

Annual Report

unison[®]

2018–19



Communities
that thrive

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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

**People
Respect
Positivity
Accountability**

We are Unison

Unison is a not-for-profit organisation that provides a range of services to foster strong communities.

We develop, own and manage social, transitional and affordable housing; and we provide commercial property management, owners corporation management, and cleaning and grounds services.

The people Unison provides housing and property services to, come from many different walks of life, but they all want to live in a safe, welcoming and thriving community. They want to feel supported and connected to their community, and be proud of where they live.

In addition, we provide homelessness services in Melbourne's West. We connect people to safe and affordable short and medium-term accommodation combined with support to address any issues that may have contributed to their tenuous housing situation. We also help people re-establish and maintain a secure home in the private rental market.

We believe that a thriving community needs a range of housing options to suit different people's circumstances and incomes. We manage many different types of housing in Victoria and in Adelaide, from single dwellings to multi-storey towers, from transitional housing to private rental, providing different housing pathways to the community.

As a not-for-profit organisation, we reinvest our operating surplus back into our services, our properties and our communities. Importantly, this allows us to invest in the development of much needed affordable housing. It makes good social sense.

Unison is about more than housing, we are about communities that thrive.

Acknowledgment of Country

Unison acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which our services and properties are located, the Wurundjeri, Wadawurrung and Boonwarrung people of the Kulin Nation, and the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains. We pay our respects to their culture, their customs and to Elders past, present and emerging.

From our Chair and CEO

This year we achieved some outstanding results while continuing to face challenges in light of the current housing crisis.

Our success was driven by a combination of growth, a continued focus on staff development, and the strategic management of our assets, underpinned by our ongoing emphasis on customer commitment.

In 2018-19, we assisted more than 6,000 households through our housing and homelessness services.

Some of Unison's key achievements include:

- o The re-accreditation of our homelessness and transitional housing services against the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Standards. We passed the external audit with flying colours, receiving excellent feedback about our staff and the quality of our services.
- o More than 1,500 households assisted to secure or maintain their homes in the private rental market through our Private Rental Assistance Program, funded by DHHS.
- o 32 new households housed in Melbourne's west thanks to our new partnerships with the H3 Wyndham Alliance and Sacred Heart Mission.

- o The high satisfaction rate from our tenants highlighted in the results of our 2019 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, reflecting the work we have done over the past couple of years on the quality of our services and our properties.
- o The National Leading Community Engagement Practice Award received at the AHI 2019 Professional Excellence in Housing awards ceremony for our Community Food Forest, in Kensington.
- o 100 modern, self-contained units in our development pipeline for social housing around Melbourne.
- o The growth of our Social Enterprise team which supplies cleaning and grounds work at a number of our sites and improved services to our owners corporation and private rental customers.
- o The two research reports released by Unison Housing Research Lab, an innovative education and research collaboration with RMIT University, which inform data-driven best practice in the sector.

This year's annual report truly reflects the incredible work undertaken by Unison's staff working in line with our strategic direction, values and vision. We would like to acknowledge and thank our dedicated staff, valued partners, Board, Tenant Advisory Group, tenants and service users.

As one of Victoria's largest providers of housing and homelessness services, we continue to advocate for the people desperately waiting for a safe place to call home. We are clear that Unison has a role to play to influence meaningful change. We partner and work with many community organisations to advance this cause, maintain a constant dialogue with State Government and deliver evidence-based research in the sector via the Unison Housing Research Lab.

This year, we welcomed initiatives from both the Australian and Victorian Governments to support the sector.

For instance, the *Homes for Victorians* government policy started being rolled out through initiatives such as the Social Housing Growth Fund and low-cost loans for registered housing associations, which will help boost the supply of social and affordable housing.

At the end of June 2019 however, more than 40,000 households were still waiting to access social housing in Victoria. This includes over 20,000 households who are on a priority category, which means their need for housing is critical.

Increasing the supply of social housing is the single, most important factor in preventing and solving homelessness. We need all levels of government to work together with social housing providers to take

a bipartisan approach to the issue. We call on the Federal Government to develop a national housing strategy with outcomes similar to Nation Building rolled out between 2006 and 2009, and to commit to delivering 300,000 social and affordable homes around the country.

We also believe that classifying social housing as infrastructure offers a solution to the issue, and that governments should be investing in social housing as a form of essential infrastructure that warrants public investment.

We look forward to another year, as we continue to advocate for more social housing and strengthen the organisation to deliver the best possible outcomes for our people and our community.



Ian McHutchison
OAM, Chair



Ed Holmes,
CEO

Our Board

Our Board of Directors bring considerable and varied experience to the organisation. Together they provide stewardship and strategic direction, governing the organisation on behalf of members.

Ian McHutchison OAM, Chair

Appointed director November 2015

Ian has legal expertise and was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for services to the community in 2009.

