



annual

Report

2023-2024



co.as.it.
community
services

Acknowledgement to *Country*

“Co.As.It. acknowledges the Turrbal and Yugambeh people on whose land our offices operate. We pay our respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.”



Yugambeh Country 4 by Cynthia Farr Barungam

Our Mission

To offer choice, value and consistently high quality services to people with diverse needs.

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, while 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.



Contents

THE YEAR IN REVIEW	4
BOARD OF DIRECTORS	6
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE	7
CEO'S MESSAGE	8
HOME CARE SUPPORT	11
CLINICAL, ALLIED HEALTH, DISABILITY SUPPORT	22
COMMUNITY SUPPORT	30
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS	36
ITALIAN LANGUAGE CENTRE	42

The year in *Review*



We successfully maintained several key contracts, including CHSP with the Department of Health and Aged Care, and RAS contracts with PHN Brisbane North.

Our funding efforts bore fruit with approvals for small equipment grants from Brisbane City Council, and support from COTA for Seniors' month activities in Brisbane and Gold Coast.

A major milestone was securing three-year funding for the new Aged Care Community Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS), formerly known as CVS.

We also renewed our CISS funding through the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, ensuring continued support for our Neighbourhood Centre activities.

Our QCSS funding was extended for another five years, allowing us to continue delivering services to those under 65 years of age through a consortium model.

We recognised the efforts of our nurses in offering a nurses bonus successfully funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

We also received additional funding to cover the 20.75% wage increase for direct care staff, mandated by the Fair Work Commission decision, as well as funding to address leave liabilities for these essential workers.

On the operational front, we expanded our allied health team to meet growing service demands. We participated in trials for the new Integrated Assessment Tool, set to be implemented in January 2025.

The year also saw us bidding farewell to some long-serving staff members who retired after dedicating 15, 20, and even 25 years of service and commitment to Co.As.It. programs.

In January, we underwent our Aged Care Quality Standards audit and established both a Client Advisory Committee and a Quality Advisory



Committee as part of our commitment to robust Provider Governance.

Community engagement remained a priority. We took part in the Brisbane Festival, organising dance classes and performances at Amici House.

Our involvement extended to meetings of Inter-Com.It.Es. in Cairns and Lismore, as well as hosting the Co.As.It. Australia meeting in Brisbane.

Our commitment to supporting vulnerable community members was evident in our organisation of Christmas and winter hampers for those in need. We are grateful for the continued generous support from the Piemonteis Association of Queensland.

The Italian Language Centre (ILC) had a productive year, hosting the National Teacher's Conference and supporting various initiatives including the Studitalia Award and statewide Italian language competitions.

We celebrated the Settimana della Lingua Italiana and made our debut in the "Premio in Classe"



competition organised by Italian language media outlets Il Globo/La Fiamma.

A highlight was welcoming Dott. Luigi Maria Vignali, Director General of Italian Citizens Abroad and Migration Policies from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Italian Ambassador H.E. Dott. Paolo Crudele.

We also continued our commitment to professional development for Italian teachers and participated in a meeting at the Italian Embassy to report on our yearly activities related to the Italian language program.

As we reflect on 2024, we are proud of our achievements and grateful for the continued support of our community, partners, and staff.

We look forward to building on these successes in the coming year, continuing our mission to serve and enrich our community.

Our Offices and Centres

Brisbane

Corporate office
473 Lutwyche Road, LUTWYCHE

Italian Language Centre (ILC)
473 Lutwyche Road, LUTWYCHE

Social Activity Centres - Brisbane

Casa Serena
1 Lanchester Street, STAFFORD HEIGHTS

Casa Aurelia
79 Sussex Road, ACACIA RIDGE

Cleveland Baptist Church Hall
240 Bloomfield Road, CLEVELAND

Amici House
294 Bracken Ridge Service Road, BRACKEN RIDGE

South Coast

Office
34 Thomas Drive, CHEVRON ISLAND

Social Activity Centre - South Coast

Italo-Australian Club
18 Fairway Drive, CLEAR ISLAND WATERS

Board of Directors and Executives

Chairperson/President

Cav. Nereo Brezzi

Vice President and Secretary

Cav. Antonio Giovanni Palella

Treasurer

Antony Brown

Directors

Angela Bonica
Rose-Marie Cappello
Joe Chisari
Dina Ranieri
Emma White

CEO

Cav. Dina Ranieri

Assistant CEO

Tanina Softa

Official Messages

On behalf of the Board and with great pleasure I present this report of a successful year in a 46 year history of Co.As.It. serving the community.

Operational challenges continued as the increases in client numbers in our major programs confronted the shortages of skilled workers. That shortage and a 20.75% increase in wages for direct care staff required careful management.

A government audit of Aged Care Quality Standards was conducted in January. Recommendations from the Aged Care Royal Commission introduced new provider governance responsibilities in December 2023, which saw us establish a Client Advisory Committee and a Quality Care Advisory Committee. Thank you to members who enthusiastically joined those committees and to Ms Emma White who accepted an invitation to join the Co.As.It. Board.

These actions will further improve the governance of Co.As.It.'s Aged Care operations. The organisation's revenue needs were met by renewals and increases in existing programs, new funding and grants for special projects such as equipment and Seniors' month activities in Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

We are extremely grateful to the various funding bodies such as Federal and State Government departments, and local Councils. We also acknowledge the great help given to us by our hard working volunteers.

Our ongoing commitment to Italian language learning in Queensland is well known and we thank the Italian government

through its Embassy in Canberra and its Consulate in Brisbane. That generosity has enabled ILC (Italian Language Centre) to offer ongoing progress through the assistance and participation of Education Qld and Catholic Education. A prime example is the "StudItalia" Award to students to attend an immersion program in an exclusive boarding school in Italy. StudItalia is marking its 30th anniversary in 2024.

ILC participates in numerous state and national activities to enhance the teaching of the Italian language. These include: the Annual Italian Teachers' Conference, "Settimana della Lingua Italiana" (Italian Language Week), and regular professional development for teachers.

We are grateful for the opportunities to participate in periodic discussions about Italian language teaching held in conjunction with other Co.As.It. bodies, the Embassy and its Director of Education and Culture, Com.It.Es., CGIE, our Italian parliamentary representatives On. Nicola Care' and Sen. Francesco Giacobbe.

Community activities that enrich our community's lives have included dance classes and performances at "Amici House" during Brisbane Festival Week. The International Women's Day event held every year was again a success with over 300 attending. The Board especially wishes to recognise and thank the Piemonteis Association of Qld for their generous donation again this year.

As always, I acknowledge with gratitude the collaboration and support of partners and other Co.As.It. entities Australia wide. I particularly thank: The Australian and Queensland State



Nereo Brezzi
President

Governments, Brisbane City Council, the Italian Embassy through the Ambassador, the Italian Consulate for Queensland and Northern Territory through its Consul, Luna Angelini Marinucci, the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Com.It.Es. Queensland and Northern Territory, PHN Brisbane North, the Catholic Education Offices in Brisbane, Cairns, and Townsville, and Education Queensland. I thank our staff, our executive team and the directors for their continuing support.

Together, we are excited by the prospects of the future and have confidence that our vision and values will continue to guide us in the advancement of our programs.

Finally, I pay a particular tribute and thanks to our retiring CEO, Cav. Dina Ranieri. Her contribution is impossible to estimate. We are privileged that she has agreed to continue as a Board Director of the organisation.

