January’s devastating bushfires in the Grampians, Wimmera and Mallee affected many people in our community.

Some lost their belongings, livelihoods and houses, including 13 families who lost their primary dwellings.

In times of crisis, Wimmera UnitingCare does its best work. The entire staff at the Baillie Street campus regularly gathered together in the new building to update everyone on the current situation, call for volunteers and share information.

Experienced staff rallied to man relief and recovery centres at Horsham, Laharum, Stawell and Rainbow.

Staff members were there to provide information, be a shoulder to cry on, assist with emergency accommodation and referrals to a range services.

Wimmera UnitingCare staff were also on hand to talk to people at community events at Tempy, Yaapeet and Laharum to provide information and link community leaders to local services.

Through great tragedy comes great generosity and the 2014 Wimmera UnitingCare Bushfire Appeal was a prime example of this.

With the help of Bendigo Bank, the appeal was started to assist bushfire victims with products and services not covered under typical funding streams.

Wimmera UnitingCare kick started the fund with $5000 from the Wimmera Community Fund and in just over a month the total reached is more than $30,000.

The Horsham Aquatic Centre pitched in $2000 from the proceeds of their annual Australia Day Weekend Pool Party while Bonnie & Clydes Pizzeria in Horsham donated $1 from every pizza sold over a weekend, results in a $1000 donation.

Then the rest of the state jumped on board, with Mentone Grammar hosting a concert benefit and the 1st North Balwyn Scout Group door knocking in Melbourne's suburbs.

The appeal was further boosted with $3150 in vouchers from Coles Horsham and $2000 in vouchers from Australian Zircon.

The generosity of many organisations and individuals was critical in Wimmera UnitingCare’s ability to service the community.

Thank you to each and every person who donated to the appeal or supported a fundraising business.
Tuning into Teens Parenting program

Tuning into teens is a free program that aims to help parents and their adolescents manage the many emotional challenges of this stage of life. It is a six week group program run once a week in two hourly sessions.

The central idea behind tuning into teens is that adolescents develop their capacity to think about emotional experiences and regulate their responses and their parents attend to difficult emotions of low to moderate intensity, and find ways to support soothe and help their teen to learn about and regulate emotions.

To find out more about Tuning into Teens contact Wimmera Uniting Care on 5362 4000.

Family Mentoring Program

WUC is introducing a new mentoring program for Family Services families with young children. Aiming to give them the opportunity to have a supportive, caring, non-judgmental relationship with a person who can offer friendship, guidance and support to their family, and be able to engage them in social, recreational and leisure activities.

We are currently looking for volunteer mentors who may be interested in joining this rewarding program. Minimum contact for a mentor to have with a family is once a week initially, especially when getting to know families, and that time could range from 10 minutes to 2 hours. This may vary depending on what time the mentor is able to provide or planned outings and activities that may be organised between the mentor and the family. Full training would be provided.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor please contact WUC child and Family services team on 5362 4000.

Family Splash Fun Day

Delkaia Aboriginal Best Start, together with the Horsham YMCA, delivered a Family Splash Fun Day for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Around 25 Koorie community members, majority children; participated in the day with a range of pool activities educating the children on water safety.

Planning is underway for a Mums and Bubs Koorie swim group to attend the YMCA for regular swimming sessions to build upon the activities undertaken at the Family Splash Fun Day.

Support group welcomes new members

Wimmera UnitingCare has welcomed Rick Corney to the agency as a Mental Health Recovery Consumer Consultant.

Rick, 45, is from Avoca and is coming into the role with lived personal experience of having a mental illness. He is a plumber by trade but returned to study 30 years after leaving school. He is currently studying a Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs and a diploma in Mental Health. Rick himself was diagnosed with a mental illness aged 28.

Rick is responsible for the facilitation of a Mental Health Peer Support Group. The group’s mission is to assist members during their recovery from a mental illness and provide a platform for people to share their knowledge and experience to benefit the group as a whole.

The group meets at 28 Urquhart Street in Horsham on Thursdays at 1pm and always welcomes new members.

Rick will assist Mental Health Peer Support Group members in their recovery and engage with the broader community in general. He will also provide a channel for consumers to provide feedback about how Wimmera UnitingCare services could be improved to better support their recovery and provide support to recovery workers.

More information is available by contacting Rick on 5362 4043 on Thursdays or Fridays or by emailing rcorney@wuc.org.au
Delkaia Aboriginal Best Start hosted a Ready for Learning day at Goolum Goolum in Horsham in January. Thirty people attended the day.

The Ready For Learning Day aimed to help children and families get ready for the new school, kinder or playgroup year.

The children were given passports to participate in a range of activities, relating to Delkaia’s programs, enabling screening for learning and physical difficulties as well as health and wellbeing.

When the passports were completed all children received a bag full of goodies.

The event was an important event to kick off the New Year. Delkaia is all about early intervention and prevention and the Ready for Learning Day assisted in identifying potential health or learning difficulties that may impact the child’s health or education.