Jane Hunt, Deputy Chair

Appointed director November 2014

Jane brings a wealth of knowledge with an emphasis on social entrepreneurship, strategic planning and governance.

Lou Panaccio

Appointed director April 2013

Lou is a chartered accountant with strong management experience in business and healthcare services.

Yvonne Turner

Appointed director December 2014

Yvonne shares her expertise in business management, strategic planning, marketing and new business development in both commercial and not-for-profit.

Barry Diamond

Appointed director March 2015, resigned in March 2019

Barry brought his considerable financial management expertise to advise Unison on our finances and audits.

Caz Healy

Appointed director November 2015

Caz has extensive leadership and executive management experience, working in the community sector at strategic levels.

Barry Shepherd

Appointed director May 2016

Barry has over 40 years' experience in the property industry and is critical in guiding Unison's asset management and developments.

Michelle Crawford

Appointed director October 2017

Michelle has overseen programs in the areas of microfinance, financial inclusion, employment, education, and training, including partnerships with corporates, government, donors and various community organisations domestically and internationally.

Daniel Carter

Appointed director December 2018

Daniel offers contemporary strategic planning and IT skills tailored to the social services sector.



Unison Board

L-R back: Barry Shepherd, Jane Hunt,
Daniel Carter, Michelle Crawford, Lou Panaccio

L-R front: Ian McHutchison OAM (Chair),
Yvonne Turner

Our Strategic Direction

Unison's vision is *Communities that thrive*. To help create that vision, Unison's strategic plan focuses on five key directions that guide our work.



Foster communities to create places for everyone

To create places that feel like home, our work extends beyond managing tenancies and buildings. We cultivate communities by connecting people to services and community activities.

Regular resident meetings and community activities, such as lunches, homework clubs, community planting days and cultural celebrations, are part of our community building initiatives. In addition, we work in partnership with a broad range of local community organisations to provide support to our tenants and facilitate community engagement.

With our clients in mind, our homelessness service in Werribee had a makeover in early 2019. Part of the refurbishment project included the creation of a family room to provide a safe and welcoming space for families and their children.



Make places to be proud of

From our experience in placemaking, we have learned that a well-maintained home affects people's overall health and wellbeing. We are proud that 80% of our residents are satisfied with the condition of their home, as reported in our 2019 Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Moreover, 82% of tenants who had repairs done in 2018-19 were satisfied with the quality of the repair we carried out in their home.

Meanwhile, our Rooming House Renewal Program is progressing well. Construction is well underway for the replacement of two ageing properties that are being re-developed and transformed into modern, self-contained units in Melbourne's inner west, and inner north.



Develop effective systems to support creative solutions

This year, we undertook a project to refresh and consolidate our asset data to inform our Strategic Asset Management Plan.

We developed a communications strategy to support, enhance and promote engagement with internal and external stakeholders.



Kensington, Victoria



Grow the supply of affordable housing

The shortage of affordable housing in Australia contributes to increased homelessness, housing stress and housing insecurity. This year, we partnered with DHHS, Uniting Wyndham (H3 Wyndham Alliance) and Sacred Heart Mission (Journey To Social Inclusion) to source properties in the private rental market and headlease them to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This has resulted in an additional 32 households being housed in Melbourne's west.



Create knowledge to change practice, policy and public perception

Now in its third year, the Unison Housing Research Lab continues to undertake innovative housing and homelessness research to inform policy and practice. In the first half of 2019, the Lab released two research reports examining occupancy patterns at Unison which provide many important learnings for governments and social housing providers.

We're also increasing the profile of housing and homelessness issues with media coverage in major news outlets.

Tenant Advisory Group Report

Unison's Tenancy Advisory Group (TAG) is made up of 11 tenants from different ages, backgrounds and communities. TAG provides feedback and advice to Unison about how to best meet the needs of our tenants.

TAG meets every two months with the Unison CEO and Board members in attendance. In 2019, TAG recruited six new members making it our third version of TAG.

Our eleven TAG members are

Frank Otis, Convenor
Ahmed Dahir
John Gordon
Madeleine Heaven
Jennifer Hodgson
Tuan Ibrahim
Erika Lodge
Carol Mogan
Jo Robinson
Ros Sultan
Dorothy Woolcock

Our achievements this year include

- o Assisted Unison to refine the waste management process
- o Provided input to tenant newsletters
- o Provided feedback on the new rent policy
- o Members made themselves available to be interviewed by RMIT students as part of the RMIT Interdisciplinary Subject focussing on housing and homelessness
- o Began working with Unison staff to develop pathways to assist with welcoming and supporting new tenants, especially those who have come to Unison from an experience of homelessness
- o Refined meeting guidelines

An important part of my job is to encourage people to speak up and have the confidence to have a say. TAG gives us a forum to contribute and talk about what is working and what needs attention. Sometimes the quietest people have the best ideas.

