

Annual

REPORT

2019-2020



Our Values

Dignity

Create a work environment in which there is equal opportunity, where staff and clients are understood and respected.

Sensitivity

Meet the clients' needs by being responsive, adaptive and innovative and supporting clients in their choice of care and lifestyle.

Honesty

Act with integrity, be transparent and exercise stewardship and good governance, whilst being responsive and accountable.

Value

Aspire to provide value for money at all times and meet the clients' expectations and financial capacity to receive the best possible care.

Excellence

Strive for a high standard of client satisfaction and to excel in all that we do.

Our Mission

“

To offer choice, value and consistency to people with diverse needs.

”

Our Vision

To be a leader in the provision of quality, accessible and affordable community care services for the general and CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) communities.

To be the focal point in Queensland for the promotion and the study of the Italian language and culture.

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Board of Directors & EXECUTIVES

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Cav. Nereo Brezzi

Vice President and Secretary

Cav. Antonio Giovanni Palella

Treasurer

Antony Brown

Directors

Peter Accornero (Resigned 19/08/2019)

Joe Bonica

Joe Chisari

CEO

Dina Ranieri

Assistant CEO

Tanina Softa

President's REPORT

In what has been a difficult and challenging year, especially in its second half, it gives me great pleasure to present this report marking another successful year of accomplishments in Co.As.It.'s 41st year of serving the community.

The Board met for its annual planning meeting in February that enabled us to review how we continue to deliver our programs and services in the context of our vision for the Co.As.It. of tomorrow. Almost immediately thereafter, Australia became a victim to the Covid-19 pandemic which forced unprecedented changes to our operations and structures. A detailed comment on the pandemic's impact and Co.As.It.'s responses can be read in the CEO's annual statement in this report.

The successful expansion to our services has resulted in our main office accommodation being very stretched so the Board investigated improvement options and then decided to purchase a building to house all of our current and future activities. The building is in Lutwyche Road, Lutwyche and it is hoped that after some refurbishment, it will be available for use by mid-2021. The proposed Community Hub at our Bracken Ridge site was given priority and should be in operation by December 2020.

Our language program through the Italian Language Centre

was chosen to conduct State Language Championships in October. It was a very successful program that undoubtedly enhanced the ILC "brand" in Qld. The event also had an international element with our special guest, Professor Donati from Campus Magnolie Castelraimondo Italy who also took part at the yearly teachers' conference in Melbourne. Another milestone for ILC was the 25th anniversary of Studitalia scholarships that took place in August at Old Government House.

A new program was implemented: The Qld Community Support Scheme (QCSS) that is funded by the State Government. The services are being delivered by a consortium of three organisations with Co.As.It. being the leading organisation.

We have been fortunate to have had Government's support with continued funding to guarantee employment and providing essential services where required. Staff have respected all Co.As.It. Covid guidelines, followed processes as required and undertaken relevant training.

We were privileged to meet the new Italian Ambassador HE Francesca Tardioli in October at a "Welcome Cocktail" at ILC organised by Com.it.es and the Italian Consul.

Collaboration and the support of partners are always vital in accomplishing united positive outcomes for our clients and community members. I would like to acknowledge our valued



partners and supporters who have supported our vision.

They include the Italian Consul, Com.It.Es., the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, PHN Brisbane North, Catholic Education Offices in Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville and Education Qld.

The dedication and contribution of our staff and volunteers is invaluable, and the Board once again expresses its sincerest appreciation. Our exceptional CEO, Dina Ranieri leads the organisation with a resolute direction for growth and sustainability in our programs and we appreciate the difficult waters through which she has had to navigate the organisation in this difficult year.

I am grateful for the on-going support of the whole Board. Together, we are excited by the challenges and opportunities of the coming years and we are confident our continued vision will guide us in the advancement of our programs.

I wish to sincerely thank the Directors, the CEO and all staff for their tireless contribution during a very active and challenging year.

Cav. Nereo Brezzi
President

Nereo Brezzi

CEO's REPORT

As we moved into a new financial year in July 2019, we were excited to be looking forward to many new developments and growth for our organization.

After a long search for a suitable site, we had recently celebrated the purchase of our new future office building in Lutwyche that would provide staff with larger, more comfortable office space.

The proposed Community Hub at our Bracken Ridge site was also powering along. After months of planning and teamwork, the architectural drawings for Bracken Ridge were progressing well and with tender documents released in May, it seemed that we were on track to bring our project to fruition.

It was evident that there were going to be challenges in running current programs and also undertaking significant renovations but we were confident and optimistic in our ability to successfully manage these challenges.

We concentrated our efforts in implementing new programs like NDIS and QCSS and were busily creating social activities that united, empowered and enhanced the lives of

many in our community. In the last part of the year, all of our programs continued to provide essential support and services for clients across all ages. We enhanced our delivery of services by streamlining our digital technology and internal processes.

Little did we know that this need for support would soon amplify in ways that no one could have predicted or expected. While the world watched in disbelief, country after country succumbed to the Covid-19 waves of infection.

In a few short months the pandemic would bestow an urgent need for greater medical, emotional, social and financial support for citizens worldwide.

It was particularly poignant to see Italy, our country of heritage be struck so overwhelmingly. We often heard from many of our Italian clients concerned about relatives and friends who were dealing with the virus over there.

When our activities ceased due to lockdown we drew on the courage and determination of our staff, the resilience of our clients and the professionalism of our teams in ensuring that the vulnerable in our community were still able to access much needed support services. There was an immediate transference in our priorities as our planned projects took second place to the welfare of our community.

We recognized that our modus operandi had to change (and quickly) in order to meet government regulatory guidelines and still cater to the wider needs in our community.

All of our staff worked with dogged persistence, from providing phone support to our clients who needed someone to understand their anxieties to securing protective equipment for staff or ensuring clients would still receive the services they needed regardless of what changes were required to make it happen.

The reassigning of staff (such as those involved with our social group activity centres) had them engaged in different roles; safeguarding that many staff members or clients who were unwell answered the Covid-19 screening questions; arranging flu shots for all staff and ensuring staff completed the online Covid-19 training - and the list went on.

Now more than at any other time, people needed reassurance and connections, we needed to strengthen the relationships with our clients, our staff and our stakeholders to empower the spirit and perseverance of the people who needed this the most.

Telephone contact became essential, grocery deliveries, window visits, messages to residents in aged care facilities were all ways we could keep in touch and show we cared.

A taskforce was formed to manage the effects of the virus not only on our daily business but also on the lives of our clients. An electronic register captured all clients and staff who were unwell and were undertaking Covid-19 testing.

Follow-up calls were made to record the results of the tests and approve either a return to work for staff or a recommencement of services for clients. This register remains in place and is monitored by the Clinical Team Leader who handles health concerns, manages the progress of testing and Covid-19 safety and provides directions for the taskforce.

Throughout it all, the majority of staff and clients have coped with all of the restrictive changes with grace and goodwill. Changes to service provision occurred across all of our programs, including students who were learning Italian through our ILC division.

Classes were run on Zoom or Microsoft Teams, platforms that have now become the norm and will be a blueprint that will continue to evolve in our future business.

As an organization, this experience has been a business—altering revelation. Different modes of service delivery that offer flexible, adaptable and innovative technologies are not as difficult to adopt as we had thought.

We welcomed the decisions handed down by the Department of Health that directed this shift in delivery parameters. Changes to the way our funding was aligned to this newly manifested need allowed us to provide jobs for our care staff and utilize funds directed for services that could not be personally delivered to services that could be delivered safely.

We are grateful for our successful application for the retention bonus for our care and clinical staff that acknowledges our government's appreciation for the extraordinary circumstances under which staff has been working.

My heartfelt thanks and admiration goes to the dedicated Co.As.It. care teams, our teaching staff and the Board of Management for their unstinting support.

While the world waits for a vaccine for Covid-19, it gives me reassurance that as an organization, we have been able to withstand the challenges of this historical event where many others have had to fold operations. Our resilience will propel our way forward and we will ardently continue to be the backbone for many who cannot stand alone.

Dina Ranieri
CEO

Dina Ranieri



"Our resilience
will propel our
way forward."

Personnel

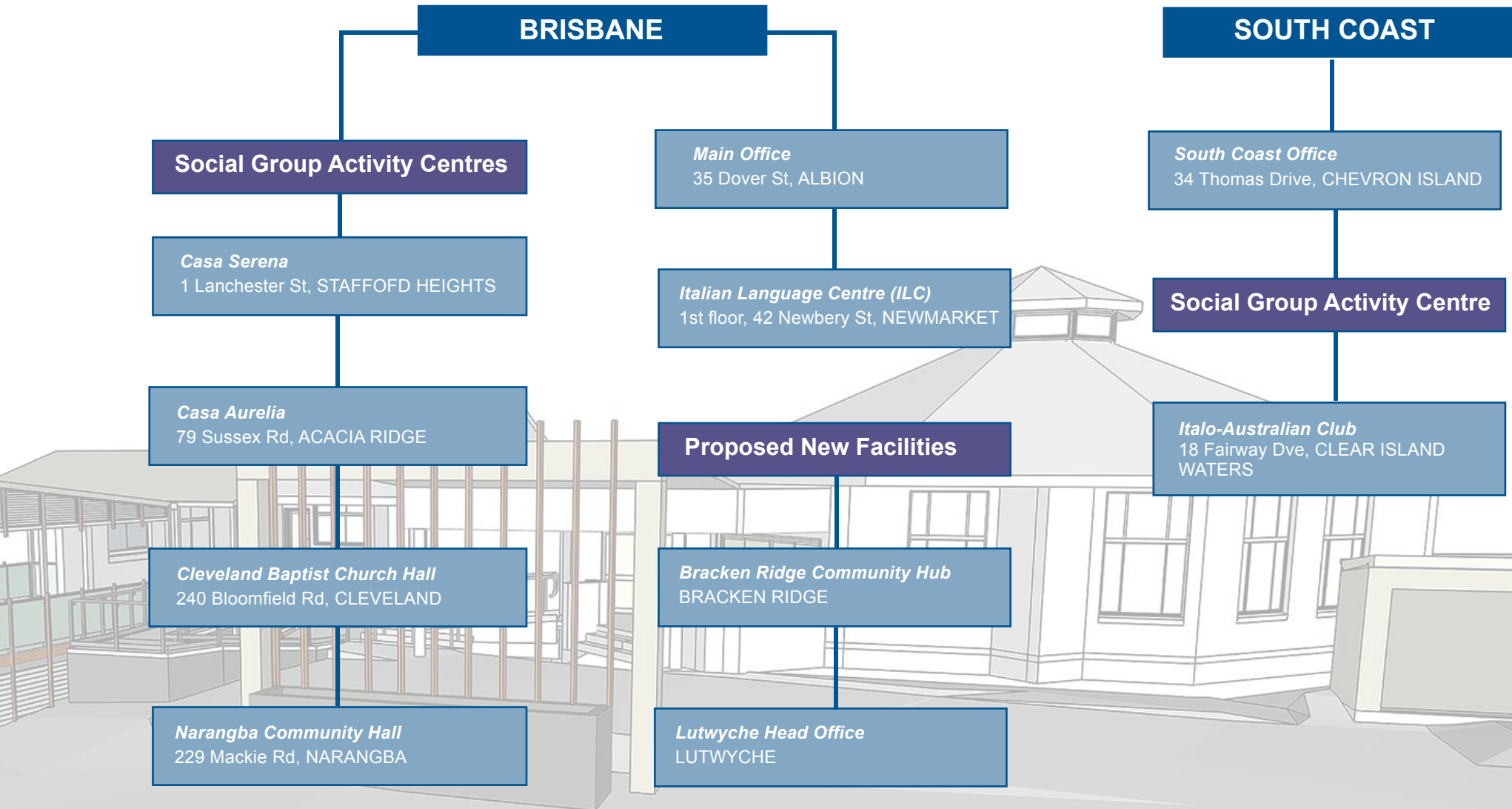
& STATISTICS 2019-2020

Management	3
Finance	7
General Administration	14
Regional Assessment Team (RAS)	6
Aged Care and other Community Services	60
Allied Health	
Team Leader	1
Physiotherapists	5
Podiatrists	2
Occupational Therapists	2
Allied Health Assistant	1
Nursing Staff	10
Team Leader	1
Care Staff	263
ILC Staff	3
Teachers	8
Volunteers	84