Delkaia is starting to focus its efforts on the Stawell and Halls Gap Koorie communities as well as Dimboola and Horsham. The focus is activities which benefit Koorie children up to eight years old and their families.

To find out more about Delkaia Best Start visit: www.delkaiaaboriginalbeststart.com.au

Funding boost for bathroom blitz

Wimmera UnitingCare has secured $30,000 for a capital works program at Horsham Community Childcare Centre.

The Uniting Church’s Board of Mission and Resourcing has allocated $20,000 for the project while the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has chipped in $10,000.

The bathroom will receive a facelift as part of a long-term plan to upgrade the agency’s childcare facilities.

The renovation will include installation of modern, age appropriate facilities with water-saving mechanisms.

Wimmera UnitingCare Chief Executive Officer Barrie Elvish said the upgrade was an important part of helping children to develop their self-esteem and skills.

“We will use a local contractor to complete the works and the renovations will not disrupt childcare or kindergarten operations,” he said.

Works must be completed by December 2015.

Mr Elvish thanked the Board of Mission and Resourcing and the State Government for their contributions and commitment to providing vital services in the Wimmera.

“This funding will directly benefit children and parents in our community which helps us in our goal to support and strengthen individuals, communities and families,” he said.

Building Update

It only seems like yesterday we started construction on Stage 2 of the WUC Building Project. Except when you are looking for a car park at certain times of the day, it feels more like it has been going on for an eternity.

The building project is quickly nearing completion.

The road work on Baillie Street is expected to be completed in early March, which will see the street become a one way street from the highway end to Darlot Street, adding 60 angle car parks.

Stage 2 of the new building is currently on schedule to be completed in March 2014, with staff located in the ‘old building’ relocating to Stage 2 whilst Stage 2a is underway.

Stage 2a is expected to be completed by late August 2014, bringing the WUC Building Project to an end after 5 years.

On the completion of Stage 2a some Wimmera UnitingCare staff from external sites and the staff that were relocated to Stage 2 will move into that part of the building.

Work is also underway to identify and secure tenants for the first floor of Stage2.
Volunteers needed

Mentors for families and youth
Car washers
Casual volunteers
To assist NILS (No Interest Loan Scheme)

To find out more contact Beau James, Volunteer Coordinator at Wimmera UnitingCare on (03) 5362 4000.

Would you consider becoming a WUC Board member?

If you are interested in the future work and growth of Wimmera UnitingCare, and have skills that you can offer, consider becoming a member of the Board of Governance.

The Wimmera UnitingCare Board of Governance provides direction for the work of WUC, reviews the strategic plan and supports staff as they deliver services across the Wimmera and Southern Mallee.

For more info contact Barrie Elvish on 5362 4013.

Calendar of Events

March
8  WYCMC Edenhope Races
9  WYCMC Harrow Billy Karts
11 Mobile Op Shop visiting Clear Lake
13 Mobile Op Shop visiting Rupanyup, Marnoo and Watchem
15 WYCMC Birchip Quarterhorse Races
19 Mobile Op Shop visiting Serviceton
20 Mobile Op Shop visiting Harrow
30 WYCMC Minyip A&P Show

April
1  Mobile Op Shop visiting Rainbow, Yaapeet and Jeparit
2  Mobile shop visiting Goroke and Apsley
04-13 Youth Week
10 Mobile Op Shop visiting Rupanyup, Marnoo and Watchem
16 Mobile Op Shop visiting Serviceton
17 Mobile Op Shop visiting Harrow

May
7  Mobile Op Shop visiting Goroke and Apsley
8  Mobile Op Shop Visiting Rupanyup, Marnoo and Watchem
13 Mobile Op shop visiting Rainbow, Yaapeet and Jeparit
15 Mobile Op Shop visiting Harrow
12-18 National Volunteers Week
15-21 National Families Week
21 Mobile Op shop visiting Serviceton
22 Mobile Op shop visiting Harrow
26-01 Responsible Gambling Awareness Week

School Holiday Program 2014

Placements are available for Wimmera UnitingCare’s School Holiday Program. The service is run by qualified educators and licensed through DEECD. This service will be operating for primary school aged children during the school holidays:

Monday 7 April – Thursday 17 April, 8am-6pm
Cost $33.50 per day (includes all activities)
To find out more contact Glenda Topp on (03) 5362 4000

Expressions of Interest

‘Mums and Bubs’ swim group

Delkaia Aboriginal Best Start is currently seeking expressions of interest from local Koorie families to participate in a ‘Mums and Bubs’ swim group at the YMCA. Expressions of Interest are also being taken for Koorie community members interested in training to become swimming teachers as part of the program. Please note you must be 16 years of age or older for eligibility for a swimming teacher role.

Please contact Delkaia Community Engagement Officer Andrew Harrison for more information on 5362 2926, 0419 336 856 or email andrewh@wuc.org.au

www.delkaiaaboriginalbeststart.com.au