

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### OVER 2,000 YOUNG PEOPLE IN PERTH HOMELESS THIS WINTER

#### UnitingCare West launches Winter Appeal to raise awareness of homelessness in the community

The 2011 Census estimated that in WA there were 1,493 children under 12 and a further 932 children between 12 years and 18 years old, homeless at the time of the Census. These two groups represent over 25% of the homeless population of WA. In the last year UnitingCare West has seen an increase in the number of families and young people seeking support around homelessness and is conscious that this statistic is only getting worse.

On 5 June, UnitingCare West's 2013 Winter Appeal was officially launched by the Honourable Helen Morton MLC at a reception held at the Warehouse Cafe in Shenton Park. Funds raised will go towards homelessness in WA and, if we receive sufficient funds, towards a 3 month pilot program for a new Family Homelessness Service currently in development - the first in Perth.

*"This year we hope to raise awareness about homelessness in Perth, particularly the rise we are seeing in families experiencing homelessness. The fact is, we can help people by giving them socks and jackets, but they don't have anywhere to wash their clothes. When we donate cans of soup, people don't have a can opener or a way to heat the food"* says Anne, Manager at UnitingCare West.

Families often seek help from UnitingCare West after they have been rejected from private rentals due to unemployment or low income; however, existing homeless facilities in Perth are not suitable for children for safety reasons, leaving families with few support options.

The Family Homelessness Service currently in development aims to give parents a place to cook a nutritious dinner and bath their kids. A place where children can play safely and do their homework. It will also support parents to link in to other services and information to help them with the challenges they are facing.

*"On average, we see 10 families seeking assistance each month from UnitingCare West's homeless services centre in East Perth. In some circumstances we are only able to provide emergency accommodation – the family will have a place to stay for two nights, but then they'll be back on the street again"* says Sue Ash, CEO, UnitingCare West.

By working in conjunction with homeless families in Perth, UnitingCare West aims to develop a service that will both support and empower families to make the changes they need in order to secure accommodation, stability and employment. In the long term the service will be part of a wider service area providing accommodation solutions for families.

To support the Appeal, visit [www.unitingcarewest.org.au](http://www.unitingcarewest.org.au) or call 1300 663 298.

## **About UnitingCare West**

UnitingCare West is a community services agency that supports thousands of people each year. UCW's clients include those in the community experiencing financial hardship, domestic violence, child abuse, mental health issues and disability to name a few.

UnitingCare West is part of a network of 400 agencies that make up UnitingCare Australia.

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