Our Service

CENTRES & OFFICES



The Year in Review

The first half of this reporting period saw our organisation maintain its strong presence within the community through meticulous planning and recruitment where possible, of skilled bi-lingual staff.

The men and women who work with us have been our wealth, their ability to establish warm rapports that comfort, support and raise our clients' capacities to live richer lives has been of profound satisfaction to everyone involved in the care process.

We also recognised that our Vision was consistently expressed by our staff through their agile methods of working, often in spite of rapidly changing service environments.

In contrast to identified ageist attitudes to older people in Australia,* from our beginnings we have heralded older people as valued members of our community and over our 45 year history, have striven to instil this philosophy in every facet of our organisation. In the past year our staff has continued to integrate older people as partners in the planning and implementing of

their services, an ethos that has inspired innovation in service delivery and high satisfaction for our clients. (* Royal Commission into Aged Care, Quality and Safety 2020; Interim Report - Foreword)

Our transition into NDIS has been a successful undertaking despite having to acquire a new knowledge base in this model of service delivery, but we are proud to have been instrumental in making positive and real changes to the lives of participants using this funding.

As we continued to work alongside the vulnerable in our community, we were busy consolidating our future footprint with the proposed Community Hub at Bracken Ridge and the purchase of a new office building at Lutwyche with the capacity to house all of our Brisbane divisions on the same site. Seniors Week celebrations in Brisbane and on the South Coast saw the attendance of over 350 people and we welcomed the new Italian Ambassador to Australia in October. Our partnerships continued to flourish, viz. PHN Brisbane North, RAS, QCSS, the Italian Consulate and other service providers and community groups in the objective of providing holistic service delivery.

We cultivated these valuable partnerships and our relationships continue to expand and develop for the benefit of our clients.

Out of necessity and to meet its growth over the past 12 months, the South Coast office expanded to a second floor in its building to better house their growing programs and staff numbers and this allowed the lower floor offices to be converted into meeting rooms, a classroom and common room.

Working closely with the Department of Education, our Italian Language Centre (ILC) had been actively involved in language competitions in Brisbane, North Queensland and the Sunshine Coast and in providing on-going professional training for teachers of Italian language throughout Queensland. The introduction of on-line student registration and fee payment were in the pipe works which would alleviate a huge part of the administrative workload for our ILC Officers and Co.As.It.'s end of year celebrations with the community and staff were the delight of many.

Returning to work after Christmas everyone looked forward to a new year of exciting challenges, new projects and bigger

programs. We had little idea that there would be social, political and health challenges that would soon supplant 'normality' in our lives. In what was soon to become an arduous and compelling workplace as a result of the tragic backwash of Covid-19, we were oblivious to the dramatic changes we were soon to incorporate into our systems.

Worldwide, as every country affected by the virus ground to a halt to restrict infection of the virus, there was a corresponding and immediate shifting of work parameters for humans everywhere. These parameters have marked the advent of a new health, socio-political and financial era generations past and present, one that encapsulates a turbocharging of technology usage, a redefinition of social connectivity and a repositioning of aged and community care in Australia. It is unlikely that these changes will revert in the near future and as an organisation, we will embrace these changes to mirror the environment in which we will need to work.

As an organisation we strove to acclimatize to the unprecedented changes being experienced worldwide. We focused on the health and well-being of our staff, supported

A year like no other

vulnerable clients and other community members and reworked our services to ensure continuity across all of our programs. Through the underpinning of strong risk management and robust capital resources, we have been able to withstand this inconceivable human disaster.

As the pandemic unfolded, during its apex, all of our social activities ceased, however, being in the essential services industry, there were still urgent and demanding support services that could not be ignored.

As a provider we had a duty of care to ensure the most vulnerable did not fall through the gaps, especially those on our Disaster Management List. Staff was reassigned to new positions when the social activity centres closed and a high proportion of office staff were able to work remotely from home to ensure that services were consistent. There was a high degree of apprehension not only within our workforce but also within our client groups. All staff undertook online training in infection control and COVID-19 screening questions became routine for any staff and clients who felt unwell and during April and May, the organisation paid for influenza shots for all office and care staff and volunteers.

Some of our Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) clients cancelled services not only for fear of contracting the virus but also as a result of the bewildering restrictions being introduced. This was primarily within clients able to bridge the gap in service delivery themselves but there was a corresponding higher demand for services in the Home Care Package (HCP) program where the ceasing of family and friends unable to provide supplementary support had to be met by additional services from us. Where appropriate and urgently required, individualised service delivery using Covid-safe plans was implemented. It was not unusual to have our workers' vehicles loaded with groceries and other necessities – which had to be left at clients' front doors. Meals were delivered by ready-made-meal companies that were also left at the front door, medications and other necessities also faced the same options and confronted with shortages that were sometimes inexplicable viz. toilet paper, workers and office staff banded together to try to find these essential items for clients who were in genuine need. Most concerning were national shortages of personal protection equipment (PPE) and sanitiser but it was rewarding to see that our own staff soon resolved these significant

safety issues to the benefit of both staff and clients. Care teams and admin staff were required to attend Covid on-line training courses, in-house resources were provided and education programs for staff and volunteers were held via zoom. Social distancing, temperature checks, which still provided much needed social dialogue for people who were isolated or experiencing mental health concerns as a result of alienation from the pandemic.

Co.As.It. counsellors started to see a rise in domestic and family violence as predicted, including abuse by carers of elderly clients with dementia. Unable to cope without respite, this became an area of genuine concern that needed to be addressed. Well-being checks done by our staff on all of the clients were frequent and essential and this contact also supported distressed clients who had families in some of the most affected areas viz. Italy, Spain.

Whilst many international visitors were encouraged to return home, travel restrictions, border closures and non-operational transport saw many people stranded. In April, Co.As.It. became aware of the plight of international students, who

having working primarily in hospitality were now suddenly unemployed and ineligible for government assistance. A webinar in Spanish was conducted by our counsellor and CISS Officer providing support, resources and information. This online social platform led to a wider array of linkages for these students and a broadening of our own social media arena where we continued to convey resources and information dissemination.

The Italian Language Centre adapted its curriculum to an online learning environment that offered Italian language and culture classes via Zoom, a previously unheard of facility that is now used extensively. Classes, training and resource development continue with our ILC Officers adapting and using technology to reach their student body.

In recognition of the astonishing flexibility, adaptation and lack of compromise in maintaining services at an optimal level for our clients, we congratulate our community care staff, our administrative teams, volunteers and everyone who contributed in ensuring the welfare of our clients remained our first priority.



Aged Care Programs

HOME CARE PACKAGES HCP

Funded under the Federal Department of Health, HCP care is essential for people aged 65 years and over who are frail, have co-morbidities or complex healthcare requirements and are still living at home.

These services are pivotal as they hinder early entry into aged care facilities or hospital admission and both the South Coast and the Brisbane office saw an increase in the uptake of packages in the past year.

Close liaison with CHSP in both regions ensured that as client needs changed, there was a smooth transition from CHSP which has lower level care to higher level care within the HCP program. However, there were delays of up to 12 months in the assignment of home care packages despite approvals being met, and many clients had to remain on lower level packages while they waited to progress to higher care assistance. Regrettably, as last year, some clients were admitted to aged care because of the delays.

Maintaining elasticity in our approach to care also allowed care staff to crossover between programs so that our clients had continuity in care and retained their familiar worker when they transitioned. As CALD care specialists, in the past year, Co.As.It. actively recruited administrative personnel and care staff with Certificate III in Individual Support and Aged Care

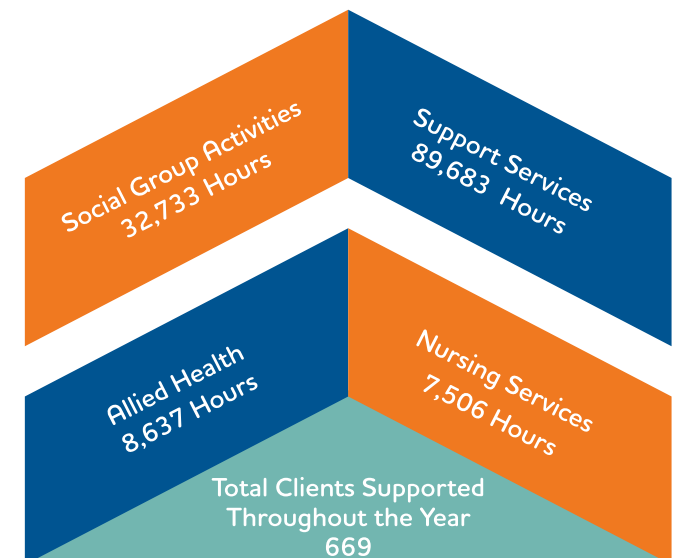
who were also from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds so that services for CALD clients could be provided within a structure that was culturally familiar.

The relationships established between carer and client remained at the heart of high quality care, staff was encouraged to be responsive to observed changes in client health and reporting these back to coordinators so that new or complementary services were introduced promptly. We have always understood the impact of our intervention in a person's life, and we took this responsibility seriously. We addressed every individual and their need with cultural understanding, dignity and respect and we are proud to have been working within a person-centred care philosophy long before it became a national standardised policy.

