

Empowering families and communities.

Uniting has a long and proud history of investing in programs that support and empower children, young people, First Australians, and socially and economically excluded communities, to improve their engagement with society, their opportunities and their outcomes.

Our Children, Youth and Families (CYF) directorate delivers an extensive and sensitive portfolio of services encompassing early learning, family restoration and parenting skills programs, youth housing support, employment services, out-of-home care, and counselling and mediation. This year, we've continued to work in close collaboration with government and local communities across NSW and the ACT, to give early and proactive support where it's needed most.

100+
targeted programs

900
team members

36,266
clients

Highlights

- CYF is an integral part of the ACT Government's A Step Up for Our Kids program, a 5-year strategy responding to rising demand for out-of-home care places, and the challenges around attracting and retaining foster carers. In 2018/19, program evaluation demonstrated a significant increase in the stability of our out-of-home care placements.
- We delivered a pilot program in collaboration with Their Futures Matter and the Department of Communities and Justice, to ensure that children whose families have child protection concerns don't fall through the cracks, and access the support they need.
- We received new funding to increase the number of supported playgroups for families living in and around Liverpool and Fairfield.
- Uniting led the Fiver for a Farmer initiative to assist our employees to generously donate and support Western NSW farmers struggling with the impacts of drought.
- Uniting Central Coast Permanency Support Program was the first of 14 family preservation packages to become fully operational this year.



Newpin

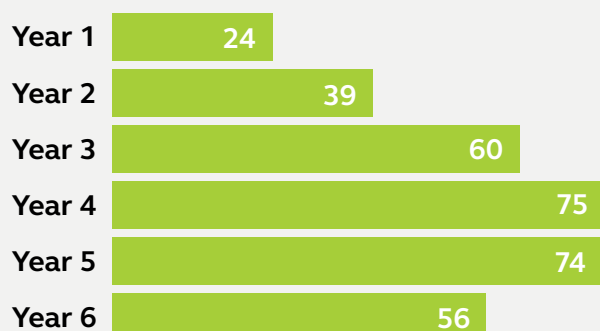
Courage to change together

This year marked the 21st anniversary of Uniting Newpin, a program that takes a therapeutic approach to repairing and strengthening parent-child relationships, so that children can be safely returned to their birth parents. It was also the sixth year of operation under the Newpin Social Benefit Bond (SBB), our financial partnership with the NSW Government and Social Ventures Australia.



Learn more: uniting.org/newpin-bond

Number of NSW children referred to Newpin returned home (per year)



Psychological safety matters

Uniting CYF has a strong safety focus, with many unique methods in place to support its diverse casework practice across a large geographical area. The physical and psychological safety of all children and young people is always paramount.

The Long Jetty Meeting Place

A collaboration between Uniting Church volunteers and Uniting employees to address social and economic disadvantage, The Long Jetty Meeting Place program operates as a safe space to build on community strengths and bring about positive changes that improve local residents' quality of life.

In 2018/19, more than 450 people received support that included assistance completing National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) applications, food and hygiene packs, clothing and blankets for the homeless, free courses and workshops to upskill the community, and advocating for locals on affordable housing options.

“I live alone and I just sat at home all day. Now I have a reason to go out.”

– Anne, a regular visitor to The Long Jetty Meeting Place who now works as a volunteer for the program

Did you know?

Uniting Doorways for Youth works with local community housing providers to offer transitional accommodation for 16 to 25-year-olds on the NSW Central Coast, in Dubbo, and in the Macarthur Region.

Referrals to Doorways come from the Uniting Church, Headspace, juvenile justice centres, drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities, and schools.

2,062 people were supported to remain in, or find, secure housing through the Doorways program in 2018/19



Find out more about our extensive services for children, youth and families at uniting.org

Loving homes and skills for life.

Our teams work alongside the Department of Communities and Justice through the Uniting Permanency Support Program (PSP).

We support more than 300 children and young people in NSW, aiming to give them a loving home and living skills - either with their parents, extended family or kin, or through guardianship.

The PSP is one of the most significant changes to the child protection and out-of-home care system in decades, bringing together government and non-government partners in a new vision to support permanency and restoration wherever possible. The PSP focuses on safety, wellbeing and positive life outcomes for the people we serve.

Evidence demonstrates that a permanent, safe and loving home gives a child or young person a better chance at leading an independent, successful life as an adult.

Uniting Permanency Support Program goals

↓ **reduce entries into care** by keeping families together

↓ **minimise time in care** by restoring children to their families or finding other permanent homes

↑ **increase positive care experiences** by supporting children's individual needs and trauma recovery

This year, the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian granted Uniting PSP with accreditation until August 2021.



