# Submission to the DEDJTR’s regional economic development strategy and service delivery model review by St. Stephen’s Uniting Church/UnitingCare Wodonga

## The present levels of Apprentice & Trainee Employment in the region

## Background

UnitingCare Wodonga is a major mission of St. Stephen’s Uniting Church to the communities centred on Wodonga, the agency has a client base of 438 people per month who are seeking assistance with emergency relief which includes food parcels, financial counselling, pastoral care counselling, a No Interest Loans Scheme and involvement in a range of social inclusion schemes.

UnitingCare Wodonga estimates that 1 in 12 households in Wodonga are seeking assistance from the agency.

As part of the interview and assessment process with clients re their needs, it has become evident to the staff that employment issues are featuring significantly in the statistics.

In particular:

1. The growth of intergenerational unemployment that exists within our community , often three generations who have never been employed and are receiving benefits
2. The level of youth unemployment in the region which currently approximates 17.5%
3. The difficulties that clients on “Newstart” are experiencing in their quest for employment via employment agencies
4. The lack of employment opportunities in the Albury Wodonga region for young people, particularly those seeking apprenticeships & traineeships
5. The growth in employers using 457 visa’s to recruit staff from overseas, using the pretext that sufficient skilled staff from Australia are not available.
6. The number of traditional trade areas in the region such as automotive, building & construction and hospitality, that are employing overseas staff with 457 visas

## Community Forum to consider the present levels of apprentice & trainee employment in the region

St. Stephen’s Uniting Church/UnitingCare Wodonga will be conducting a Community Forum to consider the present levels of apprentice/trainee employment in the region on Thursday 19th March 2015 involving participants from Employment Agencies, TAFE Institutes, Registered Training Providers, Apprentice/Trainee Employment Organizations along with representatives the Church & UnitingCare Wodonga.

## Media Release

In the Media Release of the 3rd March 2015, the following statement was made:

“On 12 February the Minister for Regional Development announced a review into the Department of Economic Development’s regional service delivery model and the best policies to drive economic growth in regional Victoria.

The Victorian Government is committed to driving sustainable economic growth in rural and regional Victoria.”

## Employment supporting economic development

A major feature in strong economic growth centres on the provision of a skilled local workforce, where the provision of apprentice & trainee employment opportunities provides the foundation. St. Stephen’s Uniting Church/UnitingCare Wodonga requests that the following questions be considered as part of the review taking into account both a state wide perspective and a regional view.

1. What are the present levels of employment of apprentices/trainees in particular fields?
2. How do these levels of employment compare to those of 10 years & 5 years ago?
3. What are the barriers to the employment of apprentices/trainees at the present time?
4. How could these barriers be overcome?
5. How extensive is the employment of people with 457 visa’s in Victoria at the present time and in what fields of employment?