Official Messages

As I mark my 37th year with Co.As.It. and my 26th year as CEO, I am pleased to present my final annual report for Co.As.It. Community Services.

This year's report shines a spotlight on the vital services we offer and the positive impact we have on those in our care.

It has been a challenging year for both our dedicated staff and our clients, as we navigated through industry-wide staff shortages in the aged and disability sector.

The Federal Government's Aged Care Reforms have been in draft mode for over two years and we are eagerly anticipating the final design of the new Support at Home Program.

Increases in direct care staff wages have provided some relief in addressing staff shortages, and our focus remains on recruiting and retaining reliable and skilled staff to ensure top-notch services for our clients.

Governance responsibilities have expanded with the establishment of the Client Advisory Committee and the Quality Advisory Committee, providing valuable feedback

Our RAS (Regional Assessment Service) team participated in the trial of the new Integrated Assessment Tool, preparing for the upcoming Integrated Assessment Service due to be implemented in January 2025.

This opportunity was provided through our RAS partnerships with PHN Brisbane North and Aspire 4 Life. The care services team faced many challenges throughout the year with supporting clients with complex care needs and responding to service requests from those that have been waiting for care due to limited availability. It has always been Co.As.It.'s aim to help as many as possible.

The Italian Language Centre has increased its presence and reputation within the educational and general community. It is committed to continuing the promotion and improvement in the teaching of the Italian language and culture in this state.

An enhanced Quality Management System has been implemented to meet increased compliance requirements, allowing us to capture real-time data, analyse trends and improve the quality of our services.

I am proud of our achievements this year and thankful to our funding partners, both Federal and State, as well as for the support of the Italian Government through the Italian Embassy and Italian Consulate in Brisbane.

As an organisation dedicated to continuous improvement, we aim to provide stable and responsive services to those in need. We have adapted to changing circumstances, seized opportunities and flourished in a competitive market.



Dina Ranieri
CEO

Throughout my time at Co.As.It. I have had the privilege of working with devoted professionals and individuals who have always believed in the Co.As.It. brand.

As I step down as CEO, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all staff, volunteers and past and present Board members for their unwavering support and shared vision of Co.As.It. as a leader in service provision for the CALD and general community.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all who have contributed over the last 37 years in any way to Co.As.It.'s success.

With warmest regards and thank you for allowing me to serve you.

Community

Footprint



Total Co.As.It. Clients	5,760
Total Co.As.It. Service Hours	1,480,560

Short Term Restorative Care (STRC)	
Total number of clients who accessed STRC service	132
Total Hours	3,185

Home Care Packages (HCP)	
Total number of clients who accessed a package	1,018
Total Hours	207,862

Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)	
Total Clients	4,421
Total Hours	323,870

Queensland Community Support Scheme (QCSS)	
Total Clients	312
Total Hours	6,704

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)	
Total Clients	83
Total Hours	27,201

Community and Individual Support Services (CISS)	
Total Clients	402
Total Hours	6,299

Clinical Services (Nursing and Allied Health)	
Total Clients	2,821
Total Hours	68,660

Community Engagement/Connections	
Total Clients	1,220
Total Hours	191,267



Personnel

Management	4
Finance	8
General Administration	22
Regional Assessment Team (RAS)	18
Aged Care and other Community Services Team	74
Allied Health	20
Clinical Team	18
Care Staff	330
ILC	18
Volunteers	73

HOME CARE *Support*

Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)

Throughout 2023/2024, the aged care sector has faced significant challenges, with many Aged Care Service Providers operating at full capacity for the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) services.

This has led to frequent closures of Service Provider portals, resulting in an influx of cold call inquiries to our Coordinators.

Our team has diligently guided these callers through the My Aged Care system, often having to convey the difficult news that CHSP services might be unavailable.

Despite these obstacles, we have successfully secured additional CHSP services for the majority of our current clients.

However, we have observed an increase in waiting times for Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) assessments and the assignment of Home Care Packages.

Consequently, many clients with high care needs have only been able to access entry-level CHSP services, presenting challenges for both clients and their carers.

In response, Co.As.It. has provided additional support through our Private Services to bridge this gap.

The CHSP team has demonstrated remarkable resilience and capability throughout 2024, overcoming obstacles through the power of teamwork.

Our collective efforts have proven that we can surmount any challenge when we work together. We have embraced a mindset of continuous improvement, constantly seeking ways to enhance our teamwork and efficiency.

Despite being short-staffed for an extended period, the CHSP team has shown great flexibility and adaptability.

Through collaborative discussions, task prioritisation, and streamlined processes, our CHSP Coordinators and Program Support Officers have maintained productivity and efficiency.

We have successfully met our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) while ensuring that our clients remain our primary focus, receiving the highest quality of care.

As we reflect on 2024, it's clear that our team's commitment to excellence and adaptability has been crucial in navigating the complex landscape of aged care services.

Despite the challenges, we have maintained our high standards of service delivery and continued to prioritize the needs of our clients.

Moving forward, we remain committed to our mission of providing exceptional care and support to our community, ready to face whatever challenges and opportunities the future may bring.



Challenges and *Successes*

We have embraced a mindset of continuous improvement, constantly seeking ways to enhance our teamwork and efficiency.

Our South Coast CHSP program has been a cornerstone of care for older adults on the Gold Coast. By offering entry-level services, the CHSP program plays a pivotal role in building relationships with clients.

This early engagement often paves the way for seamless transitions to HCP services as individuals' needs evolve. With a client base of approximately 500, the program's impact on the community is undeniable.

The recent opening of the MAC Portal for Personal Care, Respite, Nursing, and Social Group services generated over 90 referrals in just two weeks. This influx of new clients ensures a steady flow of support throughout the year.

Despite recent staff changes, including the appointment of a new Coordinator and Program Support Officer, the CHSP program has maintained its momentum. The team's dedication and adaptability have ensured minimal disruption to service delivery.

One ongoing challenge facing the program is the recruitment and retention of quality care workers, particularly in the South Gold Coast area. Co.As.It. remains actively engaged in recruitment efforts to address this issue and guarantee the highest level of care for its clients.

The South Coast CHSP program continues to be a beacon of hope for older adults on the Gold Coast. Its unwavering commitment to providing essential support, combined with its adaptability and dedication to quality care, positions it as a vital resource for the community.



Carl's journey to receiving the care he needed was a testament to the dedication and advocacy of the South Coast CHSP program.

When his HCP Level 1 package was unexpectedly withdrawn, Carl found himself in a vulnerable position.

The program's Coordinator quickly stepped in, reaching out to Carl to discuss his ongoing nursing needs. During the intake process, it became evident that Carl required more extensive support due to his frailty and open wounds.

Working closely with Carl and his family, the Coordinator was able to advocate for a reinstated HCP Level 1 package with high priority. This timely intervention ensured Carl continued to receive the essential care he needed.

Prior to this, Carl had been reluctant to accept help due to trust issues and a lack of understanding of the system. However, with the program's guidance and support, Carl has become more open to receiving the care he needs.

Today, Carl is thriving, receiving regular nursing visits to manage his wounds and prevent infection. Thanks to the CHSP program's intervention, Carl is able to remain independent in his own home for as long as possible.

Case Study CORNELIUS

Cornelius was born in Holland in 1934, and moved to Australia in 1953.

