

interchange

INTERCHANGE NEWSLETTER | WINTER 08



Social inclusion a must

The rumpus in Federal Parliament about petrol prices is a clear message that neither the Federal Government nor the Opposition is likely to provide much future leadership when it comes to adjusting to climate change and rising energy costs.

The Government's Fuel Watch scheme will hardly have any impact and the Opposition's 5 cents per litre reduction is even more badly designed. Why should taxpayers in general be providing cheaper petrol to people who can afford to pay their way? What can be overlooked is the obvious fact that the inevitable rising energy costs that will flow from carbon taxes, depleting resources, and strong competition from China and India, will hit low income and disadvantaged families very severely.

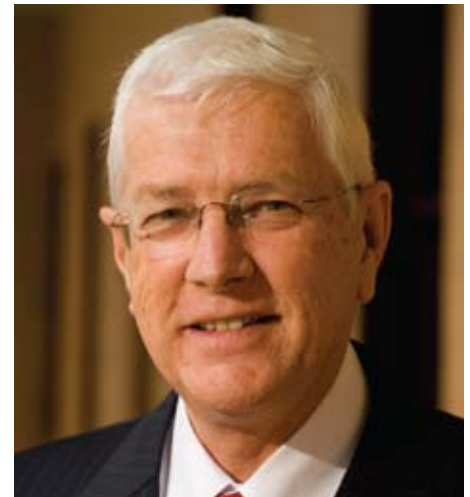
So, what we should be talking about are compensation arrangements for those who are hardest hit by these changes. This has already been suggested by economist Ross Garnaut, who is advising the Federal Government on climate change regulation. He has warned that we need to build in forms of compensation for disadvantaged people. In the current example of petrol costs, if a 5 cents per litre reduction in petrol prices at the bowser is going to cost the Government \$2 billion, wouldn't it be better to direct those funds to the most needy? Perhaps there could be a petrol voucher scheme which gives low income

people 200 litres of free petrol every year. Or a scheme which compensates some low income people for their travel costs. This would be much more socially worthwhile than an across the board reduction in petrol prices.

The rise in the price of petrol is only one of the worrying signs in the economy at the moment. There are also increasing interest costs, rents and food prices, to name but a few. When times are economically more challenging, it puts strain on the fairness and equity in our system. These cost increases have the potential to push even more people to the margins of our society.

I welcome the fact that the Federal Government has established a Social Inclusion Board to help them address some of these issues. We won't achieve social inclusion by treating everyone the same. We need to look for carefully targeted ways in which people who are socially excluded get special attention in order to bring them into the mainstream.

*Rev. Harry Herbert
Executive Director
UnitingCare NSW.ACT*



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Indigenous staff on the rise at UnitingCare NSW.ACT

UnitingCare NSW.ACT has committed to taking on more than 140 new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff over the next 12 months as part of its recently developed Indigenous Employment Strategy.



Left: Elizabeth Death, Director UnitingCare Children's Services; Gillian McFee, Director UnitingCare Ageing; Stuart Watson, State Manager DEEWR; Rev. Harry Herbert, Executive Director UnitingCare NSW.ACT and Jane Woodruff, Director UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families Services.

Other pics – Dancers from NAISDA College performing traditional Aboriginal dance and Torres Strait Islander dance.

This figure represents approximately 2% of the total workforce of UnitingCare NSW.ACT and its Service Groups – UnitingCare Ageing, UnitingCare Children's Services and UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families Services.

“UnitingCare NSW.ACT is a large employer with more than 6,500 staff and we should be making sure that we are creating opportunities for more Indigenous people to join us”, said Rev Harry Herbert, Executive Director of UnitingCare NSW.ACT.

Launched early May, at the Riverside Theatres in Parramatta Sydney, the Strategy has been developed in partnership with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

“UnitingCare NSW.ACT already employs a large number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and this Strategy marks the beginning of working to provide more meaningful employment opportunities and career development for existing as well as new staff,” said Rev Herbert.

The specific aims of the Strategy are to recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, be the employer of choice in the community services sector and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to become 2% of the total workforce of UnitingCare NSW.ACT.

This will be achieved in a range of approaches including the use of culturally appropriate recruitment processes, job descriptions and selection procedures and providing supportive and sensitive work environments that respect and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

UnitingCare NSW.ACT has also committed to providing support mechanisms such as external and internal mentoring, peer support networks and enabling staff to meet cultural obligations such as attending significant community events and gatherings.

A summary document of the UnitingCare NSW.ACT Indigenous Employment Strategy is available at www.unitingcarenswwact.org.au



Celebrating 15 years of Social Justice Advocacy



The Hon. Kevin Greene, Minister for Community Services hosted a celebration of 15 years of Social Justice Advocacy for UnitingCare Burnside at Parliament House on 8 May.



