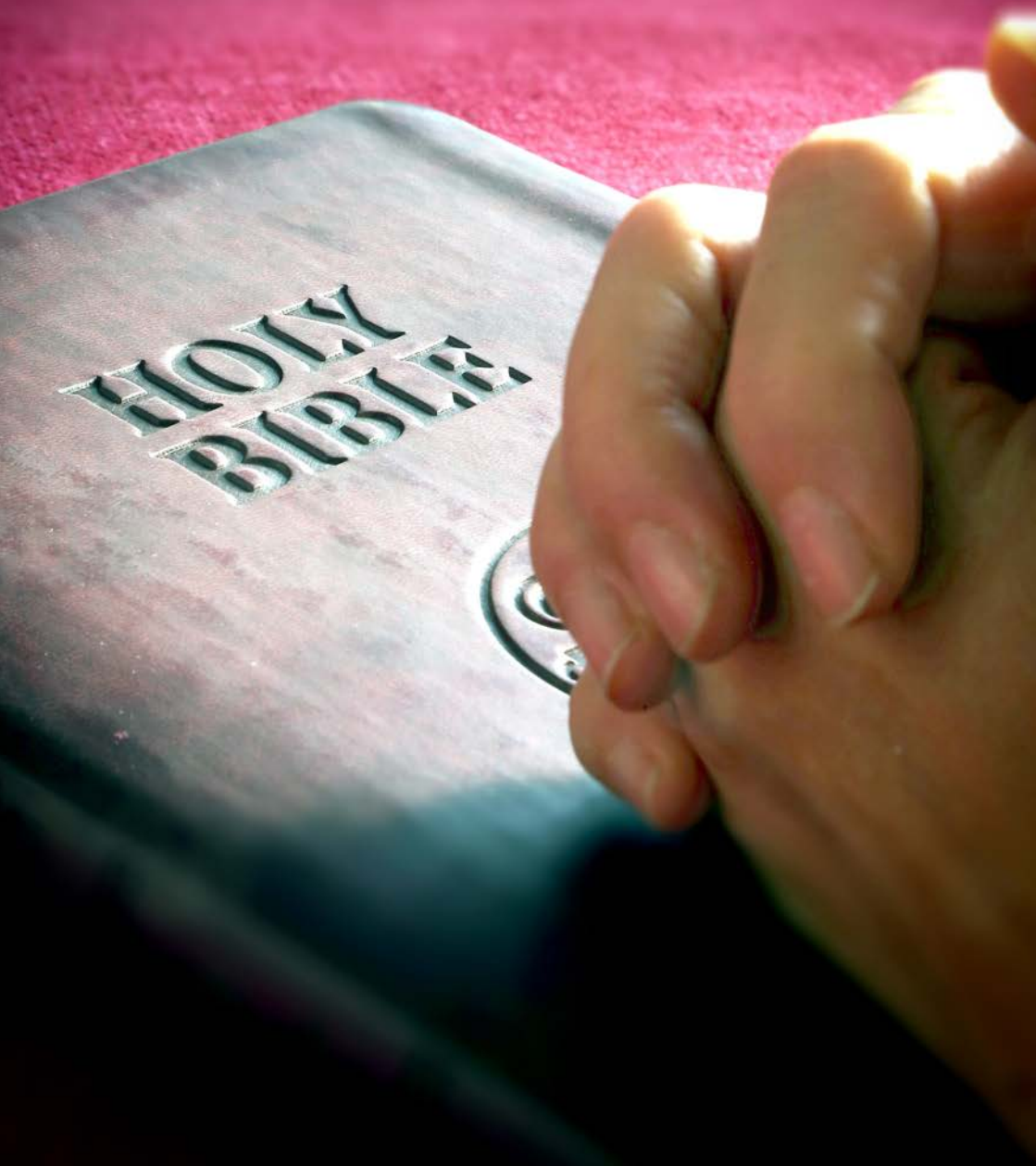


Anti-Poverty Week

15-21 October 2017 | 7 days of prayer

PRAYER DIARY





Tackling Hidden Poverty in our region

October 15 marks the beginning of Anti-Poverty Week 2017, which aims to encourage all Australians to take part in an activity highlighting the need to address issues of poverty in our local communities. Poverty is often hidden. People who are struggling often do so alone, as shame and stigma keep them from talking about it or seeking help early.