Our partnerships with our clients have been genuine, we supported their choices and management of their care and our coordinators personally tailored care services through consultation with each client, their families, loved ones and relevant health care professionals for an holistic program of care.

During Covid-19, where it was imperative that services continued as best as practicable for clients, our care staff stood strong and resolute making sure that their clients rights to high quality care were not compromised. Changes in our policies and procedures outlined the framework under which HCP could be delivered, coordinators and care staff used

PPE, adopted Covid-safe practices and tight screening processes to safeguard that client and staff risk management was at an optimal level. On the South Coast, Coordinators and care staff were flexible and also creative in continuing to support our Home Care Package clients with a wide range of one-on-one assistance. Unable to attend the Social Activity Centres, south coast care workers were reassigned to deliver alternative social support services e.g. visiting in-home on a one-on-one basis within recommended Covid-safe practice parameters. These visits were integral in soothing anxiety but also in helping them retain their sense of belonging within the community.



Vincenza

One of our Brisbane HCP Coordinators was concerned about her client Vincenza who became very isolated when the social activity centres went into lockdown during the pandemic. Vincenza would go to the group twice a week so the closure had left her without social contact.

Nina, her daughter who lived in Italy, would call her twice a day but there was a lack of any face-to-face chats or any capacity to engage with another person other than on the telephone. Nina had been intending to travel from Italy to visit her mother but as this was no longer possible, Vincenza was feeling very sad and very lonely.

The Community Visitor Scheme run by Co.As.It. was using tablet technology to maintain contact between their visitors and clients. It would be perfect for Vincenza if she could learn to use the technology?

Both Nina and Vincenza were very excited as it would bring mother and daughter together over a vast distance and alleviate some of the intense worry Vincenza was feeling about her daughter living in one of the most critically affected areas.

When the first call was made, it was poignant to see what an impact technology has had on this family. Vincenza acquired the skills to use her tablet, she is now feeling connected to her family, feels less isolated and is enjoying being able to see her grandchildren and daughter whenever she wants.



South Coast HCP client Sonia had been experiencing some serious health challenges and unfortunately, did not have a strong support network.

Co.As.It. took on the role of supporting Sonia with her hospital visits and medical appointments by providing transport, translating services and social support. Sonia found her situation to be very overwhelming at times, being socially isolated and having language barriers, she relied heavily on Co.As.It. staff to assist her with understanding the results of her medical appointments and hospital admissions.

When Sonia was admitted to hospital for surgery, our care staff continued to visit her every day, providing her with support, encouragement and social contact to help improve her outlook and recuperation.

Sonia has asserted many times that she wouldn't know how to manage everything without Co.As.It. support. She was also very grateful to be able to speak to staff in her own language (Italian) when clarifying her services or seeking other pertinent information regarding her Home Care Package. Sonia states that she is able to remain living at home independently because we provide her with essential services she needs to keep the lifestyle that she loves.

**A tablet a day keeps
the doctor away**

CIAO PROGRAM

This program is funded by Co.As.It. and participating aged care facilities and is a valuable program aimed at diffusing the deep sense of linguistic and cultural isolation felt by many aged CALD Italians living in nursing homes.

Organised CALD-appropriate socio-recreational activities bring the wider community into the nursing homes alleviating the sense of displacement experienced by the inability to adequately communicate in English. These residents do not participate in diversional therapy activities due to linguistic barriers and the feeling that crafts etc. are not recreational pastimes.

The CIAO Program rejuvenates the culture of residents in nursing homes around Brisbane by providing activity officers who plan and implement culturally appropriate pastimes with the residents. Things like traditional music, games, coffee and biscuits are shared within the groups and discussions in their own language promote a sense of belonging and inclusivity.

Before Covid -19 restrictions and subsequent lockdowns, 12 nursing homes were active participants. One of the most enjoyable sessions was held at Casa Damore Coorparoo before lockdown with the collaboration of the Activity Officer



who organised a pasta making session during the group. The Italians' passion for food is legendary and it is a substantial element in their interactions with friends, family and others. Everyone was grateful for the effort in making it a reality. The joy on the residents' faces was evident as they prepared the dough, kneaded it and then processed it through the pasta

machine before drying it and cooking it for lunch. There was much banter about the best ingredients to use, each resident had a methodology that was different to everyone else and each had a recipe they swore was the best. The next topic of discussion was which resident made the best sauce recipe to cook with the pasta, once again, a hotly debated topic.

COMMONWEALTH HOME SUPPORT PROGRAM

CHSP

The Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) is funded by the Federal Department of Health and supports persons aged 65yrs and over who require only basic assistance to enable them to live at home for as long as possible.

Constituting more than 3000 clients, CHSP is by far Co.As. It.'s largest program in terms of client numbers. As we continued to focus on person-centred care, we proudly maintained a strong commitment to meet our clients' goals with dignity and respect. Flexibility and adaptation within service delivery ensured we provided support that was responsive and appropriate to changing health conditions but more meaningfully, our ethos of instilling as much independence as possible fostered personal satisfaction and a sense of empowerment in our clients.

CHSP displayed a much needed elasticity during the past year, with particular responsiveness to the changing work environment due to Covid- 19 restrictions. Relaxations in government funding guidelines during the pandemic allowed clients even more flexibility to adapt the support they needed to comply with Covid-19 restrictions. Many clients opted to replace their domestic assistance services with unaccompanied shopping, bills payment and other

necessary services that reduced their risk of exposure to the virus. However whilst some suspended services, others increased their need for support with care staff providing temporary additional services.

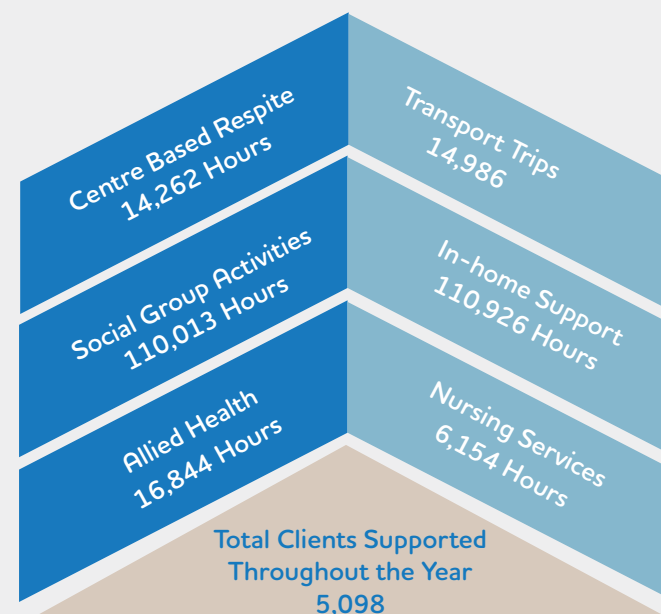
As with all Co.As.It. programs, policies and procedures were modified and instituted to manage exposure to the virus. Coordinators were divided into two teams which alternated weekly between working remotely from home and working in the office. CHSP staff carried out regular well-being checks by telephone on clients identified as vulnerable or isolated and who had limited access to social support from family and friends. These checks were also carried on clients who had suspended their services, ensuring they were managing well and did not experience increased anxiety and alienation.

Flexible respite was only one way to support people during Covid restrictions. Having been at capacity with CHSP funding before the pandemic, Co.As.It. was limited in how much help could have been provided to clients on the waiting list for services. As a stop-gap measure, access to the My Aged Care Portal was reopened and we were able to furnish clients on the waiting list for a limited period of six months only, with various supports.

Whilst it might not have been the full complement of services they were approved for, many clients felt that this was better than no service at all. Most of the clients we met genuinely struggled without assistance and the opportunity CHSP

clients to hear about the government decision to extend this flexibility in service until June 2021. Calls to clients informing them about the uninterrupted services were very inspiring.

One client was overcome with emotion when she was told her service would continue. She was beleaguered with mobility issues and her husband on whom she had been dependent had been placed in aged care, consequently she had no one to assist her. Other clients also stated that they were thankful that the support would continue as they would not have been able to cope without their regular care staff.





During the peak of the pandemic, a referral for flexible respite care came for an existing CHSP client Howard * and his wife Dawn, * (names changed). As a consequence of Covid-19 restrictions, both Howard and his wife were adversely affected and were feeling very low and isolated and had stopped engaging with each other.

When the service was started, it was aimed at providing human contact as well as respite, so it was planned that Co.As.It. would provide twice weekly, in-home respite sessions of two hours each. The positive influence of having other people coming into their home and sharing conversations, energy and human company has been

uplifting. In only two short months, there was a marked improvement in the mental health of both the client and his wife, with Howard remarking that having someone other than Dawn to talk to had been life-changing.

Dawn agreed that the change in having someone provide respite for her as a carer was vital to her ability to continue caring for her husband. She felt reassured that she could leave the house for a short time, knowing that her husband was in good hands.

It was lovely to see how flexible respite was also the stimulus for Howard's new found vitality and interest in life. He soon

reverted to his former self, engaging in conversation with his wife and in her words, "Giving her cheek! It's good to have my old husband back and I'm loving every moment."

**Two's company
but more is better!**

COMMUNITY VISITOR'S SCHEME

CVS

The Community Visitors Scheme is funded by the Department of Health and Co.As.It. has successfully implemented it for the Brisbane and South Coast CALD communities for over 20 years. It is a classic 'feel good' program where volunteers form friendships with isolated and lonely people in aged care facilities or people living at home on a home care package. The benefit of these friendships for older people are tangible and the program was instrumental in enriching the lives of many older, frail people who without this contact would experience higher degrees of alienation and displacement within their communities.

Although face-to-face visits were suspended as a result of the pandemic, the funding body was strongly focussed on encouraging auspices to be creative and try to continue operating the visiting program through ways that were Covid-safe and responsive to the changing social climate. The CVS coordinators went into creative thinking and devising new strategies to provide much needed contact especially for residents in aged care homes who could not have visitors.

A dedicated recruitment drive to attract new volunteers willing to establish or maintain 'virtual' friendships with older persons over the telephone was launched and also marketed to existing volunteers and staff who had been repositioned from their roles. A change in our policies and procedures to reflect this shift in the program guidelines was made, and via zoom, training was provided to volunteers on fostering good

telephone communication. Volunteers were all provided with flu shots and Covid-safe practices were adopted with any new inductions.

The provision of additional funding by the Department of Health for Covid related activities, allowed Co.As.It. to purchase extra tablets to continue developing virtual friendships as support strategies for clients. Training in their usage was necessarily one-on-one but the benefits were very promising. Many clients looked forward to their weekly chats and regular telephone calls, whilst not the same as in-person visits, provided a point of contact with the outside world. It is anticipated that this will become the norm as the pandemic continues its trajectory.

