



UNITED WAY AUSTRALIA:
2021-2025
STRATEGIC PLAN



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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

“ Everything we do is in collaboration with others. The reason we take this approach is because we understand ‘community’ and we appreciate we all need to work together to see systemic improvement in child and youth outcomes ”

The United Way Australia (UWA) 2021-2025 Strategy builds on our success developing collaborations across Australia to help children and young people thrive.

On behalf of the UWA Board, I am delighted to introduce our strategic initiatives to guide our work over the next five years.

Childhood is an important time for healthy development, learning, and establishing the foundations for future success. Compared to many countries, Australian children are generally healthy, safe and doing well. However, opportunity does not present itself equally and universally. Childhood is a time of vulnerability and a child’s outcomes can vary depending on where they live and their family’s circumstances.

The first five years of a child’s life are critically important for brain development. What happens in that first five years can have a profound impact on the next 80 years. That is why we focus on early literacy, early childhood development and school readiness.

Our work naturally extends to workforce readiness. In 2020 one in ten young Australians are unemployed. In many communities, one in five young people is unemployed. While the education system is doing its best to prepare our youth for life after school, a large proportion of our

young people do not make the transition to full-time education, training or employment well. As connectors, UWA brings corporate employees and youth together to explore the jobs of the future and empower students to confidently prepare for the workforce.

Everything we do is in collaboration with others. The reason we take this approach is because we understand the importance of ‘community’ and we appreciate we all need to work together to see systemic improvement in child and youth outcomes. We acknowledge the valuable support we receive from hundreds of organisations and individuals across government, business, philanthropy, community and the non-profit sector. Together we can multiply our impact.

Our strategy articulates the vision we aspire to and how we will achieve it. We are really pleased with the impact we have made to Australian communities for more than 50 years, but we have so much more to do and we look forward to working with you to achieve our vision.

Liz Dibbs
Chairman

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FROM THE CEO

“ In this strategy document, we set the direction for the team as we pursue the goal that all children, not just those born in more affluent postcodes READ, LEARN and then SUCCEED in life. ”

Across Australia, one in five children begins school developmentally vulnerable (AEDC: 2018). In many communities, one in three children starts school behind. Unfortunately, research shows many of these children will never catch up; resulting in a higher risk of poor educational, health and income outcomes in the years beyond. Australia, the lucky country, must set a much higher bar to ensure all children are given an equal chance for life success.

UWA is a grass-roots community focused organisation. We get to see what's really happening in communities across Australia. In a changing world, many families are increasingly becoming socially isolated and children are not getting the opportunities they need to thrive. In some communities we work, only half the children attend pre-school, most children don't get health development checks before school, and the number of children reported as being at Risk of Significant Harm is double the national average.

Our 2021-2025 Strategy builds on the foundation laid by our previous five-year strategic initiatives. We remain focused on the early, critical life stages. We also continue to believe in harnessing the power of collective effort. Our role is to bring community together focused on common goals, and to help organisations flourish at the things they do best.

Our Ready to Read program helps local community groups, libraries and kindergartens connect families with early literacy materials and events. Our corporate partners mentor local high school students in the jobs of the future. In one vulnerable community, we provide a backbone to other partners collaborating to help children start school well. Everything we do is focused on bringing people together, using evidence-based approaches, and empowering communities to support the development and well-being of the next generation.

In this strategy document, we set the direction for the team as we pursue the goal that all children, not just those born in more affluent postcodes, READ, LEARN and the SUCCEED in life.

Clayton Noble
Chief Executive Officer

United
Way



OUR PURPOSE



BELIEF

A child's chance of success should not be limited by their postcode.



VISION

Together, we can ensure *all* Australian children **READ, LEARN** and **SUCCEED**.



PURPOSE

United Way Australia prepares children to succeed.

We bring together all who can make a difference, starting with local communities.



OUR ASPIRATIONAL GOAL

Over five years we will help 40,000 Australian children and young people to **READ, LEARN** and **SUCCEED**.

COLLABORATION

United Way Australia brings together all who can make a difference.



COMMUNITIES

The most effective, meaningful change takes place when authentic community engagement happens. Our approach is grass-roots and collaborative; we create opportunities for community partners and residents to be leaders in the change. Solving complex social issues requires a collective effort and UWA brings all the players together in a structured way.



GOVERNMENT

Governments play a significant role in supporting communities; but we all know that “it takes a village to raise a child.” UWA helps hundreds of communities prepare their children for school. In some communities, our collective work also helps inform government on better ways of communicating and delivering services in a way that makes sense for residents and achieves impact.



