



co.as.it.  
community  
services

# insieme

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04 | 2023

# 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.

# OUR VISION

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



CO.AS.IT. COMMUNITY SERVICES LTD.

473 lutwyche road | lutwyche qld 4030  
po box 59 | albion bc qld 4010  
tel: 07 3624 6100 | fax: 07 3624 6185  
mail@coasit.asn.au | www.coasit.asn.au

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articles + editing | nella alba-calabrese  
layout | puntoitalia pty ltd [support@puntoitalia.com | www.puntoitalia.com]

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## LETTER FROM THE CEO



While policy changes in 2023 may alter programs, our core mission endures: to enable clients to remain engaged, independent, and supported.

As another eventful year comes to a close, we at Co.As.It. wish to express our sincere gratitude to all our clients and participants for making 2023 so memorable.

While challenges inevitably arose, it was the spirit of unity, engagement, and creativity sparked by our community that made this year shine.

Our Euro Concert events for Seniors Week perfectly captured that spirit. After years of isolation, what joy it brought hundreds together through music, dance, food and camaraderie—both in Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

Collaborations with Brisbane Festival also epitomised community bonding by offering lively dance workshops and kazoo lessons for all ages. Laughter, learning, and friendship were on full display.

The immense pride at our recent art exhibition summed up 2023's impact. Budding artists from all walks of life revealed their talents, emotions, and visions to inspire and connect us.

*"Every painting told a story that resonated,"* explained admiring visitor Tony P.

While policy changes in 2023 may alter programs, our core mission endures: to enable clients to remain engaged, independent, and supported. Our dedicated staff live this through reliable, responsive service—24/7 if needed—to enhance lives.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate our staff of ILC and our teachers of Italian. Your efforts have shone this year! The teaching of Italian and the maintenance of our Italian culture have perpetuated through the work put in by you all - in workshops, activities, resource building and professional development. You are the reason we can support more than 28,000 students of Italian, Queensland wide.

As we take a brief respite for the holidays before beginning 2024 recharged, know that this community means the world to us at Co.As.It.

We could not feel more honoured and motivated to continue our work empowering lives.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

*Dina Ranieri*

## WOUND MANAGEMENT

Our team is highly adept at shifting focus to practices that promote a healing environment. As chronic wounds change, so do their treatment approaches.



In past editions of Insieme we keep congratulating our nursing staff on chronic wound management, especially when other practitioners haven't been successful. What makes our clinical team so successful? It's not only their skills base: it's about trying new and innovative regimes that prompt the body to get that 'oomph' to restart healing.

Recently our clinical team saw an 85-year-old client who was referred for management of a chronic wound that would not heal.

Initially the nursing team continued to provide the treatment regime that was prescribed by her GP practice. As the treatment had not resulted in any significant improvement in many months, nurse Heather contacted the clinic's GP to request that the wound dressing treatment be changed to a regime prescribed by Heather.

The client's GP agreed to the change of dressing regime and within two weeks the chronic wound that had impacted this lady for months had completely healed. Heather no longer needed to visit. So why did this happen?

Was a change to dressings the answer you say? It isn't that simple but it does have an impact. Wound healing is a dynamic process, a number of phases have to occur before healing can happen – the healing process

is via lots of cellular activity and each phase has a job to do for the wound to move to the next phase and ultimately close.

This cellular activity can be affected by the temperature in the wound tissue, frequency of dressing changes and even the type of dressing used. According to the Journal of Wound Care, studies show the simple procedure of changing a dressing can decrease the wound temperature and temporarily stop healing.

This is because cellular activity requires a minimum of 33 degrees Celsius for healing to occur and after a dressing change, it may take up to 4 hours for healing to resume.

Our team is highly adept at shifting focus to practices that promote a healing environment. As chronic wounds change so do their treatment approaches.

In consultation with the client's GP, they may request decreasing the frequency of wound dressing changes or changing the dressing type to products that can insulate the wound and reduce temperature changes or even discuss options that have been successful with other wounds.

Above all, the team is always intent on helping to resolve painful and debilitating chronic wounds that affect their client's enjoyment of life.



# ALLIED HEALTH

## ROSEMARY

An occupational therapy assessment identified a number of issues affecting her safety and independence.



Rosemary is a 93-year-old Home Care Package client who is supported with everyday tasks of living by her daughter who lives with her and from regular visits from our carers and nursing team.

An occupational therapy assessment identified a number of issues affecting her safety and independence.

Her electric bed and air mattress were no longer working nor comfortable, her mattress slid down regularly and it was very difficult to get back into bed at night, she nearly fell after a shower and the toilet was unusable and leaked.

To make her life easier, a new bespoke rail was organised and installed in the shower and non-slip mats stopped her transfer bench moving while showering.

We also arranged for a new toilet with a higher seat and a second grab rail was installed near it for extra stability.

Her family then redecorated the bathroom making it a lovely and functional room for her to enjoy.

Rosemary was able to try a new bed and mattress from Sleep Electric, which they brought to her yard in an enclosed trailer. She selected a pressure mattress which was comfortable and enabled her to get in and out of bed easily.

Ethan from Sleep Electric also managed to repair her electric recliner and provided a temporary fix for her



bed and mattress while she waits the for her new furniture.

Rosemary, her family, and the occupational therapist were very pleased about the positive difference this has made to her daily life.

## ANDREW



I love diversity and the fact that Brisbane is so multicultural. Sometimes, I have the feeling that the world is getting smaller because all the languages spoken worldwide are in Brisbane.

"Tinh bạn" is the Vietnamese word for friendship and a major component of the synergy between NDIS client Andrew and Community Care Worker Tim (Thin).

Coming from South Vietnam, Andrew arrived in Australia with his sister in 2000. He has been receiving services from Co.As.It. for approximately five years and sees Tim as his big brother.