Although a retired mechanical engineer, Cornelius still holds great passion for mechanical creation and invention.

He enjoys working on multiple projects at once, which includes restoring a Volkswagen Golf vehicle and creating motorised scooters from spare parts. Some of his creations can be found in museums around the state.

Cornelius states that creating and repairing items for his children and grandchildren brings him immense joy, which also keeps his mind and body active.

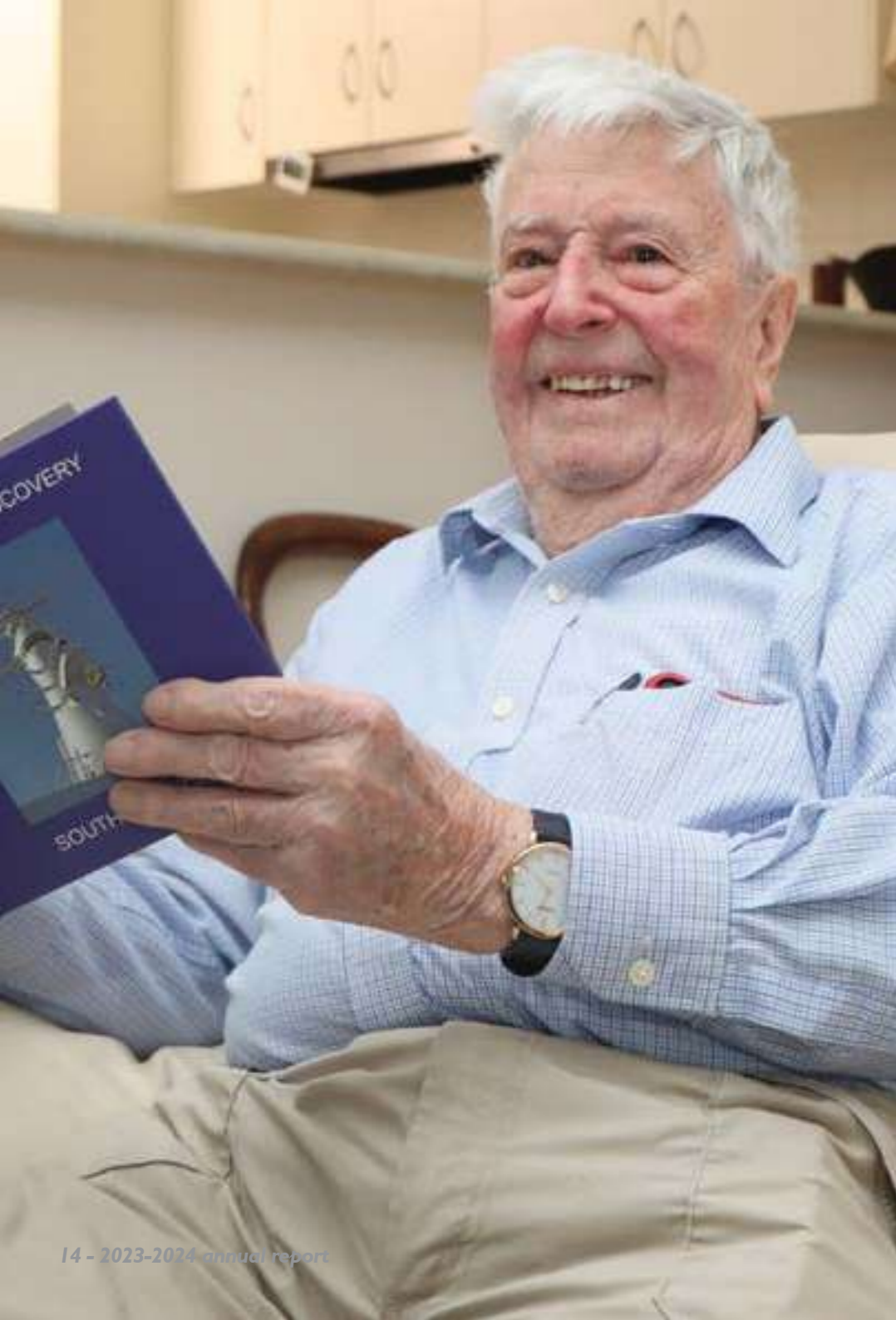
At the ripe age of 88, Cornelius eagerly enrolled and completed a welding course at TAFE in order to expand his knowledge, therefore fuelling his passion.

Cornelius owns over ten thousand tools, which are stored in his large shed. He continues to purchase new tools each month and prefers to do so in person, to ensure they are of high quality. If he can't find the tool he needs, he simply makes one himself!

Cornelius explains that receiving domestic assistance from Co.As.It. relieves him of the time and effort it would take to maintain a clean home, giving him extra time and energy to focus on doing what he loves most!



At the ripe age of 88, Cornelius eagerly enrolled and completed a welding course at TAFE in order to expand his knowledge, and fuelling his passion.



John sits surrounded by an impressive array of vintage cameras. Each one tells a story, much like the man himself.

Born in England in 1932, John's life has been a journey of discovery, both through his travels and his passion for photography.

Today, John is thriving with the support of the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP). Receiving Domestic Assistance and Social Support Individual services, he has overcome initial struggles with mobility and social isolation.

"The care workers have been a godsend," John says with a smile. *"They've helped me focus on what I love most – my cameras and my memories."*

John's love affair with photography began at the tender age of 8 when he received his first camera – a prized possession he still owns today. His oldest photo print, dating back to 1957, marks the beginning of a lifelong adventure captured through his lens.

Retirement, over 30 years ago, further fuelled John's passions.

He began collecting and restoring film cameras from around the world: Russia, Germany, Japan, and most recently, Ukraine. Each camera in his collection has a unique tale, a testament to John's curiosity and craftsmanship.

But John's creativity doesn't stop at restoration. He's authored over 20 photo books, sharing his travels and experiences with family and friends.

His current project, a book about wildlife encountered during his travels, keeps him busy and engaged.

Among his many adventures, one stands out vividly. *"I arrived in Lebanon just as a civil war was starting,"* John recounts. *"The buildings I saw on my way to the hotel disappeared hours later."*

It's these extraordinary experiences that John now shares through his photos and stories, bringing history to life for those around him.

Thanks to the CHSP services, John continues to pursue his passions, proving that with the right support, life's golden years can be filled with purpose, creativity, and achievement.

Case Study JOHN

Case Study JUNE

Following the devastating loss of her husband last year, June found herself grappling with profound loneliness and anxiety. Her world seemed to shrink as grief threatened to overwhelm her.

Through her CHSP service, Co.As.It. reached out to June and invited her to join a weekly social group designed to foster companionship and understanding among its members. Initially hesitant, June decided to give it a try, and it turned out to be a decision that changed her life.

The weekly meetings quickly became a lifeline for June. Surrounded by empathetic individuals who understood her pain, she gradually began to open up and share her experiences. Through shared activities and heartfelt conversations,

June found herself smiling again, rediscovering a sense of purpose and belonging she thought she had lost forever. Beyond the social group, Co.As.It. offered June additional support services tailored to her needs, from counselling sessions to practical assistance with daily tasks.

This holistic approach not only addressed her immediate emotional struggles but also empowered her to rebuild her life with renewed confidence.

Today, June is a symbol of resilience. With Co.As.It.'s unwavering support, she has emerged stronger, ready to embrace each new day with hope and optimism.