Over one million people are currently living in poverty and severe hardship right here in Australia!

This is not okay.

As part of Anti-Poverty Week, Anglicare and Uniting have teamed up to bring you this prayer diary. We believe in the power of prayer and we would love to see a community of Christians focused on praying for those who are most in need throughout Canberra, Queanbeyan and other local regions.

Prayer is powerful and can make a lasting difference in a life, a community and a nation. As part of Anti-Poverty Week, we encourage individuals and churches across the region to consider making prayer a part of their Anti-Poverty Week contribution.

Please join us this Anti-Poverty Week...

*"This is the confidence we
have in approaching God:
that if we ask anything
according to his will, he
hears us." 1 John 5:14*

How to use this resource

There are many ways to make the most out of this prayer diary.

Personal

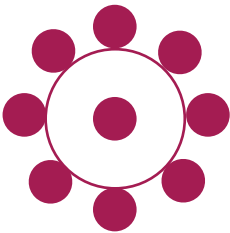


Use the diary as a personal devotion and reflection tool. Over the next seven days simply set aside some time for Bible reading and prayer with this diary as a guide focusing on a topic each day. It's a wonderful way to pray about specific needs in your local area.



Small Group Studies

If you are part of a small group, you can use this booklet as a tool. You don't have to be limited to Anti-Poverty Week. If your group meets weekly, read out the prayer topic during Anti-Poverty Week and allow it to prompt discussion and group prayer. Move on to the next topic the week after.



Congregations

The diary can provide discussion points or prayer points to include in sermons for your congregation. If congregation members are also using the diary as a guide for personal devotion or small group studies, this can help to reinforce issues that have been prayed for and discussed by people throughout the week.

Day 1 | Housing + Homelessness

Issue

Finding affordable and appropriate houses for rent in Canberra and Queanbeyan is extremely hard for people on low incomes. This leads to financial stress and social exclusion for families unable to access subsidised housing – in some cases, even family breakdown.

A decent, stable and affordable place to live is critical for human flourishing. It is important for our health and security, as a base from which to find and hold work, for our children's education and for family stability. Having a place where we belong gives us opportunities for rest and recreation, for building relationships and for making connections in the local community.

Source: (Anglicare Australia, 2016)

Facts

- In the ACT: average public housing wait times are 403 days for families with priority needs, 775 days for families with high needs, or 826 days for families with standard needs. (The ACT has the second highest rate of homelessness in Australia.)
- In Queanbeyan: average public housing wait times are 5-10 years (2 or 4 bedroom properties) or 10+ years (1 or 3 bedroom properties)

Source: (Homelessness Australia, 2014)

Penny's story

Penny is an older woman who does not own her own home. Because of a disability, she cannot work full-time and survives financially only because she is entitled to a part-pension. High rents and short-term tenancies rule out the private rental market. Penny does not earn enough to be eligible for affordable housing nor can she access public housing because of long waiting lists. Currently she is renting a room in an acquaintance's rented house, a situation that is tenuous and unsuitable given the nature of Penny's disability. Penny despairs at the uncertainty of her housing situation and fears that with changing circumstances she could easily find herself homeless.

Source: (ACTCOSS & ACT Shelter, 2016)

Praise point

Thanks to the dozens of volunteers who support homelessness services across the ACT and Queanbeyan. Thanks to those who are supporting friends or families experiencing housing stress.

Prayer point

Pray that individuals or organisations will have the courage and conviction to further trial creative housing solutions in the ACT, such as tiny house movements or community housing models. Please pray that planners and developers of our cities and towns might creatively plan and build for the needs of the vulnerable. Please pray that we consider and help provide for the needs of those who do not have a home to call their own.

Action point

Contact your local member and ask what their party proposes to do about making housing more affordable and accessible for older people and those on low incomes.

Further reading:

- ACTCOSS Publication - Stories of Home: www.actcoss.org.au/publications/advocacy-publications/stories-home

Day 2 | Domestic Violence

Issue

Domestic violence is arguably one of Australia's most serious and damaging social issues resulting in physical and mental trauma, and contributing to homelessness, poverty and family breakdown. The vast majority of dangerous, abusive and violent behaviour that occurs in the privacy of people's homes is committed by men against women.

