



Australian  
Multicultural  
Community  
Services

# Solidarity

*February 2021*

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We care, we support, and **we empower**

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*Cover image: AMCS abided with the social distancing rules for the Ride with Matilda event. The people in the photo are a family who live in the same household.*



## Message from CEO

A warm welcome to the new edition of the AMCS newsletter.

I sincerely hope you had a restful, festive and enjoyable time with family and friends.

A big thank you to all AMCS staff and volunteers who continued to support seniors and the wider community during the holidays. Your care and unwavering dedication are most appreciated, and shows the amazing group of people AMCS is privileged to work with.

A special mention to the volunteers that packed and provided hampers to people in need on Christmas Eve at Millennium House.

As we embark on a new year, we focus on our range of support services within the community. We will continue to offer the most popular ones in group gatherings and online, such as daily gentle exercise classes

and Bingo. We hope and plan to reintroduce more face-to-face activities soon.

As always, please stay safe and remember that we are thinking of you. If we can help, we will.

We care, We support, We are only a phone call away.



Elizabeth Drozd  
Chief Executive Officer,  
AMCS



## Client profile

### Meet Tina Sciretta

Packing and unpacking suitcases could be fun when young, happy and free to travel. But for Tina, she had to leave her country, family and friends. The suitcase has now become her symbol of human mobility and a companion for many trips over the Northern to the Southern hemisphere, and vice versa.

### Family ties

Born Tina Damiano in Lacedonia (Italy), a province of Avellino, she married Nicola Sciretta from the same town. In 1953, they had their first child, Valterio. Because of economic necessities, Nicola had to immigrate to England in 1954 for work. Two years later, Tina and their young child joined him. The couple then had two more sons, Michael and Mario.

'Nicola's work as a bricklayer was very hard,'

she said. 'We sold our home and returned to Italy in 1963.' They bought a house in Torino where Nicola's two sisters lived. However, city life didn't suit Nicola, so they returned to England in 1965.

### Coming to Australia

'In 1968, almost as a joke, we came to Australia, selling our second home in England,' recalled Tina. They sailed down from Southampton on the Achille Lauro towards Australia, stopping at the ports of Genoa, Napoli and Messina before arriving

## Nurse's Corner — 10 recovery tips after overindulging on festive food

The festive season is a time to connect with family and friends, not to get bogged down with anxieties over food choices.

If you are one of the many people who probably overindulged, here are our top 10 tips to reboot your body:

1. Fast until lunchtime to empty your body's residual food from the day before.
2. Drink at least eight glasses of water per day. Please note, while tea can help empty the stomach, alcohol slows the process.
3. Avoid antacids and acid-reducing medication. Our gastric juices digest food.
4. Take a reputable probiotic supplement to help replenish your gut environment.
5. Relax — stress does not help the digestive process.
6. Go for a walk — gentle exercises assist with digestion.
7. Enjoy high protein and fibre foods.
8. Deloat with a fresh fruit salad.
9. Swap biscuits and sweets for almonds. Almonds help to lower your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels.



Picture: Sinisha Krstov, AMCS Access and Support Team Leader, celebrating Orthodox Christmas.

10. Stop eating when you're 80% full. Our brain delays recognising when we've had enough.

But no matter what, don't feel guilty. Focus on what you could do to feel more confident and get back on track with your health and wellbeing. We're all human, and treating yourself is a part of life.

in Cape Town after nine days. During their one-day stopover in Napoli, they toured the city, took photographs and purchased memorabilia.

A few years later, Tina and the family returned to Torino, where they still had the house leased out while overseas. Their eldest son remained in Melbourne with his new bride.

'We stayed in Torino for seven months, but our nostalgia and family ties led us back to Australia,' explained Tina. 'We sold our house in Torino and settled in Maidstone, Melbourne.'

To remember their trip and cultural roots, Tina bought two cassette tapes and listened to the songs about romance, nostalgia and absence throughout their journey.

### Her life now

In 2007, Tina sadly lost her dear husband, but she remains close to her children, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. She finds great serenity in her association with people her age and attends an Italian social club within her local community. Her suitcases are now, 'resting with relics of a life marked by satisfaction and regrets, like everyone else.' She last visited Italy in 1995.

### AMCS experience

'I first joined AMCS two years ago,' said Tina. 'The staff are friendly, speak Italian and treat me well. They support me in every way and take a genuine interest in my life and hobbies.'



## Ride with Matilda launch



On 14 January 2021 at Maribyrnong Edible Gardens, AMCS proudly launched *Ride with Matilda*, a surrey bike program, to improve the mental and physical health of multicultural seniors in the Western suburbs.

'It has been many months in the making, a very important day for us,' said Elizabeth Drozd, AMCS CEO.

The event brought together The Honourable Bill Shorten MP, Cr Michael Clarke, Mayor of Maribyrnong, and Gamini Perera OAM, founder and president of SCATS (Sri Lankan Study Centre for the Advancement of Technology & Social Welfare Inc, Australia) as keynote speakers.

In Mr Shorten's speech, he said the surrey bike is a, 'remarkable feat of engineering. It is a chance for people to be together. It is a chance to have harmony. Happiness. Health. This bike is another example of community and togetherness.'

The bike fits four adults and two children and features a small motor to smoothly drive along grass. Not only does *Ride with Matilda* encourage people to keep active, but also, the program allows multicultural communities to stay connected.

Over refreshments, guests had the opportunity to ride the bike. After they cut the ribbon to officially launch the program, Mr Shorten with his daughter Clementine, Mr Clarke and Mr Perera were more than ready to test out the vehicle.

'I'm dressed for the occasion, ready to give it a go, be active,' said Mr Clarke. 'It's about the quality of life we live. Make a commitment to yourself. Look out for each other.'

Beautiful weather blessed the event, and many invitees, including our special guest speakers, commented on how much they welcomed this new initiative to reduce social isolation amongst seniors.

'I really appreciate this contribution,' said Mr Perera.

Thank you to Footscray Rotary Club, Maribyrnong City Council, Sport Australia and RACV for their partnership in bringing this resource to life. Going forward, community groups can hire the bike for outings and festivals by contacting AMCS reception.

## And the winners are...

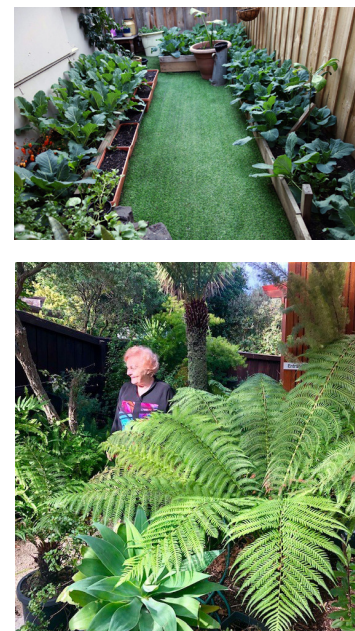
We loved receiving your entries for the Seniors' Spring Garden Show and Tell Competition. The three winners had the most likes on our Facebook page and each received new gardening tools.

Gośka Zachwieja — 60 likes

Stepan and Maria Kichakov — 58 likes

Krystyna Gertig — 44 likes

Congratulations and thank you to everyone who participated. The photos of your beautiful gardens brightened up our days.



## Multicultural festival — The Whole Village into One Digital Stage

On 18–22 January 2021, AMCS held an online festival with a different daily theme to celebrate Australia's diversity.

Over live Zoom sessions and recordings, we featured dancing, music, wedding traditions, delicious food recipes and letters about an individual's journey to Australia.

Ursula Aruma, senior participant of AMCS social cafés, recalled her immigration story. 'We migrated to Australia (from Sri Lanka) to join my family as milk, rice, clothing and groceries were rationed and money was scarce.'

There were many traditional dances, each with their own meanings. Chandra from the Sri Lankan Association explained one dance, 'told the story between a superintendent and one of his tea pluckers. The superintendent tries to tempt the girl to come with him by offering her things.'

The festival was also fortunate enough to have a Georgian Folk Polyphony, a UNESCO proclaimed masterpiece of oral and tangible Heritage of Humanity. Melbourne's Georgian community only comprises of a handful of individuals, including world-class ethnomusicologists.

AMCS proudly premiered Dragan Gavrilovic's

documentary created for Serbian TV, *Sreten Bozic Wongar*. The film showcased a Serbian immigrant, who became an Aboriginal community member in the 1960s.

Viewers also discovered the origins of the Bendigo Chinese Association (BCA).

'BCA has a proud legacy of raising funds for the Bendigo hospital since the 1850s. The citizens of Bendigo formed the Bendigo Easter Fair Society to raise funds for the Sandhurst Benevolent Asylum and Hospital,' said TAN See Tuang, member of BCA and City of Greater Geelong's Intercultural Ambassador. 'The organising committee asked the leaders of the Chinese community to join this effort. The leaders said, "yes", and the rest is history.'

The online festival would not have been a success without the community groups, local councils, museums, musicians, authors, chefs, and expert guests who dedicated their time and shared their culture and personal stories with us.

To view the festival's events, please visit: <https://www.amcservices.org.au/multicultural-festival-the-whole-village-into-one-digital-stage/>

## AMCS Support and Relief Program:

### Christmas hampers for the community

The AMCS Support and Relief Program helps disadvantaged individuals, families and communities to improve their financial capability, resilience and lifetime wellbeing.

To support the community during the holiday season, AMCS delivered 120 Christmas hampers to those experiencing financial hardship. The hampers contained hygiene packs, and necessary food items to bring festive cheer to 400 people.





## Volunteer visiting programs at AMCS

Seniors are at risk of social isolation because of living alone, losing family or friends, chronic illness, and hearing or vision loss.

AMCS match older adults and volunteers with a shared cultural background, hobbies and interests through three different programs:

**Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) Home Care** — fortnightly support for seniors waiting for or receiving a Home Care Package, including companionship or some joined activities, phone or virtual contact, or email and mail exchange.

**Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) Residential Care** — fortnightly support for seniors who live in an aged care facility, including companionship, some joined activities, phone and virtual contact, or email and mail exchange.

**Social Support Individual (SSI)** — weekly one-on-one social support for clients, including companionship, activities like shopping, paying bills, attendance at appointments,



Picture: Volunteer, Danuta Nawrot (left) and client, Maria Sendobry (right). This photo was taken before the pandemic.

or phone and virtual contact. You must be living at home and not be receiving a Home Care Package, and have a referral through My Aged Care.

Often, seniors and volunteers end up forming a special friendship and organise fun activities together.

'Luigi's visits are something that I always looked forward to very much,' said Danuta Zdanis, AMCS client. 'I can chat for hours and we always talk about anything and everything.'

### How do I request a volunteer visitor?

Please contact the AMCS Volunteer Coordinators on [volunteer@amcservices.org.au](mailto:volunteer@amcservices.org.au) or AMCS reception at (03) 9689 9170.

### How do I become a volunteer visitor?

We always need more volunteers, especially those who can speak another language or multiple languages.

AMCS volunteers receive a comprehensive induction, regular training and ongoing support from Volunteer Coordinators.

All of the above caters for clients' needs, abilities and interest, and is free of charge.

To join our team of dedicated volunteers, please visit: <https://www.amcservices.org.au/get-involved/become-a-volunteer/#volunteer-form>



## Fall in love with taking care of your body

When Victoria's first lockdown happened, Marek, AMCS Respite Team Leader in Wantirna, organised gentle exercises via Skype every morning for Polish seniors from the centre-based Respite program or a Social Support Group.

'The clients are very satisfied. A carer even called me an hour beforehand to confirm the session was still going ahead,' said Marek.

And the experience has equally benefited Marek by keeping him active whilst working from home. The program will continue in 2021.

If you are from an Easter European background, are not receiving support through a Home Care Package and would like to join the sessions, please contact Marek Smalec on [marek.smalec@amcservices.org.au](mailto:marek.smalec@amcservices.org.au) or 0424 139 729.

## Staff profile

### Silvia Murphy

#### 1. How long have you been working at AMCS?

Five years in August.

#### 2. Tell us about your role at AMCS.

I have a childhood education degree and am proud to support the elderly as they go through a very difficult adaptation process, from being independent, to depending on others. I do research, go to the library and get material to work with my clients. Old age is a reversible stage, and the elderly can need as much support as someone might as a child. I found that as a challenge and took it. I have been able to make material to work with my clients. I use the Montessori Method of reminiscent to motivate and reward clients to participate in activities they used to enjoy doing themselves.

#### 3. Tell us a bit about yourself.

I like classical music and listen to it while I am driving. I enjoy cooking and gardening, and I also practice my hobbies with my clients. I speak Italian and Spanish.



## Staff profile

### Michelle Coetzer

#### 1. How long have you been working at AMCS?

One year and eight months.

#### 2. Tell us about your role at AMCS.

I am the Coordinator of Volunteer Programs for the Barwon-South Western region, with a focus on the Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) program. The CVS



supports vulnerable seniors and seniors from a CALD background who are receiving or waiting for a Home Care Package. AMCS provide a volunteer to visit for companionship and friendship.

I have an amazing team of volunteers, who provide one-on-one visits, cards, letters, video and phone calls, flowers, birthday presents, audio books, books for reading, Moving for Life (AMCS project) exercises, short walks, accompanied activities and online Bingo.

#### 3. Tell us a bit about yourself.

10 years ago, I migrated to Australia with my two children to provide a secure environment, because my country of birth, South Africa, changed from being safe to one with the highest crime rate.

I speak English and Afrikaans. I am a single parent and my son is studying a Bachelor of Commerce and my daughter, nursing. I like to do day trips and explore this beautiful country I now call home. I walk the dogs, workout at the gym, and enjoy camping and going to the movies.

# Eat, sleep, exercise and play Bingo

Italian Bingo with Roberto, AMCS Social Support Officer, has always been fun for clients.

Now Roberto will host online gentle exercises followed by Bingo for seniors receiving a Home Care Package service.

**When:** Every Tuesday and Thursday.

**Time:** 10:00–10:30am for gentle exercises.  
10:30–11:30am for Bingo.

**Cost:** \$5 for gentle exercises. \$5 for Bingo. Both fees can be charged from your Home Care Package.

**Equipment:** An internet connection and a device to participate. You may rent an iPad from AMCS for a small charge.



For further information, please contact your direct care advisor.

## Staff and volunteers' anniversaries — January to February 2021

Thank you to our staff and volunteers for their incredible dedication and support to the seniors in our communities. Many of them have reached anniversary milestones with us during the months of January to February.

### Staff

Baryla, Kasia	5 years in January
Litewka, Kazimiera	20 years in February

### Volunteers

Bartkowicz, Bronislawa	12 years in February
Bastien, Isabella	3 years in February
Chalupka, Anna	2 years in February
Czajkowski, Jolanta	5 years in February
Gerardo, Chierchia	3 years in February
Gibson, Robyn	3 years in February
Ho, Dieu	1 year in February

Holod, Sophie	5 years in February
Iacono, Anna	2 years in February
Lipski, Donaty	3 years in February
Mulcaire, James	1 year in January
Pedler, Josephine	1 year in January
Poliwodzinski, Maksymilian	2 years in February
Przybylkiewicz, Teresa	7 years in February
Seville, Annalisa	1 year in February
Stefanova, Christina	2 years in January
Tharapos, Soula	1 year in January
Widuch, Ryszard	1 year in February

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