There were challenges, some residents didn't have a phone in their room and no access to one. Residents with dementia struggled to understand telephone calls or make connections without a physical presence and often staff was too short-handed to be able to provide supplementary support. As a consequence, for residents in aged care, at the instigation of the coordinators, children in a local primary school created beautiful posters that were delivered to nursing homes for distribution to Italian speaking residents. Additionally, letters and cards were sent by volunteers on a regular basis. The trend to do window visiting also took on popularity as CVS coordinators encouraged close liaison with aged care homes willing to collaborate and move residents to a window whenever a volunteer visitor attended.



Giuseppe

Home care package client Giuseppe, who lives alone, enjoyed his visits from his CVS visitor Perry. Giuseppe's face would light up when Perry arrived at his home. Over a cup of coffee that Giuseppe proudly prepared after setting the table with a table cloth and good china, he reminisced and recounted the stories of his family migrating from Italy in the early 1930's and becoming a pioneer cane cutting family in north Queensland. Giuseppe delighted in sharing his many stories and achievements throughout his life with his volunteer visitor but these were not possible once restrictions were put in place.

The CVS Coordinator organised for Giuseppe and Perry to borrow a CVS tablet so they could have face to face chats. After some training from the Coordinator, the tablets have been a life line to Giuseppe who is now better connected and receiving happy social support through face chats. Another of our volunteers wrote a letter in Italian to her friend at Regis Aged Care. The CVS coordinator made arrangements with the lifestyle coordinator for the resident and the volunteer to see each other through a visiting window at the aged care home. The volunteer brought along her letter and held it up on the window for the resident to read. The big smile on the resident's face was vibrant.

They then proceeded to speak on the phone to each other through the pane of glass. A new volunteer commenced telephone visiting with a new friend in aged care during COVID-19 - they had never met in person. This soon



evolved into a looking glass meet-up when the CVS Coordinator also arranged for them to see each other through the window for the first time. In a positive way,

manipulating different forms of contact has created new experiences for our elderly. Without Covid restrictions, who would have thought of window visiting.

Community Care

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME NDIS

This program is only in its second year with our organisation and Co.As.It. has experienced a steep learning curve in the delivery of support services within the NDIS funding.

However, the intrinsic satisfaction this funding has provided participants and the high rate of success stories to which we have been able to contribute is the impetus to continue to provide these essential services. Hence, Co.As.It. is currently in the process of renewing its registration as a provider.

Although the processes, administration and self-management of NDIS funding continued to mystify participants, we were conscious that the amount of supplementary support provided by our staff went well beyond their roles in trying to unravel the complexities of the system for our users. Amongst other tailored support, Co.As.It. actively helped participants with support coordination, assistance with self-care and tasks of daily living, community inclusion, employment, transport and allied health therapies.

In its first year of operation, a robust, specialised team was established to meet all of the identified goals of participants. Respecting and helping participants to attain their goals is integral to the successful implementation of this program.

supporting their aspirations and making things happen, despite obstacles like Covid-19, has been heartening.

Each service was planned with the participant as a partner in their own care, if a goal was expressed and could be achieved easily we were there to encourage them but it was when their goals were not as easily achievable that we saw our support staff excel. Nothing was unrealistic, too much trouble or just not feasible. Our staff is so tuned in to their participants that they would identify individual needs often before they were identified by the participant.

We have all been truly gratified to see how the teaching of life skills, promotion of individual choice in every aspect of their lives, the empowering of control and the building of independence has propelled those in the program to bloom.

The program has assisted participants to spread their wings, they have embraced their confidence to become increasingly self-sufficient and independent with their everyday lives and we are happy to have been catalysts in these changes. Team members cannot wait to see what the participants will achieve in the next year.



Jeremy

Jeremy Sherwood lives with schizophrenia and had been accessing support with limited fortnightly services within the Queensland Community Support Scheme (QCSS). His recent transition into NDIS marked a turning point in his life.

Since starting his participation in NDIS in January, Jeremy has made unfaltering strides towards reaching his short-term goals. With the help and support of his care worker Kyleigh, Jeremy identified that he wished to develop better social and life skills and improve his health and wellbeing so that he could increase his potential for independent living. They both set to work to make this a reality.

With the advice of a dietitian and support from Kyleigh, Jeremy has acquired culinary skills to cook healthy meals that he enjoys, such as spaghetti and sausages with vegetables. (He also makes a mean chocolate cake.)

Kyleigh has helped Jeremy acquire skills with domestic chores and with aid from weekly cleaners, he is now independently managing a healthy lifestyle and keeping a spotless household. Jeremy has also been able to adopt and manage a household budget and his money management ability is focused on saving for a new washing machine and other essential items he would like to buy. Jeremy has a passion, constructing and racing remote control cars. He has been able to indulge this interest with Kyleigh's support and has built his own car which he has been testing in different activities that have been equally

Reaching short-term goals

rewarding. Jeremy and Kyleigh have taught each other to play chess and backgammon as part of his social skills development.

With his confidence unfolding, Jeremy is now turning his sights to his medium-term goal of obtaining a job. Having completed a marketing degree at QUT in 2004, he hopes that at some stage in the future, he will secure a job he can be zealous about.

We cannot wait to see where Jeremy's new skills and on-going support through NDIS will take him.



QUEENSLAND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SCHEME

QCSS

This was the first year of operations for the QCSS which replaced the Queensland Government's Community Care Program from 1 July 2019.

Administered by the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, it supported people with functional impairment resulting from a disability, chronic illness or mental health condition, are aged under 65 years (under 50 years if Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander), not eligible for the NDIS and require minimal assistance to remain living independently.

Co.As.It. delivered this program as the lead partner in a consortium with GOC (Greek Orthodox Care) and the Islamic Women's Association of Australia Inc. (IWAA).

The model allowed for CALD providers to deliver appropriate services for culturally and linguistically diverse clients. Access for services was through the Community Access Point portal and culturally and linguistically diverse people who experienced difficulty navigating the site were supported by Co.As.It., GOC and IWAA.

Using the re-ablement framework of support, together with the client, the services were designed to identify the client's optimal support mechanisms.

Support within the program was of short term duration and was provided through in-home services such as domestic activities planning and preparing meals and personal care activities.

Other assistance e.g. paying bills, household correspondence, accessing appointments, capacity building activities such as online shopping and home maintenance activities were also provided.

Prior to Covid, most important was the creation of community connections assisting participants to link into local clubs, groups of interest and other supports/services within the community. With social restrictions personalised activities were designed to support participants to achieve their goals and minimise isolation.



Marlene

Connected with emotional and spiritual support

QCSS client Marlene, a Spanish speaker was particularly isolated during the COVID-19 lock down. Prevented from joining her family members who had been unsuccessful in fleeing Cuba to seek asylum in America Marlene was feeling very displaced and disconnected.

Co.As.It. staff has 85% of personnel who speak a second language and excluding Italian, Spanish is the most commonly spoken language. A Spanish speaking staff member was able to liaise with Marlene and arranged for her to receive fortnightly domestic assistance and social support services.

Marlene was extremely grateful, not only for the practical assistance but more for the emotional and spiritual support she received from her regular worker, someone who was matched to her cultural and linguistic background.

Despite being separated from her family and being in a foreign country, Marlene was soon reassured that she was not alone.





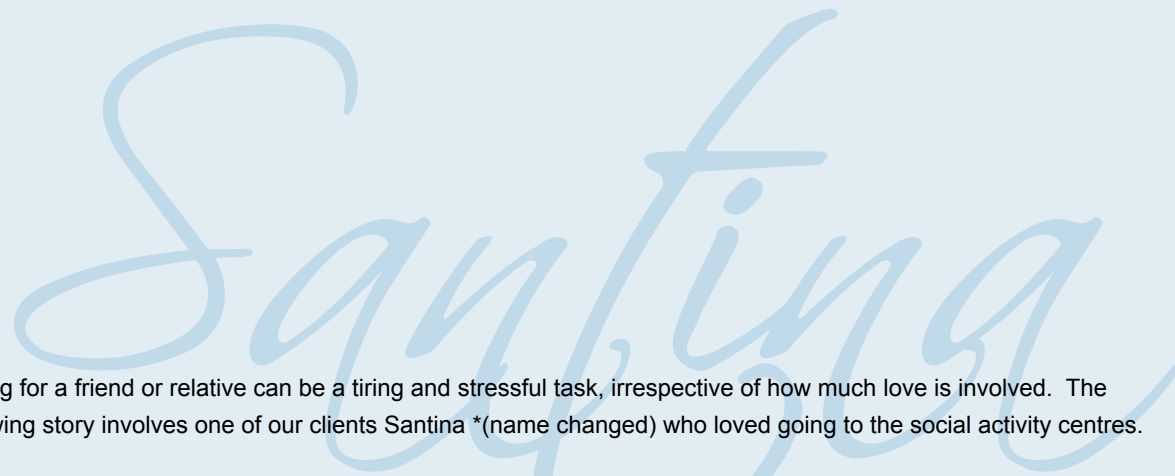
SOCIAL ACTIVITY CENTRES

Located at Stafford Heights, Acacia Ridge, Cleveland, Narangba and on the South Coast, the social group activity centres play a significant role in the lives of clients and their carers by providing social and recreational activities, socialisation, outings and essential respite services for carers.

Between July 2019 and mid-March 2020 the centres were in full swing with many clients wishing to attend extra days if they could. Each week, a new theme would become evident to clients as they entered the facilities. The rooms would be decked up with decorations for Christmas in July, or mock black cats and witches hats for Halloween. It wouldn't be surprising to find the staff at the centres getting into theme with costumes, props or other weird and whacky items to help spread the atmosphere.

There was always something interesting happening in the centres from Melbourne Cup, to Australia Day, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day and Waitangi Day. Additionally, several Saturday outings were conducted for clients of the centres.

In Brisbane they included trips to Airlia, Jaylano's, the Springwood and Richlands Hotels and a special mass and lunch at Pallara to commemorate Italian Veteran's Day. On the South Coast, clients also enjoyed centre-based activities as well as outings to Albert River Wines, Tweed Heads, Paradise Point. Highly popular were competitive challenges like ten pin bowling, card games and other team activities.



Caring for a friend or relative can be a tiring and stressful task, irrespective of how much love is involved. The following story involves one of our clients Santina *(name changed) who loved going to the social activity centres.

Santina was showing signs of cognitive decline and although she still lived alone, her daughter Anna* (name changed) would visit her daily and provide cooked meals so that her mum could stay in her own home for as long as possible. In need of a break, Anna planned a short holiday on the coast to reenergise and worrying about leaving her mother alone, had made arrangements for her to attend centre-based respite in a nursing home.

When the time came, Santina flatly refused to go into respite. The holiday was booked and with Anna in tears and not knowing what to do, she contacted our Respite Coordinator and together they developed a plan that met everyone's needs. During the day Santina would attend the social group activity centre where she was guaranteed nutritious meals, but she would return to her own home at night. Anna would call twice a day to check on her mum and the centre rang each morning to remind Santina that the bus was coming to collect her.