Key challenge in 2018/19

We're targeting the areas in and around Dubbo with a foster care awareness campaign and recruitment drive, to address the current and urgent need for foster carers in Western NSW.

Foster carers make a real difference in the life of a child or young person. It's rewarding, challenging and life-changing for everyone involved.

If you know someone who would make a great short-term or longer-term foster carer, we'd love to hear from them.



Find out more: uniting.org/foster-care

“Uniting has worked hard to build a system where issues are identified early, dealt with openly, documented thoroughly, and reported clearly.”

– From an Accreditation Monitoring Visit by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, conducted in February 2019.

Supporting growth



Brendan is one of 10 children, and in 2011, aged 10, he and his younger brother came into care with Uniting. Since then he has overcome many obstacles and emerged as a young man that many people love and admire. When his Uniting caseworker and coordinators threw him an 18th birthday morning tea earlier this year, he spoke with great affection of his time with his carer. He remarked that the consistency of Uniting's support for him and his brother made him feel secure in his place in the world, and able to live a life with opportunity, positivity, and love.

Brendan is currently studying aviation at Griffith University and has recently moved in with his birth father and family. In a letter to his former caseworker he wrote, “I feel I have worked very hard with my carer and with you to make my dream a reality. This move is the most fantastic and positive way to end my journey in out-of-home care”.

Photo: Brendan with his Dad, modelling his Griffith University aviation uniform.

Encouraging life-long learning.

Uniting Early Learning and Childcare aims to make quality education accessible for all families. We believe all children deserve the opportunity to develop skills that encourage creativity, build confidence, and forge community connections.

This year, we have continued to create engaging and inclusive programs that inspire children from birth to primary school to become life-long learners and active community members.

Highlights

- 27 of our services were assessed and all were successfully rated against the National Quality Standard (NQS).
- Uniting finalised launch preparations for the Early Learning Fund (ELF), a social impact scholarship program working to identify and support young children who might otherwise miss out on early learning opportunities before starting primary school. ELF is supported by Uniting, Goodstart Early Learning, and The Benevolent Society.



Learn more: bit.ly/early-learning-fund

- We launched the Connect, Promote and Protect Program (CP3), a positive mental health initiative connecting primary schoolers with specialist volunteers, peers and the community, through creative and productive play. CP3 was developed in partnership with Corrimal Uniting Church and the University of Sydney Brain and Mind Centre.
- We now have 32 early learning services that are directly managed by Uniting, and 24 shared governance services that are managed together with local Uniting Church congregations. The transition has resulted in Uniting employing a total of 850 early learning employees this year, a 15% increase on 2017/18.

Using technology to connect and communicate

Storypark is just one of the many ways we engage with our early learning communities, and this year it was rolled out across our entire early learning network. It's an online service that helps families and educators collaborate as they record, share and extend their children's learning.

See how one of our educators, Paul Collins at Uniting Summer Hill Children's Centre, has championed Storypark here:



bit.ly/story-park

Our Rockdale preschool rocks inclusion.

Uniting Frederick Street Preschool cares for 80 preschoolers each week, whose families represent 21 different cultures and speak 26 languages and dialects. As we're often the first experience of Australian childcare after these families migrate, and with English as a second language, we make sure our teacher-to-child ratios are higher than standard.



Learn more: bit.ly/rockdale-preschool



56

services for children from birth to age 13

4,598

enrolled children

850

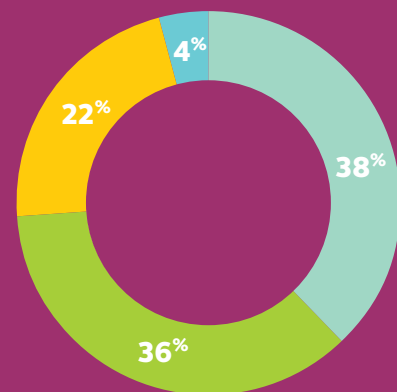
employees

↑15%

more staff than previous year

100%

of our assessed early learning services meet, exceed or are rated 'Excellent' against the National Quality Standard



Proportion of services

- Long Day Care
- Preschools
- Outside School Hours Care
- Occasional Care

“The teachers take the most incredible, individualised approach to helping my three boys with their own unique learning needs. I’ve seen them make real progress and their confidence and social skills have absolutely flourished. This has been so helpful for a positive transition to school. Thank you.”

– Parent at Uniting Forest Preschool Belrose

What children love about Uniting

Watch this video to hear what comes out of the mouths of children in our early learning services:



bit.ly/uniting-kids

Child safety matters

Feeling safe, and being healthy, has positive impacts on a child’s ability to learn and grow.

Uniting’s child safety policies and procedures are continually reviewed and updated to uphold every child’s right to be kept safe from harm and to be given the opportunity to thrive.



Find out more: uniting.org/early-learning