The night included speeches from Associate Professor Judy Cashmore, who shared her experiences with Burnside (and managed to mention both Family Group Conferencing and Burnside's role in out-of-home-care and after care). However the highlight had to be three young people from ACE Southern; Matt, Sarah and Corinne, who spoke about their experiences after leaving foster care. The NEWPIN choir also performed at the celebration.

Other speakers included Burnside CEO Jane Woodruff and Rev. Harry Herbert Executive Director UnitingCare NSW.ACT. Many former and existing staff members of UnitingCare Burnside, service users and politicians were among the guests.

It was a lovely evening, bringing together many people who continue to stand up for what is right, and with whom Burnside have worked with for many years.

A summary of achievements in the 15 years can be found on our website at www.unitingcarenswact.org.au



A new shared service for payroll

On 21st February 2008, the UnitingCare NSW.ACT Board approved the creation of a Payroll Services Centre (PSC) to provide a specialised payroll processing service, which will eventually pay all staff across each of the three UnitingCare Service Groups as well as other programs that form part of UnitingCare.

The new PSC is expected to commence operations in July 2008 and will be located in Parramatta. This project includes the implementation of a state-of-the-art HR/Payroll & Rostering system across the organisation, including a common operating model comprising of consistent processes and procedures.

There will be a gradual implementation program over the next 12-18 months, where each local payroll service will be 'rolled into' the new Centre as part of detailed implementation plan.

The Payroll Services Centre will officially be launched on the 17th July at the Parramatta office. For more information on this Centre please contact Sam Galluccio, Director People, Learning and Culture UnitingCare Ageing on 02 8267 4364 or samg@nsw.uca.org.au

For more information on this strategy email ies@nsw.uca.org.au

UnitingCare Harris Community Centre celebrates Chinese New Year!

The Chinese New Year celebrations are one of the highlights of the UnitingCare Harris Community Centre. The event epitomises the core values of the Harris Community Centre in Ultimo, Sydney, bringing residents from all walks of life together in celebration.

With just four weeks to go, the event coordinator and another two key staff suddenly had to take extended emergency leave of absence. In its 10th year, everyone wanted the New Year Celebrations to continue and so the community rallied around and pitched in. And, to add to the mayhem, the UpTown Festival was just four weeks later!

Lorraine Findlay, Manager, UnitingCare Harris Community Centre, explains, "I was overwhelmed with offers of help, from other local services, volunteer groups, our own Chinese Seniors group and more. The support we received from so many ensured a successful 10th Chinese New Year Celebration reflecting the strong and unique ties we have developed as a community in Ultimo."

"Our neighbours represent many nationalities and live in a mixture of public housing, affordable housing and the luxury apartments of Jackson's Landing. We have worked very hard to keep the Harris Community Centre a vital and relevant community service."

UnitingCare Harris Community Centre provides organised services such as Playgroups and English classes. The centre also caters to special groups such as the Chinese Opera Singers and Japanese Story Tellers. The hard earned reputation of the centre draws people in, responding to community needs, concerns and problems.

Photography by David Wallace.



Canberra City Uniting Church Early Morning Centre

The Early Morning Centre at Canberra City Uniting Church serves breakfast for approximately 350 vulnerable and marginalised people every week.

With just 21 seats and a tiny kitchen, they run a very efficient operation, with the valuable help of volunteers.

Terry Birtles, Lay Minister met in 2005 with Dr Colin Adrien, who was then with the ACT Chief Minister's Department, to discuss the possibility of offering an Outreach Service. The next step was to conduct a Scoping Study, which showed a lack of services for the 1500 homeless and marginalised people living in the ACT.

"There is no stereotype for marginalised people. Their backgrounds may be professional, some are ex-prisoners and some are poorly educated and some 30% of our guests are women", says Terry.

"For example, a few years ago many banks were closed in Canberra, one of our guests lost his job and turned to alcohol. His family couldn't cope with the roller coaster ride of living with an alcoholic and disowned him. Simply listening to the stories on a one to one basis is an important social interaction."

The centre focuses on providing a substantial, healthy meal for guests, recognising that this may be the only meal they have all day.

Chris Stokes, Manager at the Centre emphasises not only the importance of a substantial meal but also a selection of foods.

"It is important to offer choices to makes our guests feel welcome and maintain their dignity", said Chris.

Services offered by the Early Morning Centre will continue to develop to meet the needs of the clients. The Centre currently offers the use of a phone, internet access, a postal address, fax and photocopying facilities and, importantly, staff from Centrelink visit once a week.

A highlight for the Centre last Boxing Day was a surprise visit from Prime Minister Kevin Rudd! The Prime Minister visited, rolled up his sleeves and assisted with serving breakfast to Uniting Church Early Morning Centre guests.

