

# THE UNITING CHURCH



## IN AUSTRALIA

*Synod of NSW and the ACT including  
The Northern Synod  
Insurance submission*

## What is The Uniting Church?

The Uniting Church in Australia is arguably the nation's only truly indigenous mainstream Christian movement. It stands with the people of this land in their search for spiritual life, justice, identity and dignity.

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) was formed on June 22, 1977, as a union of three churches: the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

The UCA is the third largest Christian denomination in Australia. It has around 2,800 congregations, 52 presbyteries and six synods. UCA members number 300,000 while 1.3 million Australians claim an association.

It has 48 schools, ranging from long-established schools with large enrolments to small recently established low-fee schools. UCA also operate a range of care facilities including aged care, child care and other welfare services.

More than 20,000 people are employed by the church in community services work, particularly in aged care, Lifeline, hospitals, nursing, family support services, youth services, and care for the homeless.

- **This Submission**

Specifically in relation to this submission we are focused on the Synod of NSW and the ACT and the Northern Synod, other UCA Synods arrange and maintain separate insurance programs.

All UCA property is held by The Uniting Church in various Property Trusts. In the portfolio in question assets and property sits within the Property Trust of the NSW and ACT Synod and the Northern Synod.

Uniting Resources and specifically The Property Services Division manages operational aspects of the Trust as trustee on behalf of the UCA NSW and ACT Synod. The northern Synod whilst maintaining independence does have the insurance placement arranged as a component of the NSW and ACT Synod's program,

- Further detail is available from - <http://nsw.uca.org.au/church/unitingchurch.htm>

## Structure and administration

The Uniting Church is organised not by hierarchy, nor by a hierarchy of church courts, but by groups of women and men, lay and ordained, consulting together, usually making decisions by consensus, in each area of the church's life.

The church is committed to being a series of inter-related councils — local churches, regional presbyteries, state synods, and the national Assembly. Each council has its distinct tasks, and each council recognises the limits of its responsibilities in relation to other councils.

According to the church's foundational document, [The Basis of Union](#), the "Uniting Church recognises that responsibility for government in the Church belongs to the people of God by

virtue of the gifts and tasks which God has laid upon them. The Uniting Church therefore so organises its life that locally, regionally and nationally government will be entrusted to representatives, men and women, bearing the gifts and graces with which God has endowed them for the building up of the Church.

"The Uniting Church acknowledges that Christ alone is supreme in his Church, and that he may speak to it through any of its councils. It is the task of every council to wait upon God's Word, and to obey God's will in the matters allocated to its oversight."

- Further detail is available from - <http://nsw.uca.org.au/church/unitingchurch.htm>

## The Assembly

The [Assembly](#) is the national council of the Uniting Church.

The Assembly is headed by the President of the Uniting Church, with a General Secretary as chief executive officer. Its meetings (usually every three years) "consist of such ministers, elders/leaders and other Church members as are appointed thereto, the majority being appointed by the Presbyteries and Synods.

It has determining responsibility for matters of doctrine, worship, government and discipline, including the promotion of the Church's mission, the establishment of standards of theological training and reception of ministers from other communions, and the taking of further measures towards the wider union of the Church.

It makes the guiding decisions on the tasks and authority to be exercised by other councils. It is obligatory for it to seek the concurrence of the councils, and on occasion of the congregations of the Church, on matters of vital importance to the life of the Church." The Assembly's central offices are located in Pitt Street, Sydney.