Each version of TAG has had something special to offer. I want to thank past, present and future members of TAG for making it such a success.

Frank Otis, Convenor



TAG members L–R: Jo Robinson, Ahmed Dahir, Frank Otis, Madeleine Heaven, Tuan Ibrahim, Dorothy Woolcock

Our Services

At Unison, our customers are at the heart of what we do. Here is an overview of the services we provide:

Housing services

Unison provides a range of social and affordable safe, long-term accommodation for people who are on a low income. We currently manage 2,119 social and affordable properties across Victoria and Adelaide, including rooming houses, standalone units and apartments in multi-storey buildings. We are committed to providing housing for the most vulnerable members of our community, many of whom have histories of homelessness and complex needs. Our homes offer security of tenure and cater for all household types, including single people, youth, seniors, couples and families. Our Place Management team is at the heart of the delivery of our housing services and works with our tenants to make them feel at home and help them connect with support services and the community.

Homelessness services

Unison provides two access points for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Melbourne's west. We connect people to safe and affordable short and medium-term accommodation; as well as refer them to support services to assist with addressing issues that may have contributed to their unstable housing situation. We provide a range

of services, funded by DHHS. One of them is a Private Rental Assistance Program, which supports people to secure or maintain private rental accommodation through information, advocacy and outreach support. We also manage 279 transitional housing properties for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in western Melbourne.

Private rental management

As a licensed real estate agency, Unison leases and manages a range of market rental properties in Melbourne and Adelaide, on behalf of private investors.

Owners corporation management

Unison is a registered Owners Corporation management company. We manage residential and commercial properties in Melbourne and Adelaide, on behalf of owner occupiers, private investors and government. The lots we manage as part of Owners Corporation management are in our mixed tenure communities.

Social enterprise property service

As part of the commercial property services we offer, our Enterprise team provides domestic and commercial cleaning, and grounds maintenance services in Melbourne.



Unison resident Nathan
Fitzroy, Victoria



Our Property Portfolio

We manage **2,550** properties.

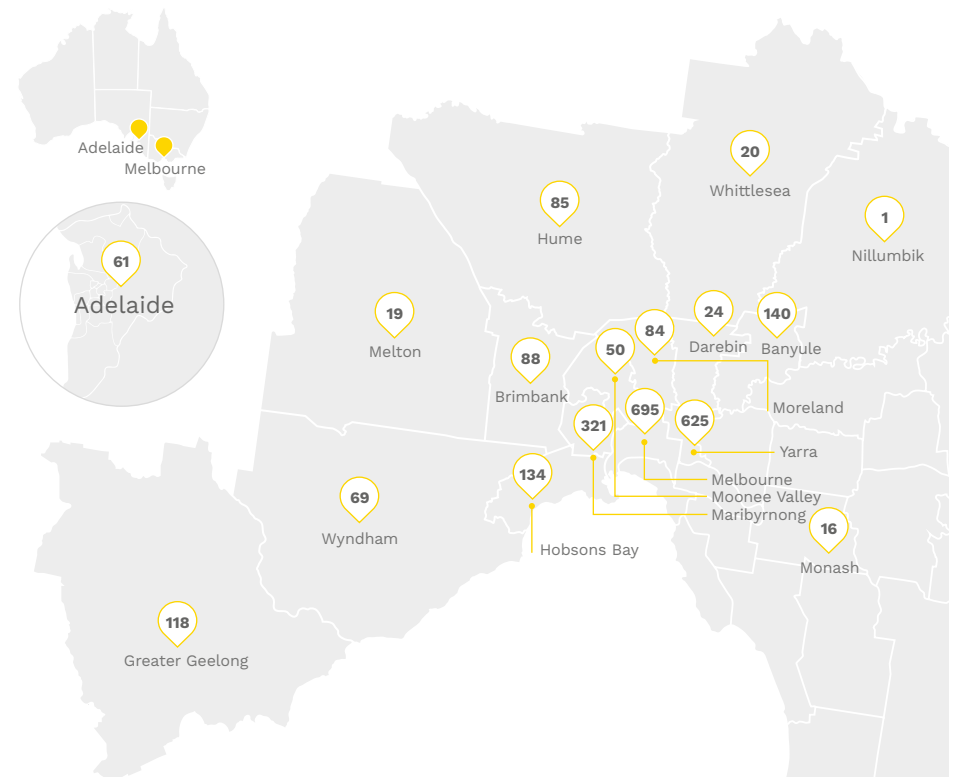
1,717
social housing properties
(incl 433 public housing properties)

402
affordable housing properties

152
private rentals

279
transitional housing properties for
people exiting homelessness

2,550 Property Locations



Altona, Victoria



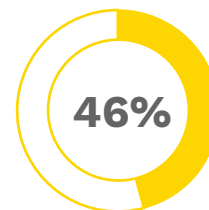
Ikram, Amran and Khadra
celebrating our community
at the Kensington
Community Festival

