

Position Description

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| Title: | Centre Cook |
| Business unit: | Specialist Early Education & Development (SEED) Program, Early Learning |
| Location: | 22 Church Street, Richmond VIC 3121 |
| Employment type: | Part-time, maximum-term to December 2025 |
| Reports to: | Centre Director |

About Uniting

Uniting Vic.Tas is the community services organisation of the Uniting Church. We've been supporting people and families for over 100 years. We work alongside people of all ages in local communities in Victoria and Tasmania. Our services reach to Albury-Wodonga in the north, Mallacoota in East Gippsland, the Wimmera region in the west, and across Tasmania.

We empower children, young people and families to learn and thrive. We're there for people experiencing homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction or mental illness. We support people with disability to live the life they choose. We assist older people to maintain their independence and enjoy life. We provide opportunities to access training and meaningful employment. We're proud to welcome and support asylum seekers to our community. We work to empower people with the information, skills and tools they need to live a healthy, happy life.

As an organisation, we work in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Peoples and as the traditional owners and custodians of this land.

We celebrate diversity and value the lived experience of people of every ethnicity, faith, age, disability, culture, language, gender identity, sex and sexual orientation. We welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and non-binary, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ+) people at our services. We pledge to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services.

Our purpose: To inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice

Our values: We are imaginative, respectful, compassionate and bold

1. About the program

Cooke Court Uniting was selected by the Department of Education (VIC) as the site for an intensive early childhood education and care research project, as part of their Safe Haven budget initiative. The research project is being undertaken in partnership with Parkville Institute, a not-for-profit organisation established to operationalise and evaluate the program. The Australian government and philanthropy are also funding the project.

The results from previous trials have found that children who participated in an intensive early education and care program had significant improvement in their cognitive (IQ and language) and non-cognitive skills (resilience and social-emotional). The University of Melbourne research team undertook a rigorous evaluation and some members have established Parkville Institute to continue the work (Research report 4 can be found [here](#)).

The objective of the intensive early childhood education and care program is that children living with significant adversity will experience a stable and enriching early learning and care program and enter school as confident and successful learners who are developmentally equal to their peers. The long-term objective of the program is that these children will enjoy the same life trajectories as their peers.

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This research will seek to determine whether children, recruited with the same eligibility criteria as those in previous trials, can achieve the same remarkable learning and development outcomes. This will be one of four research sites established in Australia.

2. Position purpose

The Cook is a valued member of a multi-disciplinary team and works collaboratively with staff, children and families in the development and implementation of the centre's food safety program and healthy eating policy in recognition of the link between children's daily nutritional intake and their health, wellbeing, development, and learning.

As the Cook at the Uniting Richmond Research Centre, you will have overall responsibility for planning, monitoring the food budget, ordering, shopping, preparing and serving balanced meals and snacks that meet the nutritional, medical, dietary, cultural needs and preferences of children.

The Cook oversees all kitchen operations, maintains safe, clean and sanitary facilities, and ensures safe food preparation, storage and disposal in accordance with accepted food handling practices, food safety regulations and Nutrition Australia Dietary Guidelines.

The Cook supports the Centre philosophy, programs and policies as part of maintaining a standard of care and nurturing that contributes to quality and continuous improvement.

3. Scope

Budget:

Nil

People:

Nil

4. Relationships

Internal

- Centre Coordinator
- Pedagogical Leader
- Early Childhood Teacher/
- Educators and support staff
- Early learning management team
- Infant Mental Health Consultant
- Family Services Practitioner

External

- Children
 - Families
 - Suppliers
 - Parkville Institute staff
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5. Key responsibility areas

Service delivery:

- To work in consultation with the Centre Director and the senior leadership team to plan nutritious menus inclusive of all fluids, snacks and meals based on the Nutrition Australia guidelines, and that are aesthetically pleasing and meet the medical, dietary, and cultural needs of the children and local community.
- Ensure that meal provision meets 75% of the children's daily nutritional requirements.
- Plan menus that reflect seasonal changes and the availability of fresh food such as vegetables and fruit.
- Be responsible for ordering and sourcing all food.
- Document and display weekly menus.