Her journey is a reminder that even in our darkest moments, there are hands reaching out to lift us up and help us find our way back to joy.



Home Care Packages (HCP)

The HCP program has experienced steady growth in 2023/2024, with an increase in overall client numbers in Brisbane and the South Coast region.

This is a reflection of our ageing community where changing needs or the identification of more complex needs result in clients transitioning from CHSP or STRC or becoming eligible for a package directly following cognitive or physical deterioration.

Managing this growth has necessitated careful staff planning, including proactive recruitment throughout the year to meet the demands of new clients.

Additional funding allocated to cover the 20.75% wage increases for direct care staff as mandated by the Fair Work Commission as well as leave liabilities was a boost to our financial management of these essential workers.

On the South Coast, the extreme weather conditions during the Christmas holiday period presented challenges for home maintenance works as brokered suppliers were overwhelmed, this was resolved by collaborating with an additional provider in the Gold Coast area.

A Quality Standards Aged Care Audit conducted at the beginning of the year ensured our commitment to quality and compliance and strengthened the program's position within the community.

Steady Growth

On the South Coast, continued community networking, such as participation in the Seniors Round Table Meeting, has allowed us to build and maintain relationships with brokers and aged care providers in the Gold Coast region.

This visibility has kept us at the forefront of people's minds when considering Home Care Packages and the companies that manage them.

Our reputation for high quality and compassionate care at an affordable price is a major drawcard for potential clients seeking home support, as is our high degree of cultural competence for people seeking culturally and linguistically appropriate care for loved ones.

Participation in Lifestyle and Health Expos further increased awareness of our programs and were extremely successful in expanding our potential client base.

As the HCP program continues to grow we are excited about the prospects for the coming year.

With new faces joining our teams and familiar faces taking on increased responsibilities, the program is well positioned for continued success in both the Brisbane metropolitan and South Coast regions.



Case Study VITO

Vito's world has expanded dramatically thanks to innovative assistive technology and dedicated care.

A power lift recliner now allows him to easily elevate his legs, alleviating symptoms from a medical condition and improving his mobility. But Vito's newfound independence doesn't stop at home.

With a rented scooter, funded by his Home Care Package, he confidently navigates the community for shopping and medical appointments. At the heart of Vito's care is a team of compassionate Community Support Workers, including Val.

These workers assist with personal care, and meals and Vito's well-being is further enhanced by regular nursing check-ups and a range of allied health services, including podiatry, dietetics, and speech therapy.

Despite initial challenges with the scooter, quick responses from his care coordinator ensured smooth sailing – or rather, smooth rolling.

Now equipped with an upgraded model, Vito continues his adventures with renewed confidence. Vito's simple yet profound feedback speaks volumes: he's very happy with Co.As.It. and its staff.



Vito's story is a testament to person-centred care, assistive technology and human compassion that created a life of dignity and joy.

Queensland Community Support Scheme (QCSS)

The QCSS program continues to face challenges in terms of funding and changes to service types, such as the introduction of Community Connection supports.

Co.As.It. has been at capacity for QCSS services for the past year, limiting its ability to accept new referrals and maintaining a larger client base.

The Coordinator attended the QCSS Forum in June, where the Department announced a five-year contract with the intention of reducing social isolation and building capacity for clients.

However, limited numbers of Community Care Workers has posed challenges in providing consistent support to QCSS clients.

While the program has faced difficulties, it has been successful in supporting CALD clients who are not eligible for the NDIS. This ensures that they receive essential support to remain independently in their homes.

Moving forward, we will continue to advocate for increased funding, work with the department to refine service delivery models, and explore opportunities for collaboration with other organisations to address capacity limitations and enhance service provision.

Case Study NORMA



As her voice fills with emotion, Norma 54, reflects on her journey with the Queensland Community Support Scheme (QCSS).

“I’m so grateful for the carefulness and attention I’ve received from the team,” she shares.

For Norma, it’s the little things that matter most: her coordinator’s regular calls, tailored service referrals, and the respect for her cultural background.

Norma arrived in Australia 23 years ago from El Salvador. Although her English is basic, that hasn’t hindered her ability to make friends and explore.

“I’m addicted to the Social Outings Program,” she laughs, noting she participates in bus trips with fellow clients almost every month.

Every Friday, she attends social groups at Casa Aurelia, where she appreciates the vibrant exchange of cultures.

“I’ve made friends who speak Italian, English, and Spanish. It’s a beautiful mix!” Norma explains, her eyes lighting up at the thought of her diverse friendships.

Having been with Co.As.It. for over a year, Norma benefits from domestic assistance, social groups, and the QCSS program.

“I would definitely recommend this organisation to my friends,” she says earnestly. *“I’m very grateful for the services I’ve received, the team’s genuine concern, and their empathy. They have always been there for me.”*



Short Term Restorative Care Program (STRC)

The Short Term Restorative Care Program has reached a significant milestone in its third year, demonstrating remarkable growth and success through a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach to client care.

By establishing strong partnerships with key stakeholders, including the ACAT (Aged Care Assessment Team), Primary Health Network (PHN), and the Aged Care Advocacy Team, the program has created a comprehensive support network that ensures holistic care for clients.

The program's team has strategically expanded its capabilities by adding part-time administrative support and an assistant care coordinator, enabling a more robust and responsive service delivery model. This collaborative approach allows for more personalised and efficient care planning, ensuring that each client receives tailored support that addresses their unique needs and goals.

Over the past 12 months, the program has experienced an overall increase in referrals, though with some notable fluctuations in demand. Recognizing this dynamic landscape, the team has

developed strategic plans to strengthen existing partnerships and implement targeted marketing strategies.

The primary objective for the upcoming year is to achieve more consistent referrals and maintain a steady stream of client cases.

The true measure of the program's success lies in the transformative stories of its clients. Numerous individuals have shared inspiring narratives of regained independence and renewed hope.

One client, who had previously thought his lawn bowls days were behind him, has returned to the sport he loves.

Another client, previously limited by mobility and confidence, managed to board a plane and visit her daughter in Sydney—a journey she never thought possible.

Perhaps most remarkable is the story of a client who has even started a new career as a bingo caller, demonstrating the program's capacity to not just restore physical capabilities, but to reignite passion and purpose.

Rekindling Joy

The benefits of the program extend far beyond the individual clients. Families have expressed profound joy and gratitude, witnessing their loved ones regain confidence, independence, and a sense of agency.

The emotional impact is as significant as the physical rehabilitation, with families reporting improved quality of life and renewed hope for their relatives' futures.

By fostering a collaborative environment that brings together healthcare professionals, support workers, administrative staff, and community partners, the Short Term Restorative Care Program has created a comprehensive ecosystem of support.

This approach ensures that clients receive not just medical intervention, but holistic care that addresses physical, emotional, and social needs.

As the program looks to the future, its commitment remains steadfast: to continue empowering clients, supporting families, and demonstrating the profound potential of targeted, compassionate, and collaborative care in enhancing the lives of older individuals.

Case Study BEVERLEY

At 90 years old, I never thought I'd regain the independence I'd lost. Living alone, with my three wonderful children always worried about me, I struggled daily with my strength, balance, and mobility.

Simple tasks became mountains to climb, and my home felt like an obstacle course.

I relied heavily on my four-wheeled walker, both inside and outside my house. For longer distances, I resigned myself to a wheelchair.