Our Tenants

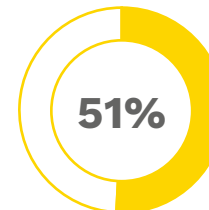
Tenant demographics*

Gender

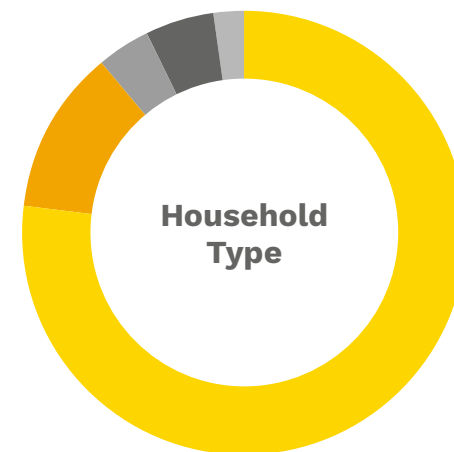
Female



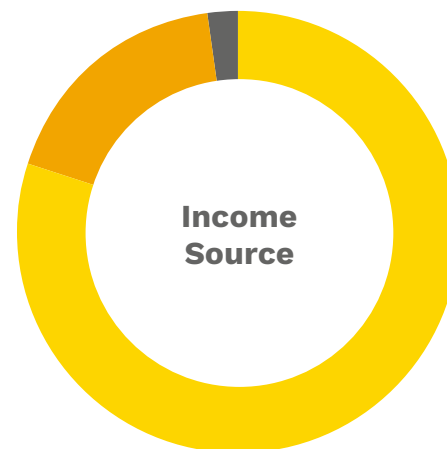
Male



Other 3%



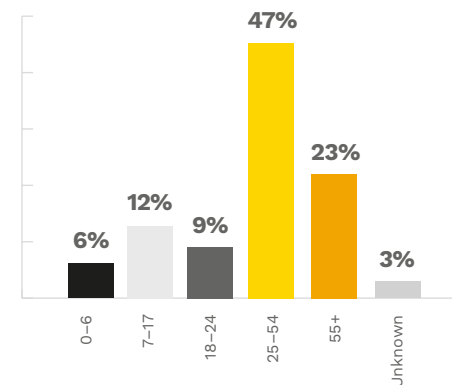
- Single person 77%
- Sole parent family with children 12%
- Couple 4%
- Couple with children 5%
- Group 2%



- Centrelink 80%
- Wages 18%
- Other 2%

5% households identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Age Range



* known data, excludes tenants from Adelaide and from private rentals

Housing Services Update

Unison is one of ten registered housing associations in Victoria. We are committed to ensuring the people we house gain access to the support, resources, and opportunities needed to sustain their housing, build a sense of home and participate in the wider community. We do this through effective partnerships and connections with specialist organisations.

Our housing service is delivered within a Tenancy Management Practice Framework, to facilitate a sense of connection and community engagement.

In 2018-19, we provided long-term social and affordable housing to

2,365 households.

First on the Victorian Housing Register

In November 2018, Unison was the first housing association to sign up to the Victorian Housing Register – a single central waiting list for people wanting to access social housing across Victoria.

Success for our headleasing programs

This year, Unison partnered with DHHS, the H3 Wyndham Alliance and Sacred Heart Mission to headlease properties from the private rental market and sublet them to people disadvantaged in the private rental market. Tenants in our headleased properties are supported to sustain their tenancies and pay subsidised rent. This program has provided a housing outcome for 32 households in Melbourne's west.

Good results for our tenant satisfaction survey

In 2019, we conducted a survey with our tenants to assess their level of satisfaction and provide a platform for feedback. The overall trend is positive with the overall satisfaction rate going up by 4 points to 77% in the last five years. 80% of our tenants are satisfied with their homes, and 82% of the tenants who requested repairs are satisfied with the quality of the repairs carried out in their homes.



Kensington, Victoria

Homelessness Services Update

Funded by the DHHS, Unison's Initial Assessment and Planning (IAP) services include assessment of housing and support needs, referral to crisis, transitional or longer-term accommodation and specialist support services, as well as advocacy and financial assistance to individuals and families in a housing crisis.

The Unison IAP service provided assistance to

3,557 unique households in 2018-19.

Just over 70% of people assisted by Unison were homeless on first contact.

We provided transitional housing to

347 households.

Private Rental Access Program (PRAP)

In a tight housing market, where social and affordable housing are in such short supply, we need to be looking towards the private rental market as one part of the solution to homelessness. Unison receives funding from the State Government to deliver the PRAP which provides practical support and financial assistance to help people secure or sustain private rental tenancies. Organisations like Unison work closely with private real estate agents to prevent eviction and to reduce the time families spend in the homeless population by getting families into homes quickly.

In 2018-19, Unison's PRAP assisted 1,562 households. That's an increase of 47% compared to 2017-18.