Flexibility, respect for the client's desires and a willingness to work together ensured that everyone's needs were considered. Anna was able to enjoy her much-needed break knowing her mother was being well looked after and Santina still enjoyed her special group activities.



SOCIAL OUTINGS



The monthly social group outings held within Brisbane North, South, Bayside and South Coast were heavily patronised activities for people aged 65 years and over with no mobility issues nor cognitive impairment.

Outings were usually day trips with buses full of energised people who loved the companionship and catching up with friends. Popular on the list of things to do were the Toowoomba Flower Festival, wine tasting at local wineries, river cruises and museum visits, visiting wholesale garden centres and of course lunches at local clubs and restaurants. They continued to generate an interest for people to share, stay active within the local community and above all, to form networks and friendships that were sustained away from the outings.



DEMENTIA SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Dementia Support program is funded by Co.As.It. and is comprised of a registered Nurse/Dementia Resource Officer and Counsellor and the team works in close affiliation with our dementia trained care staff and program coordinators.

Over the past 12 months, the team has been overwhelmed by the increased incidence of dementia within our clients.

Working in synergy, intensive work was carried out in supporting 80 carers and the program's team focused on alleviating carer stress, providing practical management strategies for challenging behaviours and education about cognitive impairment within the clients' relevant cultural and linguistic framework.

This increase in the number of people with dementia necessitated training for our care staff to equip them in providing dementia-appropriate support in the field.

Training sessions were held in Brisbane and on the South Coast and are repeated regularly during the year.

Co.As.It. had written and created short films and videos on dementia in Italian and English a number of years ago, currently available on Youtube and on our Facebook profile and during time of restrictions, these have proven to be invaluable for educating clients and their families able to access social media.

Liaison with our Counsellor and Dementia Resource Officer resulted in referrals for clients to attend specialised respite/social activity groups called the Sunshine Groups which continued to be a source of pleasure and validation for many clients living with cognitive impairment.

Trained Dementia Coordinators and staff created themes and activities that were outcome based for clients because they integrated the strengths of the individual clients e.g. visual, emotional, aural and experiential senses, rather than focussing on physical or verbal interactions which are often challenging. Outcomes of games or activities were made achievable for the clients, they engaged the heart of the client rather than their linguistic ability and focused on cultural elements, personal interests and life experiences. Clients and carers alike relied heavily on the centres to provide a change of scenery, social contact but also much needed respite from caring responsibilities.

SUNSHINE GROUPS

During Covid-19 restrictions, physical distancing requirements meant that the social group activity centres were an early casualty of the pandemic. Their closures were profoundly felt. With the centre activities ceased in both regions, some staff redeployed to providing in-home services while coordinators made wellbeing checks on clients via the telephone. Wellbeing checks not only maintained connectivity with their clients, they monitored their mental health, provided an outside contact and a welcomed opportunity for conversation.

More significantly, the calls relayed a message that someone was still looking after their welfare, they mattered and were not forgotten but missed. Whilst a phone call was not the same as face-to-face contact, there were advantages in the new service, with some staff commenting that the calls provided an opportunity to get to know their clients much better than they would have had whilst performing an in-home service.

Rosanna & Jean

There has been a lot of discussion around doll and stuffed animal therapy for people living with cognitive impairment because it can be seen as demeaning and patronising but if one looks at the studies and the anecdotal evidence of the happiness these items bring to people, the discussion would stop in its tracks.

The nurturing instinct is strong in humans, and it is this instinct that is the reason why doll and stuffed animal therapy is so effective. Studies have shown that people with Alzheimer's show reduced aggression and anxiety, improved communication, reduced wandering and agitated behaviour and are generally happier and more settled in their environment. Studies also show that just fifteen minutes spent bonding with a doll or animal (even if it has batteries) promotes the release of endorphins in the brain, producing a calming effect, reducing blood pressure and improving overall cardiovascular health.

A trial with interactive and responsive simulated animals was particularly successful with two of our clients who were thrilled to receive an interactive cat and dog as companions.

It was a joy to see our clients' reactions. Jean was delighted by her ginger cat but Rosanna was truly elated when she met her new puppy whom she called Chico! The simulated animals nuzzle, make sounds and even turn on their tummies for belly rubs and they don't need to be fed, bathed or taken to the vet.

Pet companions bring joy

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COUNSELLING

Counselling continued to represent an important scaffold for buoying individuals, families and carers experiencing micro and macro personal, family or mental health difficulties.

Our counselling support services continued strongly in the first part of the year and became overwhelmed with the anticipated high demand for help during the pandemic, including members of our own staff who are also human.

Our Counsellors used face-to-face counselling but following lockdown and restrictions, these were reassigned to telephone and virtual sessions. As predicted, the restrictions of Covid-19 were the impetus for a surge in people asking for help in trying to cope with elder abuse, domestic violence and a range of other mental health concerns caused by isolation, alienation and lack of emotional and spiritual kinship.

Males identified as being in vulnerable groups, particularly single older men from a CALD background and disengaged younger males inspired our male Counsellor to establish a men's 'brotherhood' called "Mind the Men". Aimed at meeting the diverse needs of the men, social meet-ups were aimed at establishing friendship networks and linkages so that they could provide support to one another, share



thoughts, outings and life experiences. Although the group could not meet during the pandemic, the group has kept in contact with each other with our Counsellor continuing to support each of the members at an individual level.

The counselling team were also involved in supporting international students who due to the pandemic, suddenly found themselves in hardship, unemployed, ineligible for government assistance and unable to secure flights home because of travel closures. Working closely with the CISS Officer, these students' needs were successfully addressed through the provision of online information webinars.



COMMUNITY & INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES

CISS

This is funded under the Queensland Government's Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, and is aimed at identifying systemic and cultural barriers and supporting people who would not normally access localised child, family, individual and community support services. The CISS program has a broad outreach function and as a Neighbourhood centre provides many social and learning activities for the community. In the past 12 months despite Covid-19 restrictions, the CISS officer has successfully completed most of the assigned funding outcomes and Co.As.It. has exceeded all of the minimum activity requirements. The following activities were undertaken within this period:

Girotondo Playgroup: As an Italian language and culture group, this ongoing playgroup provided opportunities for children aged 3-5 years to engage in Italian learning activities promoting interaction with peers, and preserving linguistic and cultural links to their parents' heritage.

Spanish support services: It was identified that in Brisbane there was a high need for support services for over 1200 people born in Portugal, many of whom had limited English. Together with the Honorary Consul of Portugal in Queensland, a community meeting was held with the Portuguese community where a number of gaps in access to services were identified; viz. social recreational activities, mental health services, home care assistance and support by Portuguese speaking care staff. Co.As.It. Portuguese

speaking staff were utilised for information dissemination and support services and going forward, this target group will continue to receive support from Co.As.It. as needed.

Creative Movement Classes: These free community dance classes were run on a monthly basis but due to high popularity were extended to weekly sessions. Run by a professional dance teacher, the dance sessions brought together participants of all ages in a fun, social atmosphere which promoted networking and the establishment of supportive friendships within the local community.

Technology Classes: These courses addressed the disparity in technical skills and knowledge that most seniors experienced as a result of the rapidly evolving progression in digital technology. The classes were integral to the future wellbeing of older people being thrust into technology whether they wanted it or not. The three main elements of the classes were to equip participants with the freedom to function in an increasingly online world; to connect with family and friends, particularly those overseas and to ensure their online activities were safe. Following a successful grant from the government initiative 'Be Connected', Co.As.It. conducted 'Online Week' where participants, on a number of devices viz. mobiles, laptops, tablets, ipads were educated about technology, scams and cyber safety.

Information Dissemination Webinar: The CISS officer and

counsellor identified that there was a high need for information dissemination, practical guidance and referral to resources for many Spanish-speaking students who were experiencing financial hardship, mental health and other issues as a result of the pandemic. The students, many of whom worked in hospitality, were ineligible for government subsidies after lockdown and were experiencing numerous difficulties from financial burdens, lack of resources on practical support, mental health issues and anguish about not being able to return home. Information webinars were held via zoom and linkages on social media were made with other organisations and Spanish-speaking groups Australia wide that could provide valuable support. Co.As.It. continued to develop these networks and worked to strengthen its ties with the various Latino communities throughout South-east Queensland.

Insieme magazine: The quarterly "Insieme" magazine was a well-recognised way of connecting the diverse groups within the Italian and wider communities to Co.As.It. and its services. The editions provided information about ILC and language courses, upcoming community events and highlighted activities that promoted community harmony and inclusion. In the past 12 months, Insieme featured numerous achievements of clients and workers and the work done by our teams. Hard copy editions were sent to government funding bodies, nursing homes, other organisations and individuals and all copies are available on the Co.As.It. website.

Technology Classes – Online for Seniors



Clinical CARE

Clinical services featured prominently in client care programs, often dramatically reducing the need for, or preventing an overnight or inpatient hospital admission.

The opportunity to be treated in their own home gave clients and their carers a greater sense of control and maximised their comfort by coordinating services to fit around their individual needs and not organisational boundaries. Most importantly, it reduced inconvenient and often stressful travel, particularly for elderly clients. Our clients often have severe or long term conditions which negatively impact their daily lives and the regular attendance of our clinical teams improved their quality of life pronouncedly. The routine intervention of our clinical staff meant that they also monitored clients at risk of harm from treatment, e.g. secondary infections. Early identification of health concerns by our clinical team ensured faster access to assessment and treatment and improved management of chronic conditions.

Our clinical teams were also adept at reading the environment of their clients and what impacted on their well-being. It was not unusual for our nursing staff to go out of their way to ensure that their patient was not disadvantaged by remaining at home when other avenues of care could have been more beneficial. The employment of an enrolled nurse provided the team with greater manpower, increased efficiency and improved financial competitiveness. The acquisition of a small fleet of vehicles allowed greater

flexibility with the increased client workloads, especially during Covid-19 restrictions.

During Covid-19, a clinical governance framework was established in line with recommended government directives and this was integral in establishing consistent and safe methodology to treat our clients during lockdown procedures. Co.As.It. also established a Tracker database that allowed monitoring and follow-up of all clients, staff and volunteers by our Clinical Team Leader who could respond immediately to identified or suspected Covid contact cases.

There was also a restructuring of our internal referral procedures which improved client follow-ups, results of which were reflected positively on statistical data about acute and chronic changes in client health status. It was not unusual for our clinical staff to devote long hours driving to reach our clients and it was also common that they often spent their own time researching ways to ameliorate the health and well-being of cases that concerned them.



Tina

Our lovely 'young' 91 year old client Tina had a fall at home one morning and was not found by her family until later that afternoon. Although she sustained no broken bones she did acquire two severe pressure injuries to her buttocks. She was hospitalised for a few weeks and then with rehabilitation support was able to return to her son's home where our nurses commenced wound care.