- Further detail is available from <http://assembly.uca.org.au/>

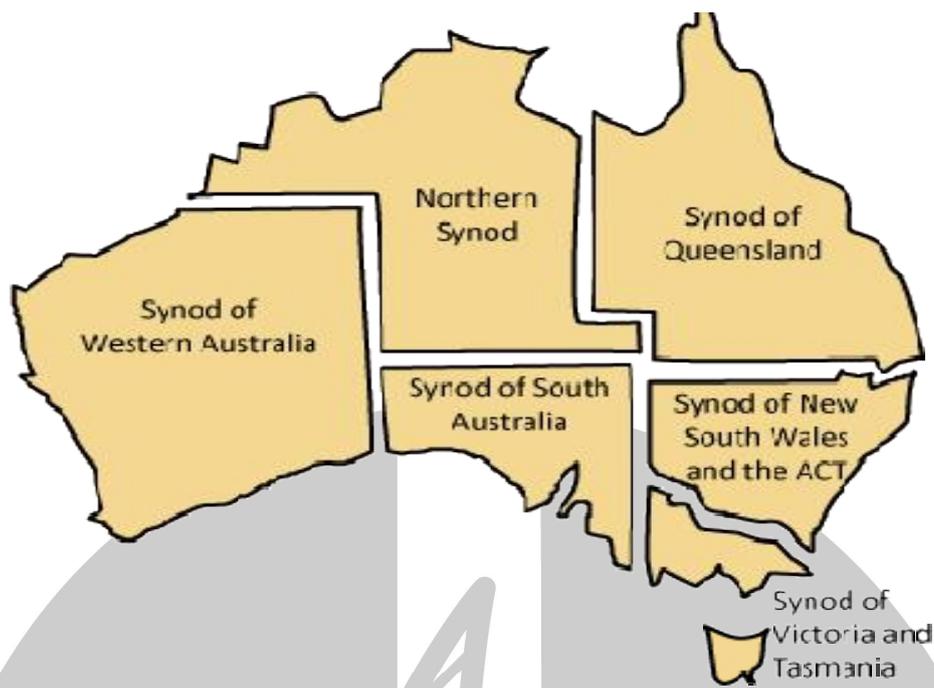
## Synods

A synod is the state council of the Uniting Church. The word "synod" also describes the annual meeting of representatives of the state-wide Uniting Church.

There are six [synods](#) of the Uniting Church in Australia, these have responsibility for overall support and resourcing of the church in their area — especially in community services, mission planning, theological education and other educational services, administration relating to ministers, property and financial services.

The elected head of each synod is the Moderator assisted by a General Secretary.

- Further detail is available from <http://uca.org.au/synods.htm>



There are six synods in the UCA. These are The Synods of;

- New South Wales and the ACT
- Victoria and Tasmania
- Queensland
- South Australia
- Western Australia
- Northern (incorporating the Northern Territory and the Kimberleys in WA)
- Further detail is available from <http://uca.org.au/synods.htm>

## Presbyteries

A presbytery is a council of the Uniting Church which has oversight of congregations, ministry and programs within a region. The Uniting Church in Australia's 52 presbyteries have responsibility for oversight of the church's life and work in their region.

A presbytery is the council to which ministers of the word and deacons are responsible. It has the duty of caring for them and ensuring their work is carried out faithfully. Presbytery meetings include ordained ministers, lay pastors and elected lay persons from every congregation.

The Synod of NSW and the ACT has 14 [presbyteries](#) (Canberra, Central West, Far North Coast, Georges River, Illawarra, Ku-ring-gai, Mid North Coast, Northern Inland, Parramatta-Nepean, The Riverina, Sydney, Sydney North, The Darling and The Hunter).

Further detail is available from <http://nsw.uca.org.au/congregations>

## Congregations

A [congregation](#) is the embodiment in one place of the Uniting Church meeting for worship, witness and service. It is the local congregation where the church tells the story of Christ, calls people to faith and shares with God in service in the world. In congregations and associated groups Australian Christians discover what it means to be human in this world. They provide a foundation from which people seek to live out the Christian faith in ways that make a difference.

Many decisions about the church's life and witness (its membership, worship, pastoral care, local ministry and mission, administration) are the responsibility of the congregations. Councils of elders and church councils are elected to oversee these functions.

Congregations are seen as the focus and centre of the Uniting Church's ministry and mission, alongside community service agencies. Congregations usually meet in local churches, but may also be based in one of the many community service agencies of the Uniting Church.

Congregations are supported and assisted in mission and service by the other councils of the church, each of which is a gathering of God's people to explore ministry and mission across the area they cover.