The Unison Housing Research Lab has commenced an evaluation of our PRAP program which will aim to identify the sustainability of PRAP outcomes over time. The evaluation will be finalised in late 2019.



Rachael, Private Rental Access Program Team Leader

Transitional Housing

Unison manages 279 transitional housing properties in western Melbourne. These properties provide temporary accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Melbourne's west. Unison works in close collaboration with a broad range of homelessness support services in the region to ensure that transitional housing tenants have the support they need to manage a successful tenancy and find permanent long-term housing that is safe and affordable.

Successfully re-accredited

Unison's homelessness programs were successfully re-accredited against the Human Services Standards and received outstanding feedback. In particular, Unison staff were commended for their positive, client-centric approach and their commitment to the provision of a quality service. Auditors Global Mark noted in their audit report: "There was strong evidence that Unison staff have developed and are nurturing their connections to local support networks and that the team are going above and beyond expectations of their Service Agreements. The service is exceeding targets in most programs."

Community Building Update

Community building initiatives are an important aspect of our work. Underpinned by our vision of *Communities that thrive*, we partner with organisations with shared values to foster social inclusion, neighbourhood connection, and health and wellbeing.

Congratulations to our award winners

There are many people living in our communities doing great work. We congratulate this year's award winners on being recognised for their contribution to their communities.

- o Erika Lodge, who won the Molly Hadfield Award, a Victorian Government Social Housing Volunteer Award, in recognition of outstanding services to older tenants.
- o Hamida Abdi, who won the Victoria in Bloom award for Best Community or Common Area Garden.
- o Xiao Mei Zhou, who received a Victorian Multicultural Award for Excellence recognising her extraordinary work with the Chinese community.

Community gardens

Ranging from large plots of vegies and flowers, to lush rooftop gardens, and planter boxes with seasonal produce, gardens across our communities connect people from the neighbourhood with a shared interest

and provide a great opportunity for outdoor activity, exercise and, of course, fresh food.

We were honoured that our Kensington Community Food Forest won the National AHI Professional Excellence in Housing award for Leading Community Engagement Practice.

Get togethers

Regular resident meetings, game nights, excursions, cooking classes, community barbecues and luncheons are just a few examples of activities that enable residents to get together. Communities celebrate significant times of the year with events, such as NAIDOC Week gatherings, Easter Egg hunts, Grand Final barbecues, Cultural Diversity Week meals and school holiday programs. The Kensington Community Festival is a much-anticipated neighbourhood event organised with the Kensington Community Network.

Creativity

Young and older creatives in our communities can realise their passion whether it be in an art group, singing group or event such as visits to art galleries. Youngsters in our Broadmeadows community can take part in the kids' art program run by our partner MOSS; and Unison funds a weekly radio program Roominations on 3CR dedicated to housing and homelessness issues.



Kensington Chinese Friendship Association Choir performing at the Kensington Community Festival

Exercise

Residents have access to a range of exercise activities to promote healthy living and wellbeing, and encourage social interactions. These include Tai Chi, soccer, walking, table tennis, and pool competitions.

Education and learning

Information sessions were held throughout the year with topics including community safety, education, employment, voting at elections and applying to be on the Victorian Housing Register. School holiday and after-school programs offer fun activities and homework assistance. For instance, our Somali community has a weekly language and cultural education program, and a weekly Arabic Language School is run for children.

The Sorghum Sisters, a catering social enterprise located in one of our communities offers employment and training pathways for a number of our community members.

300+
Get togethers

50
Community initiatives

\$89,000
Community building leveraged funding

Meet Unison Resident, Victoria

Victoria says that she has been born three times.

The first time as a baby in Iraq. The second time when she arrived safely in Australia as a refugee. The third time when she moved into her lovely unit in Reservoir where she is independent, safe, cooks and bakes, befriends her neighbours and sleeps well. “My home is heaven,” she says.

Victoria spent time in Jordan after escaping Iraq before being assisted by the UN to settle in Australia as a refugee. She is safe in Australia, however her health is not good and her housing situation has been difficult.

Although she has relatives here, things didn’t work out with Victoria living with them. She moved around, finally ending up in a less than optimum housing situation where she was robbed a number of times and assaulted. Police called to the site linked Victoria to a support worker, who reached out to Unison to find Victoria a suitable and safe home. Which we did.

Victoria now volunteers at the Vinnies Op Shop to socialise and learn English. Happy and proud of her new home, she loves decorating and looking after it.

Victoria’s story is just one of the many we have heard. Each is unique, but they all have one thing in common: a restored sense of connection and belonging fostered by having a safe place to call home.



Unison resident, Victoria

Research Update

The Unison Housing Research Lab is a unique education and research collaboration between RMIT University and Unison Housing. The Lab is funded for five years to undertake innovative housing and homelessness research informed by the experiences of services users and providers. Together, we are building a strong body of work, steeped in academic rigour and engagement with both staff and service users, which will be a solid evidence base on which to continue to build Unison's practice.