It was an extremely difficult body area on which to provide dressings and equally difficult to find an appropriate dressing that would not provide extraneous damage to her fragile skin and delicate wound. At an advanced age like Tina, healing is often slow and prone to infection and there was much trial and error as the clinical team concentrated on finding an appropriate dressing. Somehow despite their best efforts, the wounds were not healing well. At a review, the clinical staff agreed to a change in the wound care processes and also to limit the number of nurses attending so that the wound was being controlled in a consistent way. This was to make a huge difference, with great improvement throughout April, May June and then finally by mid-July the wound was completely healed.

Sadly during this period, one of Tina's daughters resident in South Australia, passed away and Tina could not travel to attend the funeral. It was of some comfort to have Co.As. It staff visit every day. Even though the nurses had a job to do, their comforting presence was gratefully acknowledged during the grimness of COVID lockdown.

Co.As.It. staff visit every day



Allied

HEALTH SERVICES

This team works closely with Co.As.It.'s clinical teams, program coordinators and other staff and is integral to the long term ability of clients to remain living at home for as long as possible. Comprised of physiotherapists, assistant physiotherapist, occupational therapists and podiatrists, the allied health team acquired additional staff in the last six months of the year, obviating Co.As.It.'s brokering of services to meet client demand.

To facilitate safer mobility and promote as much functional independence as possible, home modifications and assistive technology feature strongly within this field. Our occupational therapists are practical, efficient and effective in arranging new assistive devices or advising about modifying existing structures.

Since the emergence of Covid-19, life for Co.As.It. clients has changed dramatically as they adjust to limiting themselves to home-based activity. Clients still continued to require physiotherapy to assist them in managing pain and chronic conditions, preventing falls and staying out of hospital.

Conversations with clients included reassurance and encouragement to stay calm as many clients expressed their anxiety for themselves and their families. Our visits became just as important for the social interaction they provided in what has been for most, a severely limited environment. As we continued these services, we did so in the context of increased attention to infection control, including pre-attendance health screening

questionnaires, strict hand washing procedures and the use of personal protective equipment when needed. During recent physiotherapy, we noticed an increased 'community togetherness' within the new norms of social distancing.

Walking clients around their yard, others called out over the fence, reminding them that they were there to help if needed. It was encouraging to see how communities accepted strict isolating and distancing measures but showed support for their elderly, vulnerable members.

Since March, practitioners were asked to work remotely in between planned home visits. Administrative support for the team continued to be provided from the office and the team concentrated on client home visits whilst meeting all Covid-safety precautions. These arrangements worked well with defined benefits for clients and Co.As.It., so much so, that work trials will continue for several months to determine the viability of these flexible work arrangements.



Joe



At 88, Joe's body has done a lot of hard work. As a young 13 year old on the family farm in Innisfail, lifting a tree for firewood, he sustained a severe back injury resulting in life-long pain. Over the past 10 years Joe's back pain worsened. Compounded by recovery from bowel cancer and a hip replacement, he felt unsafe and unsteady on his feet, he felt he could no longer look after his garden, dress himself and even his much loved daily walks were becoming a trial.

His Coordinator suggested that perhaps some physiotherapy could help with his mobility. After meeting his Physiotherapist and agreeing on a plan together, Joe worked steadily at his specific exercises. His Physiotherapist worked on his back each week and with some fine tuning in doing his exercises every second day to prevent increasing his back pain, he soon saw some real improvements.

Months of applying his strong work ethic to a new kind of work has paid off. Joe no longer has constant back pain and this winter he did not suffer with his back pain as he always had in the past. In fact, most days, he reports no back pain at all! His daily walks are a pleasure again, he is steadier on his feet and for the first time in years, he can bend down to reach the ground! At his Physio's suggestion he started a small garden again using a raised garden bed and his herbs are growing beautifully. Best of all for his family and friends, Joe's big smile is back.



Ross

Ross was diagnosed with Peripheral Neuropathy 13 years ago, a progressive neurological condition. For Ross, this initially affected his legs and mobility, however his whole body is now affected and Ross now requires a powered wheelchair for all mobility.

The Occupational Therapist (OT) was initially involved in organising a standing hoist which Ross managed well for a period of time. However, as Ross' functions continued to deteriorate, it was identified that this hoist was no longer safe and a full hoist and sling was subsequently trialled in Ross's home with the OT providing our CCWs with specialised training and support.

The OT continued to be involved with Ross and when the couple considered moving into a new home, the OT visited the property with Ross and Christine to ensure the home would meet their needs. Recommendations for some minor modifications including a rear entrance ramp and grab rails in the bathroom ensured Ross' safety.

Given the progressive nature of Ross' condition, additional equipment needs were subsequently identified, an adjustable bed with foam mattress met his decreased ability to manage bed transfers, however the OT continued to monitor this suitability and when concerns about pressure areas were identified, the OT recommended a change to an air mattress more appropriate for pressure management. In conjunction to the OT ensuring Ross and Christine's home environment

remained safe with appropriate equipment in place, Ross' HCP Coordinator also ensured that they had other support in place. Ross received personal care support every morning (7 days a week) to use the hoist to transfer him from the bed, assist him to shower and then transfer him to his wheelchair or specialised lounge chair. CCWs then attended again at the end of the day to assist Ross back to bed.

Ross also received nursing services for catheter care, wound care as required and three monthly well-being checks. Christine received some respite hours and assistance with shopping during the week. This holistic, coordinated service, delivered by an efficient and caring team, including ongoing involvement of the OT, placed Ross and Christine at the centre of care, and was critical in ensuring Ross and Christine would be at home to celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary. Ross and Chris are extremely grateful for the services they receive especially since all of their needs can be met by one provider.

Chris

Community CARE & CONNECTIONS

Brisbane Care Expo

Co.As.It. Community Services was one of many aged care providers that attended the annual Care Expo at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre in South Brisbane in October 2019.

The expo was aimed at optimising opportunities to meet and connect with providers from a diverse range of community services e.g. aged care, disability services, education, mobility aids, mental health, social and recreational services.

The HCP intake officer was a guest speaker at the event with her presentation delivered to an enthusiastic standing room only audience.

Gold Coast Seniors Health & Lifestyle Expo

Held at the Southport Community Centre in November 2019, the Expo was a source of intense interest with older members on the South Coast who were collating information to plan future aged and community support services or acquire additional information on other providers.

Co.As.It. and other providers shared their service portfolios, disseminated information and distributed resources to interested attendees.





Stay Active Classes

Co.As.It. applied for funding under the Active Neighbourhoods for Older Australians and received a small grant to run a Stay Active project for people aged 65 years and over. The grant covered the purchase of appropriate exercise equipment, facilitator fees and sessions were free for the community. The first class in January at the Community Place at Kalinga was a resounding success with over 19 participants. The physiotherapist did initial baseline assessments to ensure that participants could undertake planned exercises and the classes were soon packed to capacity before the compelling restrictions of Covid-19 forced their closure. Stay Active classes were later resumed with Covid-safe procedures and continue to provide older persons with personal goals and satisfaction in promoting better health outcomes.

Seniors Week Brisbane - Knowledge is Power Forum

Public community forums continued to provide us as service providers with valuable feedback through consultation with the public. The forums supported our ethos of valuing older persons and their opinions and celebrated the presence and values of seniors within our society. They were also crucial in providing insight into their perceptions of ageing and how we interpreted this ageing vision as service providers. The forums also highlighted our presence within the community and how our services operated and offered an insight into the organisation's culture by having our staff as guest speakers. Coinciding with Seniors' Week and supported by the Council on the Ageing, Co.As.It. hosted a 'Knowledge is Power' themed forum at the Gaythorne RSL in August 2019. The free, four-hour community forum included lunch and addressed health and wellbeing, electrical safety, social connectedness, the value of technology, aged care services, healthcare directives, wills and testaments. Attended by over 140 participants, the event was a resounding success.



Community EVENTS

Although months of physical distancing, social isolation and lockdowns significantly reduced the opportunities for people to gather together, events such as the Knowledge is Power community forum and International Women's Day High Tea were signature events for the organisation before Covid restrictions.

International Women's Day High Tea

More than 360 guests, predominantly women, attended Co.As.It.'s high tea for International Women's Day (IWD) on Saturday 7th March. The 2020 IWD theme of #Each for Equal stressed that as women, they could actively choose to challenge stereotypes, broaden perceptions, and celebrate women's achievements.

Attendees Grace Grace, Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and member for McConnel; The Lady Mayoress, Ms Nina Schrinner; President of Com.It.Es. Mariangela Stagnitti; Manager Health Ageing from PHN Brisbane North Julie Morrow; Italian Consul's wife Diana Cekova supported the event to raise funds for Co.As.It.'s dementia support program. Keynote speaker, Belinda Cox (Domestic Violence Service) expressed the plight of women in society with a sobering discussion of the current statistics of domestic violence in Australia, both state and nationally. Co.As.It. CEO highlighted the role of women as the mothers of future generations, in combatting the unacceptably high rates of domestic violence.





Seniors' Week South Coast - Forum and Luncheon

Always a much awaited event on the Co.As.It. South Coast calendar, Seniors' Week 2019 was marked by a luncheon held at the Dog and Parrot Tavern Robina that was attended by more than 160 people.

The annual event was not only an opportunity for socialising and networking, it too provided feedback on our services and identified potential clients and their expectations whilst promoting a better knowledge about our services within the community.



Client Christmas Parties

For many, the Co.As.It. client Christmas parties are yearly highpoints. The 2019 event held at the Kedron Wavell Services Club in Brisbane for more than 360 clients and at the Dog and Parrot Tavern in Robina on the South Coast for over 170 clients, were unqualified successes.

The Christmas celebrations were presented by Co.As.It. to thank clients for their loyalty throughout the year in Brisbane, attended by members of Co.As.It.'s Board and the Italian Consul for Queensland and Northern Territory, Mr. Salvatore Napolitano.



Short Circuit Education Sessions

As a result of a successful small grant from Energex Ergon, Co.As.It. was able to address concerns about electrical safety with older persons from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background.

Through a public forum, numerous community education sessions the project aimed to provide education on safe electrical practices and the importance of circuit breakers and safety switches – often absent in older homes. Resource booklets in English, Italian and Spanish were in high demand. Presented by personnel from Energex at the Seniors Week celebrations, over 140 people enthusiastically participated in the forum and another 150 attended the education sessions convened in September and October.

Workshops & TRAINING

Go1 Online Training

Following 12 months of preparation, Co.As.It.'s new online training platform was launched during this reporting period. Replacing the Aged Care Channel, GO1 has the advantage of an almost endless array of training options and enables bespoke training to be uploaded as necessary. The new platform enables workers to access the training in their own time (for which they are paid) thereby removing the necessity to attend training in person at the office.