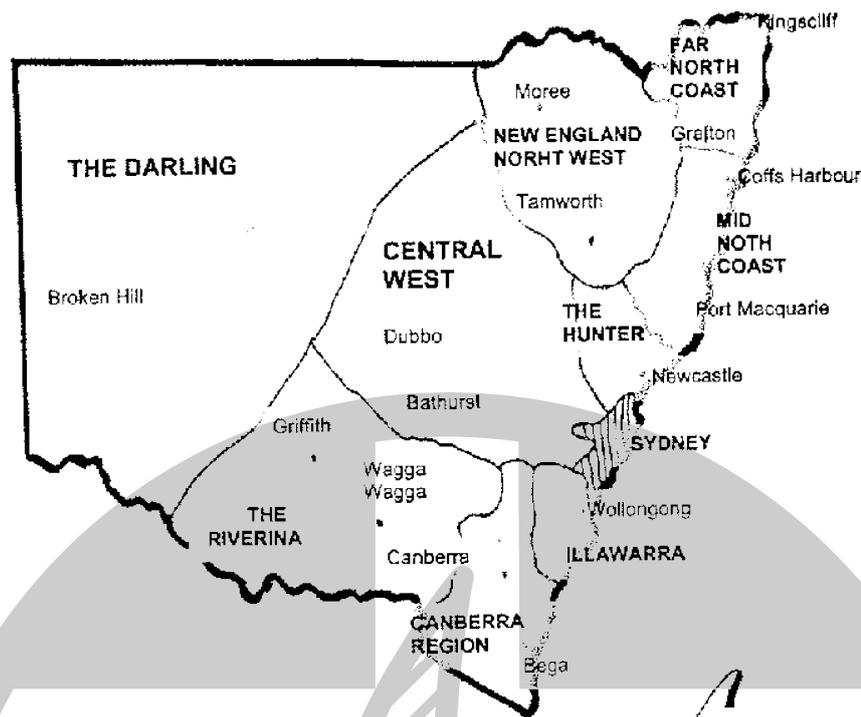
- Further detail is available from <http://nsw.uca.org.au/congregations>

## **Profile of the Synod of NSW and the ACT.**

The Synod gathers presbyteries and congregations in New South Wales and the ACT where, according to census details there were 377,805 Uniting Church adherents with around 30,000 regular Uniting Church attendees.

The New South Wales Synod's offices in Pitt Street, Sydney, house the;

- [General Secretary's Office](#),
- [Board of Mission](#),
- [Board of Education](#),
- [UnitingCare NSW.ACT](#), and
- [Uniting Resources](#) including Uniting Financial Services.



## Secretariat

The Secretariat's key purpose is to ensure the work and operations of the Synod and Council of Synod continue smoothly. It has responsibility to coordinate the work of the Boards and other agencies and to provide support for the:

- Advisory Committee of Ministry Placements;
- Reception of Ministers Committee; and
- Other committees concerned with:
  - Sexual misconduct or discipline of Ministers;
  - Support funds for Ministers; and
  - Relationships with multi-cultural churches;

The Secretariat is also responsible for oversight of the Communications Unit that publishes and distributes [Insights magazine](#), Connect newsletter, Mustard Seed, Living is Giving, The Link and other publications. The Communications Unit conducts media relations and provides printing and web services for the Uniting Church. It also helps church and other organisations find affordable solutions to their communications problems — in the media, on the internet or with publications.

- Further detail is available from <http://nsw.uca.org.au/secretariat/index.htm> and <http://nsw.uca.org.au/cu/>

## Board of Mission

The Board of Mission oversees and works to support the mission of the Uniting Church in NSW and the ACT. Areas of work include the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Congress, Cross-cultural Mission, Rural Evangelism & Mission, Urban Mission & Evangelism, Mission Finance, New Congregations, Research (through the National Church Life Survey) and World Mission. Consultants are available to work with Congregations or Presbyteries enquiring about Rural Mission Planning and Evangelism, New Congregations, Mission Finance or Research.

In resourcing mission across the Synod the Board of Mission is aware that the Church serves diverse communities including urban, suburban, rural, remote, indigenous and multicultural and differing mission responses are required in different communities.

- Further detail is available from [http://nsw.uca.org.au/bom/BOM\\_about.html](http://nsw.uca.org.au/bom/BOM_about.html)

## Board of Education

The Board of Education is responsible to the Synod for leadership in educational resources, facilities, processes and consultancy. It continues to do so by equipping, challenging and supporting the people of God, so that they grow towards maturity in faith, and live out that faith by exercising their particular ministries within the world. The Board advises the Synod on policy and strategy in education and seeks to implement the policy directions of the Synod with regard to education.

The activities of the BOE relate to a range of education facilities (schools), conference centres and training establishments.

- Further detail is available from <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/boe/executivedirector.htm>

The Board of Education relates and maintains “oversight” a variety of significant areas of the UCA Synod of NSW and the ACT.