Announcing UnitingCare Disability

The UnitingCare NSW.ACT Board is committed to the development of disability services and disability advocacy under the auspice of UnitingCare, building on the quality and well respected services provided by UnitingCare Supported Living.

In order to provide the leadership and administrative support necessary for the planned growth in this area, a new position of Director, UnitingCare Disability has been created. Recruitment for this position is currently underway. It is expected that the new Director will begin in July 2008.

The Director, UnitingCare Disability will report to Jane Woodruff, Director, UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families Services Group with service support progressively provided by the HR, Finance, IT and Communication staff of the Service Group. The management structure will

be designed in such a way that the separate needs and voices of children and families, and people with disabilities will continue to be respected.

One of the key functions for the new Director will be the oversight of UnitingCare Supported Living. Julia McCreadie and Linda Ward will continue as the Managers of UnitingCare Supported Living and staff and services will continue to operate from the existing offices in Croydon.

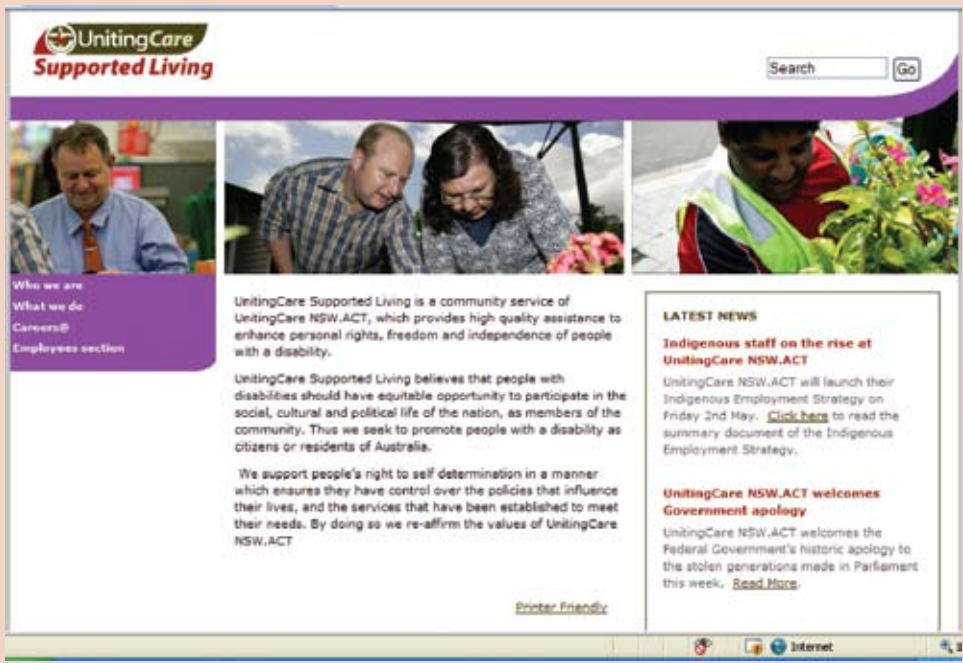
The Director, UnitingCare Disability will also be responsible for liaising

with UnitingCare Ageing and UnitingCare Children's Services, and other UnitingCare services to promote quality and appropriate disability services, seeking funding for the establishment of new disability services, and leading advocacy and social policy development in the area of disability.

This is an exciting initiative for UnitingCare NSW.ACT and acknowledges the needs and rights of people with disabilities and their families, and builds on the capacity of UnitingCare to provide flexible, responsive and innovative services.

UnitingCare Supported Living launches new website!

Check out the new site at www.unitingcaresupportedliving.org.au for general information on UnitingCare Supported Living, their services, career employment opportunities and more.



Thank you for your generosity

UnitingCare would like to thank all those who have already contributed to this year's Share Appeal. Please keep the donations coming in.

Your support of our Share Appeal gives us the strength and encouragement to continue with our community services for the Church and work towards achieving a more just, compassionate and fair society and better life opportunities for the people we serve.



Yes I would like to support the work of UnitingCare NSW.ACT with a donation.

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..... Postcode.....

Congregation.....

Please enclose your cheque/money order payable to UnitingCare NSW.ACT or complete the credit card details:

Payment method: Cheque Bankcard Visa Mastercard

Amount: \$25 \$50 \$100 Other \$.....

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Name on credit card..... Expiry date / /

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Donations \$2 and over are tax deductible.

Address all donations to UnitingCare NSW.ACT GPO Box 9961 Sydney NSW

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Please send me details on how I might consider UnitingCare in my Will.

UnitingCare respects and values your privacy and will not disclose any personal information without your written permission.

Thank you for your support



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