Despite seeing a physiotherapist through the CHSP program, I felt I was making no progress.

Managing my medications became a game of chance - some days I'd forget, other days I couldn't remember if I'd taken them at all.

That's when the Short-Term Restorative Care Program entered my life, and everything changed.

They started me on weekly one-on-one physiotherapy sessions right in my home, complete with exercises to do throughout the week.

An occupational therapist assessed my living space and daily activities, recommending small but impactful modifications to my home.

The program coordinator even reached out to my GP about my medication struggles. Together, they organised a webster pack system for me - a simple change that has given me newfound confidence in managing my health.

The results? Nothing short of miraculous. I no longer need my walker inside the house. I move around

confidently and safely, thanks to the physiotherapy and the smart adjustments to my living space.

Managing my medication is no longer a source of stress or confusion.

My children have noticed the change too. They tell me I'm a different person now: more independent, more confident. I feel like I've been given a new lease on life.

To anyone wondering if they can regain their independence in their golden years, I say: it's possible.

With the right support and a little determination, you can rewrite your story.

I did, and at 90, I'm living proof that it's never too late to start a new chapter.

Enabling Clients

Following significant recruitment efforts approximately a year ago, our team of 20 professionals has remained largely unchanged. This group includes occupational therapists, physiotherapists, podiatrists, allied health assistants, and administrative support staff.

This stability has been particularly welcome as we continue to face an increasing number of allied health referrals, which have grown in both volume and complexity year on year.

Our primary focus remains on providing individualised, one-on-one in-home support to our CHSP, HCP, and STRC clients.

Over the last financial year, we've had the privilege of supporting over 2,800 clients, helping them maintain their safety and independence at home. This support often involves a multi-disciplinary approach, with our team working closely alongside Coordinators, Nursing, and the Wellness team.

In addition to our core in-home support services, we've expanded several other activities and services throughout the year. Due to growing demand, we've increased our podiatry and physiotherapy clinics at Amici House. Podiatry services have expanded to nearly two full days per week, staffed by one dedicated podiatrist.

Physiotherapy clinics now operate daily at Amici House, with two physiotherapists.

Our Stay Active classes continue to be a resounding success. We currently run four classes at Amici House on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Additionally, we hold two classes at Kalinga on Mondays and one class at Carina on Wednesdays.

These classes are designed for the "well elderly" population, providing an avenue for improving and maintaining physical well being. Notably, some participants have been attending the same classes for over three years, transforming the Stay Active program into a valuable source of social connection and friendships for our clients.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to providing high-quality, personalised care to our clients. The stability of our team has enhanced our ability to offer consistent, reliable support, even as we adapt to meet the evolving needs of our community.

We are proud of the positive impact we've made in the lives of our clients and look forward to continuing our mission of promoting independence, well-being, and quality of life for older individuals in our care.



In the world of rehabilitation, success stories often emerge from the most challenging circumstances.

Meet John aged 74, a retiree whose life took an unexpected turn when he suffered a stroke. This is the story of his remarkable recovery through a multidisciplinary allied health program.

The setback

John, once a regular at Amici House's Stay Active and Latin Dancing classes, found himself facing decreased hand function, balance issues, and cognitive challenges post-stroke. His active lifestyle seemed a distant memory.

The STRC Program: A Tailored Approach

John was enrolled in an 8-week Short Term Restorative Care (STRC) program, where he received personalised care from our team of allied health professionals including:

Physiotherapy
Weekly sessions focused on shoulder pain relief and mobility.

Exercise Physiology
Progressive exercises to strengthen shoulders and improve balance.

Occupational Therapy
Bi-weekly sessions aimed at cognitive fine motor skills improvements.

John's occupational therapy sessions were far from ordinary. From Sudoku to board games, and even paper airplane making, these activities were designed to improve focus, planning, and bilateral hand coordination.

As a retired engineer, John particularly enjoyed the airplane challenge, often outperforming his therapist!

The comeback

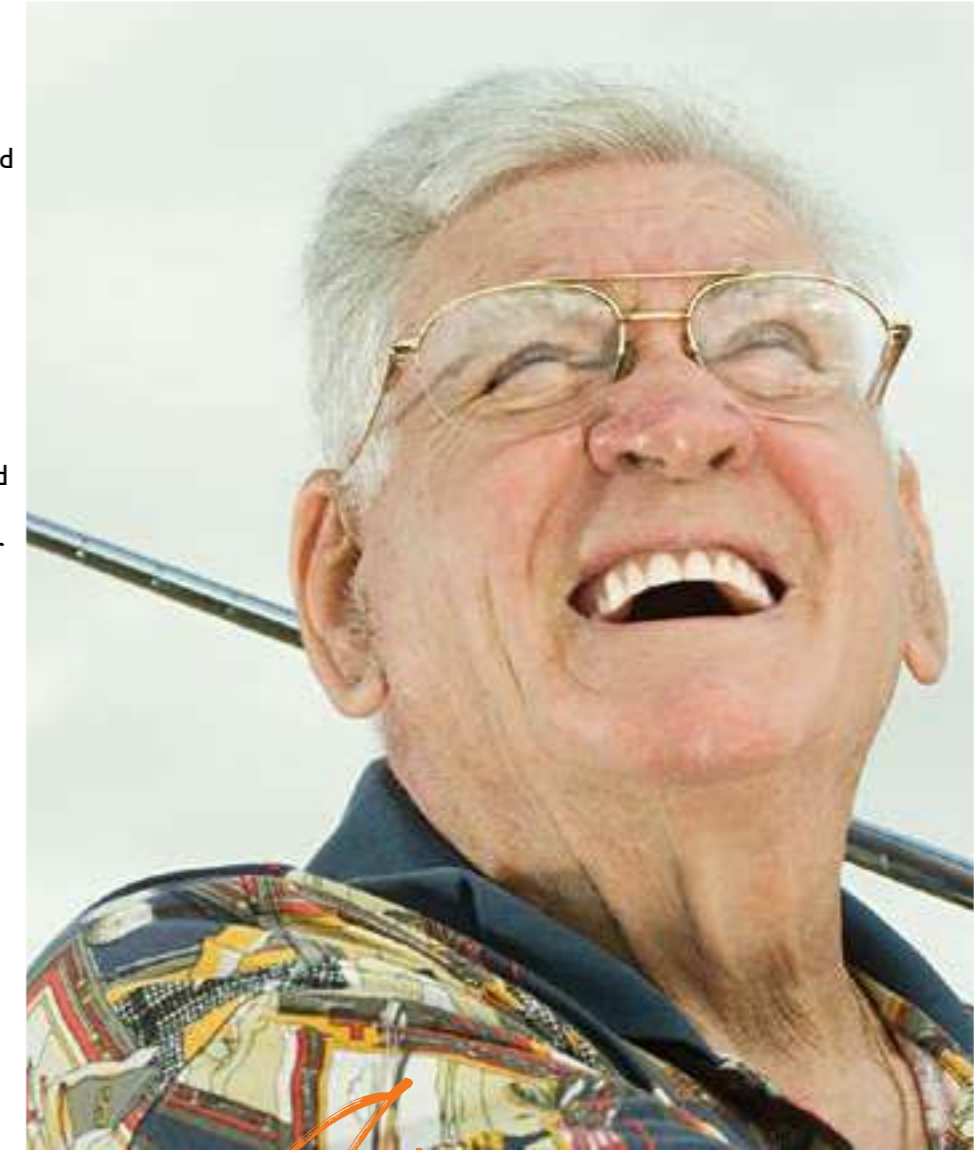
By the end of the program, John reported that he had improved mood and motivation and brain fog, increased upper limb mobility, and a jump from 2/10 to 5/10 in golf-playing confidence.