Manual Handling Training

Co.As.It.'s physiotherapists developed and delivered the theory component of a manual handling refresher course for all care staff prior to lock-down. Due to social distancing, the practical aspect of the training was put on hold but the theory component was available through the Go1 platform.

Launch into Work Pilot Project

Co.As.It. partnered with the Department of Jobs and Small Business to implement a pilot project intended to assist a number of long-term unemployed adults to return to work. The "Launch into Work" pilot project involved 12 long-term unemployed who attended a 5-week training program to develop core skills in the Certificate III in Individual Support. The students' work experience placement was at Co.As.It. which ultimately generated a number of students becoming valuable staff members for our organisation. The positive outcomes and work placement experience highlighted the need for similar partnerships, an area that is of particular interest as our participation in future training of staff closely aligns with Co.As.It.'s Strategic Plan.





Covid-Safe Practices Training

At the height of the pandemic, all staff members were required to undertake online training in infection control, specific to COVID-19. The training was developed by the Commonwealth Department of Health and was updated as new information came to light. Additionally, staff members were regularly emailed updates about the COVID-19 situation relating to statistics, easing of restrictions, and Covid-safe practices etc.

Conflict Resolution Workshop

Conflict resolution training was held to improve interpersonal relationships and increase the level of harmony within the work environment. The training held by our Counsellor was to equip participants with actions to deal with conflict in ways that were positive, could initiate mutually appropriate changes and allowed all participants to feel they had contributed to a favourable outcome in the resolution. Sessions were conducted on a semi-regular basis throughout the year and all staff members were welcome to attend. Feedback from the sessions indicated a high degree of support and satisfaction.



Dementia Training

Hundreds of staff members participated in dementia training early in 2020, designed to equip them with insightful knowledge on more effective communication with their clients living with dementia. The training provided information about why clients may adversely react to staff attempting to provide services and was designed to empower staff to recognise triggers to challenging behaviours and to give them options which uphold the dignity and wellbeing of client. Day-to-day scenarios were discussed and positive responses/options investigated.

Continuity OF CARE

Co.As.It. based its foundation of high quality care on the establishment of meaningful relationships between care staff, clients and supplementary support people.

We see our role as a 'community village' where continuity of care is a fundamental element of identifying and meeting needs and it is linked, via an expanding evidence base, with important client and system outcomes.

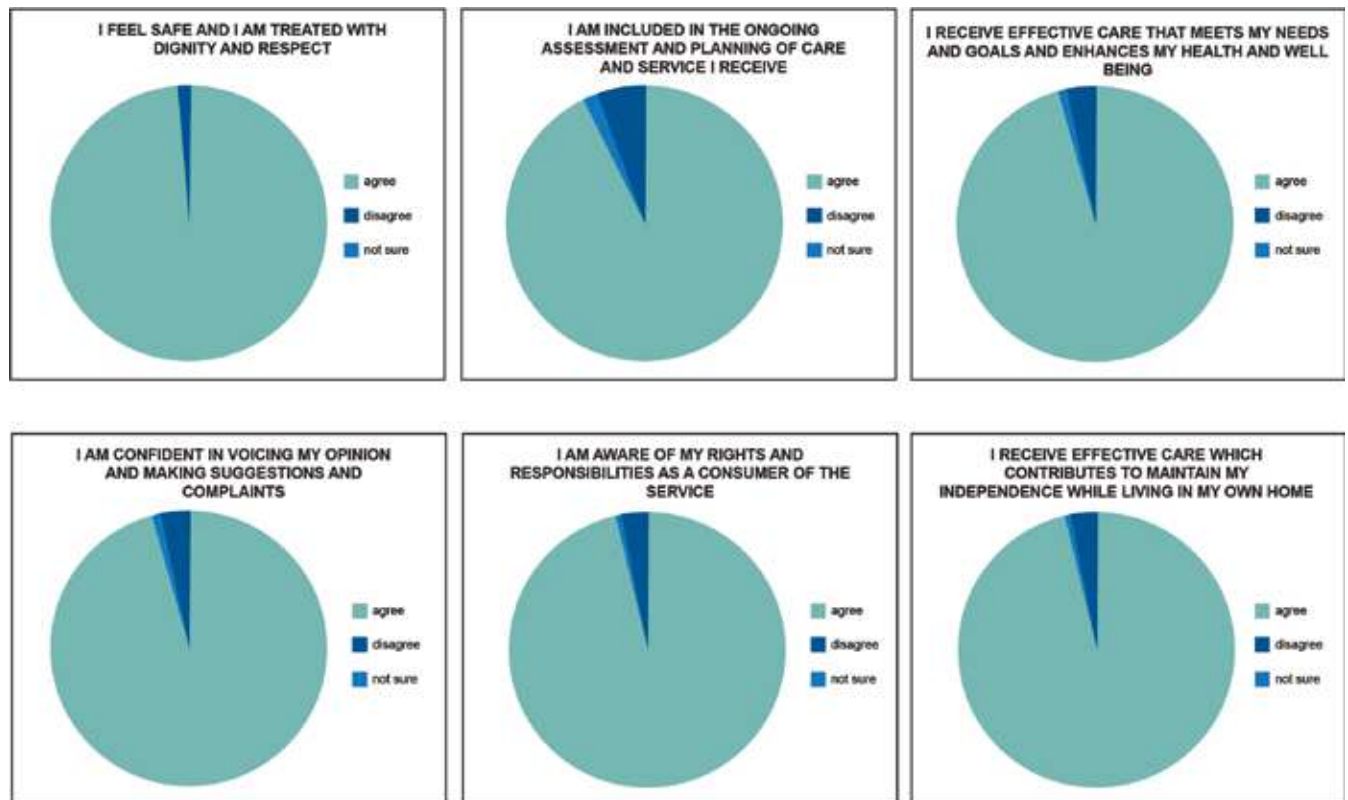
We have observed first-hand that as clients become familiar with their care worker, they establish trust and confidence in staff that are tuned in to monitor any changes in their health, mental, physical or other needs -things that a new worker who goes into a different home each week may not discern. This has particular bearing as our clients age and live increasingly with significant, ongoing lifestyle and chronic illness challenges.

Consequently, we continue to provide the same care worker for a client, especially those living with dementia, mental health illness or chronic disease. This interpersonal continuity ensured empathic, collaborative consultations and enhanced empowerment, enablement and better treatment outcomes for those living with illnesses.

Results of client surveys undertaken last year reflect that this continuity of care is an effective strategy that meets clients needs across spiritual, emotional, physical and social levels.

CONSUMER EXPERIENCE SURVEY

1,756 RESPONDENTS





Italian

LANGUAGE CENTRE

The Italian Language Centre (ILC) is a division of Co.As.It. Community Services and is a peak body in Queensland for the teaching and learning of Italian language and culture. In the past 12 months, this division achieved resounding success across all of their programs despite restrictions posed by Covid-19. We are indeed proud of the ILC team that continued supporting Italian language programs in Queensland schools with resources, guidance and linguistic expertise. ILC also provided international level professional development training to teachers in Brisbane and Cairns, held corporate classes for larger organisations doing business with Italy. Nine levels of Italian language courses were offered over the past 12 months from playgroup for children to beginner, intermediate, advanced and conversational Italian.

The team was also instrumental in creating practical opportunities for activities and events that value added saliency to language learning as well as organising and running competitions that promoted the love of Italy, its language and culture.



Supporting Italian language programs in Queensland schools

ILC directs funding received from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAECI – Ministero Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale) through the Italian Embassy in Canberra and the Italian Consulate in Brisbane for curriculum support where Italian is taught in primary and secondary schools throughout Queensland. It has signed Memoranda of Understanding with Brisbane Catholic Education Office; Townsville Catholic Education Office; North Lakes State College; Selected Catholic schools which do not fall under the MOUs and selected State schools eligible to receive annual contributions throughout Queensland.

Most importantly, the ILC provides professional development training to teachers of Italian in schools state wide. A comprehensive range of innovative resources were created as curricula support for teachers and staff keenly developed online resources and courses that would be appropriate for virtual learning.

Translations and other requests for curricula support are met with resources that have currency in terms of colloquialisms, language trends and facility of practical application and able to adapt to needs of students as classes evolve throughout the year.



Ambassador's Welcome

The newly appointed Italian Ambassador, Her Excellency Francesca Tardioli, was invited to meet the Brisbane Italian community in October 2019 at a function hosted by the Italian Consulate and Com.It.Es. and held at the Italian Language Centre, Newmarket.



va in cucina a
MANGIARE

Suoni divertenti
BLA BLA
chiacchierone vuole
PARLARE

Suoni divertenti
BRUM! BRUM!
la Ferrari piace
GUIDARE

fa un grido per
CHIAMARE

per
EXTRARE
dove
BUSSARE

il camion fa
SUONARE

Suoni divertenti
IZACI IZACI
la carta può
TAGLIARE

Suoni divertenti
DRINI DRINI
col cellulare...
TELEFONARE!

Suoni divertenti
BUM! BUM!
la bomba fa
SCOPPIARE

Suoni divertenti
BUM! BUM!
la bomba fa
SCOPPIARE



Italian

LANGUAGE CENTRE

The Italian Language Centre (ILC), a division of Co.As.It. continued its valuable work leaving an indelible imprint on the learning of Italian for students throughout Queensland with school and community-based events that were innovative and engaging.

Adult Italian

A total of 218 adult students enrolled in semester 2, 2019 and semester 1, 2020. Halfway through semester 1, with the onset of COVID physical distancing restrictions, the ILC had to swiftly change the mode of presentation to the Zoom online platform. ILC teachers attended webinars to upskill in teaching remotely and lessons progressed seamlessly from face to face lessons.



Girotondo Playgroup

Twice-weekly playgroup sessions for children aged 3-5 years are based on themed activity booklets supported by Italian songs, vocabulary, props and toys, however the playgroups did not operate in Term 2, 2020 due to the pandemic.

Language Queensland State Championship, held at the Italian Language Centre (ILC), Brisbane in October.



Italian Language State Championship

During August 2019, Queensland regional language speaking competitions were held in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Townsville and Cairns. Students participating in years 10–12 were then invited to compete in the 2nd Italian Language Queensland State Championship, held at the Italian Language Centre (ILC), Brisbane in October.

After School Italian Program

School-aged children attended after-school classes at the ILC and at locations in Brisbane's north and south. Qualified native-speaker teachers ensured students were positively engaged in learning language through a range of activities.

ILC Calligram Competition 2019

This annual event, open from Prep-Yr8 school students of Italian across 5 categories was launched with the theme 'In Gelateria' and attracted 349 entries. Winning and highly commended entries were on public display at the ILC premises, with winners receiving certificates, medals and gifts.



Book Club Italiano

The book club continued in Semester 2, 2019 and Semester 1, 2020, conducted by the ILC's literature expert. The 2-hour sessions took place fortnightly on Saturday mornings at the ILC. Attendance by registered school teachers counted towards obligatory professional development hours.



ILC Continues Subscription to Education Perfect

This popular online learning resource is used by thousands of mainstream schools around the world. The incorporation of education perfect online activities as part of the adult classes enrolment package, has lifted the ILC's profile, placing it at the forefront of language learning innovation.

Italian Language Queensland State Championship

Year 10-12 finalists from the Brisbane, Cairns, Townsville, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast regional speaking competitions were invited to take part in the 2nd Queensland State Championship, organized by the ILC in October 2019. Co.As.It. President Nereo Brezzi and CEO Dina Ranieri hosted the dignitaries' morning tea, in honour of attending Italian Government guests Mr Salvatore Napolitano, Italian Consul for Qld and NT and Ms Anna Rita Tamponi, Director of Education, Italian Embassy, Canberra.



StuditaliA Prize 2019

The StuditaliA Prize is an annual initiative to promote excellence in Italian-language studies in Queensland schools and reward the high achievement of Year 12 students of Italian. Organized by the Department of Education and the Italian Consulate in Brisbane, the scholarship is supported by Co.As.It./ILC. The organisation provides sponsorship and members sit on the selection panel. The year 2019 marked the 25th anniversary of the StuditaliA Prize. Winners were awarded prizes at a celebratory 25 year anniversary function held at Old Government House in August 2019. Renowned international pianist Alessandro Marangoni entertained the audience with a virtuoso performance.

Italian

LANGUAGE CENTRE

ILC New Website

In line with its refreshed branding strategy, a new ILC website was launched with a contemporary look to appeal to new generations of consumers. Potential students' age, taste, social trends and perceived learning outcomes were considered as significant factors in creating the new website which has additional features which align to current digital access platforms. The website has broadened the ILC's marketability as successfully reflected by increased enrolments, easier payment methods, more comprehensive class planning schedules and better communication with staff. With the addition of enrolments and course payment mechanisms on-line, the website was a valuable tool in the marketing and publicity campaign aimed at advancing the learning of the Italian language and culture across Queensland. Following the switch to zoom related teaching activities during Covid, the new website aligns well with the remote teaching and learning that it had to adopt and it has widened the target bases for students who would not otherwise be able to access language classes.

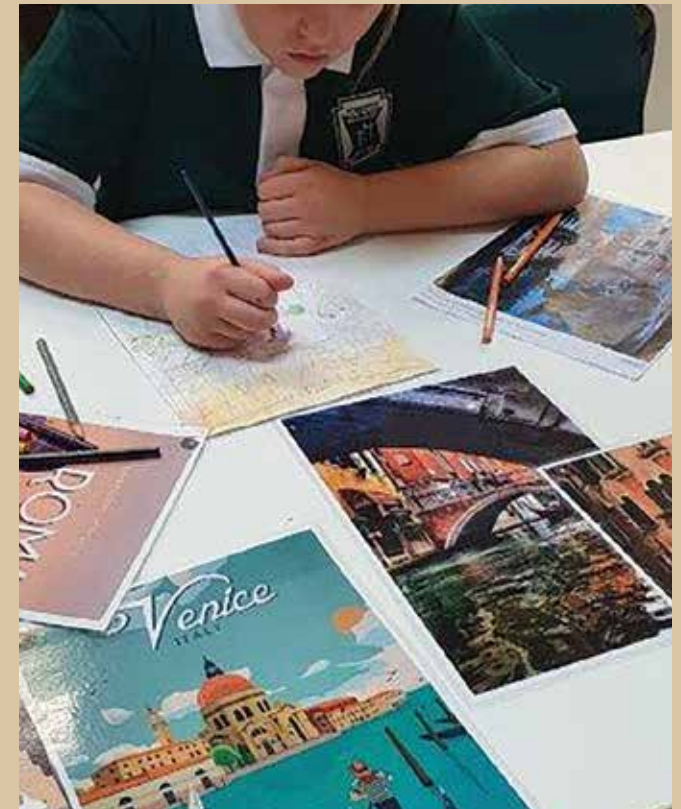


Complementary Activities to Language Learning: Italian Speaking Competitions

The 4th Brisbane Region Italian Speaking Competition was held in August 2019 at the ILC Centre Newmarket. The 2-day event, open to students in years 2-12 studying Italian in the greater Brisbane area, attracted 169 competitors. Mother-tongue teachers from the ILC, Dante Alighieri Brisbane and Griffith University generously volunteered to judge the contestants. Co.As.It. sponsored the Italian sectors and provided judges for the language speaking events that were held in Townsville, Cairns, the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast.

Italian Summer Camp

Prior to the start of Semester 1, 2020, an Italian summer camp intensive course was held over two weeks. Morning and evening sessions ran 'across three levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced.



New Events to Enhance Vocabulary and Grammar

In response to community requests for additional events to maintain and enhance student knowledge of Italian, the following events were organized:

- 'Fear of Italian Verbs' was held over three Saturdays in October/November 2019, during which ILC teachers engaged students in revising their Italian verbs through songs.
- 'Yoga in Italiano' was held over four Fridays in March 2020 facilitated by a teacher of yoga and Italian.

Students not only had the opportunity for gentle exercise, they also perfected their listening skills and acquired new vocabulary in a creative learning environment. The yoga lessons could not continue into April, due to lockdown.



End-of-semester Celebrations

ILC traditionally celebrates the end of semester classes with a dinner and prizes for students, however due to social distancing requirements, the practice was modified.

Each class was offered a smaller celebration during their final lesson of the semester. On all occasions, students completing a minimum of 10 out of 16 lessons were awarded certificates, and students with unblemished attendance records received a small gift for their dedication.

Italian Immersion Days for Schools

Teachers booked a total of 96 students into school excursions to the ILC that provided them with the opportunity to be immersed in the Italian language and culture for a day.

Students took part in Italian activities designed to hone their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

The highlight was a hands-on cooking activity making ricotta gnocchi from scratch, which was later cooked and enjoyed at lunch.



Future DIRECTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has certainly been a catalyst for changes in what many may think will endure as a technological archetype of care for organisations such as ours. However, whilst we embraced the necessity of supercharging our uptake of technology and adapting all of our programs and services to bridge the mighty challenges of service provision during this gruelling half year, in our hearts, we are waiting to go back to the way we were.

We know that the people we care for in the community are also anxiously waiting for the familiar happy faces of our workers at the social activity centres, in their homes, on outings and at events. They tell us they miss the hugs, the genuine empathy and their worker's love for what they do.

We did not cease operations completely and thanks to the resilience of our staff, many of our newly introduced digital options thrived in our new work reality. Digital technology calmed the turbulent waters but it did not replace the comfort of another human in close proximity. And therein is our dilemma. Human care is our core business, the business of physically being in the life of our clients, not waving in front of a camera, and while we hope for a return to our old ways of operations, in the long term, we are aware that it is wishful thinking.

It can be expected that as restrictions are relaxed, recovery will not be static, normal life will not return but will carry the detritus of the pandemic, critical social distancing and other



safety precautions and we will need to adapt our operations again. However, for an organisation such as ours where traditionally, clients and staff were considered partners and family, the disintegration of our urban fabric has indeed been challenging. Co.As.It. will continue mobilising, stabilising in the new environment and strategizing for what's next. We will continue to maintain close engagement with care staff through our staff newsletter (We Connect), telephone calls from supervisors and coordinators, zoom meetings and other strategies.

Our primary objective for the present is protecting our people and implementing strategies that will mitigate risks so that we remain viable and emerge as a more robust and more resilient organisation. We also need to ensure that effective communication keeps our clients and workforce apprised of the evolving conditions and ensures that the trust and reputation we have built reflects our responses to such catastrophic events with agile, aligned and effective measures.

If nothing the pandemic has taught us that our responses in crisis management were strong and we will continue to leverage our teams to refine their response efforts in the immediate wake of a crisis. We will focus on developing cross-functional team leaders that can respond to event-driven changes and we will continue to provide our staff with the resources and support they need to be productive. As the recovery process infiltrates businesses,

we aim to be at the frontline of innovation with short term recovery strategies directed at a long term vision. We will continue to comply with the new Government directives that will define the new dimensions under which aged care services in Australia will operate post-Covid.

We will revisit our strategic priorities and focus on the capabilities that differentiate our organisation in the aged care market and use these to market our services in a wider capacity, especially in the Home Care Package Program.

We will need to identify which work tasks can be left to operate remotely and which should be place-driven and revise our programs accordingly.

Our digital readiness across processes will be reviewed as we scrutinise the salient building blocks of our digital strategy, including data analysis, cybersecurity, digital trust and how to protect workers at home and on site from security breaches. We will continue to use digital technology but will also redirect this at our staff in innovative ways, viz. to connect with them, steer better engagement and productivity, improve morale for staff, inspire creativity and ultimately with their help, harness their complementary strengths because these are what bring parallel benefits to our table.

In the meantime, as we continue to implement government directives for the benefit of our society, we have great optimism for the completion of other projects.

The new Community Hub at Bracken Ridge will be a wonderful multi-use facility that will integrate a social activity centre, allied health services, a community cafe, community classes and activities to unite and embrace the local community. It will rejuvenate the area and provide a meeting point for locals and neighbouring regions and we look forward to propelling positive outcomes for this area.

Our proposed new office location at Lutwyche is also an exciting juncture in our future growth. With the purchase of this building, all of our operations can be centralised from this location which will include classrooms, meeting and conference rooms, ample parking for our vehicles, and the uniting of all divisions under the one Co.As.It. umbrella.

The satisfaction of our success with the NDIS program has encouraged us in expanding this service model as we better understand our participants' needs and expectations. In a post-Covid climate we will need to maintain fluidity in our services to build upon our footprint within the NDIS model of funding. We will also strive to be the conduit between a comprehensive understanding and a competent management of the funding for those participants who struggle with the model guidelines.

We look forward to the eventual staging of community events that may be hybridised with virtual elements but we hope that soon people will be able to gather, reconnect and do so in face-to-face situations.



Strategic DIRECTION

Goal 1

Diversify revenue streams

We will enhance our financial viability by ensuring that income is received from a diverse range of sources including private fees, government funds and rental income.

Goal 2

Respond to community needs

We will continue to deliver services that respond to the diverse needs of our community across Queensland.

Goal 3

Improve governance systems

In keeping with our growth to become a large charitable organisation, Co.As.It will upskill our board with the necessary structures, resources and training to ensure effective governance.

Goal 4

Develop systems and resources to respond to an increasing workforce

We will continue to recruit and upskill a productive and professional workforce and ensure that they have access to the appropriate resources to deliver quality services.

Goal 5

Secure business growth from existing and new sources and partnerships

We will continue to grow the business, research and identify new partnerships and embrace new technologies to deliver cost effectiveness and efficiency.



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Annual

REPORT

2019-2020