Facts

- Just under half a million Australian women reported that they had experienced physical or sexual violence or sexual assault in the past 12 months.
- 33.3% of women had experienced physical violence since the age of 15 and 19.1% of women had experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.
- More than a million women had experienced physical or sexual assault by their male current or ex-partner since the age of 15 (some women may be counted twice if they experienced both physical and sexual assault).
- 37.8% of women who experienced physical assault in the 12 months before the survey said the perpetrator was a current or previous male partner and 34.4% said the perpetrator was a male family member or friend. Most violence was committed in the home.
- 12.4% of women had been sexually abused before the age of 15, compared with 4.5% of men, between 1996 and 2005.
- 64% of women who experienced physical assault and 81.1% of women who experienced sexual assault still did not report it to police.
- The majority of violence against men is committed by other men. Of men who reported that they had experienced physical violence in the 12 months before the survey, 73.7% said that the perpetrator was a male.

Source: (Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast Inc, 2016)

Nicole's Story:

In 2013, after enduring years of domestic violence, Nicole made the brave decision to leave her partner and try to build a safer life for herself and her children.

With no other choice, Nicole was forced to split up her children between relatives. She lived with two of her children in a caravan in the back yard of her aunt's place. Nicole's other children

stayed with her mother in a one-bedroom apartment. Finally Nicole contacted a local support centre.

From her very first conversation with the staff at the centre, Nicole felt cared for. The support that Nicole received meant that she could move into permanent housing in less than a year. When Nicole's electricity was about to be cut off, her bill was paid for and when her family needed groceries, the centre provided Nicole

with food parcels. "I've got more confidence and I'm so much happier. So are my kids. Children, more than anyone, need a safe place to live." says Nicole. Today, Nicole is studying Business Administration and wants to become a volunteer. Nicole is convinced that if other women knew they could get help through community organisations, they wouldn't stay in violent environments.

Praise point

Thank you for the workers at emergency relief centres across Canberra and Queanbeyan where domestic violence survivors can find refuge, care and support. Thank you for a growing awareness of the extent and seriousness of domestic violence and the need to do more about it.

Prayer point

Please pray for victims, that they would have the courage and support to leave violent environments, that those victims who are recovering would experience healing, and that those at risk of committing acts of violence would receive the preventative help they need to deal with underlying issues. Please pray for the children who have experienced trauma, distress and injury because of domestic violence. Pray too for the perpetrators of violence and control, that they would cease and seek help.

Action point

You can make a difference by donating food, clothing or finances to assist local organisations that are assisting victims of domestic violence.

Further reading:

- www.nomore.org.au
- www.whiteribbon.org.au;
- For such a time as this – reflections for healing and hope, published by the Uniting Church in Australia, Canberra Region Presbytery, www.canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au/documents/bklet.pdf

Day 3 | Emergency Relief

Issue

Emergency relief services are delivered by community organisations and help people address immediate basic needs in times of crisis. Emergency relief can act as a safety net for people experiencing financial distress or hardship and who have limited means or resources to help them alleviate their financial crisis.

People accessing emergency relief typically have a low or no income, making them vulnerable to financial shock such as high utility bills. Others need support as a result of an unforeseen or life changing event such as illness or family violence.

Emergency relief organisations can be the first point of contact for an individual with complex needs, allowing for referral to more intensive support such as financial counselling or mental health or alcohol and other drugs support. This early intervention with a wraparound approach can lead to better outcomes and future self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

Source: (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2016)

Many community organisations provide emergency relief services to people in need throughout the ACT, Queanbeyan and other parts of NSW.

Facts

- 1 in 6 people report having experienced food insecurity in the last year
- 2 million people seek food relief each year
- 644,000 people receive food relief from Foodbank agencies, every month
- 33% of those are children (216,000)
- 43,000 people are turned away every month because of food shortages (14,600 of these are children)

Sharon's Story

While wood fires and reverse cycle air conditioners warm homes across Australia, Sharon is struggling to afford her electricity bill. The single mother of two girls, aged seven and nine, says she was forced to ask for help as she couldn't afford to pay for basics like food and clothes.