The road ahead

While John hasn't quite made it back to the golf course yet, his therapists are confident it won't be long before he's teeing off again.

John's journey demonstrates the power of personalised, multidisciplinary care in stroke recovery.

It shows that with the right support, determination, and a touch of creativity, it's possible to regain not just physical abilities, but also joy and zest for life.



Case Study JOHN

Better chronic disease Management

The past year has seen significant strides in community clinical care, with improvements in accessibility, quality of service, and client outcomes.

Client satisfaction with clinical services provided at home has become increasingly important as healthcare systems aim to reduce hospital stays and enhance client comfort.

These services, which can include nursing care, physical therapy, and medication management, constantly receive high satisfaction feedback due to their convenience and personalised nature.

Clients appreciate the ability to recover in familiar surroundings, maintain their daily routines, and have more control over their care environment.

We are confident that client satisfaction is linked to our quality of communication with healthcare providers, the timeliness of services, and the perceived competence of clinical staff.

Ensuring consistent, high-quality clinical care and addressing clients' individual needs are crucial for maintaining and improving satisfaction levels with home-based clinical services.

Key Achievements:

Increased Home Care Services: Expanded our home clinical care services to now supporting over 2,000 clients to remain living in their own homes.

Chronic Disease Management:

Improved management of chronic conditions, reducing hospital admissions and re-admissions.

Greater collaboration with local healthcare providers and increased client access to localise health care support.

Challenges Faced

- Staffing shortages in specialised care areas
- Adapting to rapidly changing healthcare technologies

- Addressing health disparities in underserved CALD groups

Client Outcomes identified

- High client satisfaction for home clinical services
- Less frequent emergency department visits for chronic condition clients
- Improved medication adherence rates

While challenges remain, our community clinical care services have shown remarkable resilience and adaptability.

We remain committed to providing high quality, accessible healthcare to all members of our community.

The Challenge

Charlie, who requires a catheter for complex medical issues, found himself in a difficult situation: his previous care provider lacked a Registered Nurse with the necessary skills to replace his catheter.

This situation forced Charlie to make frequent, arduous trips to the hospital for what should have been routine care.

“Every time there was an issue with catheter drainage, I had to go to the hospital,” Charlie recalls. *“At my age, it was extremely challenging. I’d spend hours waiting on a trolley before someone could attend to me.”*

The Co.As.It. Difference

Charlie’s Home Care package was transferred to us and the Co.As.It. clinical team quickly identified the core issue and found an innovative solution.

“We located a Registered Nurse with the expertise to handle all of Charlie’s catheter related issues, including replacement, right in the comfort of his own home,” explains our clinical team supervisor, *“No more hospital transfers, no more long waits, and no more unnecessary stress for Charlie.”*

A Life Transformed

The impact on Charlie’s life has been profound. Gone are the days of dreading catheter complications and the subsequent hospital visits. Now, he enjoys peace of mind knowing that expert care is just a phone call away.

“It’s such a relief to have my care needs met at home,” Charlie shares with a smile. *“I’ve been recommending Co.As.It. to all my friends and family. They’ve truly changed my life for the better.”*

The Bigger Picture

Charlie’s story is just one example of how tailored, expert clinical care can dramatically improve the lives of older individuals.

It underscores the importance of matching the right caregivers with the right clients and highlights the potential for home clinical care to reduce the burden on hospitals while enhancing client comfort and dignity.

With the right approach, we can ensure that more older persons receive the specialised care they need, right where they’re most comfortable – at home.

Better clinical care has revolutionised his quality of life and restored his independence.

Case Study CHARLIE





The transformative power of community support and counselling

walking on sacred *Ground*

“Walking on Sacred Ground” explores the profound impact of community support and counselling in mental health.

Our Mind Wellness Team emphasises the privilege and responsibility of mental health professionals in guiding individuals through psychological distress.

Their expanded duties include handling phone and online inquiries, and assisting front line workers.

An innovative monthly pop-up at Lutwyche Shopping Centre provides on-site support, particularly focusing on reducing loneliness and isolation.

This initiative notably serves Italian men seeking counsel in their native language. The impact of these efforts is evident in

successful client transitions to My Aged Care registration and access to services including social groups.

A poignant example involves supporting a man’s transition to a nursing home, highlighting the importance of dignity and family involvement in such processes.

The “Nourishing the Soul” program at Amici House, running three sessions monthly, offers another avenue for community engagement.

Throughout their work, staff members are consistently inspired by the resilience of the human spirit, witnessing the growth of qualities like determination, courage, and self-awareness in their clients.

One striking example is Jude’s story, an 84-year-old who described her transformation into a “wise

lady” after overcoming childhood traumas, proving it’s never too late for personal growth.

For the counsellors, this work is more than a profession: it’s a calling.

They not only witness healing but actively facilitate it through various channels, including one-on-one counselling, community outreach, and group programs.

In the process of supporting others, they too experience personal growth and transformation.

It highlights the humbling and awe-inspiring nature of being present for those in need, underscoring why many choose and persist in this field: to make a positive difference in others’ lives while walking on sacred ground.



National Insurance Disability Scheme (NDIS)

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has continued to make significant strides in providing quality services and supports over the past year.

One notable development has been the introduction of dedicated Disability Support Workers, who exclusively work with NDIS clients.

This specialised role has enhanced consistency and quality in service delivery, as clients appreciate the support provided by staff with additional skills and experience.

The NDIS Art Class remains a resounding success, with the new Art Teacher bringing fresh ideas and creative skills that have been warmly received by participants.

While the NDIS has achieved remarkable progress, it faces challenges in a highly competitive market.

Many providers may offer greater flexibility in their service provision, and the shortage of support workers poses ongoing difficulties.

The coordination role, in particular, can be exceptionally demanding due to the complexities of client needs, the support and mentoring required for support workers, the preparation for audits, and the overall management of program-related matters.

Despite these challenges, the NDIS remains committed to providing exceptional support to individuals with disabilities and continues to evolve to meet their changing needs.



Clinton, an NDIS participant, is alive with the power of curiosity and determination. His days are filled with the voices of history's greatest thinkers and today's sharpest minds, courtesy of his extensive audiobook collection.

From political discourse to cutting-edge science, Clinton's mental library is a treasure trove of information that would make even the most seasoned scholars envious.

But Clinton's wisdom isn't confined to the realms of digital audio. His passport tells a tale of a man determined to experience the world firsthand.

"It was an important experience," Clinton reflects on his travels to the Philippines and England. "I wanted to go deep and understand England's history and its impact on the world."

His eyes light up as he recounts hours spent in museums, absorbing centuries of Western culture like a sponge.

Clinton's renaissance isn't limited to intellectual pursuits. Recently, he's turned his curious mind and capable hands to the culinary arts, with a particular focus on Asian cuisine.

"I love cooking for people," he says, his eyes twinkling with enthusiasm. "And sometimes, I give some tips to Sandra, my disability support worker."

Whether he's dissecting global politics, exploring historical landmarks, or experimenting with exotic spices, Clinton approaches each day with an insatiable curiosity and a drive to improve.

