

The power of connection with clients

Working in the area of disability services is a privilege and is exciting, says Gail Jeltres, general manager of client services at Unisson Disability.

Throughout its 100-year history, Unisson has always been at the cutting edge of support services, says Jeltres, and it is all about connection with clients.

"Our values are very much around integrity, collaboration and generosity," she says. "Generosity is a really important one because it is so much about how we give of our hearts and minds in an effort to understand others."

"These core values come across into our person-centred active support and how we engage with the people we work with."

"At the core of what we do, we believe great support and desired outcomes for people are achieved through collaboration between us and the person we are supporting, family members, community, other providers – whoever we need to work with to deliver on what the person we are supporting wants and needs."

"We are prepared to work hand in hand with individuals and recognise that they are experts in their own lives. But we are also happy to explore with them as well."

Unisson was founded in 1924 by Dr Lorna Hodgkinson and was known as the Sunshine Institute. When Dr Hodgkinson died, it became the Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home. Now known as Unisson, the double 's' in the name is a nod to its history.

"We are more than just a home," says Jeltres. "We are certainly no longer the institution; we provide a suite of services. Now we label it as support that we provide – whatever it is that somebody needs to live



From left: Unisson's human resources advisor, client Frances Scott and an interviewee support worker.

the life of their dreams. Sometimes it's about employment, sometimes it's about specific skills development. Whatever it is, however, we can work, that's what we do."

Every employee at Unisson attends a culture program – the art of human connection.

The program emphasises the key principle that relationships and connection with others is a fundamental part of society, and the foundation for delivering

exceptional customer service. "We believe in teaching our staff to allow themselves to be authentic in who they are, to allow clients and families to see their vulnerability to create the space for connection to take place," Jeltres says.

"We believe every person has a story and understanding where someone has come from, what's important to them and why this is, will assist us to deliver on what a client wants."

Unisson client Frances Scott says she enjoys choosing her own support people and appreciates the fact that Unisson staff treat her with respect.

"I like Unisson because they treat me nicely and respectfully and always help me out," she says.

"I picked Lucy because she treats me nice, she reads books and I feel good about her. She helps me with budgeting, helps me with my lunch and takes me in the car."

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EVERYONE ELSE
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