- **Commission for Lay Ministry**

- Education for Life & Ministry (ELM) <http://elm.org.au/>
- Ministry and Mission with Children <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/children/index.htm>
- Regional Education Officer – Newcastle
- Uniting Church Adult Fellow (UCAF) <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/layministry/ucaf.htm>
- Growing Together in Marriage <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/layministry/tohaveandtohold.htm>
- Special Religious Education <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/children/sre.htm>

- **Commission for Specified Ministry**

- Continuing Education for Ministry <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/sce/sce.htm>
- Ministers of the Word
- Community Ministers
- Deacons
- Dean of Candidates <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/dean/index.htm>
- Lay Pastors
- Youth Workers

- **Commission for Conference Centres**

- Bonny Hills <http://www.unitingcc.org/pages/bonnyhills-info.php>
- Centre for Ministry <http://www.unitingcc.org/pages/northparra-info.php>
- Elanora <http://www.unitingcc.org/pages/elanora-info.php>
- Naamaroo <http://www.unitingcc.org/pages/naamaroo-info.php>

- **Commission for School Education**

- The Exodus Tutorial centre <http://www.billcrews.com.au>
- Kinross Wolaroi School [www.kws.nsw.edu.au](http://www.kws.nsw.edu.au)
- Knox Grammar School [www.knox.nsw.edu.au](http://www.knox.nsw.edu.au)
- Margaret Jurd Learning Centre <http://www.mjlc.com.au/>

- MLC School [www.mlcsyd.nsw.edu.au](http://www.mlcsyd.nsw.edu.au)
  - Newington College [www.newingtoncollege.nsw.edu.au](http://www.newingtoncollege.nsw.edu.au) (not part of this submission)
  - Pymble Ladies' Centre [www.pymblelc.nsw.edu.au](http://www.pymblelc.nsw.edu.au)
  - Ravenswood School for Girls [www.ravenswood.nsw.edu.au](http://www.ravenswood.nsw.edu.au)
  - Wahroonga Preparatory School [www.wahroongaprep.nsw.edu.au](http://www.wahroongaprep.nsw.edu.au)
  - The Uniting Network <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/resources/unitingnetwork.htm>
  - Synod Youth Unit <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/youthunit/>
  - Wesley College, University of Sydney. <http://www.wesleycollege-usyd.edu.au> (NOTE - not part of this submission, but may be included when it falls due for renewal)
  - Tertiary Chaplaincy <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/education/tertiary.htm>
  - Pastoral Counselling Institute <http://www.pastoralcounselling.org/>
- Further detail is available from <http://nsw.uca.org.au/boe/boe/structure.htm>

## UnitingCare

UnitingCare NSW.ACT falls within the oversight of the UnitingCare Board. The Synod has entrusted the Board with responsibility for the oversight of the Church's community welfare services.

The UnitingCare Board has three main roles:

- Synod oversight and reporting on community welfare services
- Management and delivery of some community welfare services, and
- Social Justice Advocacy

Services

- Services covering aged care and disability programs.
- Services for vulnerable families, children and young people
- Services for preschool education and care.
- Oversight of the [Medically Supervised Injecting Centre](#).
- Voices commitment to social justice and advocacy by speaking out on issues that affect the people we serve. This is reflected in their [social justice charter](#).

Further detail is available from <http://unitingcarenswact.org.au/>



## Uniting Resources

Provides Property, IT, Financial Management, Workplace Safety, Human Resources and Uniting financial Services to the church and church entities.

<http://www.unitingresources.org.au/>



**The Property Services** role is to assist the Church and its members with advice in regards to property matters. This includes formulating property policy, property approvals, oversight of properties, safety and compliance and other services. Property Services also manages and arranges insurance for the whole of the NSW Synod.



**Information Technology Services** supports the NSW Synod, agencies and organisations. We provide infrastructure management, project management, and content management systems. We also provide advice for congregations who are seeking answers to IT questions.



**Financial Management Services** supports Uniting Resources, NSW Synod and Treasurers in coordinating financial reporting and budgeting, advising on taxation and long-term viability and capital financing matters, assisting with regulatory compliance, and undertaking a range of other accounting services.



**Workplace Safety Services** strives to facilitate effective Occupational Health and Safety Management System implementation throughout the NSW Synod and our functional role includes the effective management of Workers Compensation.



**HR Services** provides human resource and industrial relations assistance and advice and a payroll bureau service to employing entities within the Uniting Church NSW Synod



When you invest with **Uniting Financial Services** you will support the work of the Uniting Church NSW Synod. You will receive good interest rates, easy access to your investments and no transaction or administration fees on a wide variety of services. Click here for more information on interest rates, investments and loans.

<http://www.unitingresources.org.au/>

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In 2005 we developed a [new brand identity](#) that proudly promotes our Uniting Church links as

well as offering a wider range of [financial products and services](#), and increase our contributions to the Church's important work.

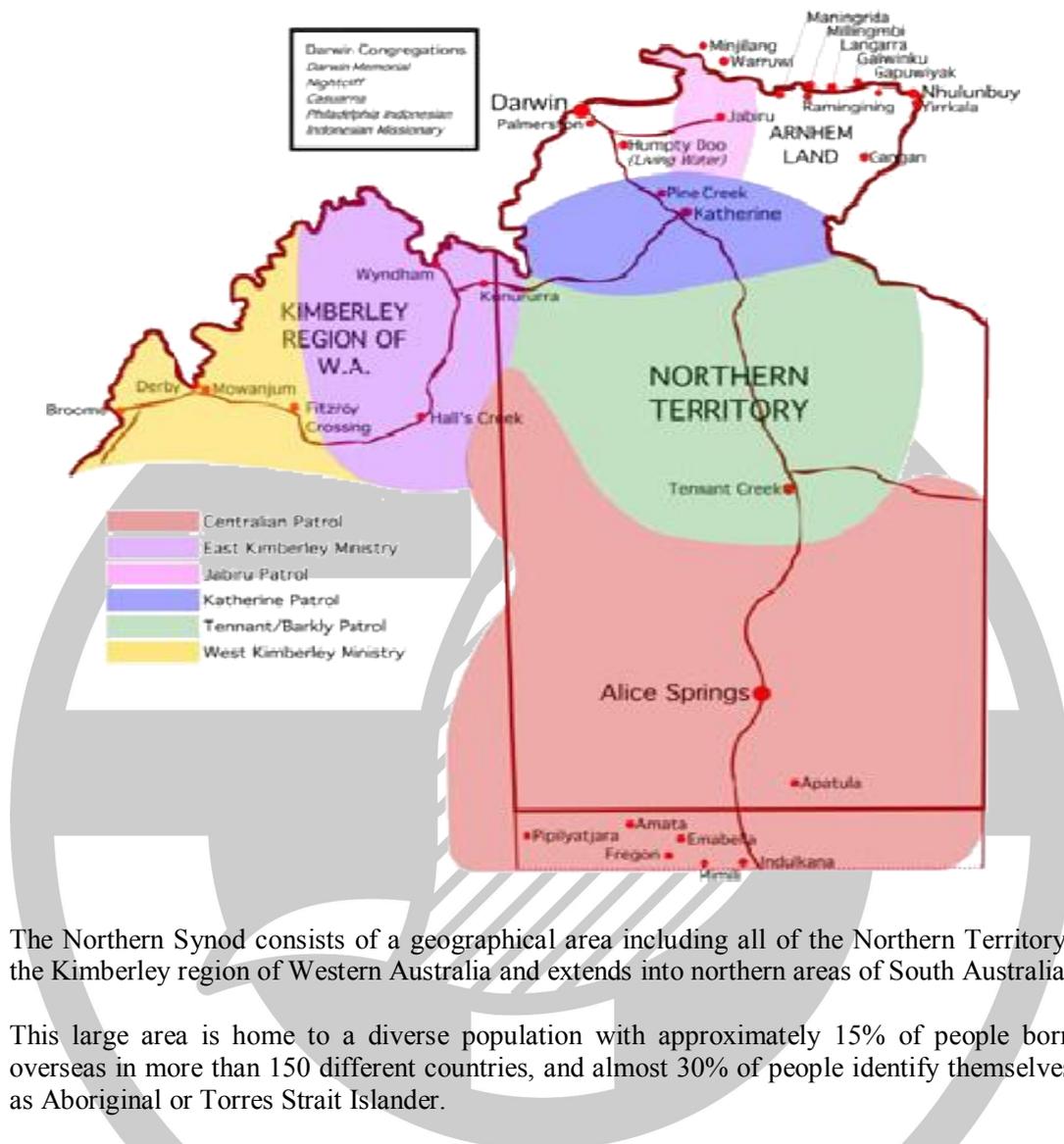


## What do we do – Activities.

The activities of the Uniting Church are broadly broken down as follows;

- Local Congregations
- Child care and associated facilities
- Aged Care and associated facilities
- Schools and associated facilities
- Charitable and Benevolent activities and facilities
- Hospital activities and associated facilities
- Conference centres and associated facilities
- Property Owners
- Joint Venture activities and
- Other activities incidental to the various core activities of the UCA
- Further detail is available from <http://nsw.uca.org.au/>

## Profile of Northern Synod



The Northern Synod consists of a geographical area including all of the Northern Territory, the Kimberley region of Western Australia and extends into northern areas of South Australia.

