

Unison Strategic Plan:

2017–2020

Communities
that thrive

Our vision

Communities that thrive

Our mission

Collaborate to create vibrant, sustainable communities that meet the needs of renters, owners and people who are homeless by developing, managing and providing access to affordable housing.

Our values

We deliver services in line with our organisation's values.

At Unison we value:

- **People**
We put the customer at the heart of what we do, we value each other and welcome diversity.
- **Respect**
We are respectful of all and welcome open and honest discussion.
- **Positivity**
We have a positive and dynamic approach to our work. We embrace change, learn from our mistakes and seek to find solutions.
- **Accountability**
We do what we say we will do.



Introducing Unison

This is the first strategic plan for Unison, the result of a merger between Yarra Community Housing and Urban Communities Limited. Unison provides a diverse range of housing services across Victoria and in Adelaide, including social housing, affordable housing, private rental, and owners corporation services for private owners. We believe that affordable housing is the foundation on which to build a life of value, but that a good life takes more than just housing. A good life takes place in a community.

Unison is one of the largest housing providers in Victoria, managing more than 2500 tenancies. We provide affordable housing, and work to reduce disadvantage and social exclusion for people who have previously been homeless by helping to create communities around them. Unison also assists over 3000 people each year who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Over the life of this strategy our focus will be on providing housing opportunities in areas where people might otherwise be excluded from the housing market. We will develop more mixed tenure properties, so that our housing reflects the diversity of the surrounding community. Using affordable housing as a base, Unison will create communities that are service rich and assist people to create lives they value. This means creating partnerships with other community service organisations, and connections to the wider community.

This strategy will guide Unison to:

- 1. Foster communities to create places for everyone**
- 2. Make places to be proud of**
- 3. Develop effective systems to support creative solutions**
- 4. Grow the supply of affordable housing**
- 5. Create knowledge to change practice, policy and public perception**

The Strategic Plan was created with the involvement of tenants, staff, board members and stakeholders. We drew on the expertise and wisdom of this group through forums, workshops and individual discussions. The final document reflects our shared vision for Unison's future.

At Unison, we believe that diverse communities, that are inclusive to all, are the ones that thrive.

Our customers

Unison provides services to tenants, property owners and clients of our homelessness services. To capture the range of services we provide this document refers to all of these groups as customers.

Where an initiative is specifically targeted to tenants, we refer to tenants.



1.

Foster communities to create places for everyone



Communities thrive because of the efforts and activities of people that live, work and participate in them. A home is the platform for this participation.

To create places that feel like home our work will extend beyond managing tenancies and the physical infrastructure. We will cultivate communities by connecting people to the services and community facilities that promote positive relationships in the home and neighbourhood, and connect people to place. This includes making sure that people experiencing or at risk of homelessness can get access to the information and services they need when they first contact us.

What we'll achieve:

Our tenancy management approach supports tenants and connects communities.

How we'll measure it

We will increase the rate of tenancy sustainment.

Customer feedback mechanisms indicate:

- o Increased overall satisfaction
 - o Increased satisfaction with involvement with the organisation.
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Residents have a range of opportunities for social and economic participation and support to sustain tenancies when it's needed.

An increasing number of tenants access the education, employment and social activities offered.

People experiencing or at risk of homelessness can access services that are responsive to their needs.

Customer feedback mechanisms indicate increased satisfaction with homelessness services.

An increased number of households presenting to our homelessness services secure or sustain housing through Private Rental Brokerage assistance.

Affordable rents and transparent process.

Rent setting processes provide clarity and certainty to residents.

Social housing rents are set at rates that do not exacerbate after housing poverty.

Get timely customer feedback.

New customer feedback mechanisms are implemented and reviewed monthly.

2.

Make places to be proud of



From our experience in placemaking, we have learnt that the quality of places affects how people feel and behave, as well as their overall health and wellbeing. By developing high quality safe and secure housing, delivering excellent maintenance and facility management services, and maintaining shared areas to a high standard, we will deliver homes and places that people can be proud of.

What we'll achieve:

All our housing supports wellbeing and participation.

Our asset management systems create great places to live.

The Unison Enterprise Team grows to create employment opportunities for tenants and deliver high quality cleaning and gardening services.

Our properties and communities are safe and secure.

How we'll measure it

We will convert our rooming house properties with shared facilities to self contained accomodation.

We are consistently meeting Key Performance Measures for asset management.

Customer feedback indicates increased satisfaction with repairs and maintenance.

The number of tenants employed in the Enterprise Team increases.

The number of contracts secured by the Enterprise Team increases.

Customer feedback indicates increased satisfaction with safety and security.



3.

Develop effective systems to support creative solutions



Over the next four years Unison will invest in our internal systems and processes to create the foundation for the organisation to grow.

With systems and tools in place to support staff and the organisation, we'll seek more creative housing solutions for our current and future customers.

What we'll achieve:

Our IT infrastructure and software supports efficient systems and effective practice.

Our staff are flexible and responsive to the wide variety of customer needs.

Our operations are financially sustainable.

How we'll measure it

IT systems are implemented and deliver increased efficiency through system responsiveness, a decrease in overall IT costs and enabling mobile working.

Evaluation of staff training and annual staff surveys indicate that training has improved their confidence and capability to respond to a range of tenant needs.

We will develop and monitor financial performance targets appropriate to our housing mix and tenant group.

We have set aside adequate reserves to maintain properties to a high standard over the long term.

Continued overleaf..

What we'll achieve:

Communicate clearly and effectively.

How we'll measure it

There are a range of ways for customers and staff to communicate with each other including online platforms, regular face to face meetings and increased use of electronic communications including email and SMS.

The use of these channels will be monitored and evaluated.

Tenants have opportunities to participate in our organisation.

Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) provides regular advice to the board on the operational performance of the organisation.

TAG are consulted on all changes to tenancy management and tenancy related maintenance policies prior to implementation.



4.

Grow the supply of affordable housing



Too many households are locked out of communities and places that can offer them a range of choices and opportunities in life.

The shortage of affordable housing in Australia contributes to increased homelessness, housing stress and housing insecurity. We want to create solutions to this problem by growing the supply of affordable housing and creating thriving communities.

What we'll achieve:

Diversify our funding sources by expanding our private business operations.

Seek new funding models to build affordable housing.

Create a financially and socially sustainable model for housing development.

Expand our housing model to more communities.

How we'll measure it

We will double the private tenancy and Owners Corporation management business.

We will have commenced development on at least one building under new financing models.

The housing mix model will guide new investment decisions.

Unison will be a registered Tier 1 Housing provider by 2019-20.



5.

Create knowledge to change practice, policy and public perception



Creating great places is a mix of art and science. To bring rigour and evidence to our activities we have established an applied research partnership with RMIT University.

This partnership will test and trial new ways of working, and expand our understanding of homelessness and urban housing assistance. We will share our research findings to help develop solutions to housing insecurity and homelessness in Victoria and beyond.

We'll use this evidence base, our practice knowledge and our tenants' experience to call for solutions that increase the supply of affordable housing.

What we'll achieve:

Create new solutions to housing insecurity and homelessness.

Be a trusted voice in public and policy debates.

Develop a learning culture.

How we'll measure it

The partnership:

- o informs Government policy making on housing and homelessness, and
- o improves practice and tenant outcomes.

Unison increases the reach and impact of our communication efforts including media, social media and research publications.

Review and evaluation mechanisms are included in annual business planning cycles.

The research partnership provides staff development and learning opportunities.





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