What remarkable achievement will this extraordinary man tackle next?

Case Study CLINTON

Case Study EWAN

Ewan isn't letting anything dim his musical melody. This NDIS client, partnered with Co.As.It. since 2021, has found the freedom to chase his musical dreams thanks to the program's support.

Daily tasks used to be a roadblock on Ewan's creative journey. Groceries and errands meant heavy bags and long walks, leaving him drained.

"Without this help," Ewan admits, "I wouldn't have the energy to focus on my music." But the NDIS program, through Co.As.It., has changed that.

His friendly support worker helps him conquer everyday tasks, freeing him to pursue his passion. Ewan describes his support workers as *"not just good people, but*

incredibly flexible." They adapt to his needs, allowing him to dedicate time to music.

The "thoughtful and passionate" staff at Co.As.It. further enhances his experience, making him feel valued and listened to.

Ewan's NDIS goals are clear: safe access to the community, fostering social connections, and building independence.

While he enjoys contributing to household chores, music is his true calling. Two guitars and a harmonica are his constant companions.

Inspired by The Beatles at 16, Ewan picked up the guitar. Bob Dylan and John Lennon ignited his passion for the harmonica. Music isn't just entertainment for Ewan: it's

a spiritual escape. *"Sometimes I play for my support workers,"* he shares.

"Music, whether on the radio or through my instruments, takes me to a place where time and space don't exist. My senses come alive."

Ewan's story exemplifies the NDIS program's power to empower individuals and unlock their potential.

It's not just about daily tasks, it's about the freedom to pursue the music within, the freedom to chase one's melody.

The NDIS helps him overcome challenges and write his own song of success.

Music isn't just entertainment for Ewan: **it's a spiritual escape.**

COMMUNITY *Support*

CIAO Program

In their twilight years, many Italian seniors find themselves facing an unexpected challenge: navigating life in a residential aged care home where English is the primary language.

This transition can be isolating, alienating, and even frightening. But thanks to an innovative program called CIAO (Cultural Italian Activity Opportunity), these elders are rediscovering a sense of belonging and cultural connection in their new surroundings.

A Taste of Home

Imagine the comfort of hearing your native language, savouring the aroma of Italian coffee, or sharing in familiar cultural pastimes when you're far from home. This is exactly what the CIAO program brings to Italian residents in aged care facilities across Brisbane.

More Than Just Activities

Developed by Co.As.It, the CIAO program was the first of its kind

introduced into aged care facilities in 2014.

It now operates as a self-funded program connecting more than 150 residents per month in over 14 aged care facilities across Brisbane.

Our activity officers implemented culturally and linguistically appropriate social activity groups, which promoted inclusion and fostered a sense of belonging in what can often feel like an alien environment.

Community Connections

One of the most valuable aspects of the CIAO program was its ability to link Italian residents with the wider community. By bringing together Italian residents, friends, families and volunteers, the program created opportunities for shared activities, music sessions, morning teas, even pasta and pizza making!

Positive Changes

Since its inception, the CIAO program has yielded numerous

positive outcomes. The groups have helped residents make the transition from home to a nursing home and they've been integral in alleviating isolation, promoting inclusiveness, fostering participation, and creating a sense of belonging.

A Cost-Effective Solution

Despite its significant impact, the CIAO program is delivered at a low cost to residential facilities, aligning with Co.As.It's commitment to community service and ensures that even facilities with limited resources can provide this valuable program to their Italian residents.

Looking Forward

As Australia's population continues to diversify and age, programs like CIAO serve as a model for culturally and linguistically sensitive aged care. By recognising and celebrating the cultural backgrounds of elders, we can ensure that their golden years are filled with comfort, connection, and a touch of home – no matter where they may be.



Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS)

Funded for 75 volunteers the ACVVS has continued to be a valuable resource and 'feel good' experience for both elderly residents, home care clients and dedicated volunteers.

Staff have continued fostering connections and providing companionship and the Scheme has made a significant impact on the well-being of older individuals.

Benefits for Residents and Home Care Clients:

Alleviation of loneliness:

The ACVVS has helped to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness among elderly individuals, improving their overall mental health.

Enhanced social connection:

Volunteers have provided much-needed companionship and social interaction, enriching the lives of residents.

Improved quality of life:

The Scheme has contributed to a higher quality of life for elderly individuals by providing opportunities for engagement and meaningful relationships.

Enriching quality of *Life*

Benefits for Volunteers:

Personal fulfilment:

Volunteering with the ACVVS has offered volunteers a sense of purpose and satisfaction.

Skill development:

Volunteers have had the opportunity to develop valuable skills, such as communication, empathy, and active listening.

Social connection:

The program has provided volunteers with opportunities to connect with others and build new friendships.

The ACVVS has been instrumental in creating a more inclusive and supportive community for older adults, especially those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD) who are at higher risk of alienation and isolation..

By bringing together volunteers and residents, the Scheme has fostered meaningful connections that have benefited both parties.



Meet Mario, a vibrant volunteer at Co.As.It. whose life experiences read like a culinary and artistic adventure novel.

With an impressive resume that includes four years as Head Chef at The Vatican, stints as an Executive Chef in Kenya and South Africa, and multiple accolades for his restaurants in Rome, Mario brings a wealth of knowledge and warmth to his role.

He's also a self-taught painter, creating stunning masterpieces in his spare time, and he can tell jokes for days!

How did you become involved in volunteering at Co.As.It.?

"I got involved through a mutual friend who mentioned her partner was volunteering. I thought, 'That sounds like a good idea.' I found myself with more time on my hands and wanted to do something meaningful."

Can you describe your visits with Piero?

"I absolutely love visiting Piero! We spend hours chatting—he often shares

stories about his home in Sardegna, and I enjoy every minute of it. We play cards together, though I have to watch out; he sometimes cheats! The time flies by when we're together."

What do you love about volunteering?

"I've always loved being around people. I enjoy talking and listening to stories, and helping others brings me joy. It's a rewarding experience that enriches my life as much as it does theirs."

What message do you have for anyone considering volunteering?

"One big piece of advice is that many people out there need help. Loneliness is a major issue for older individuals, and they have so many fascinating stories to share. When you help someone, it's not just about them: it's a transformative experience for you too."

Mario's enthusiasm and compassion shine through every word, reminding us all of the profound impact that volunteering can have on both the giver and the receiver.

An *interview* with
Mario

Community and Individual Support Services (CISS)



SPREADING HOLIDAY CHEER

Co.As.It. embraced the festive spirit by distributing for the fourth year, 100 Christmas hampers filled with delicious Italian and Australian treats. This gesture of kindness brought smiles to the faces of those in need within our community. Clients expressed their gratitude for the thoughtful gifts, highlighting the positive impact Co.As.It.'s care staff has on their well-being. "Receiving a hamper like this makes us feel very special" said a Home Care Package (HCP) client. "We are delighted as now we get to eat something nice on Christmas Day," a Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) client revealed.

ART EXHIBITION 2023

Amici House transformed into a vibrant hub of creativity during a captivating art exhibition in December 2023. This event showcased the remarkable artistic talents of participants in the NDIS program and other passionate community members. Featured in the Courier-Mail, the exhibition attracted hundreds of guests who marvelled at the diverse artwork on display.

