



From the CEO's Desk

It's difficult to believe, but we are once again reaching the end of the year and I would like to offer season's greetings to all associated with the UnitingCare West family.

2009 has been an exceptionally challenging and busy year for our organisation, but also a hugely rewarding one. I am particularly pleased that we have attracted significant additional government funding this year to both expand our existing services and programs, and to develop new services in response to the needs of the West Australian community.

Over the past 12 months, we have continued to receive significant financial support from our donors. Indeed, our 2009 Winter Appeal was our most successful ever, raising in excess of \$60,000. This additional revenue has allowed us to provide a unique range of services to those most marginalised in our community and we are extremely grateful to everyone who donated.

As you may already know, we have also recently launched our Christmas Appeal and we are hopeful that the money raised from this will enable us to continue to make a real difference to the quality of the lives of the thirty thousand individuals and families we expect to support and assist during 2010.

At UnitingCare West our mission is to support, serve and empower those most in need, and like many other community organisations in WA, the past 12 months have been challenged by the economic downturn. In addition, as the effects of the

Commonwealth government's economic stimulus package begin to wane, there is increasing hardship being faced by many families and individuals in WA.

As a result, across all our client services and programs, we have continued to see increased



demand, with growing complexities associated with disturbing trends in areas such as homelessness and housing affordability, mental health and substance abuse issues.

These issues and others were touched upon during our Annual Public Meeting which was held on Tuesday 10 November. We were very pleased to welcome over 100 people to this event, and were also extremely honoured to welcome the President of the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, Reverend Alistair Macrae, who was our guest speaker.

Held at the former Tranby Drop-in Centre for people who are homeless within the refurbished Uniting Church in the city, the meeting, which was chaired by Wendie Wilkie, Chair of the Board, was extremely successful and my thanks and appreciation go to everyone who took the time to attend.

Prior to the meeting, we held our inaugural Annual Thanksgiving Service at Wesley Uniting Church to celebrate our achievements over the past year and to seek guidance and blessings on our work and activities during the year to come. Staff, volunteers and members of the Board were joined by many of our supporters at this important and most enjoyable celebration.

Earlier in the day, we were very also grateful that Alistair Macrae took time during his busy schedule to visit some of UnitingCare West's services and to learn about the important work in which UnitingCare West is involved. His time was spent visiting our new Tranby Drop-in Centre for people who are homeless and the Trinity Learning Centre which provides educational and learning options for pregnant and parenting young women. Additionally, he spent time with participants at the Rainbow Project luncheon, held at Uniting Church Wembley Downs, which are organised regularly to support and befriend people with mental health issues.

And so, as we approach the end of 2009, I would like to thank everyone who has supported the important work of UnitingCare West during the year, and especially our staff and volunteers for their commitment, dedication and passion for our organisation throughout the year.

In closing, may God's Grace and Peace be with you and your loved ones during the Christmas season and may you enjoy a very happy and peaceful New Year.

Chris Hall
Chief Executive Officer

Stop Press:

Special thanks to the Honourable Robyn McSweeney MLC, Minister for Child Protection; Community Services; Seniors and Volunteering and Women's Interests, for taking the time to visit our Tranby drop-in centre earlier this month.

Although not a formal visit, Ms McSweeney met some of UnitingCare West's clients, many of whom were homeless, and joined the group for a number of morning activities. She took the time to chat to a number of people, wanting to find out more about them and their problems with homelessness, and we are thankful for her interest in this area.



Giving thanks during thanksgiving service

UnitingCare West's first ever thanksgiving service provided an opportunity to reflect on the challenges and successes of 2009 and look to the future with optimism and anticipation, according to Mission Development Leader Robert Watson, who was responsible for leading the celebration.

Organised for Tuesday 10 November at Perth Wesley Uniting Church, the service, which was

attended by staff, board members and volunteers at UnitingCare West, was attended by over 100 people and opened by Wendie Wilkie, Chair of the UnitingCare West Board.

According to Robert the service, which preceded the organisation's annual public meeting, was intended as a way of giving thanks to fellow colleagues – and to God – for the year that was. In addition, hopes and aspirations for the future were also touched on.

“The feedback we’ve had following the thanksgiving service has been extremely positive and the event is definitely something which we will repeat next year,” said Robert.

“Much of what we do at UnitingCare West is focused on bringing light into other people’s darkness and the symbolic act of lighting candles during the service was singled out as particularly moving and also inspiring.”

Taking time at Tranby

Students at Uniting Church School Tranby College in Baldvis recently took part in a 10 week social inclusion program with a group of UnitingCare West’s day care clients.

The Take Time program connected the clients with students from Year 10 at Tranby College once a week, enabling both groups to participate in joint activities including scrap-booking, cooking, dancing and playing games.

Sue Grover, UnitingCare West’s Activities and Recreation Officer, says the program was an overriding success, with staff, students and clients all commenting on what a positive experience they found it to be.

“Considering it was the first time we have run the program at Tranby, it really was a tremendous success,” said Sue.

“From my perspective I think it’s fair to say that it’s been one of the best programs that we have put together all year, it’s certainly very different to what we would usually



do and it has proven highly successful.”

“What’s more, many of the staff from UnitingCare West asked specifically to be involved in the program, and the feedback from teachers has also been fantastic.”

Angela Gileno, Service and Learning Coordinator at Tranby College, echoed Sue’s comments and said the program gave students important exposure to people with disabilities, which ultimately gave them more understanding and empathy.

“Over the semester, it was really incredible to see how the students increasingly became more at ease with the group, how they related to them, and ultimately real friendships were developed which was very rewarding to witness,” she said.

“The students very much enjoyed the program, gained a huge amount from it and without doubt everyone agreed it was an incredible success.”

One example of the success of the program included a young gentleman who initially said he did not want to take part in the program because it would involve going into a school environment, but ended up stretching himself enough to agree to take part.

“He later commented that it was one of the best things he had been involved in all year and was very keen to see the program repeated,” adds Sue.

“Take Time has certainly been a great way for pupils at the school to see the person, rather than the disability, and experiences like that often resound for many years with an individual, which is incredibly valuable both for the individual and for society.”

Planning is currently underway for a repeat of the Take Time - Tranby College Program during 2010.



Sharing and caring at Christmas time

It's the season for giving, and for the sixth year UnitingCare West is partnering with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) to ensure many of Perth's disadvantaged families receive a special gift from Santa this Christmas time.

Operation Santa will see staff from the bank donate gifts of food which are then made into hampers and distributed throughout the metropolitan area in the few days leading up to Christmas.

The hampers, which are beautifully gift wrapped by the bank's staff, are distributed to families who are known to UnitingCare West and who, in many cases, have received services throughout the year.

"This is a really fantastic initiative and last year we received over 80 hampers from the Commonwealth bank which we were absolutely delighted with," said Lesley Wilkinson, Executive Manager, Finance, Property and Marketing. "We are very much hoping for a similar response this year.

"The bank staff do a wonderful job of collecting items and gift wrapping them, and we then tailor the

hampers so that they are most suitable for individual families to whom they are delivered," she adds.

"We are incredibly thankful for the bank's support for this initiative, which brings joy and happiness into the lives of many disadvantaged people during the festive season."

UnitingCare West is also part of the Target UnitingCare Share Appeal where people can donate Christmas presents under the trees strategically placed in Target stores. Please give generously as every gift goes to a child at Christmas.

"The partnerships with Target and also CBA aims to distribute gifts to disadvantaged people of all ages, including children, teenagers, families, and anyone else who may be forgotten at Christmas," said Lesley.

"Both are a great way to share the true meaning of Christmas with Australians who have done it tough this year."



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