*"Tim helps me with my outdoor activities. He takes me to the Vietnamese shopping centre and explains to the retailers what I need," says Andrew. "Our friendship makes me feel closer to home as Tim is also from Vietnam, and we speak the same language."*

The program Tim has been developing with Andrew is part of the multicultural roots of Co.As.It., which aims to communicate with clients using their native language.

Andrew and Tim are together every week and have an intense routine of outdoor activities: taking strolls by the river, fishing, enjoying the benefits of the social support groups, hitting the gym, and learning Spanish.

*"I love diversity and the fact that Brisbane is so multicultural. Sometimes, I have the feeling that the world is getting smaller because all the languages spoken worldwide are in Brisbane. Learning Spanish is me embracing diversity," concludes Andrew.*



# COMMUNITY AND BELONGING AN ART EXHIBITION



Amici House hosted its second Xmas Art Exhibition on December 13 with paintings created by the NDIS and CISS Community Art Classes participants. Under the flag "Community and Belonging," a wide range of artworks were displayed, attracting hundreds of guests.

A Senior Community Choir set the festive mood with carols while guests admired the artwork. Amici House Art Teacher Ali Gillet, one of the most engaged at the event, was "floating in the air" with a large and proud smile she made sure she didn't hide.

*"I'm really proud as I walk around and see what's happened over this year. You can see where the students started and where they finished up. Their paintings become more courageous,"* Ali says. *"I have seen them grow as a community. At the end of the classes, we put our brushes down a little bit early and then walk around and congratulate each other on our work. You can feel the friendships growing, and that is 100% of what Amici House is about."*

Leena a Community Art Class participant, had her artwork exposed at the event. She celebrated a busy year filled with accomplishments and Ali's guidance throughout the months.

*"I started last July. Ali is very good because she gives direction and teaches you. You want to learn how to use your brush to create the effects you want, and that's what Ali brought to us. She is teaching us to have a clinical eye,"* Leena says. *"Having my artwork exhibited is a compliment. This is a true reward for showcasing what we have done this year."*

NDIS Art Class participant David had four of his paintings exhibited. Fairly new to the classes, David predicts a bigger event for 2024. *"I have been attending the art classes for three months, and it is awesome to have my paintings displayed for the community. I'm very proud,"* David says. *"I love painting; it relaxes me. Painting birds and animals is what I like most. I can't wait for next year's exhibition."*

Amici House is a Community Hub in Brisbane that runs activities and services for older Australians and members of the local community and beyond.

Visitors enjoy yoga classes, art classes, women's groups, technology classes, Latin dancing, NDIS art and yoga classes, and health services such as podiatry and physiotherapy.





# QUEENSLAND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SCHEME

## NORMA

Norma (54) gets emotional when talking about the carefulness and attention she has received from the QCSS (Queensland Community Support Scheme) Team at Co.As.It. Community Services.

The gratitude towards the organisation, she says, comes from simple customary actions, such as getting calls from her coordinator, being referred to services that met her needs, and having her cultural background respected.

Norma disembarked in Australia 23 years ago after a long haul from El Salvador. She speaks basic English, but this doesn't stop her from making friends and travelling around. Addicted to our Social Outings Program, Norma is on a bus trip with other clients from our organisation almost every month.

*"There is a very strong exchange of cultures - I have learned a lot on these trips with friends who speak Italian, English and Spanish. Travelling with people from different countries is wonderful, and I'm getting to know Queensland thanks to Co.As.It.," she says.*

*"I feel very safe when travelling. Everything is very personalised, the carers help me with my cane and bag. They are very attentive to all of us. I feel very special."*

Norma has been with Co.As.It. for over a year, receiving domestic assistance and being part of the QCSS program.

*"I would definitely recommend the organisation to my friends. I'm very grateful for the services received, the team's concerns, and their empathy. They have always supported and been with me." Norma concludes.*



# AGED CARE VOLUNTEER VISITORS SCHEME

(formerly called Community Visitors Scheme)

## SPREADING HOLIDAY CHEER THE ITALIAN WAY

There was much to celebrate, the Coordinators emphasised in their remarks. Volunteers contributed endless time and compassion to serving community members in need over the last year.



The scents of garlic, tomatoes, and fresh basil perfumed the air as ACVVS volunteers gathered in December for their annual Christmas celebration lunch. The location, Brisbane's cosy Italian eatery The Italian Street Kitchen, set the tone for a festive Italian-style feast.

The group of 20, including volunteer Coordinators Loretta, Sarina and Luisa, took the chance to relax over a four-course meal and look back over an exciting year for the volunteer program.

*"We've seen such growth in our amazing team recently,"* said Loretta. *"I'm honoured this was my first Christmas party with ACVVS since joining as Coordinator."*

There was much to celebrate, the Coordinators emphasised in their remarks. Volunteers contributed endless time and compassion to serving community members in need over the last year.

*"Your work and dedication is so vital and valued,"* Sarina told the group. Inspiring stories were shared between bites of creamy risottos and sweet tiramisu.

The annual gathering also gave new volunteers opportunity to meet and mingle with long-time participants. Friendships old and new were kindled over the holiday feast.

As the lunch wound down, volunteers left with full stomachs and fuller hearts, motivated by camaraderie with their selfless peers.

The Italian fare fuelled both body and spirit, sending volunteers back into the community with renewed passion for bringing hope and care to their elderly isolated and lonely friends this holiday season.

# AGED CARE VOLUNTEER VISITORS SCHEME

(formerly called Community Visitors Scheme)

## NAVIGATING FAMILY CONFLICTS

Laughter and deep sharing filled the community room as ACVVS volunteers gathered last week for their bi-monthly morning tea.