BUSINESS

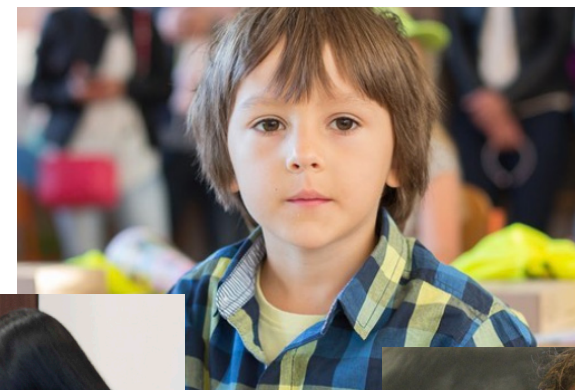
Our business partners are committed to playing their part in society. We leverage the skills and passionate commitment of businesses and their employees to make a difference in the communities in which we work, particularly in locations experiencing social vulnerability. Bringing business and community together is a core component to maximising our impact.

ABOUT US

We are passionate about supporting children and young people at critical life stages. Our key initiative, **READ LEARN SUCCEED**, operates across many geographically and culturally diverse communities. Development of early literacy skills and school readiness is supported through the **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**. Youth employment and career development are promoted through school and business partnerships.

UWA addresses entrenched disadvantage with a place-based approach. **The Hive** in Mt Druitt, Sydney is a collaboration with the community to help children start school well. Our goal is to bring about community and systems change and break the cycle of disadvantage.

UWA is a not-for-profit company registered in Australia, has DGR1 status and is also a Public Benevolent Institution. UWA has been operating in Australia for more than 50 years and is governed by a local Board of Directors. UWA is part of a global network of 1800 local United Way organisations in over 40 countries. Our common aim is to identify and resolve pressing community issues and make measurable changes in communities through collaborative partnerships.



2021-2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Education is a powerful agent of change. It improves health and livelihoods, contributes to social stability and drives long-term economic growth. UWA is helping Australian young people break cycles of disadvantage through early childhood development, early literacy, and youth mentoring. By working on a grass-roots level, we learn a lot about the systems that generate social problems and support child and youth success. We seek to influence change in those systems which are not working for our most vulnerable.



EXPAND OUR IMPACT

Working alongside community to help 40,000 children and young people



UNITE COMMUNITIES

As social innovators, improve our collaborative approaches to empower local communities



ADVOCATE FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

Share our learnings and see sustainable change in the ecosystem surrounding our children



GROW AND INSPIRE OUR SUPPORTERS

Grow our partner base to allow us to scale up our work

INITIATIVES & PROGRAMS

A child's early experiences lay the foundation for all future learning and skill development. However, one in five Australian children is developmentally vulnerable when they start school. In communities of disadvantage, up to one in three children is not ready for school and learning. Children who are developmentally vulnerable often have a difficult start to school with ongoing educational challenges that may have an adverse impact on long term health outcomes and life success. Our community development approach seeks to address these issues as early as possible in a child's life. Starting school well is a critical first step for a successful life. However, we are also

aware that many youth in the communities in which we operate do not have the skills, knowledge and confidence to launch into full-time employment, education or training. Our business community partnerships and youth mentoring help these young people make this transition.



INITIATIVES & PROGRAMS

| INITIATIVE | PROGRAM | FOCUS | DESCRIPTION |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|---|
| Read Learn Succeed | Ready to Read | Early literacy | Exposure to books is an essential developmental building block for children age 0-5. By partnering with community groups, corporates, governments and philanthropists, we bring the gift of a book every month to children across vulnerable communities and support parents/carers as the child's first teacher. The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is used in conjunction with other local community wrap-around services to support children's early literacy development, and support parents/carers to establish a rich home learning environment. |
| | Ready to Succeed | Youth transition to the workforce | For many young Australians, finding your first job or going on to further education is a daunting proposition. Unemployment rates for young people aged 16–19 are rising. UWA supports youth career development through engaging with passionate corporate employees who inspire young people to explore various career options, develop their life skills, and stay engaged academically and vocationally as they enter adulthood. |
| Early Childhood Development | The Hive | Place-based collective impact focused on the early years | The development of the brain in early life affects health, learning and behaviour. The first few years of a child's life has a multiplier effect for society. The Hive has brought together a passionate and effective group of residents and partners helping children start school well in Mt Druitt, Sydney. Together, we conduct early childhood development and learning programs and activities aligned to evidence-based prevention or intervention pathways to support child success. The issues in Mt Druitt are complex and no one organisation has the solution to inter-generational poverty. We help bring everyone together around common goals using a structured form of collaboration. |

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES – ACTIONS

The 2016-2021 Strategic Plan set the direction for UWA to strengthen its impact agenda focused on community engagement and preparing young people for success in life. Our 2021-2025 Plan builds on this foundation and reinforces the importance of education, grass-roots community collaborations and UWA's role as a social innovator.

| Program/Priority | Expand our Impact | Unite communities | Advocate for change | Grow & inspire our supporters |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Ready to Read</p> <p>Imagination Library</p> | <p>Grow enrolments through strategic partners.</p> <p>Focus on locations with low socio-economic outcomes (SEIFA) and high child vulnerability (AEDC).</p> | <p>Leverage the community 'assets' already in place and encourage local leadership.</p> <p>In consultation with community partners, expand local wrap-around support services for children and parents.</p> | <p>Improve our impact framework to better measure defined outcomes for individuals and communities.</p> <p>Advocate for investment in early literacy at local, State and Federal levels of government.</p> | <p>Deepen engagement with communities and partners through story-telling and effective social media.</p> <p>Grow the funding base through stronger brand awareness with the public.</p> |
| <p>Ready to Succeed</p> <p>Business Community Partnerships</p> | <p>Grow our Corporate partner base while supporting their employee engagement goals.</p> <p>Launch new programs focused on the jobs of the future.</p> | <p>Provide more opportunities for the local Corporate community to give back in the locality they work (not live).</p> <p>Align school professionals, students and corporate volunteers around the skills and jobs of the future.</p> | <p>Collaboration between our partner companies and schools brings new insight into student readiness for the jobs of the future. UWA is able share these insights with policy and program makers and schools can pivot programs accordingly.</p> | <p>Develop our virtual mentoring program to provide more engagement opportunities for remote working corporate volunteers.</p> <p>Innovate our fundraising events to maximise corporate employee engagement.</p> |
| <p>The Hive</p> <p>Place-based collective impact</p> | <p>Initiate additional social incubators to trial different approaches to helping children start school well.</p> <p>Plan and launch a second Greater Western Sydney place-based initiative focused on the early years.</p> | <p>Continue to explore and implement new governance structures to empower people from across the community to develop local solutions.</p> <p>Through collaborative efforts, improve the 'conditions for change' in local communities.</p> | <p>Model new ways of resident engagement and advocate for different approaches to delivery of services.</p> <p>Inform and influence policy makers at all three levels of government to drive sustainable service delivery reform.</p> | <p>Improve our Measurement Evaluation and Learning framework to better communicate community impact and individual stories of change.</p> <p>Secure additional strategic funders to expand the collective impact work.</p> |

STORIES



IMAGINATION LIBRARY

EVAN'S STORY

“ THE GREATEST PART OF THE PROGRAM WAS LETTING EVAN MAKE FRIENDS WITH BOOKS. IT WAS A BIG CHANGE BEFORE AND AFTER THE PROGRAM. ”

MAE, EVAN'S MOTHER

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has enormous benefits across a range of developmental areas, as one mum discovered. We first heard from Mae, mother to then three year old Evan, in 2014. Close to tears, Mae told us how Evan was not communicating with his peers and teachers at childcare or meeting his developmental milestones. We immediately signed Evan up to his local Imagination Library in West Ryde.

Once the Imagination Library books arrived, Mae began reading to Evan every day. Although English isn't her first language, she picked out words she knew and explained what they meant. She used the United Way parent tip sheets to help bring the books to life and maximise Evan's learning. Before long, she told us "reading books became his habit and part of his daily routine."

There was a noticeable change in Evan. He became much more confident in asking for what he needed, and began to form friendships for the very first time. His childcare educators noticed the changes and asked Mae what she was doing differently at home.

Proudly, she was able to tell them how she was supporting her son through shared reading – a simple activity that made the world of difference to his confidence and communication skills.

In 2016 Mae phoned to say her son was now learning to spell out words and could even read simple books independently. He had come a long way in just two short years. "Evan is ready for school next year!" she excitedly told us.

Early literacy skills are vital for Evan and other children who might struggle with language barriers. Building the self-confidence to communicate and a sense of identity as a reader are vitally important for starting school ready to learn. These skills will have a lifelong impact.

Mae recently got in touch to update us on Evan's progress since he graduated from the program. Evan is now thriving in school and is in the highest reading literacy group in his year level.

"The greatest part of the program was letting Evan make friends with books. It was a big change before and after the program. The books you gave to him built a solid foundation – thank you very much." **Quote from Mae, Evan's mother**

STORIES



THE HIVE

JESSICA'S STORY

“ PEOPLE NOW FEEL THEY ARE BEING HEARD.
THEY FEEL EMPOWERED. AND MORE KIDS ARE
GOING TO PRESCHOOL. ”

COMMUNITY MEMBER

The Hive is a network of people working in Mt Druitt whose aim is to bring together the community, services, businesses, government, and philanthropy to address locally identified priorities. The Hive team is on the ground facilitating local community change and influencing systems to ensure every child in Mt Druitt starts school well and has enhanced life outcomes.

This case study highlights the unique needs and barriers experienced by the families with which we work. Our consistent, holistic and tailored assistance is delivered in a non-judgmental way in order to support parents to enrol in early education. It is evident that there is a fundamental and vital need for trust-building to successfully support families in accessing early education.

The Hive met Jessica when she attended one of our 'Kids Day' events in Willmot. After several months of attending various community events, Jessica expressed that she would like to find out more about options for childcare. As a single Mum, Jessica was looking for support to enrol her two young sons into childcare to continue her studies and ultimately gain employment.

The Hive and Jessica worked together to enrol her boys in a suitable local childcare centre. We continued working together to sustain their enrolment throughout a number of challenging times, including COVID-19 and a recent family crisis. This support has included financial assistance for bond and fees, as well as liaising with the centre director to help communicate Jessica's needs and concerns, as she has a hearing impairment that impacts her confidence in communication.

Jessica has now finished her course and is ready to take the next step towards gaining employment.

“Real change started when residents shared their ideas and workers listened to them... It was important that workers came in and didn't dictate the change. They listened to residents.

Workers were on the ground and cared and really wanted to hear what residents think. We saw smaller things starting to happen which built and sealed trust.

People now feel like they are being heard. They feel empowered. And more kids are going to preschool. There are more opportunities for people to volunteer, upskill and find employment. There is a culture of empowering people to find their strengths. I found my strength and today I am an influential member of the community.” - Quote from a Community Member

BUSINESS & COMMUNITY

In 2013 a group of CEO's in Macquarie Park got together with the intention of giving back to the community in which they work. UWA performed some local research and determined there was a need for a focus on childhood literacy and school to work transitions. Thus, the Macquarie Park Business Community Partnership (MPBCP) was created to support the local community.

The business community has enthusiastically invested their time, effort and money to support local residents and address pockets of need close to their offices. The businesses welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with their corporate neighbours even when they are competitors. This initiative provides them with the opportunity to come together for something bigger than themselves.

The core group of members includes Fuji Xerox Australia, Johnson & Johnson, Macquarie Telecom Group, Optus, Orix and Ricoh. These companies have all demonstrated extraordinary commitment to making a difference to those less fortunate. Employee engagement opportunities for staff include volunteering, fundraising, leadership and professional development.

As a result of this valuable initiative, our collaborative work across the Ryde community has helped more than 5000 children and high school students.

As well as being a social change agent in the community, this partnership is a great opportunity for employee engagement. Staff members can use their passion, expertise and resources to support the implementation of local early literacy and transition to work programs.



Like many high school students, Jack, aged 16, didn't know what he wanted to do once he finished school. But after spending time in Fuji Xerox's offices and with his business mentor as part of the Macquarie Park Business Community Partnership, Jack realised that work can be enjoyable and that finding your passion is important. Jack learnt valuable skills and is now more confident.

He believes the experience has helped shape his perspective towards work and he is excited about the opportunities once he leaves school. Jack thinks all high school students would benefit from mentoring and industry exposure. He now has a plan to gain employment after he graduates from school.

"We got to go out to Fuji Xerox, which I found really interesting because I hadn't been in an office environment before. It was a very positive mentality – all the people had a vision and each one of them believed in that vision, which was pretty encouraging to see.

*I've gone from thinking of work as a chore, to thinking of it as something I really can't wait to do. Now I'm actively looking for university courses and trying to picture my ideal career path." - **Quote from Jack***



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STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITIES **TOGETHER**

