

Friday 9 May 2014



MEDIA RELEASE

Renovating Centre for the Homeless (South-Terrace)

Wilf Sargent House, which has housed UnitingCare West's Homeless Accommodation Support Service (UCW HASS) for the past seven years, is being extensively renovated. Staff and services have been relocated to nearby Cantonment Street in order for plans by the Department of Housing to be carried out.

Wilf Sargent House, at the corner of King William Street and South Terrace, has played a pivotal role in Fremantle's community life since 1895.

According to UnitingCare West CEO Sue Ash, the new design builds on the history of the structure, with the front limestone walls retained and incorporated as key elements of the new building.

"The re-development of the building will make it a more inclusive and accessible for our clients," Ms Ash said.

"The up-to-date facility will provide a greater sense of community and at the same time allow clients a level of privacy that the old house did not provide"

The renovations are expected to take 12-18 months. Building will occur Monday to Friday, with no activity scheduled during the weekends.

During the redevelopment UnitingCare West's Homeless Accommodation Support Service will continue to operate as normal from alternate premises. Current residents have been relocated to transitional accommodation for the homeless in Hilton and Spearwood.

UnitingCare West's new Wilf Sargent House is expected to provide medium-term accommodation and support for eight people experiencing homelessness by the first half of 2015. Once a person's immediate needs such as a bed, food and clothing are taken care of, staff will address the secondary issues that may have led to their homelessness such as unemployment, mental illness and language difficulties.

Team Leader of the service, Alec Uzunovsky, said, the redeveloped property will provide a safe, clean and comfortable environment for future clients.

"It will encourage a sense of belonging and will be more conducive for clients to implement changes to their lives and start the process of reintegrating back into the community," Mr Uzunovsky said.

The history of the property on South Terrace can be traced back to 1895 when a blacksmith bought the property. In 1897 the property changed ownership to a surgeon named Dr Arthur Thomas White who established a private hospital on the corner of King William Street and Mandurah Road (now called South Terrace). In 1927 the hospital became a lodging house. During the sixties and seventies the property was used as a family home.

Wilf Sargent House was established as a refuge for homeless men and couples during the early 1980s by the Uniting House welfare office that ran programs such as foster care, low cost groceries and a welfare office. It was this group of people that recognised the need for housing for single men and couples in South Fremantle. This new service for homeless men and couples was named Wilf Sargent House after a long-time member of the Fremantle Wesley Mission congregation and Treasurer of the Mission. In 2006 UnitingCare West was founded after a merger of several not-for-profit organisations and Wilf Sargent House became UnitingCare West's Homeless Accommodation Support Service (UCW HASS).

Whilst the property is being redeveloped, staff will move into the UCW office located in Fremantle at Unit 7/4 Cantonment Street, Fremantle WA 6160.

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Attachments:

- Historical documents regarding ownership of the property
- Redevelopment drawings and plans

About UnitingCare West

UnitingCare West assists over 30,000 individuals and families each year. With over 300 staff members and approximately 300 volunteers, UnitingCare West is a community service agency that has a mission to support, serve and empower those most in need. UCW operates over 35 community service programs from 17 sites across Perth, reaching as far North as Merriwa and as far South as Bunbury, in the areas of community housing, accommodation, homelessness, family support, mental health and disability services. UnitingCare West's clients include those in the community experiencing financial hardship, domestic violence, child abuse trauma, mental health issues and disability to name a few.