But between sips of coffee and bites of Italian cookies, the conversation turned to a weightier subject - coping with disruptive family dynamics.

Led by mind wellness counsellor Laura the group explored the roots of family feuds, from contrasting personalities to breaches of trust. *"Triggers range from sibling rivalry to disputes over elder care or inheritances,"* Laura explained. *"And we often see the effects on clients when visiting homes."*

Volunteers opened up with personal experiences navigating tense family relationships. The key, many agreed, was establishing boundaries. *"I regained peace by detaching myself from the chaos,"* said volunteer Mary.

Others emphasised self-care through healthy outlets. There was also cause for celebration, as long-time volunteer Maria Masci bid the group farewell after 12 years of service. *"Her dedication as a companion to isolated elderly folks is so commendable,"* said coordinator Luisa.

Maria Masci reflected, *"I found joy and purpose in this role."*

As cannoli capped off the emotional but inspiring session, volunteers left with fresh perspectives on how to handle strained family ties - both in their work supporting clients and their personal lives.

Once more, the gathering proved the ACVVS team bonds through both laughter and vulnerability.



# COMMONWEALTH HOME SUPPORT PROGRAM

## ELSIE



People who cease being full-time carers find themselves at a complete loss when they no longer have the burden and responsibility of looking after someone.

Aside from feeling as if they have nothing important to do, if their loved one has passed, the grief and loneliness can seem insurmountable.

This was the case with Elsie, a full-time carer for her husband who had high care needs. Her daughter Jenny, contacted us looking for extra support for her mum. Jenny was concerned that her mum was at home by herself and as she had her own health concerns and slept a lot, Jenny felt Elsie was becoming isolated and lonely.

Although her mum received domestic assistance and was on the waiting list for a Home Care Package, she hoped that there would be other services we could arrange for Elsie in the meantime.

We met Elsie and after letting her know how we could support her to engage with life again, she willingly tried some in-home respite and gave the social activity groups a go. Elsie got on with everyone and is now a regular participant at our social group on Mondays and she has widened her friendship group with a number of other ladies with whom she catches up outside of the social group setting.

While she loves attending the group and wants to continue coming along, she finds the day a little too long for her. We are hoping when the package is assigned, that the funds will allow her to be transported home after lunch rather than remain for the full day. In this way she can still keep up with her friends but not be out for the whole day.

## CIAO PROGRAM

# COOKING UP MEMORIES AT ROCKPOOL

The air is filled with laughter and the scent of simmering tomato sauce on this warm December day, our lifestyle Activity Officer joined a group of vivacious ladies - and one very charming gentleman - at Rockpool Taigum aged care facility.

"Benvenuti!" cheers Benito, our lone male companion, as he kisses the ladies' hands and conjures up Italian phrases to make them smile. He tells us later, with a wink, "*I am the Masterchef here!*" Although the women playfully dispute this, it's clear Benito is the life of the party today.

The participants gather around a long table, passing bags of flour and cracking eggs with ease. "*I made gnocchi for my family every Sunday,*" shares Emilia, dusting the finished doughy dumplings with flour before handing them off to be boiled. The women traded recipes and good-natured barbs, reminiscing about feeding hungry husbands and children once upon a time.

As we boil and sauce the gnocchi, the mouthwatering scents of garlic, basil and tomatoes fill the room. When final tasting time arrives, there are delighted murmurs all around. "*Delizioso!*" proclaims Benito. The ladies agree, between savoury, satisfied bites.

In all, nine ladies and one gentleman came together not just to cook, but to laugh, to remember, to find joy in making something with their hands and sharing it with others.

The gnocchi were delicious, yes, but the company was truly the most vital ingredient.

The women traded recipes and good-natured barbs, reminiscing about feeding hungry husbands and children once upon a time.



# COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES

## ELEGANCE AND CHARISMA AT AMICI HOUSE

Nourishing the Soul participants wore bespoke fascinators, garments, and jewellery that enriched a special morning session in harmony with the Melbourne Cup traditions. Elegance and charisma paraded side by side at Amici House.

The morning started with a breathing technique demonstration, including relaxation and anxiety control. In pairs, participants learned a guided self-massage technique, enabling them to receive and give love through a simple gesture like a massage.

As part of the Melbourne Cup theme, Co.As.It. offered homemade scones with whipped cream and jam, coffee, and tea—a delicious break to recover the energy for what was ahead.

It was the moment for a “horse ride competition”, where each participant picked a rubber horse and moved according to the number rolled by the dice. At the end of the activity, all the participants received a calendar for 2024 as a prize.



*“The importance of having a project like Nourishing the Soul is that women learn how to empower their lives, bond with their peers, share stories, and grow,”* says Cintia, our Community Services Officer.

This is corroborated by our Dementia Resource Officer Rita, who states that *“Being in the company of like-minded women releases oxytocin, which can help counteract the day-to day stress most of us experience. What we love about these groups is that the goal is to honour where they are right now in their lives and empower them to reach their full potential - without giving advice”*.

Nourishing the Soul creates opportunities for multi-aged and multicultural women to develop, increase, or improve their self-esteem and self-love.

The techniques taught involve meditation, self-massage, and presentations based on women’s mental health.

Groups run on the first and third Wednesday of every month.



# COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES

## QS & AS WITH SONIA

**Interviewer: I'm here today with Sonia, a very active participant in CISS community programs. Sonia, it's wonderful to have you. Tell me how you first got involved with CISS.**

Sonia: Well, I felt I needed things to keep me active and engaged. A friend suggested I look into the programs at the community centre. Now I attend art classes, exercise classes, yoga, technology lessons and nourishing the soul sessions - I just love it! There is always something to do during the week!