Administration and finance:

- Keep accurate and current food safety records.
- Keep food receipts and delivery documentation.
- Ensure all food delivered is reflective of the food ordered and acknowledge receipt of the food.
- Participate in the performance review process.
- Participate in the ongoing continuous improvement of the service through reflective practice in consultation with the Centre Director
- Work in consultation with the Centre Director of the service to monitor the food budget.
- Keep accurate records of menus and food provided, as required by the research team evaluating the program.

Quality and risk:

- Maintain cleanliness in the kitchen and storage areas.
- Physically check the condition of all packaging and temperatures of food to ensure it is safe for consumption inclusive of use by dates and contents.
- Ensure a separate meal is prepared for children with known allergies and that it is clearly identified on the tray / trolley, and this is communicated to staff upon delivery of food.
- Record all temperature checks for all refrigerators and freezers on a daily basis.
- Adhere to service policies and procedures in relation to the service of foods that children have known allergies to keep abreast of changes to individual children's dietary requirements, inclusive of infants.
- Develop and comply with a regular sanitization schedule for ovens, refrigerators and other appliances and areas.
- Ensure a safe and healthy environment.
- Report any equipment maintenance that may be required.

People and teams

- Work as a member of a professional, multi-disciplinary team.
- Work in partnership with colleagues.
- Participate in meetings, contributing to the development and implementation of the quality improvement plan.
- Participate as required in the research project, for example interview with researchers.
- Consult and communicate with children and families about food requirements, preferences and nutrition.

Personal accountability

- Compliance with Uniting's values, code of conduct, policies and procedures and relevant government legislation and standards where relevant.
- Cooperate with strategies to actively ensure the safety, protection and well-being of children who come into association with us.

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- Ensure appropriate use of resources.
 - Work collaboratively with Uniting (Victoria Tasmania) employees and external stakeholders in accordance with Uniting's values and professional standards of behaviour.
 - Actively participate in initiatives to maintain, build upon and promote a positive and collaborative workplace.
 - Identify opportunities to integrate and work collaboratively across teams.
 - Take reasonable care for your own health and safety, and health and safety of others (to the extent required).
 - Promote a positive safety culture by contributing to health and safety consultation and communication.
 - Promptly respond to and report health and safety hazards, incidents and near misses to line management
 - Attend mandatory training sessions (i.e. equal employment opportunity, health, and safety) and mandatory training specific to position.
 - Declare anything that you become aware of through the course of your engagement which may impede your suitability to work with children and / or young people.
 - Declare any potential or actual conflict of interest that you become aware of through the course of your engagement:
 - Based on a relationship with a current member of Uniting's workforce
 - Based on my ongoing work with another organisation.
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6. Person specification

Qualifications

- Current Working with Children Check (WWCC) valid for paid employment.

Experience

- Current knowledge of food safety requirements inclusive of records to be maintained.

Core selection criteria

- Values alignment: ability to demonstrate and authentically promote Uniting's values.
 - Demonstrated ability to provide safe environments for children and young people and protect them from abuse and neglect.
 - Extensive knowledge of safe food handling practice and procedures.
 - Demonstrated ability to understand the requirement to provide menus that meet the dietary, medical, preferences and cultural needs of all children.
 - Demonstrated ability to develop and provide high-quality nutritious menus that align with providing 75% of children's daily nutritional requirements.
 - Demonstrated ability to promote and advocate for the rights of children and families and ensure they are provided opportunities to participate in decision-making regarding food choices for their children.
 - Demonstrated ability to relate to and communicate effectively with all staff, children, families, and other professionals as required.
 - Demonstrated ability to participate in and contribute to a productive, dynamic and cooperative team culture and participation in continuous improvement processes.
 - Well-developed organisational skills and ability to prioritise tasks and meet required timeframes working both under direction and with a high degree of autonomy.
 - Be committed to supporting the research in collaboration with the Parkville Institute and Uniting (Victoria Tasmania).
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7. We are a child safe organisation

Uniting is a child safe organisation and is committed in everyday practice to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children, at all times. As a child safe organisation, employment with Uniting is subject to a satisfactory national (and international where relevant) police check and relevant Working With Children Check (and NDIS Worker Screening Check where relevant) to your State prior to commencement of any paid or unpaid work and/or participation in any service or undertaking.

This position description is subject to review and may change in accordance with Uniting's operational, service and consumer requirements.

8. Acknowledgement

I have read, understood, and accepted the above Position Description

Employee

Name:

Signature:

Date: