



Australian  
Multicultural  
Community  
Services

# Connection

October 2021



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

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## Message from CEO

Welcome to the AMCS October edition of the newsletter with the theme of *Connection*. More than ever, connection allows us to live happier and healthier lives.

We recently celebrated R U OK? Day on 9 September by checking on each other's wellbeing. Please take the time to reach out to friends, family members or neighbours.

**"Connection allows us to live happier and healthier lives."**

Lately, we have worked with the ABC, Star Weekly and Geelong Independent to share Home Care Package clients' stories to advocate on behalf of ethnic seniors.

*International Day of Older Persons* was on 1 October, highlighting the important contributions of seniors to society and raising awareness of their challenges.

As always, stay safe and remember, if we can help, we will. We love what we do and are happy to support other people you know who might benefit from our care.



Elizabeth Drozd  
CEO, AMCS

## Nurse's corner — Arthritis awareness

Arthritis is a common condition in Australia, affecting 1 in 5 people of all ages from all walks of life, including children. 2.4 million sufferers are of working age. As the population ages, the number of people with arthritis grows. Access Economics' current trends suggest, "By 2050, seven million Australians will suffer from some form of arthritis."

**"2.4 million sufferers are of working age."**

With over 120 different types of arthritis resulting in pain, joint stiffness and reduced mobility, early intervention can delay the disease.

### How to reduce your risk of arthritis

Although not yet curable, medicinal and non-medicinal means can manage symptoms. Talk to your doctor before trying remedies.

### Stay a healthy weight

Extra kilos place pressure on weight-bearing joints like hips and knees.

### Control your blood sugar

Follow a healthy diet.

### Exercise

Exercise takes the stress of excess weight off your joints and strengthens muscles, protecting them from added wear and tear. To maximise the benefits, alternate aerobic activities such as walking or swimming with strengthening exercises. Further, stretch to maintain your flexibility and motion range.

## A mathematical connection

Meet AMCS Home Care Package clients, Rose Ogle, 88, and Ben Ogle, 93.

They live in Melbourne while their four-year-old twin great grandsons, Ethan and Aidan, reside in Virginia, USA.

As part of pre-school home learning, the boys became interested in sums. Rose and Ben receive emails and videos showing their skills. In return, the couple sends additional maths problems.

"I have always been a maths lover," Ben says. "In the past, my children, grandchildren and neighbours asked for help many times."

Although over 16,000 kilometres apart, numbers and figures keep the families connected.

### Avoid injury

Over time, joints can wear out. When you injure your joints, you can damage the cartilage and cause wear and tear quicker.

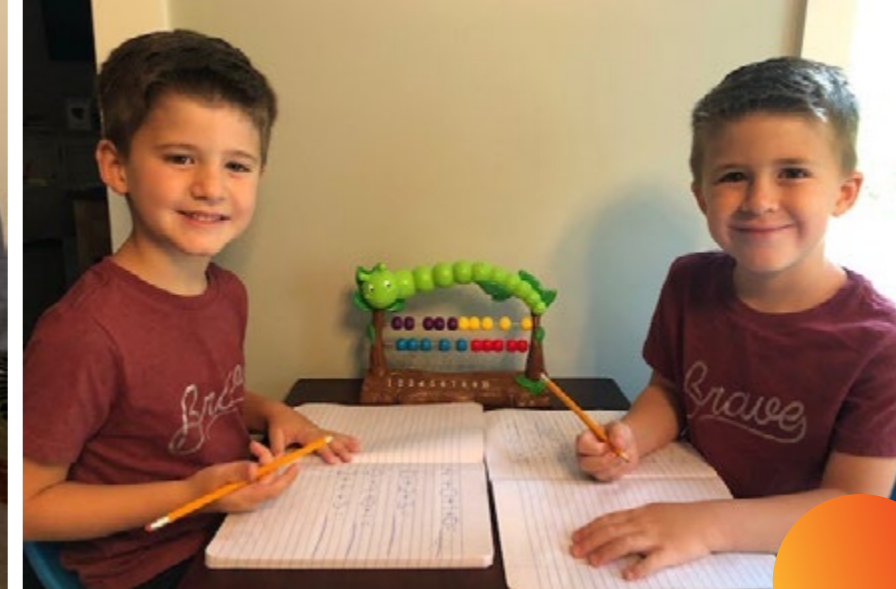
### Protect your joints

The right techniques when sitting, working and lifting can protect joints from everyday strains. For example, lift with your knees and hips, not your back when picking up objects. Also, carry items close to your body to decrease strain on your wrists.

### Eat fish twice a week

Fish like salmon, trout, mackerel and sardines are rich in Omega-3 fatty acids, have many health benefits and can reduce the body's inflammation.

*This photo was taken before the pandemic.*



## Meet Anastasia Piejko

### Home Care Package client

AMCS has many interesting clients who lived through the war, including Anastasia. Born in Poland in 1923, she speaks Polish, German and English.

At age 14 during World War II, she was forcibly deported by Poland's German occupiers as a slave labourer in Germany. There, she had to do heavy physical work on a farm and look after the owners' children.

Despite her tough experiences, she regularly gives back to the community through volunteering.

### Coming to Australia

In 1950, Anastasia, her husband and two children moved to Australia.

"I was happy to start a new life in a free country. We had another daughter, Maria," Anastasia says. "I made many friends from different backgrounds. We helped one another, shared jobs and spent free time together."

After her husband's passing, she remarried.

### Working 9 to 5

Because of Anastasia's willingness to learn, strength and efficiency, she worked in several jobs.

## "I operated heavy machinery and did roles normally for men."

"My employment included areas in telecommunications, textiles and a metal factory for fruit and non-perishable food," Anastasia recalls. "I operated heavy machinery and did roles normally for men. Most male workers went to war."



### Pay it forward

Anastasia was one of the first volunteers to build AMCS-owned Millennium House in the 1950s. The venue is currently undergoing renovations for community groups to hold workshops, education and training, and cultural and family celebrations.

In the early 90s, Anastasia was also a first to raise funds to purchase land for the Polish Sport Recreation Centre in Albion.

"I also assisted with the Polonia Soccer Club and other sporting events," she remembers.

### Life as we know it

At age 98, she is full of energy and offers help and practical ideas for anyone in need.

"I crochet beanies, scarfs and gloves, donating them to hospitals and charities," Anastasia explains.

In her spare time, she enjoys Bingo and outings with her Polish social group.

She has 12 grandchildren, 24 great grandchildren and seven great, great grandchildren.

### AMCS experience

Anastasia receives support services in personal care, cleaning, shopping and cooking. AMCS also organise Anastasia's medical appointments and physiotherapy care.

## Staff profile

### Kazia Litewka Support Worker

#### 1. How long have you worked at AMCS?

I have worked at AMCS for over 20 years. My responsibilities include home care, personal care, respite for carers and companionship. I enjoy supporting clients, like Anastasia (see page 4). My role gives me an opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds and cultures, including Croatian, German, Greek, Italian, Polish and Russian. I learn from their experiences and we share ideas.

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

I love seeing clients happy and smiling, whether helping with household chores, visiting a local café, walking around the park or discussing interesting topics.

The team of Care Advisors, Care Coordinators and Managers are helpful when communicating different issues. They provide excellent advice to prepare for working with new clients.

#### 3. Tell us about yourself.

In 1981, I migrated to Australia with my husband and four-year-old son from Poland. Thanks to family and friends already here, I fitted in comfortably and learnt to speak English, found jobs and met people. I was happy to live in Australia, where I could raise children while continuing Polish traditions. After several years, I had two more sons and now, two lovely grandchildren. I mainly speak Polish at home and know a little Croatian and Russian.

"My Support Workers like Kazia (in this newsletter) and Janusz arranges transport to my social group. I also cook delicious foods with them such as pierogi (Polish dumplings)," Anastasia says. "I am always satisfied with the services provided. The Support Workers and staff speak Polish and I enjoy their company."



When I first arrived, I volunteered at the local Polish soccer club as the committee's secretary. Like Home Care Package client Anastasia, I also support the Polish Sport Recreation Club and plan special events.

I like to cook, read, listen, walk, socialise and watch documentaries on health and medicine (Medical Report on ABC Radio).

AMCS is hiring Support Workers. For information on the role, please contact Eva, HR Officer, on [eva.ata@amcservices.org.au](mailto:eva.ata@amcservices.org.au) or 0481 245 220.

For information on Home Care Packages, please contact Eloina, Intake Coordinator, on [eloina.zepeda@amcservices.org.au](mailto:eloina.zepeda@amcservices.org.au) or 0432 099 225.

## AMCS Home Care Package clients in the news

For those who didn't see the stories, please find the articles on ABC Online, Brimbank and North West Star Weekly, Geelong Independent, Maribyrnong & Hobsons Bay Star Weekly and Sunbury & Macedon Ranges Star Weekly.

We are always pleased to share the stories of our diverse clients.

### Maribyrnong & Hobsons Bay Star Weekly Sister's vaccine message

*Goya Dmytryshchak*

She lost her brother after he contracted COVID-19 and struggles being in lockdown at her Seddon home but 90-year-old Francesca Catroppa still finds reasons to sing.

The local identity sits outside her home of 71 years and talks to passers by, sometimes breaking into song to lift her own and others' spirits.

One song is Mamma, a classic from her Italian homeland: "Mamma son tanto felice (Mum, I am so happy)".

She is urging others to get vaccinated so that people have a chance against the coronavirus.

In March last year, her brother, Francesco, 86, died after contracting COVID.

"My brother went to the big shop to buy something," Francesca said.

"When he came back home, he fell down."

He was taken to Footscray Hospital, where he learnt he had coronavirus.

He died a week later.

Francesca didn't get to see him in hospital and was not allowed to attend his funeral.

Australian Multicultural Community Services (AMCS), based at Maidstone and Geelong, supports Francesca to live at home and takes her to medical appointments.

Her most recent one was on Friday, when Francesca received her second dose of AstraZeneca.

Support worker Tina Parisi, who visited Mrs Catroppa sometimes daily last year, went with her the first time and they got their jabs together.

Tina said after the first dose, she went home with Francesca to ensure there were no side effects. Both experienced none.

"She thinks that if people have the vaccine, maybe we can cope with COVID," Tina said.

"Without the vaccine, we have no chance."

Francesca said she enjoyed other people's company and struggled during lockdown.



"I sit outside my front door ... and everybody who passes on the street knows me," she said.

"Everybody talks to me.

"I sit in front of the door all day from in the morning at 7 o'clock and the people who go to the [train] station ... every day, every minute.

"Everybody says to me, 'Hello, how are you'. I talk with everyone."

Francesca said her message to people about COVID-19 was to vaccinate.

"When we were in Italy, in the wartime, I was 10 years old," she said.

"A lot of soldiers died in the wartime. They had no chance to bury them.

"A lot of sickness from the soldiers dying and being left on top of the ground.

"Every day, one doctor came around my town and he gave kids, anyone, an injection to not catch the sickness.

"Same now."

### Brimbank and North West Star Weekly Finding a new love

*Tara Murray*

George Rousou has become quite the artist throughout the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Having never picked up pencils and textas before, the 94-year-old Sunshine North resident now spends much of his time colouring and drawing.

His daughter Yvonne said they had seen a new side of her father in the last year, with the artwork bringing him immense joy.

"During COVID he was introduced to it by my sister who is a graphic artist by trade," she said.

"He tried pastels and was drawing bottle brushes. He is so proud of his work and shows everyone.

"Everyone now buys him textas and

crayons and he's really got into it in a big way.

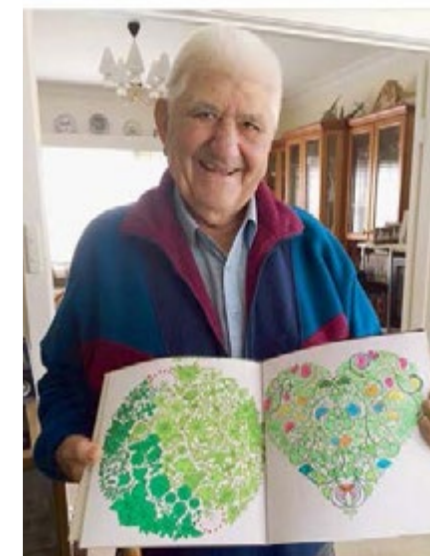
Yvonne said her father put his art work up around the house and said they had mentioned about having an exhibition for the family when lockdowns ease.

She said the paintings made things less stressful for him and helped them gauge the mood he was in.

"If he had taken this up a while ago, he would have been quite good at it."

Mr Rousou has been sharing his love of his artwork with carers from the Australian Multicultural Community Services (AMCS) team that visit him every week.

He receives health services and weekly support worker visits



to vacuum, mop and dust, and maintain his garden.

AMCS has looked at different ways to connect with clients and make sure they're safe during the pandemic.

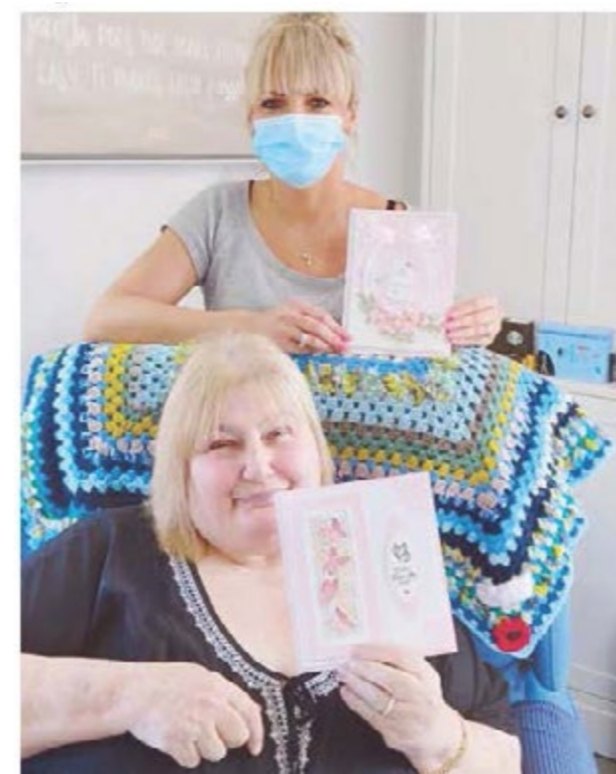
### Sunbury & Macedon Ranges Star Weekly Crafting back on the cards

*Oliver Lees*

In the midst of Victoria's sixth lockdown, one Sunbury resident is using her time to rediscover one of her favourite pastimes – card making.

In 2003, after suffering from back pain that limited her ability to work, Angela Evans began filling her time crafting cards, each adorned with a unique three-dimensional flower design made out of craft paper.

Angela said she made cards for all occasions but never charged her customers.



The cards were popular, she said, so much so that she compiled a free online booklet with a how-to guide for anyone to use.

"I've got a very inquiring mind, so I enjoyed finding new patterns and being able to make it work," she said.

"But mostly I enjoyed making people happy. I'd pick a person from my contacts and send one to them, if that puts a smile on their face, it's worth more than any payment.

But in 2019, after her husband of 40 years died, Ms Evans lost the will to continue her craft without someone to keep her motivated.

"He was my inspiration to do things, he was always there rooting for me and taking an interest in what I did," she said.

"On his rostered day off, he'd take me to any craft shop I wanted to go to. When he died, I lost it. And I hadn't been able to get myself back into it."

That is until recently, when Angela unearthed her old craft supplies with the help of her carer, Magda.

Working for Australian Multicultural Community Services, Magda visits Angela's home regularly to help around the house and has taken an interest in Angela's craft-filled past.

"She does have a real interest in my cards, so I'm seeing it as a goal to get back into doing what I love," Angela said.

"It's really done good things for my mojo, I'm excited about it. It's a win for us both, and it'll be nice to do something with my talent."



ABC News

## The full extent of homelessness is not known

Norman Hermant

The last census estimated that 15 per cent of the homeless population were people who arrived in Australia in the previous five years. That's more than three times the size of that group in the general population.

And in the Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria in 2020, the Centre for Multicultural Youth estimated that young people from refugee backgrounds are six to 10 times more likely to be at risk of homelessness than Australian-born young people.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics said it had measures in place to accurately measure the make-up of homeless populations in this month's census.

It said census staff work with organisations supporting culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations to identify homeless people in the community. And they will visit areas where people are known to sleep rough and conduct interviews over a week-long period.

But agencies that work with refugees and migrants said it was hard to know the scope of the problem because housing and support services often don't record data on cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

"I would describe it as a hidden problem because we don't know the full extent," said Elizabeth Drozd, chief of Australian Multicultural Community Services (AMCS).

Her organisation supports older Australians to live in their own homes. Most of their clients are migrants. Many have experienced insecure housing situations after immigrating to Australia.

"It is not unusual for migrants and refugees not to have anybody here," she said.

"If something happened and you need help, who can you call at 2:00 in the morning? ... Is it only you or your son and daughter?"

Lack of support leaves older migrants vulnerable, especially considering that if they've been sponsored by family, many are not eligible for Centrelink payments for up to 10 years.

## Sleeping in Lions' Club while waiting for housing

Rodolfo Cabuang and his wife Erlinda Garcia know how quickly things can change.

They came to Australia from the Philippines in 2007 after being sponsored to join their daughter in Melbourne. But a year later, she died.

"After she passed away, we have big problem because her husband cannot accommodate us in the house," 75-year-old Erlinda Garcia said.

"I'm frightened. And I'm very, very sad, of course, because we don't have money, we don't have a place to live."

The couple turned to a community church and wound up sleeping in a Lions' Club in Footscray in Melbourne's west. They were there for nearly four years.

Eventually, they were placed in a public housing unit. AMCS helped them secure Home Care Packages for both Erlinda and Rodolfo, 83. But they know many migrants who simply do not know where to turn for help.

"Some of our friends who are staying here for more than 20 years, and they still don't have the package up to now," Rodolfo said.

Elizabeth Drozd from AMCS has seen this story play out many times.

"There's a family breakdown, there may be a divorce, there may be an accident at work ... the impact of that ... can be quite significant."

She'd like to see government funding for a pilot program to reach out to the largest migrant communities to ensure those who are living insecurely get help. And she hopes the census will accurately measure the homeless population.

But she believes in addition to these ideas, there's a more basic solution.

"The level of homelessness for seniors has in the last 10 years actually increased by 49 per cent," she said.

"We wouldn't talk about homelessness ... if we had adequate housing for people."

## Geelong Independent War survivor Meta reaches century

Luke Voogt

Meta Schameitat was born 100 years and a day ago in a country that no longer exists.

The Geelong great-grandmother celebrated the century milestone yesterday after surviving World War II and fleeing Germany as the Russians took over.

"I'm still here!" she told the Independent.

Meta was born on September 16, 1921, in Memelland, a part of East Prussia that became autonomous following World War I, until Lithuania took over in 1923.

She grew up in a small village with no electricity, using kerosene lamps at night, and her mother, a World War I widow, raised her, her two older brothers and, later, an adopted sister, alone.

In the early 1940s, Meta, her husband and then three-year-old daughter Edita were forced into refugee camps in western Germany, where they spent several years during World War II.

They left on wagon trains in the winter of 1945, as "the Russians came" before sailing to Australia.

After a several years in country Victoria and NSW they moved Queenscliff and later Geelong.

Meta raised Edita as a single mother after separating from her husband in 1955 and worked for decades at the Federal Mills in North Geelong.

She credits a healthy diet and a spoonful of fish oil a day for the past three decades – long before it became fashionable – for her longevity.

"I still do my cooking," she said.

"I started young – I've been cooking for more than 90 years."

Although, with only a little vision remaining in her left eye, she needs help from time to time with cooking, cleaning and other daily tasks.

She lives at home with a support package from Australian Multicultural Community Services.

"I find it difficult to cut the potatoes and vegetables," she said.

She told the Independent she would be happy to pass away peacefully at night after a long and fulfilling life.

"But every morning I wake up and thank the Lord I'm here," she added.

And her family keeps her going too, even though COVID-19 has limited their ability to visit.

"I'm so happy when I see my family and friends," she said.

Meta is also an avid green thumb, according to granddaughter Julia Dunscombe.



Meta Schameitat celebrates her 100th birthday with granddaughter Julia Dunscombe. (Louisa Jones/250441\_00)

"What has kept her going is her garden," Julia said.

"Her whole life she has been pottering in the garden.

"I think it's quite a feat for her to reach 100 – she's fiercely independent and she's worked hard all her life.

"To see the changes she has and go through war, coming from peasant life to the world we live in today – it's amazing. She's no good with technology, mind you."



## AMCS Inaugural Anti-ageism Art Challenge winner

To combat ageism and negative perceptions seniors face in the community, AMCS launched an art challenge to represent positive ageing, inclusivity, multiculturalism and life celebrations.

Gerardo Chierchia's photos of his friend Carlo, who passed away five months ago, unanimously won first prize of \$1,000.

As a participant in the AMCS Volunteer Visiting Programs, Gerardo visits seniors at risk of social isolation. A mutual friend asked if Gerardo could support Carlo too.

"We developed a close friendship I will always cherish," Gerardo says.

Maria Janczak won second prize of \$500 for a painting of her mother skipping and Jack Forbes-Walker placed honorary third for his Indigenous art piece.



Anti-clockwise, from top right image:

1st Gerardo Chierchia  
2nd Maria Janczak  
3rd Jack Forbes-Walker

The rest of the finalists received a special recognition:

Archie Buyser	Quan Phung
Bronwyn Calcutt	Sonia Di Mezza
Carmen Spiteri	Sophie L'Huillier
Gabriela Blaszczyk	Sri Lankan Senior Association
Gosia Blaszczyk	in the City of Casey
Hilkat Ozgun	Sue Jackson
John Oh	Yongxin Yuan
Naomi Spry	

Congratulations to everyone who entered and helped us challenge ageism. Australia's first Ageism Awareness Day coincided with the UN's International Day of Older Persons on 1 October 2021. There is no better time to start the conversation on the impacts of ageism.



## Recipe — kiribath (milk rice)

by Dhammika Ekanayaka

In Sri Lanka, kiribath symbolises life and the head of the family feeds the cuisine to the rest of the group. People enjoy the sweet dish for ceremonies or breakfast on the first day of each month.

### Ingredients

250 grams basmati rice  
500 millilitres full coconut milk  
1 tsp salt

### Method

- Cook rice with salt until soft and done.
- Pour coconut milk into a heated pan until boiling point.
- Add rice and an optional pinch of salt into coconut milk.
- Keep stirring until thickened and the mixture forms a lump. Do not mash.
- Pour the milk rice onto a dish and flatten evenly.
- Cut into diamond shapes and serve with lunumiris (salt and chilli).

Dhammika is a participant in AMCS' online social cafes featuring gentle exercises, line dancing, arts and craft, gardening, knitting and games.

For more information on the social cafes, please contact Nirodha on [nirodha.dissanayake@amcservices.org.au](mailto:nirodha.dissanayake@amcservices.org.au) or 0487 202 903

Do you have a recipe to share? Please contact Olivia on [marketing@amcservices.org.au](mailto:marketing@amcservices.org.au) or 0481 218 931.

## COVID-19 Multicultural Support Hub

Are you feeling isolated and need to connect with the community?

The AMCS COVID Support Hub assists with:

- food and hygiene packs
- COVID-19 health and vaccination information in different languages
- accessing My Aged Care
- help to find work

We also offer online social cafes:

### Gentle exercise and information sessions

**Mondays 11:00am – 12:30pm**

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4925509546>

Bring two dumbbells/water bottles or anything to use as weights.



Picture: Art by social café participant, Chandra.

### Line dancing

**Wednesdays 11:00am – 12:00pm**

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84456599166>

### Arts and craft, gardening, knitting and games

**Fridays 11:00am – 12:00pm**

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/99230930660>

Have a chat, access resources and learn something new.

For more information, please

contact Nirodha on [nirodha.dissanayake@amcservices.org.au](mailto:nirodha.dissanayake@amcservices.org.au) or 0487 202 903.



## Volunteer spotlight

In September, Archie Buyser celebrated two years of volunteering at AMCS by visiting seniors at risk of social isolation. Originally from the Philippines, he is an international student studying a Diploma of Mental Health.

Recently, Archie was a finalist in the AMCS Inaugural Anti-ageism Art Challenge.

"I have loved art since I was young. I engage more with people through craft," Archie says.

We are always looking for volunteers. Please ask for a Volunteer Coordinator — Milena, Michelle or Sheren — at reception: (03) 9689 9170.

## Staff and volunteers' anniversaries — September to October 2021

Thank you to our staff and volunteers for their incredible dedication and support to seniors in the community.

### Staff — October

Leska, Jolanta	20 years
Quach, Tu Phuong	5 years

### Volunteers — September

Aslanis, Mina	1 year
Buyser, Archie	2 years
Wolosz, Jerzy	2 years
Zotkina, Aleksandra	1 year

### Volunteers — October

Beata, Swidron	3 years
Chimburu, Daisy	1 year
Harris, Deborah	3 years
Hartney, William	1 year
Michalski, Wanda	7 years
Shenouda, Sophie	2 years
Skowronska, Marta	6 years
Tomaszewska, Anna	16 years



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