

The History of the Williamstown Uniting Church Op Shop

Commencing in 1980, the Williamstown Uniting Church (linked churches – St John’s, Westgate, St Stephens and Stevedore St UCA), in partnership with Sunshine Christian Community Service, leased and then operated an Opportunity Shop at 75 Stevedore St, Williamstown.

We thank the early shop volunteers who with dedication and faith worked tirelessly to help others in need; Mr Russel and Nancy Treble, Mrs Natalie Cronin, Isabell and Geoff Wilson, Joyce Bailey, Margaret Robinson and many many others.

In May 1988, the Williamstown Uniting Church took sole responsibility of the Opportunity Shop, and in July 2005, the then two Williamstown Uniting Churches, Electra St and St Stephens had joint responsibility. A major shop refurbishment in 2007 led by Ms Beverley Lambie (Shop Manager) developed the shop as in the picture below.



Due to the impact of COVID – 19, the shop closed its doors on March 22nd 2020 and some months later, a very difficult decision was made to end the lease and we vacated the shop on Nov 14th 2020.

Electra St decided to explore the opportunity to continue the Op Shop Mission work, and St Stephens decided to pursue other activities. An planning application was submitted to Hobsons Bay City Council to operate the Op Shop from a building on the Electra St church

property, which we received approval on the condition that it would only operate as an extension of the work of the church - to help others.

The Church Council in Nov 2020 offered the former St John's Tennis Pavilion then converted Children's Centre on church property, to the Op Shop team who set about transforming it to a small and friendly shop following fit out designs prepared by Mr Neil Langford.

We give thanks to the children and their leaders who gave their 'Children's Centre' space for the work of the Op Shop, and to the St Stephens congregation who donated a considerable share of the previous shops' fixtures and furniture.

Due to COVID 19 lockdowns, the shop was finally ready to open in May 2021. Then another lockdown and delay, and it was finally a blessed day on Sunday 20th June 2021 when Rev Mike Lewis and congregational member (and long-time op shop volunteer) Mrs Winsome Barnett offered a blessing to this continuing Welfare missional program in the new location, and officially opened the shop with the cutting of a red ribbon.

The Op Shop continues to provide care, a welcoming place for all, while generating funds which then go to others. We thank all our past and present volunteers who have offered their time freely to this important church program.

