

Media Statement – for immediate release

27 September 2016

UnitingCare West announces, with regret, the closure of Bunbury based True Colours program

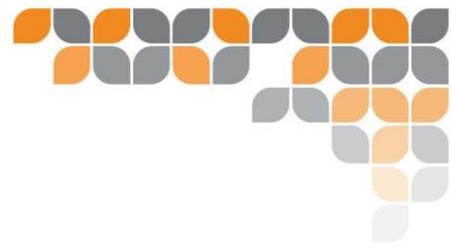
Since 2006 True Colours, a program of UnitingCare West, has directly supported young LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning) people in WA's South West, and has worked with schools and the broader community to raise awareness and break down the barriers to safe and inclusive communities. Since its formation, True Colours has operated with only a few dedicated staff and volunteers. It has been delivered by UnitingCare West through funding from the Uniting Church which, despite considerable efforts over the past ten years to obtain much needed additional funding, has been the only reliable source of financial support.

Without additional funding being available, and because alternative support structures within school systems and the community have resulted in a decline in people requesting program assistance over the past 12 months, the difficult decision was made to close the program from 30 September 2016. All current True Colours group members will continue to be supported by volunteers, and anyone seeking assistance is being referred to alternative local services.

True Colours has supported many young people, their friends and families over time. Many of the group members have stated that they have been grateful to have a place to go where they could feel safe and be themselves. UnitingCare West expects that the ongoing, and yet to be named, safe space support group will continue to offer that opportunity to people into the future.

Over the years, True Colours' members have been instrumental in the planning and organising of events for National Youth Week, Pridefest, International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) and Social Inclusion Week, amongst others. They have taken opportunities to become involved in community art projects, youth reference groups and media opportunities to promote the inclusion of diversity in the community, regardless of sexuality or gender.

UnitingCare West wishes to thank all of the people who have played an integral role in the support of LGBTIQ people, their families and friends through True Colours over the years; including the dedicated staff and volunteers, the contributions and partnerships with other community based organisations and of course the wonderful support from the LGBTIQ community.



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About UnitingCare West

UnitingCare West is there for those most in need; providing a broad range of services and partnerships that build healthier, more resilient, and better connected communities.

UnitingCare West operates over 36 community service programs from 17 sites across Perth, reaching as far North as Merriwa and as far south as Great Southern, in the areas of community housing, accommodation, homelessness, family support, mental health and disability services.

About True Colours

True Colours, a program of UnitingCare West, was established in 2006 as a response to the needs of young LGBTIQ people in rural and remote regions. True Colours was the continuation of the *Same Sky Project* that ran from several regional areas including Bunbury, Albany and Geraldton from 2002 until 2004. The True Colours model is a systemic one, supporting the young person, their family, friends, and their school, while also increasing community awareness to break down barriers and remove stigma.