact WA information*

## Current collaborators

The Coalition has brought together the community and private sectors to share ideas, experiences, expertise, skills and resources.

Bankwest and Herbert Smith Freehills represent the private sector and have provided seed funding and in-kind support, while United Way WA, Foundation Housing, St Barts, Ruah Community Services, St Vincent de Paul Society and HOPE represent the community and social services sector in their provision of support. The Centre for Social Impact (UWA) and Central Institute of Technology provide a tertiary voice and resourcing.

Going forward, all collaborators will continue to explore options for contributing their resources. For example, Bankwest is assessing models for utilising staff in 'mock interviews' for program participants. Herbert Smith Freehills is providing ongoing pro bono legal support for the development of the documentation pertaining to the legal status and structure of the project.

## Future collaborators

The project is now actively seeking:

- ❖ Social enterprises and small businesses to provide ongoing employment opportunities for people experiencing homelessness
- ❖ Partners (such as businesses, philanthropists and governments) to join the collaboration to provide funding and resources
- ❖ Business and government: include social procurement and employment placements
- ❖ Education providers, such as Central Institute of Technology, to explore training options.

Organisations that join the ***Uniting for Homelessness*** collaboration have the opportunity to be part of a leading edge Collective Impact project that recognises that *together as one, we are greater than we are as one.*

## United Way

United Way is one of the world's leading community organisations. It is a not-for-profit, non-religious and non-political network of approximately 4000 affiliates operating in 46 countries and territories. Each branch operates independently, according to local needs.

United Way recruits people and organisations from across Australia who bring passion, expertise

For more information

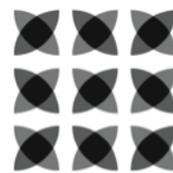
**Ms Sue Dixon**

**Chief Executive Officer, United Way WA**

**Ph: (08) 9440 4800**

**E: [Sdixon@unitedwaywa.com.au](mailto:Sdixon@unitedwaywa.com.au)**

*Uniting for Homelessness* is an innovative collaboration involving:



**CENTRE  
for SOCIAL  
IMPACT**



## Support for the first year of the project:

### An opportunity for collaborators

#### Overview

*Uniting for Homelessness* provides a unique opportunity for the community, private and public sectors to join together to tackle an issue that affects the resilience of our society and challenges our notions of inclusiveness.

By developing and implementing pathways out of homelessness that are based on the tangible and sustainable frameworks of education and employment, *Uniting for Homelessness* will significantly improve outcomes for some of Western Australia's most marginalised citizens.

This can only be achieved through individuals and organisations working collaboratively towards a common goal.

*Uniting for Homelessness* is a chance for people to come together in one of Western Australia's earliest and most innovative Collective Impact models and join a journey that will yield dividends for all involved.

#### Proposal

*Uniting for Homelessness* is seeking funding for the first year of implementation of the project.

Over the next 12 months, the project will work with a group of homeless people in Perth who are currently supported by social services but who do not have tenure of housing, to identify education and training opportunities suitable for their individual circumstance.

Simultaneously, the project will work with social enterprises and small businesses to identify and

develop suitable roles for program participants, and start to move participants into employment. Participants will be fully supported by the project throughout this journey. Not-for-profit organisations will continue to provide relevant case managers and social workers.

First-year funding of \$300,000 is required to support implementation of the model. This will enable the further establishment of the service program, employment of staff (two vocational facilitators and a part-time coordinator) to facilitate support services for program participants, and development of evaluation mechanisms.

## Why get involved?

***Uniting for Homelessness*** will provide partners with an opportunity to be involved in a collaborative social impact initiative in which resources are pooled to achieve greater leverage; risks are managed and shared; and outcomes are tangible and measurable.

Further, partners have the opportunity to:

- ❖ Contribute in a meaningful way to addressing one of WA society's most pressing challenges
- ❖ Work in collaboration with leading thinkers and organisations in this space
- ❖ Play a role in creating social innovation
- ❖ Realise social benefits that are sustainable
- ❖ Be part of one of Western Australia's most exciting Collective Impact initiatives
- ❖ Assist in developing the growing sector of Social Enterprises.

Helping people out of poverty and into a position where they are productive members of our community is everyone's civic responsibility. Together we can work to build a society that is committed, caring and inclusive.

## Monitoring and evaluation

The Centre for Social Impact at The University of Western Australia is the Research and Evaluation Partner of *Uniting for Homelessness* and will provide resources to support the ongoing monitoring of the project and progress towards goals.

## Reporting and communications

*Uniting for Homelessness* is committed to transparent and consistent communications, and will provide to partners quarterly reports about the project, reporting on:

- ❖ Progress against goals
- ❖ Milestones
- ❖ Issues management
- ❖ Financial spend
- ❖ Involvement of new collaborators
- ❖ Sector developments

A report will be provided at the end of the first year of implementation, and this will include plans for continuing the project.

## Governance

*Uniting for Homelessness* is a company limited by guarantee, independent of its members and with a constitution currently in development. The organisation will be governed by a Board, which will have oversight by the United Way WA Homelessness Coalition.

## For more information

**Ms Sue Dixon**

**Chief Executive Officer, United Way WA**

**Ph: (08) 9440 4800**

**E: [Sdixon@unitedwaywa.com.au](mailto:Sdixon@unitedwaywa.com.au)**

*"Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development."*

- Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General United Nations