The Lab's research program is built around its flagship project – *Maximising Impact: a longitudinal study of social, affordable and transitional housing*. The study examines how environmental, social and biographical factors drive or hinder tenancy sustainment and satisfaction, as well as community and economic participation. This project involves surveying 300 new residents over four years, and the second round of interviews has already begun.

Led by Professor Guy Johnson and Dr Juliet Watson, our team expanded in 2019. We welcomed Erin Tyrrell, a part-time research assistant, thanks to funding from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation; and Dr Sarah Taylor, our new postdoctoral research fellow and project leader. Both of our doctoral students, Fiona Carey and Sue McCallum, have been busy doing field work. Sue, who is

researching the process of 'settling in', has completed a number of in-depth interviews with new tenants, and Fiona has started ethnographic work examining the social mix in two apartment blocks managed by Unison.

In early 2019, the Lab released a research report investigating occupancy patterns at Unison Housing. The report, *Who stays, who leaves and why? (2019)*, identified four groups at risk of early tenancy loss – young people, Indigenous households, residents who were homeless or in institutional accommodation prior to allocation, and those in rooming houses. It recommended that Unison strengthen relationships with key support agencies that work with these groups, as well as consider ways to improve data collection, particularly of the circumstances and social characteristics of tenants.

The Lab also published a report examining the most recent 12 months of tenancy data and comparing this with data collected between 2014 and 2016. Overall retention rates were the highest recorded since 2014. We noted that this was largely due to stability in long-term tenancies with over 80% remaining intact at the end of 2017. As with previous years, tenancies that ended within a 12-month period tended to do so because of negative reasons. The relationship between early tenancy loss and negative exits remains strong, suggesting that proactive



Sue McCallum, Dr Sarah Taylor and Fiona Carey from the Unison Housing Research Lab

engagement with high-risk tenancies may be beneficial to tenancy sustainment and better outcomes for tenants, Unison, and the broader community.

In 2019, the Lab also delivered Australia's first undergraduate university course on homelessness. Drawing on industry experience and the latest research produced by the Lab and by scholars around the world, this course introduces students to the contemporary context of homelessness in Australia through the exploration of current theory, policy and practice frameworks.

The partnership is making steady progress and has established a solid foundation for future research. In the next 12 months, building on the data collection and analysis underway, the Lab will release a number of reports and think pieces to support evidence-based understanding of sustainability and satisfaction, program evaluation and data-driven decision making.

You can find all the Unison Housing Research Lab's reports at unison.org.au/publications

Asset Management Update

As one of the largest community housing providers in Victoria, Unison develops, owns and manages a range of affordable and social housing.

As custodians of our buildings, our Asset Management team oversees all repairs and maintenance to make sure that our residents' homes, located in 217 different properties across Melbourne, Greater Geelong and Adelaide, are maintained to a high standard. They also manage our new developments and asset upgrades.

91% of urgent maintenance requests were addressed within 24 hours

In 2018–19, we worked with **41** external property service contractors

100 units are in our development pipeline

Better systems for faster results

In 2018–19, we consolidated our asset data, including lifecycle capital expenditure liabilities, development assessments, and property strategies. This project saw a condition-assessor apply barcodes to maintainable assets

to improve tracking of repairs and upgrades to plant and equipment. The outcomes of the project – accurate datasets and dashboard reports with rich-quality information – ensure Unison can make well-informed asset-related strategy decisions.

Safe homes

Unison is committed to providing a safe living environment for our tenants. We are progressing rectification works to address flammable Aluminium Composite Panel Cladding in our properties, in line with Victorian legislation.

We continue to improve our management of maintenance and repairs requests through our 24/7 Help Desk. This has a positive impact on our tenants with 87% of the residents who made a request satisfied that their call was answered in a timely manner and that staff were helpful and attentive.

New development and assets upgrades

As part of our Rooming House Renewal Program, we are in the process of transforming two ageing properties into new modern buildings with self-contained units on the fringe of Melbourne's CBD. In Footscray, we have demolished an ageing 17-unit block and are replacing it with 54 brand new modern, self-contained units. While in Fairfield, we



Solar panels installed on one of our properties

are working on the transformation of a 22-bedroom rooming house into a new building of 38 self-contained units for single women. Designed with our residents in mind, the new buildings will provide safe communal spaces to encourage community connections.

These projects are respectively supported by the Victorian Government, with a funding contribution provided from the Victorian Property Fund on the approval of the Minister for Consumer Affairs; and by DHHS.

With funding granted to Unison under the H3 Wyndham Alliance (Health, Housing & Homelessness) Construction Program, we have secured a site in Werribee, Victoria, and are currently in the planning stages for an 8-unit development designed for homeless

young people in the City of Wyndham. Construction is due to commence early 2020.

Sustainability

With funding from the Victorian Property Fund Environmentally Sustainable Housing Round, Unison invested in the installation of Solar PV systems to 17 multi-occupancy properties in our portfolio. Not only will this solar project reduce our carbon footprint, it will also help cut electricity costs at multi-occupancy properties.

Unison also undertook assessments of stand-alone properties and subsequently secured further funding through Sustainability Victoria and Solar Victoria to deliver installations at approximately 40 additional properties.

Commercial Property Services Update

In addition to homelessness and social housing, Unison delivers a host of services to private market clients. We operate services in private rental real estate, owners corporation management, cleaning and grounds maintenance. Our commercial services are about more than bricks and mortar – they're about people, place and community. 2018-19 has been a busy year as we continued to grow and kick goals.

Focus on service delivery

Our focus this year has been on building strong relationships with our customers. We have an overarching commitment to provide high quality customer service, as reflected in our Customer Commitment.

We pride ourselves in offering a skilled and professional response to meet the needs of our clients.

Solution-driven

Local government recognised our pro-active risk management, asset compliance and customer service in relation to the support we provided our owners corporations to navigate risks associated with cladding.

We also led a rectification project for major water ingress issues. This involved collaborating with local council on common drainage solutions, while separately working with each owner affected towards all-round water ingress building solutions.

Expansion of our Social Enterprise Property Service

The Social Enterprise team is providing more services to more customers. We are scaling up our capacity, creating more work opportunities in our community, including by supporting staff with a disability to gain employment and build skills. The team secured an additional eight contracts for cleaning and grounds maintenance in 2018-19.

Training has been a priority, as we aim to support our Social Enterprise staff build professional capability. Our team is currently 14 strong, and growing.

795 lots under
Owners Corporation
management

152 private
rentals managed

33 contracts for our
cleaning and grounds
maintenance services

Meet our Social Enterprise Property Service team

Unison's Social Enterprise Property Service provides domestic and commercial cleaning, and grounds maintenance services in Melbourne, with some team members also residents of Unison.

The Enterprise team aims to create employment pathways for people from diverse backgrounds. It can be difficult to secure work in a competitive labour market, with barriers such as cultural background, lack of local references or limited awareness of local employment services. Our goal is to make a positive social impact by helping our team build the skills and experience they need to pursue sustainable employment in the workforce.

Employment means far more than just having a job; it means connecting with community, finding financial independence, and regaining a sense of purpose.

Randy is one of the Enterprise's long-standing team members. He lives and works at the Unison-managed Kensington estate. Randy prides himself on knowing the residents and the Kensington site very well, which is a valuable asset to both the service and the community.

"The job means everything," Randy said. "We have a great team and the work keeps me motivated and active. I look out for the place and want to keep it looking beautiful because I live here."



Joseph, Enterprise
Team Member

Joseph is one of the team's gardeners and has been with Unison for the last seven years. "I spend my time in the gardens with my teammate Randy, at five of our properties. I look after the gardens to make sure they are well presented including mowing, pruning, weeding and tidying up," Joseph said.

"For me, the best part about working at Unison in the Enterprise team is discovering yourself, helping others and helping to grow Unison."

Coporate Services Update

The Corporate Services team is our organisation’s backbone. The team incorporates Finance, Information Technology, Communications, and Risk and Compliance.

Together, they play a key role in developing the systems and processes and providing information to guide and support our organisation.

Improving our processes

This year, we focused on strengthening our processes and increasing efficiency in our Finance department. Our IT team developed and rolled out a number of initiatives to streamline processes, reduce paper-based information sharing and harness the power of digital workflows. This is helping to boost the reporting and analysis capacity of our Finance team.

Strengthening communications

We recognise the importance of engagement with internal and external stakeholders, which is why this year we invested in an additional full-time role in communications. Our Communications team’s goals are to effectively inform, empower and educate customers and staff, to promote our mission and work to a wide range of audiences, to have a voice in public and policy debates and to advocate for our sector.

Transitioning to a new telephony model

The NBN roll out across Australia means the progressive disconnection of traditional landlines. This infrastructure change required Unison to review the way we manage telephony across the organisation and to find a solution to continue to be able to receive and make calls. Unison decided to move to a mix of internet and mobile telephony to fit the needs of a largely mobile workforce. Implementation of the new model will take place over 2019-20.

Financial Operations Summary

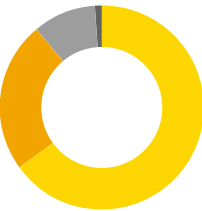
For the year ended 30 June 2019, Unison delivered an operating surplus of \$2.7 million.

Unison is in a sound financial position. Positive factors influencing good performance include stable vacancy rates for social tenancies and the fact our commercial services are achieving consistent profitability.

A decrease in revenue associated with fewer tenancies was matched by a proportional decrease in expenses.