**Interviewer: Have the technology classes made you more confident using all this new technology?**

Sonia: Oh yes, what has really helped is learning how to use the mobile. It can be very confusing but the sessions have really helped.

**Interviewer: What attracts you to the Nourishing the Soul sessions?**

Sonia: I think I learn a lot other, especially from the counsellor Laura who always has really eye-opening information to share.

**Interviewer: I heard you recently had some artwork displayed from the community art classes. What was that experience like?**

Sonia: Oh it was thrilling but stressful getting the pieces ready! I worked for weeks perfecting them. But seeing them displayed made me so proud. And I've made friends in that class so I find it really relaxing - if we don't have to meet a deadline. (Sonia chuckles)

**Interviewer: Social connections seem very important to you. What other classes have helped?**

Sonia: The yoga class is fantastic exercise but I do miss socialising afterwards like we used to from the stay active class held before. I stay connected with friends from both by phone or visits outside class at least. And I just adore the gals from technology lessons - we chat over tea the whole time!

**Interviewer: It sounds like the centre manager, Barry, also deserves some credit for bringing people together.**

Sonia: Oh Barry is just amazing! He truly keeps the spirit and community alive there. Someone even painted a portrait for his office since he's such a star (laughs). I can't praise Barry and all these CISS programs enough for keeping me young at heart!

**Interviewer: Well, thank you Sonia for sharing your uplifting experience and passion for CISS. Keep enjoying those activities!**

Sonia: I surely will - thanks for having me!



# COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES

## FREE DANCE WORKSHOPS - 80S STYLE!

As part of Brisbane Festival, we collaborated and supported this community event by opening up Amici House for weeks leading up to the big 80s Dance bash.

Free dance workshops were held every Friday that taught popular 80's choreography. Laughs were shared as people across generations learned the moves to classic hits like "Maniac" and "Footloose."

*"It was wonderful to see young and elderly, those with disabilities and from various cultures, all finding common ground and community through dance and music,"* said attendee Maria S. *"Everyone had a smile on their face the entire time!"*

The grand finale party saw attendees show off their new dance skills while dressed in flashy 80's inspired outfits.

An Instagram-worthy photo booth with neon props let people capture fun memories. Traditional Italian pasta and hot dogs with an 80's twist fuelled the dancing.

*"Dance has a way of bringing people together beyond differences,"* explained organizer Cintia P. *"We created something very special here - a sense of belonging."*



COMMON  
PEOPLE  
DANCE  
PROJECT

# COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES



# COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES

## GROOVY DUDE! - AN 80S NIGHT TO REMEMBER

As part of the Brisbane Festival we rolled back the clock to the tubular 1980s as part of a rad collab with the Brisbane Festival. The righteous event went down at Amici House, transformed for the night into a bodacious 80's party pad.

For two hours, over 100 enthusiastic participants decked out in bangin' 80's threads danced the night away to choice cuts like David Bowie, Maniac, and the Footloose soundtrack. Bitchin' neon lights set the mood as the crowd got their dance on under the guidance of instructor Nerida from Common People Dance Project. From breakdancing to the robot to moves from Flashdance, the dance floor was poppin' all night long.

*"The vibe was totally gnarly,"* said one participant sporting a colorful unitard and legwarmers. *"The music, the clothes, the dancing - it was just like taking a time machine back to the 80's!"*

On arrival, guests took some primo Polaroids in the Instagram-ready photo booth with props like boomboxes and Rubik's cubes. The bar was also stepping back in time, serving up slurpees, coffee, and Amici House's signature Italian almond cake.

*"From the righteous tunes to the bodacious outfits, this radical throwback event was straight out of an 80's movie,"* said one attendee. *"Cowabunga dudes! It was the most trippendicular night ever."*

Amici House's tubular time warp made this Brisbane Festival event a totally gnarly night.

We got physical all night and had the time of our lives!



# COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES

## ON HOLIDAYS WITH THE DREADED MOBILE

The Technology classes at Amici House have been life-changing for Kaylene and Brian. An overseas trip on the horizon weighed in on the decision to learn how to use the much-feared cell phone.

Kaylene began her classes at the beginning of the year. She would make and receive phone calls and play a few games. She has worked her way up to learn how to take photos, search on the Internet and change her phone settings.

*"Technology and I have never mixed up. Now, I'm slowly picking my confidence up. I don't hesitate to try a few things," says Kyleene. "When overseas, I'll be able to contact my kids and my 90-year-old mother. I'll use Maps to find stuff, get directions, and everything else."*

In the same way, Brian's relationship with the cell phone was even more meaningless before the classes. He hadn't had a mobile phone for ten years, and life was fine. It all changed when he got a new device - a fresh start on learning basic settings and controls.

Knowing the ins and outs of the Internet, texting and saving data by connecting the device to a Wi-Fi network are some of the valuable lessons Brian has learned at Amici House. Not to mention, his confidence is high ahead of the family trip.

*"I have been looking carefully at Google Maps, its benefits, options and operation. We will not get lost from each other now that we have our phones," concludes Brian.*



# COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES

## CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY WITH MUSIC SENIORS WEEK EURO- CONCERTS

The air was filled with the sights and sounds of Europe recently as Co.As.It hosted two vibrant Euro Concert events in Brisbane and the Gold Coast. These concerts blended together live music, dance, food, and friendship to create an immersive cultural experience while highlighting local services for seniors.

Over 400 attendees gathered, enjoying a lineup of European tunes from a live band and thrilling tango performances.

*"Getting together like this after being isolated for so long is so beneficial,"* said guest Claire G. *"This is the first major outing since restrictions lifted. It's brought our community together again."*

Plentiful raffle prizes and a generous two-course Italian meal added to the

festivities, pairing European flavours with music. *"I love events that combine great music, dancing, and food - the perfect combination,"* exclaimed Samar M., who frequently took to the dance floor.