This large area is home to a diverse population with approximately 15% of people born overseas in more than 150 different countries, and almost 30% of people identify themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The Synod has two Presbyteries; The Northern Regional Council of Congress consists of the aboriginal community churches throughout the Northern Territory, the Kimberley region and Central Australia and the Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia which consists of the churches existing in the main towns in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley.

The Northern Synod covers the Northern Territory, the Kimberley region of Western Australia and a portion of northern South Australia. Within this area, the Northern Regional Council of Congress (NRCC) has oversight of the work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. NRCC functions as a presbytery within the synod and has responsibility for the approximately 20 Congress congregations, the work of the Aboriginal Resource and Development Services (ARDS) and relates to Nungalinya College.

The 1996 meeting of the Northern Synod established one non-indigenous presbytery, the Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia, covering the same area as the synod. It has oversight of 15 congregations and ministries not within the NRCC. PPNA covers congregations from Darwin in the north to Alice Springs in the south and from Nhulunbuy in the east to Broome in the west. The presbytery meets twice a year.

## **Synod Standing Committee**

The Northern Synod elects a Standing Committee to deal with matters which require attention before the next annual Synod meeting.

Standing Committee consists of the Moderator, Synod Secretary, Ex Moderator or Moderator-Elect, Executive Officer of the Northern Regional Council of Congress (NRCC), one minister and two lay persons of the Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia, two ministers and two lay persons from the NRCC, and the Northern Synod representative on Assembly Standing Committee.

## **Synod Social Service Commitment**

At its 2005 Synod meeting the following commitment to Social Service and Social Justice was agreed. These statements support the agencies working in this area within the Synod boundaries.

## **Community Services Statement**

The Northern Synod endorses the Uniting Church in Australia's commitment to the people of Australia by supporting individuals, families and communities through effective social policy, advocacy and community service provision.

The Northern Synod commits itself to strongly supporting and working with Somerville Community Services Inc, Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Inc., Congregations and Frontier Services. Synod believes it is important to continually explore other areas of community need.

## **Education**

### **Statement on Government Schools and Continuing Christian Education:**

#### **Government Schools**

Members of the Uniting Church in the Northern Synod have many opportunities to witness, to the reign of God through care, service and influence within the Government school system. The diverse ways that our members can be involved include being students, parents of students, teachers, support staff, chaplains, teachers of religious education and members of School Councils.

We value and seek to develop the opportunities offered by:

- Praying for our public schools
- Recognising as a ministry for God the roles our members play wherever they participate in the public education system.
- Either directly or by co-operating with other churches provide chaplains in primary and secondary schools.

#### **Continuing Christian Education**

The Uniting Church is involved in Christian Education for all ages. This includes playgroups, parent support groups, Sunday schools, Kids clubs and camps, youth groups, marriage courses, introduction to Christianity courses and adult education formation groups and so on. Such groups impact on the lives of individuals and the life of the community in general, as the truth of the gospel is shared and received with the power to change attitudes, actions and relationships.

We seek to support life long Christian education by:

- Acknowledging its worth and importance in people's lives and in the life of the community
- Encouraging members of our congregations to participate in and lead educational activities.
- Assisting financially where possible.
- Praying that these groups will to further the understanding of God in our communities.

## Vision

To achieve our mission, we commit to following Jesus, living together and going forward together in the love of Christ.

## Mission

As part of the Uniting Church in Australia the mission of the Northern Synod is to proclaim, promote and live out the reign of God revealed in Jesus Christ under the direction of the Holy Spirit, transforming people and communities in which God calls us to worship, witness and serve.

## Activities

The Northern Synod has responsibilities in relation to

- Somerville Community Services,
- Kormilda College
- Nungalinya College
- St. Philip's College in Alice Springs
- Uniting Church chaplains serving the military forces.
- Frontier Services operates outback patrols
- Aged care services in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, the Kimberley, Jabiru and Alice Springs.

As well as;

- Local Congregations
- Child care and associated facilities
- Aged Care and associated facilities
- Charitable and Benevolent activities and facilities
- Property Owners
- Further detail is available from <http://ns.uca.org.au/>