"I find I start to struggle during winter and also before and after Christmas. The main things that I compromise on are clothes and food," she said. "My partner is deceased so I'm on my own financially. I receive a Parenting Payment but it's not enough. I only just scrape by every week," she said.

Praise point

Thank you for the volunteers at emergency relief centres, churches and other organisations who help provide food and other essential resources. Thank you too for the staff who are helping people with more complex difficulties.

Prayer point

Pray for people like Sharon who suffer from hidden poverty in our city. Pray for those who do not have enough money for food and especially for the children who are going without.

Action point

You can help by donating food and other essentials to a local community organisation.

Further reading:

- Anglicare Hard Choices report (www.anglicare.org.au/sites/default/files/public/Hard%20Choices%20Food%20Insecurity%20Final%20Report%202013.pdf)
- Foodbank Hunger in Australia report (www.foodbank.org.au/hunger-in-australia/hunger-report-2016/)

Day 4 | Gambling Addiction

Issue

Excessive gambling is not the result of individual weakness. Sadly, products such as poker machines and online gambling are designed to addict and promote excessive use. Evidence shows that 'responsible gambling' approaches minimise the impact of gambling harm. These can easily be applied to poker machine usage which continues to cause the most harm. Responsible approaches include mandatory pre-commitment on maximum spends, reducing the value of single spins on poker machines, and limiting the maximum value of cash withdrawals at EFTPOS machines in clubs.

Facts

- 900,000 Australians play pokies weekly. They lose on average \$7000-\$8000 a year.
- Around 30% of people who play poker machines weekly are (or are "at risk" of) becoming problem gamblers.
- Poker machines are more concentrated in Australia's poorest suburbs.
- In WA, where poker machines are only allowed inside the casino, problem gambling is two-thirds lower than the rest of the country.
- 70% of Australians agree that gambling should be more tightly controlled. 74% agree there should be spending limits on gambling.

Bernie's Story

When Bernie was hospitalised as a result of a nervous breakdown caused by her gambling addiction, she knew she had hit rock bottom. "I was behind in my rent and about to become homeless and I'd lost all respect from my kids because I'd lie to them about where the money was going." The mother of six says she would play poker machines to escape the domestic violence she was suffering. Realising she had a problem and calling Anglicare's Gambling Help Counselling Service was the first step to getting her life back on track. Anglicare's counsellor developed a personalised money plan to help Bernie budget for food, rent and other expenses. "I quit gambling and the counsellor helped me to do a self exclusion so I could still go out to dinner in the club but I couldn't play the pokies," Bernie has saved up enough money to buy a second hand car and wants to share her story to help more people.

Praise point

Give thanks for Canberra's Gambling Reform Alliance formed in 2017, a coalition of organisations, businesses and citizens who have come together to express their deep concern regarding the impact of gambling harm on our community. Visit [www.facebook/CanberraGamblingReformAlliance](https://www.facebook.com/CanberraGamblingReformAlliance)

Prayer point

Pray that government and local clubs will be receptive to implementing changes to reduce the potential for gambling harm in the community.

Action point

Advocate for social change by contacting your local member and encouraging them to support initiatives to reduce gambling harm.

Further reading:

- [www.facebook/CanberraGamblingReformAlliance](https://www.facebook.com/CanberraGamblingReformAlliance)
- www.abc.net.au/radio/canberra/canberra-matters-gambling/8532588
- If you or someone you care about is running into trouble with gambling please contact Gambling Help via www.gamblinghelp.nsw.gov.au or call 1800 858 858

Day 5 | Disability

Issue

In Australia, there are 4.3 million people with disabilities. That's nearly one in five Australians, or 18.3% of the total population.

Facts

People with disabilities face a higher risk of poverty than the general population. Almost one in two people with disabilities live on less than 60% of the median income, almost 2.5 times the poverty rate experienced in the general population.

The higher risk of poverty for people with disabilities is likely because they have less access to employment opportunities. Just over one in two people with disabilities participate in the labour force (53.4%), compared to four in five people without a disability (83.2%). The unemployment rate among people with disabilities is 10 per cent, compared to 5.3% among people without a disability.

Source: (Australian Council of Social Service, 2014).