Notable changes in operating income and expenses include a sharp increase in insurance costs reflecting market conditions and investment in consultants to develop a Strategic Asset Management Plan.

The results below do not include capital grants received for development programs and solar projects or profit on the sale of McKean St property.



Operating Income

Rental Income	\$15,709,815	65%
Grant Income	\$5,884,545	24%
Management Income	\$2,447,103	10%
Other Revenue	\$201,303	1%
Total	\$24,242,766	



Operating Expenses

Staff Expenses	\$8,738,253	41%
Housing Program Expenses	\$8,171,348	38%
Organisational Operating Expenses	\$2,580,547	12%
Brokerage Program Expenses	\$2,082,483	10%
Total	\$21,572,631	

Our Team



Behind all the work we do is a team of 108 talented and passionate people, who share a collective vision for the organisation’s future.

Championing diversity and equality

At Unison, we value and promote diversity, and recognise the abilities and contributions of all. We are an equal opportunity employer, and welcome people of any culture, ethnic background, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation and ability in our team. We support flexible working

arrangements: 18% of our workforce works part-time to suit their personal needs.

In 2018-19, Unison submitted its second Workplace Equality Gender Report, under the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012. We are proud of the gender balance of our team with 59% of Unison’s workforce identifying as women and 41% as men.

Building awareness

This year, our staff attended Aboriginal Culture Awareness training to increase our cultural knowledge and competence and enable us to work effectively and respond to the needs of a culturally diverse population.

As an inclusive workplace and organisation, the Unison team also undertook LGBTIQ+ awareness training to meaningfully and respectfully engage with people and help overcome barriers to accessing services.

Celebrating longevity and loyalty

In 2019, 30% of our staff had been with the organisation for over five years, with one employee celebrating 14 years in the organisation. Our CEO was proud to present our long-serving staff with awards and certificates acknowledging their tremendous contribution to the organisation at a recent all staff meeting.

Fostering a positive team culture

With staff located across 13 offices spanning over two states and different services and teams, it can be a challenge to get to know each other. We work with each other to establish a collaborative, productive workplace where people are happy and proud to work. To help build this people-centred culture, we regularly organise professional and social events to encourage interactions, relationship-building and greater awareness of other parts of the business.

Our Social Club, a committee of staff from all levels of the organisation also sets up social get-togethers that all staff are invited to. It’s a great opportunity for employees to meet and mingle outside of the workplace while promoting staff morale.



- Housing & Homelessness
- Commercial Property Services
- Corporate Services
- Asset Management
- People & Culture
- CEO Team

Thank you

Partnerships are critical to our work and help us achieve more than we could working alone. We say thank you to our valued partners.

Funders

We acknowledge the contribution of our major funding partners in 2018-19:

City of Melbourne
Consumer Affairs Victoria
Department of Health and Human Services (Vic)
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Department of Human Services (SA)
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
Solar Victoria
Yarra City Council

Community Partners

3CR Community Radio Station
78 Seniors Club Inc
Aboriginal Family Support Services (SA)
Adelaide West End Association
AMES Australia
ARBIAS Inc
Australian Services Union
Barwon, Children Youth and Families
Bolton Clarke Homeless Persons' Program
cohealth
Connie Benn Centre
Corrections Victoria
Cultivating Community
Foodbank
Good Shepherd
H3 Wyndham Alliance
Hotham Mission
Hutt Street Centre
iEmpower
Independence Australia
Indo Chinese Elderly Refugee Association
Jesuit Social Services
Kensington Adventure Playground (The Venny)
Kensington Association
Kensington Child and Youth Committee
Kensington Chinese Friendship Association
Kensington Community Children's Co-Operative

Kensington Community Network
Kensington Community Recreation Centre
Kensington Forest Care Team
Kensington Neighbourhood House
Laos Association
Latitude: Directions for Young People
Launch Housing
Lighthouse Foundation
Living Learning Australia
Melbourne City Mission
Merri Health
Merri Outreach Support Service (MOSS)
MIND
Multicultural Youth South Australia
RMIT University
Sacred Heart Mission
SecondBite
Service to Youth Council (SA)
Somali Women's Development Association
Somali Women's Language and Cultural group
St John of God
St John's Youth Services
St Mary's House of Welcome
Tenants Victoria
The Drum Youth Services
The Salvation Army – Homeless Case Management Services
The Salvation Army – Crisis Centre St Kilda
The Vinnies (SA)
Uniting Communities (SA)
Uniting Wyndham
VACRO (Victorian Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders)
Victorian Building Authority
Victorian Electoral Commission
Victorian Multicultural Commission
Victoria Police
Weekend Arabic Language School
Wombat Housing Services
Women's Health West
YSAS (Youth Support and Advocacy Service)

Peak Bodies

Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA)
Victoria
Council to Homeless Persons
PowerHousing Australia
Victorian Council of Social Services

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