The Gold Coast event echoed similar delight from guests, who relished the chance to celebrate European culture.

Funding to support both concerts was provided by COTA (Council on the Ageing) along with the Queensland Government and Gold Coast City Council.

Through vibrant sights, sounds, tastes, and movement, both Euro Concerts created an immersive cultural experience connecting seniors.

Guest Debra K. summarised the sentiment: *"What wonderful camaraderie and joy - this is what community togetherness is all about!"*



# COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES

## KAZOOING UP CREATIVITY AND BONDING

Laughter and off-key melodies rang through Amici House recently for a one-of-a-kind Brisbane Festival workshop. Attendees discovered their inner musicians while learning to play the kazoo - that humming and buzzing instrument that anyone can master.

In the hour-long workshop, participants let their creativity flow by inventing unique sound stories as an ensemble. A healthy spirit of competition emerged to see who could craft the most amusing tune.

Smiles abounded as new and unexpected kazoo compositions came to life.

*"It was wonderful seeing everyone from young children to the elderly letting loose and having fun with these silly little instruments,"* explained organiser Tony P. *"Sometimes being creative and not taking yourself too seriously is the best medicine."*

The workshop concluded with the entire room attempting to play songs like "Hot Cross Buns" in unison.

While not entirely melodious, the experience brought everyone together through lots of laughter and light-hearted bonding. It was a sound story of community joy.



### LOVE IS THE BEST THERAPY

Sometimes when all else has failed it pays to think outside the box and try something unconventional when trying to comfort clients with challenging chronic pain conditions.

Stemming from numerous surgeries and ailments, our lovely client Brenda has lived with severe chronic pain for many years. She had tried numerous remedies to bring some peace into her life, including pain medication, physiotherapy, chiropractic care and hydrotherapy, all to limited success.

Brenda's family looked for something that would occupy her so that she would be distracted from her chronic pain.

The new stratagem came in the form of a twelve-year-old short haired domestic rescue cat called Suzi that was desperate for a loving home. Suzi and Brenda immediately formed an inseparable bond. Brenda spends all day with Suzi ensuring she is happy and well looked after. In turn, Suzi provides Brenda with love and affection and her presence is a distraction from her chronic pain.

Through 'animal assisted therapy', it seems that her family has provided a genuine benefit for Brenda. Suzi is a joy to Brenda, but there is also a science behind animal assisted therapy.

Caring for a loved animal reduces stress hormones and increases the body's natural opiates. Additionally, Brenda's mood has improved and this reduces anxiety and stress about her pain.

Brenda cannot stop talking about her new best friend and has explained how the relationship has brought her out of her shell and given her purpose again – she feels truly needed. Brenda says that *"Suzi has been the missing link in my search for well-being"*.

From our part we are just looking forward to seeing this beautiful relationship grow.

The new stratagem came in the form of a twelve-year-old short haired domestic rescue cat called Suzi that was desperate for a loving home.



# OUR COMMUNITY

## HAMPER SEASON IS BACK!

The “hamper season” brought comfort and light hopes for a warm Christmas to many clients of Co.As.It. Program coordinators delivered the baskets throughout December for those who had faced social isolation, economic hardship, or depression in 2023.

It has been three years in a row delivering hampers. What started as a small good deed ended up becoming something very special. Clients demonstrated gratitude after being gifted with a fine selection of products.

*“Receiving a hamper like this makes us feel very special. It makes us feel remembered,”* said a Home Care Package (HCP) client. *“We are delighted as now we get to eat something on Christmas Day,”* a Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) client revealed.

NDIS Coordinator, Melissa, highlighted the sense of community and generosity as a result of the hamper delivery. *“We value our clients and want them to feel cherished. It is priceless to spread joy in the holiday season.”*



## A WOMAN BEFORE HER TIME: GEPPINA ESPOSITO

Geppina was determined to get an education and build a career, despite the cultural constraints on women at the time.

In 1923, Geppina Esposito entered the world in Montesarchio, Italy, bringing with her the seeds of an unconventional life journey that would challenge constructs of gender and societal limitations.

Hers is a story of courage, resilience and a pioneering spirit that burns brightly over a century later.

While most young girls were destined for lives of domesticity, this ambitious girl dreamed bigger.

Geppina, was determined to get an education and build a career, despite the cultural constraints on women at the time.

### **A supportive foundation:**

As the last of 6 children, Geppina's supportive family provided her access to robust educational opportunities uncommon for girls in early 20th century Italy. From an early age, Geppina rejected expectations for girls and set her sights on America.

Her father, a successful footwear businessman, enabled her academic pursuits—a privilege sparingly granted to young women of the era who rarely had an education and traditionally married early.

### **Daring to dream:**

While most girls were groomed for roles of wife and mother, Geppina was voraciously learning English at primary school.

Though sought after locally for her literacy skills, she grew weary of mundane community tasks, mostly writing endless lists for her mother who was an embroiderer of glory box items.

*"Four sheet sets; 3 tablecloths; 6 hankies, and 6 pillowcases... etc. etc. "I got so tired of those boring lists!" she recalls.*

### **Excelling against odds:**

As Geppina continued her studies by scandalously travelling unchaperoned by bus to Benevento, for secondary schooling, her moxie and intelligence shone through.



She thrived academically and in sports where she played basketball, competing in the Benevento State Basketball finals.

The family was already well known in the region, so Geppina was sought by the 'Partito Liberale Attivista' political party to help in organising and setting up rallies and public speeches, bringing her awareness of social and political issues to the fore.

Regrettably, Geppina's confidence and abilities spurred taunts from her envious Montesarchio peers who would also "*spitefully cut my hair from the back!*" she states. She persevered, undeterred by petty jealousies and resentment.

#### **Vocational pursuits:**

Geppina moved to Campobasso to attend tertiary studies.

Living with her aunt, Geppina studied a number of vocational training subjects,

specifically morse code and shorthand - a skill that was highly prized before phones and other forms of communication were developed for public use.

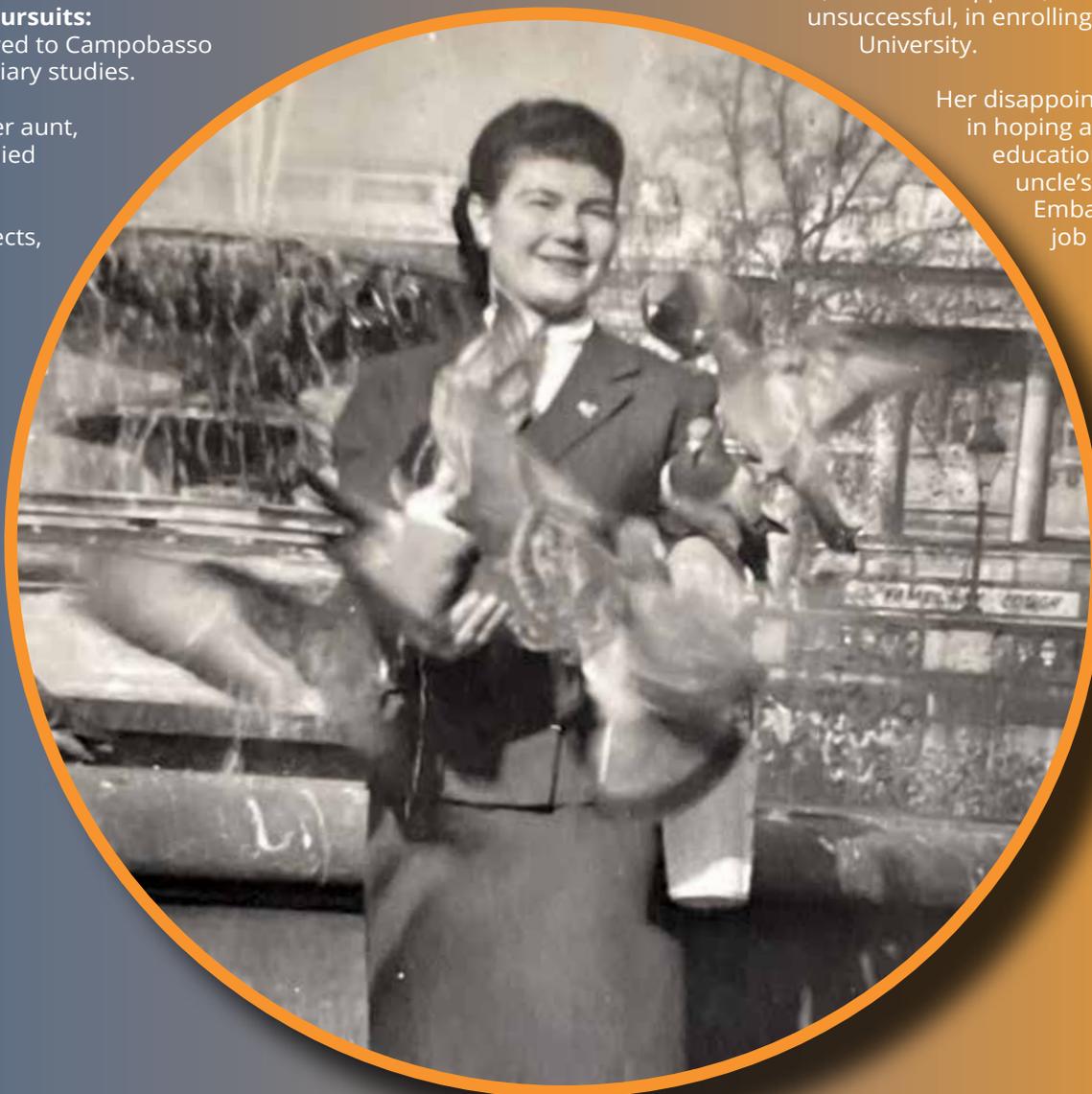
In 1944 she contracted typhoid fever and was forced to return home but found success tutoring students and working at the local Post Office.

#### **The lure of new horizons:**

Her yearning to go to America increased and partly she says "it was to get away from Montesarchio." When she took a solo tour of Italy in 1955, the village elders and gossipmongers were aghast.

Geppina's adventuresome spirit drew her to London in 1958, where she applied, but was unsuccessful, in enrolling at Oxford University.

Her disappointment in hoping a British education and her uncle's Italian Embassy job would



# AGED CARE BRISBANE | SOCIAL ACTIVITY GROUPS

ultimately lead to migration was not wasted though, she perfected her English. During that time, she taught and cared professionally for children in Charing Cross Hospital.

She warmly remembers her experiences in Trafalgar Square, Piccadilly and the sights and sounds of London.

## **Plot twist -an unexpected destination:**

Returning to Italy a year later, Geppina soon voyaged abroad again - but as an Italian bride migrating to Australia in 1960.

Her husband had returned to find a wife and Geppina became the apple of his eye. Though assured by the Italian Embassy in Rome that her skills were valued and sought, on arrival in Australia, she was unable to utilise them in a diplomatic capacity.

Limited Italian government funding for Consulates worldwide meant that she could not wait for the diplomatic climate to change.

Having waited 3 years for a position, she realistically gave away her dream of using her qualifications and began looking for a job that would help her young family of 3 children.

Like many migrant women of the time, she walked from factory to factory until a millinery manufacturer employed her, remaining there until her retirement.

## **The virtue of resilience:**

In Australia, like many other migrant women, Geppina battled isolation and culture shock.

Having come from London, 1960's Brisbane was a provincial town with few social and community networks.

Her natural reticence in trusting and confiding in people took some years

to master but she slowly built a community and friendships which have endured.

Her daughter Rose admires her determination: *"She was a brainy woman born 50 years too soon!"*

Now 100, Geppina feels immense gratitude for the rich life she built and opportunities seized.

## **An enduring legacy:**

Geppina's courage to subvert expectations and pursue her ambitions leaves a powerful legacy. *"Knowledge is the path to freedom,"* she urges young girls today.

The trajectory of her extraordinary life stands as a testament to that timeless creed.

We are fortunate to have this denizen at our social activity groups - there is never a dull moment with her around!



# AGED CARE BRISBANE | SOCIAL ACTIVITY GROUPS

## LO SPIRITO NATALIZIO CONQUISTA I CENTRI

In mancanza di un camino sufficientemente ampio per essere utilizzato, Babbo Natale ha dovuto usare la porta per visitare il gruppo di Cleveland.

Lo spirito natalizio ha letteralmente conquistato i centri comunitari e di assistenza del Co.As.It. e anche Babbo Natale ha trovato il tempo per portare un po' di gioia ai nostri clienti.

I bambini dell'asilo locale Tumble Tots hanno anche quest'anno visitato Casa Serena, chi vestito da Rudolph, chi con addosso le orecchie di renna, e con i loro balli hanno allietato la giornata ai nostri anziani.

I nostri clienti di Casa Aurelia si sono vestiti per l'occasione festiva, e in tanta allegria non poteva certo mancare Babbo Natale!

In mancanza di un camino sufficientemente ampio per essere utilizzato, Babbo Natale ha dovuto usare la porta per visitare il gruppo di Cleveland. Poco male, visto che tutti si sono divertiti cantando e allestendo il Centro per le festività natalizie.

E ad Amici House? Prima di un lussuoso pranzo di Natale, Babbo Natale ha distribuito regali ai presenti, per essere poi fotografato assieme ai nostri anziani.



## THE CENTRE GETS CRAFTY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The halls of our Gold Coast Centre were decked for Christmas this year thanks to the creative efforts of clients and staff. They have been hard at work over the past few weeks, channelling their holiday spirit into handmade decorations that now adorn the walls and ceiling.

“We wanted to make this Christmas season really special,” says Juny, the Centre’s Group Coordinator. *“So we had our clients make beautiful stars and trees using straw, wood sticks, glue and glitter. They absolutely loved getting their hands dirty with arts and crafts.”*

Colourful wreaths, snowflakes, paper chains and Christmas trees shone brightly around the centre, infusing it with festive cheer. On Friday, the sound of carols being sung jovially filled the rooms when the Dante Alighieri choir paid a visit. Staff and clients alike danced arm in arm, shaking jingle bell rattles and banging tiny drums along to the music.

The revelry is not over yet. A week filled with celebrations saw Santa himself stopping by daily for photos with the eager clients and a Christmas raffle was greatly anticipated where clients won prizes for their participation in the many holiday activities held over the past month.

To cap off the season, a scrumptious lunch was planned at Galaxy Seafood Restaurant. With tasty treats and joyful company, it was a meal that left lasting smiles.

After a year of hard work, the holiday season allows staff to relax and have fun while making lasting memories with clients. It may be the most wonderful time of the year, but at Co.As.It. every day brings wonder when they see the smiles on their clients’ faces.





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BRISBANE CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE  
PLAZA TERRACE ROOM

# International Women's Day

2 MARCH 2024  
STARTING AT 11AM

Fashion Parade by Laura Churchill  
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Hosted by Kim Skubris

2 COURSE LUNCH  
RAFFLE PRIZES

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## PANETTONE WITH FRIENDS



Amici House was fully decorated in the Christmas spirit to welcome North and South Social Outings Groups for a morning tea replete with panettone.

The Christmas music playing in the background gave the day a festive atmosphere, followed by a special mini-basketball game with a special prize.

The travellers finished the day at the Redbank Tavern, where they relished a delicious seafood lunch buffet.



## AGED CARE | SOCIAL OUTINGS

### ESPLORANDO LA GINGER FACTORY

Nel mese di novembre, i nostri gruppi sono partiti per una avventura storica e gastronomica che li ha portati alla Ginger Factory di Yandina, sulla Sunshine Coast.

La giornata ha preso il via dal Baaia Cafè di Sandgate, dove i gruppi si sono incontrati per colazione ed una breve passeggiata sul lungomare prima di salire sull'autobus che li avrebbe portati a Yandina.

Una volta arrivati, i gitanti hanno esplorato buona parte dei 9 acri della fattoria sul "Moreton", un treno ultracentenario che per decenni ha operato nello zuccherificio Moreton a Nambour. Una occasione per ricordare memorie e episodi di gioventù passati su treni molto simili a questo, che attraversavano i campi di Ingham.

Nel pomeriggio, gli allegri viaggiatori hanno assaggiato prodotti a base di zenzero come bibite, dolci, e marmellate, per poi proseguire con acquisti vari nel negozio della Ginger Factory.

*"Perfino quelli ai quali lo zenzero non piaceva tanto si sono dovuti ricredere alla fine. La nostra meta di oggi è veramente bellissima, ed è facile capire il motivo per cui la Ginger Factory attrae sempre tantissimi visitatori,"* ha commentato Luisa, organizzatrice della giornata.



# ITALIAN LANGUAGE TEACHING

## GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY INTERNSHIP AT ILC

*I am Juan Camilo Mahecha, an international student from Cali, Colombia, currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Government and International Relations at Griffith University in Brisbane.*

*My journey with the Italian language began in the summer of 2016 when I visited my family in Perugia, the capital of the Umbria region. During that summer, marking a promising start I chose to study Italian at l'Università per Stranieri di Perugia, completing two levels (A2-B1) in three months. This experience provided me with the opportunity to meet people from around the world and develop a foundation for the language.*

*Based on my future career expectations and needs, at university I had the chance to select a major or diploma. Opting to continue studying Italian presented itself as an opportunity to further develop the language and gain academic experiences.*

*My internship with Co.As.It./ILC serves as a platform for me to continue this development and complete my studies. The organisation offers the necessary tools and environment for students like me to showcase their knowledge and abilities.*

*After completing my degree, I hope to return to Italy and immerse myself in the language - while visiting my family after five long years.*

*In terms of hobbies, I engage in a variety of activities, including reading, especially biographies and thrillers, playing video games, and finding solace in the kitchen. I thoroughly enjoy cooking, specialising in Colombian gastronomy and pasta, which happens to be my favourite dish. I have a particular fondness for truffle pasta, and simple vodka-infused recipes that bring me immense satisfaction.*

**ILC**  
ITALIAN  
LANGUAGE  
CENTRE



# ITALIAN LANGUAGE TEACHING

## 8TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR TEACHERS OF ITALIAN

Held in Brisbane on Saturday 21 October 2023, as part of the XXIII Settimana della Lingua Italiana nel Mondo, the Conference was attended by over 100 enthusiastic teachers from all over the country.

It was a day filled with workshops, presentations, and discussions related to the promotion, teaching and learning of Italian language and culture.

This event was made possible through the initiative of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) with the support of the Italian Embassy in Canberra, the Italian Consulate in Brisbane, the Italian Cultural Institute in Sydney and Co.As.It. Community Services - Italian Language Centre, Brisbane.

It was a great opportunity for teachers to be immersed in Italian language, create connections and be introduced to contemporary language teaching practices to take back to their Italian classrooms.



## WINE AND CHEESE TO CELEBRATE END OF TERM 2



Friday 24 November saw the Scala Room transformed into a Christmas wonderland for the ILC Wine and Cheese event to celebrate the end of Semester 2. Tanina Softa, Co.As.It. Assistant CEO, opened the proceedings welcoming Cav. Fil d'Arrò from Italiquore who presented the wines available for sampling.

Soon over 100 guests were enjoying renowned wines like Pinot Grigio delle Venezie, La Torre Macchione Rosso Toscano, Chianti Renzo Masi, and Vidusi Ribolla Gialla Collio. The wines were perfectly matched with delectable cheeses like grana padano, fontina, provolone, and gorgonzola.

Towards the end of the evening, ILC's course coordinator, Marzia Mauro, called up eleven ILC students who were all presented with a gift to reward their full attendance at Italian classes throughout the semester.

Finally, everyone joined in with a hearty rendition of the Christmas carol 'Bianco Natale' before wishing one another well over the festive season until the next ILC event!

Keep consulting the ILC website [www.italianlanguagecentre.org](http://www.italianlanguagecentre.org) for updates.

# ITALIAN LANGUAGE TEACHING

## STUDENT WORK EXPERIENCE AT CASA SERENA

Kelvin Grove College students undertook an inspiring one-week work experience at Casa Serena in December, organised by Co.As.It. Community Services and the Italian Language Centre (ILC).

Three Year 10 students assisted the respite centre's clients with playing games, exercising, serving their lunch - but above all, brightening the clients' days with kindness and affection.

This initiative combined Italian language and culture with work experience, as the students were responsible for welcoming the clients upon their arrival and learning more about their lives.

ILC Teacher Giovanna Amatruda supervised the students' progress. *"We put a booklet together detailing the proper words to use when speaking to the clients. The brochure had a section where the students had to practice using English and Italian when reflecting on their experiences and the skills they had gained."*

Students were prompted to discuss topics such as the cultural aspects of family for immigrants and female participation in the caring industry. Casa Serena staff welcomed the girls as part of the team, ensuring they had a fruitful week of learning at the centre.

*"The staff was really unbelievable, making the students feel comfortable by encouraging them to ask questions and to observe how the caring tasks were performed,"* says Giovanna.

*"As they grew more confident over the days, and the clients got to know them better, their relationship blossomed into something great with beautiful smiles and laughs."*

The students had already visited Casa Serena in the past with a bigger group as part of the Immersion Day organised by the Italian Language Centre. At the time, the students interviewed the Italian clients of Casa Serena about their experience as immigrants.

Kelvin Grove College teacher Amanda Kennedy praised the initiative, affirming that Co.As.It. and ILC are creating something incredible for the students and community.

*"We are so blessed to have you as part of this project. We truly are creating experiences for our students so that they can become "globally competent learners, leaders and citizens. We are making it happen thanks to you."*



# Servizi comunitari per anziani e giovani bisognosi di sostegno.

**Avete bisogno di aiuto nei lavori domestici?  
Avete bisogno di aiuto per cucinare?  
Volete incontrare nuovi amici?  
Assistete qualcuno a domicilio e avete bisogno di aiuto?**

Il Co.As.It. Community Services fornisce assistenza alle persone anziane e ai giovani dal 1987 e il nostro personale esperto e qualificato è capace di prestare un servizio culturalmente e linguisticamente adeguato.

La maggioranza del nostro personale è bilingue e capace di assistervi nel vostro ambiente familiare in casa vostra.

I nostri gruppi sociali offrono un pasto casalingo e la possibilità di incontrarsi con gli amici e chiacchierare dei tempi andati.

Attività di arti manuali, canzoni e balli, tombola e gite fanno parte del nostro programma giornaliero.



Contattate il nostro centro al

# 3624 6100

per ulteriori informazioni



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