Peter's Story

In February 2016, Peter* aged 49 years, expressed interest in moving into a shared house instead of continuing to live alone. Peter had escalating health issues, and he and his family saw merit in him living with others in order to reduce his social isolation and to increase his ability to manage his health needs. Peter was referred to the ACT Shared Social Housing project which then introduced him to more intentional support available through the NDIS. As a result of this referral, Peter has not only been assisted to view and explore shared housing options that suit his interests and needs, he has also had support with pre-planning and development of his NDIS plan.

**name changed for privacy*

**Praise
point**

Thanks for the opportunities now being offered under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS empowers people with disabilities to have more choice and control in their lives, achieve their personal goals and participate in their community.

**Prayer
point**

Pray that organisations providing support to people with disabilities will continue to adapt, adjust and grow within the changed environment of the NDIS, remembering their call to mission and service.

**Action
point**

- Support your local Australian Disability Enterprise, which provides employment for people with disabilities in your area.
- Donate to a non-profit organisation that provides support for people with disabilities.
- Ask your local member to commit to adequate funding for the NDIS.

Further reading:

- www.actcross.org.au/policy/population-groups/people-disability

Day 6 | Youth unemployment and disengagement with education

Issue

Youth unemployment and disengagement with education has been acknowledged as a growing problem in Australia.

Young people who experience a difficult transition from school to further training and/or the workforce are in many cases disadvantaged for years into the future.

Many students have had to overcome significant barriers outside their control which make it impossible for them to continue mainstream schooling.

There are widespread benefits to the individual and community in finding the most effective way to help them move into the next stage of their educational or vocational lives. Without support from community organisations, chaplains, social workers and others, some would not be able to complete Year 10. This contributes to further risk of unemployment, poverty and homelessness.

Facts

- In the ACT there are 2-3 people seeking work for every one job.

(Anglicare NSW South, NSW West & ACT, 2014)

- In January 2016, the rate of people between the ages of 15 and 24 who were unemployed was at 12.2%, more than twice the 5.8% national unemployment rate

(Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2016).

- About 26 per cent of young people do not attain a Year 12 or Certificate III equivalent by age 19.

Laura's Story

From only five years of age Laura* was severely bullied and physically hurt at school. From the age of eleven she was repeatedly sexually assaulted. Overcome with mental health issues from these repeated traumas, she struggled to stay in school. Home life was also filled with difficulties and soon, at the tender age of 15, she was out on her own, living on the streets.

For several years, Laura was trying to survive on the streets, in shelters and 'couch surfing' in dangerous environments. At the age of 16, Laura came to Anglicare's youth services centre known as Club 12/25 for the supported Youth Education Program to try and continue the education she desperately wanted, but no longer felt good enough to achieve.

The Junction medical centre helped Laura with prescriptions, health checks and sanitary items. They gave me cooking classes and other life skills so I could learn to look after myself properly. Anglicare gave me supports from all angles.'

Supported by caring youth workers, Laura was empowered to take control of her life.

She is now living in a stable home, studying social work at TAFE, and looking forward to the future.

**name changed for privacy*

Praise point

Give thanks for organisations and employers that recognise and assist young people, inspiring and equipping them to find and flourish in employment.

Prayer point

Please pray for vulnerable young people who are struggling to find work. Pray that they would find opportunities to gain experience to enter the workforce.

Action point

Ask your local member for more support to ensure that there are sufficient treatment places to meet needs as they arise.

Further reading:

- Anglicare NSW South, NSW West & ACT – Limiting Futures Report www.anglicare.com.au/data/Limiting_Futures_Report.pdf
- www.youthcoalition.net

Day 7 | Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Issue

Australia has a problem with alcohol and other drugs. Problematic alcohol and other drug (AOD) use does not occur in isolation. It happens in response to other events occurring in people's lives. However, problematic AOD use has its own consequences and adds complexity to the challenges people face. The harmful impacts of AOD use are felt by individuals and families, but everyone in the community bears the cost.

Facts

- Alcohol is consumed by three out of four Australians. Most drink responsibly, but many do not. Alcohol remains, by far, the drug responsible for the most harm in Australia.
- More than 40% of Australians over 14 have tried illicit drugs, mostly cannabis. Heroin use continues to decline, but Ice (methamphetamines) and emerging 'synthetic' drugs pose new challenges.
- Prescription rates for powerful opioids, benzodiazepines and other psychoactive medications continue to rise. Overdose deaths have now overtaken the road toll.

Source: (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013)

Story

The path of addiction has been likened to the passage through a black railway tunnel. Often, young people will try a drug to address a particular issue in their life, such as a risk-taking urge or to cope with pain or insecurity.

Dependency is not switched on by the first taste. Indeed, depending upon the drug, users have to work at it. This will be familiar to those who have dabbled with smoking. A small percentage of those who try will develop an addiction. At this point the substance that met their needs that motivated them to try it will begin to appear as possessing thorns as well as a rose bloom. When the pain of those thorns (like difficulties with families, lack of money, work and other responsibilities) become insistent enough, the users will start realising that there is a problem, that the substance is taking over their life. At that point, but not before, they will be prepared to consider seeking treatment. In this they will typically be urged on by desperate parents.

The decision to seek treatment is typically accompanied by a swirl of strong, contrary emotions. A preparedness one day to enter treatment will often be countered the next by the yearning for the euphoria of the substance and the attraction to the

Day 7 | Drug and Alcohol Abuse - continued

welcoming peer group of fellow users. The timing of securing treatment is therefore everything and it is here that the best intentions and determination of users and frantic efforts of their family are commonly frustrated by the lack of treatment places. Parents will be told that the user themselves must make telephone contact for an assessment, and if assessed as suitable, will be told that no place is presently available. They will then probably learn that there is a waiting list, so the user must check every day whether a place has become available, or be given an appointment

days and weeks hence. This delay is often fatal to the good resolution of the dependent user who gives in to the attraction of the drug and the life surrounding it.

Parents, by now panicking, look around for help. In this condition they are susceptible to the beguiling marketing of many private drug treatment services offering an immediate bed for a charge of tens of thousands of dollars. Desperate to save the life of their child, parents have been known to sell or mortgage their home and possessions to raise the funds.

Praise point

Give thanks for the resolution and perseverance of dependent drug users and their families who seek out treatment; and for the patience and professional skill of drug treatment workers who ethically address the insistent needs of dependent drug users with evidence-based treatments.

Prayer point

Pray for individuals, families, and communities who are affected by problematic alcohol and drug use.

Action point

- Ask your local member to ensure there are sufficient treatment places to meet the treatment needs as they arise.
- Learn more about the benefits of changing the way we respond to the personal use and possession of illicit drugs by reading the research and information available at: canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au/2016/drug-law-reform-update-from-uniting/#more-7339

Further reading:

- ABC, Four Corners, Rehab Inc. www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2016/09/12/4535254.htm (12th September 2016)
- Tony Trimmingham, "Families need to be at centre of 'ice' strategy", Sydney Morning Herald, 10 April 2015 at: www.smh.com.au/comment/families-need-to-be-at-centre-of-ice-strategy-20150409-1mhg83
- Uniting Care, Regen, Outline of our treatment services, at www.regen.org.au/treatment-support
- Drug Law Reform, canberraregion.unitingchurch.org.au/2016/drug-law-reform-update-from-uniting/#more-7339

Anglicare and Uniting are proud partners of Anti-Poverty Week.



About Anglicare

Anglicare is the social justice arm of the Anglican Church, helping the most disadvantaged children and families to hope, heal and thrive so they can lead lives free from poverty.

Anglicare focuses on working with children, young people and families who are homeless or in crisis addressing their immediate physical needs and also supporting their long-term social, emotional, spiritual, educational and financial needs as they work towards a better future where they can thrive. Anglicare supports parents to make sure their children are school ready and then stay engaged with school and post-school training.

Website: anglicare.com.au

About Uniting

At Uniting, we believe in taking real steps to make the world a better place. We work to inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice.

Our not-for-profit services are in the areas of aged care and disability, community services and chaplaincy, and we get involved in social justice and advocacy issues that impact the people we serve. As an organisation we celebrate diversity and welcome all people regardless of lifestyle choices, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation or gender identity.

We're proud to be a community services ministry of the Uniting Church NSW & ACT.

We work in partnership with the Canberra Region Presbytery of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Website: uniting.org

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Romans 12:12

“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

Anglicare

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