CELEBRATING HARMONY DAY

Co.As.It.'s rich cultural tapestry was celebrated during Harmony Day in March 2024. With staff representing a staggering 52 languages, this vibrant event was a melting pot of delicious international cuisine and cultural pride.

FREE DANCE WORKSHOPS 80's STYLE!

As part of Brisbane Festival, we collaborated and supported this wider community event by opening up Amici House for weeks leading up to the big 80s Dance bash. Free dance workshops every Friday taught popular 80's choreography across generations as they grooved 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," someone commented. The 80s Dance Bash party saw dancers showing off their new skills while dressed in flashy 80's inspired outfits.

KAZOOING UP CREATIVITY

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.

"Everyone from young children to the elderly were letting loose and having fun with these silly little instruments," explained organisers.

"Sometimes being creative and not taking yourself too seriously is the best medicine." While not entirely melodious, the experience was a sound story of community joy.



Initiatives that spread joy, empower individuals, and foster strong communities



BRIDGING THE DIGITAL GAP

Co.As.It. tackles the digital divide by offering technology classes. These classes equip participants with fundamental tech knowledge, online safety awareness, and the ability to navigate the digital world with confidence.



GIROTONDO PLAYGROUP

The Girotondo Playgroup, run in collaboration with ILC, continues to nurture children's self-assurance. Parents and grandparents consistently praise this cherished cultural activity, emphasising its positive influence on children's development. The program fosters a sense of belonging and connection within the community.

LATIN DANCING

The Latin Dancing classes offer a dynamic combination of physical and mental benefits for participants. From improved cardiovascular health to stress reduction, these classes also promote social interaction and a strong sense of community among members.



STAY ACTIVE - SENIORS

The Stay Active classes empower older Australians by promoting the importance of physical activity, strength training, and social interaction. Over 165 participants enjoyed the classes' specially designed movements.



ART CLASS

The weekly art class offers a platform for self-expression, social interaction, and personal growth for NDIS participants and others. Participants have showcased their artistic talents and experienced significant increases in self-confidence.



YOGA

Mat and chair Yoga classes integrate relaxation techniques, coordination exercises, and controlled breathing to foster holistic well-being, reduced anxiety, and improved mood for participants.



NOURISHING THE SOUL

Nourishing the Soul provides a safe and supportive space for women to learn and grow. Working alongside the Mind Wellness Team, this activity offers educational sessions on self-care, mental health, and personal development.

Participants have expressed immense gratitude for the activity, highlighting its positive impact on their self-esteem, well-being, and social connections.

COUNSELLING SERVICES

A team of qualified counsellors provide invaluable support and guidance on a range of personal issues. This confidential service is a vital resource for many in the community.



SOCIAL *Connections*

Our community projects, social events and activities continued to bring the community together and the demand for social outings outstripped demand for any other activities. Connections, inclusion and social contact increased engagement and participation in many community events.

SENIORS WEEK SIZZLES WITH EURO CONCERTS!

In October 2023, Co.As.It. brought the spirit of Europe to Brisbane and the Gold Coast during Seniors Week with two Euro concerts. Participants enjoyed lively European music, captivating Tango dance performances, and delicious gourmet lunches. But beyond the entertainment, the events offered a chance for connection and information sharing. Another attendee echoed those sentiments, adding, *“I would attend events like this every month! I love music and dancing, and Euro Concert was a perfect combination of both.”*

The Euro Concert Gold Coast received contribution funding from COTA (Council on the Ageing) and the Gold Coast City Council. The Euro Concert Brisbane was supported by COTA and the Queensland Government.

These concerts highlight Co.As.It.’s commitment to providing enriching experiences for seniors, promoting social interaction and healthy attitudes to aging.



INTERNATIONAL WOMENS’ DAY

The International Women’s Day celebration at Co.As.It. was more than just a social event: it was a salute to the achievements and contributions of women in our community.

The event provided a platform for women to connect, inspire, and be inspired. The Honourable Grace Grace, Minister for State Development and Infrastructure, Industrial Relations, and Racing, Lady Mayoress Nina Schrinner, and Italian Consul for Queensland and Northern Territory Luna Angelini Marinucci all issued a heartfelt call for an unbiased, equal world.

The celebration was a reminder that when women come together, they can create a powerful force for change and progress. While the International Women’s Day celebration was a resounding success, it is important to remember that the fight for gender equality is ongoing. Co.As.It. remains committed to advocating for women’s rights and promoting inclusivity.



INTER-GENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Co.As.It.’s social activity groups in Brisbane fostered heart-warming connections and positive attitudes to aging through regular visits from nearby kindergarteners and high school students learning Italian.

These multi-generational interactions offered immense benefits for both children and adults. From sharing stories to eating and playing games together, these exchanges promoted cultural transmission and fostered healthy attitudes towards aging.

The reciprocal learning process fostered connection and understanding between generations.

VOLUNTEERS: VITAL COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Volunteers are our most valuable resource, enriching Co.As.It. with their expertise, kindness and unwavering commitment to our services and programs.

Most importantly, we acknowledge the impact they make on older members in the community who live alone, have no networks to seek support yet strive to live life with dignity and independence.

From supporting social activity groups, visiting the lonely and isolated members of our older CALD community to assisting in administration, our volunteers play a critical role in achieving the organisation’s vision of maintaining a connected and vibrant community.

Co.As.It. recognises the selfless commitment of its volunteers and the balancing act volunteers undertake between personal life and giving back to their community.

As an organisation we strive to acknowledge the impact our volunteers have on our programs and the lives of those we support.

Our appreciation is expressed through formal and informal recognition, special events, and medals, certificates and media acknowledgement.

Special ceremonies like the Co.As.It. Medal of Appreciation for five-year volunteers further acknowledge their outstanding contributions.

These initiatives showcase Co.As.It.’s commitment to building bridges within the community, fostering

collaboration between generations, and valuing the vital role of volunteers who support us in delivering high-quality programs and services.

We express our sincerest gratitude to them for their continued dedication to vulnerable members in the community.



AMICI HOUSE

Community Hub

Our community hub Amici House at Bracken Ridge has blossomed into a vibrant social venue that's changing lives and fostering connections in numbers we never expected.

"It's more than just a community centre," says one of our staff, his eyes twinkling with pride. "Amici House has become a second home for many, a place where friendships are forged, skills are learned, and lives are enriched" says our staff.

Over 600 people walk through Amici House's welcoming doors each week, drawn by a diverse array of activities that cater to all interests and abilities.

Allied health services have expanded dramatically, with physiotherapy now

available five days a week and podiatry services doubling to meet demand.

From the energetic beats of Latin dance classes to the serene focus of yoga sessions, from technology workshops to soul-nourishing art classes, there's something for everyone. But it's not just about quantity – it's the quality of experiences that truly sets Amici House apart.

Hayley, an NDIS art class participant, initially clung to her mother's side, hesitant and unsure. Fast forward a few months, and the transformation is nothing short of remarkable. *"Now she strides in confidently, greeting everyone with hugs and kisses,"* her mother shares, voice thick with emotion. *"The change in Hayley is beyond words."*

When a client passed away, her daughter chose to hold the wake at the centre. *"It was Mum's favourite place,"* she explained, *"It felt right to celebrate her life here, surrounded by the community she loved."*

The centre's reputation has spread far and wide, with community groups flocking to the Amici House Café for meetings, drawn by the warm atmosphere and our chef's legendary home-cooked fare.

Even local MP Stirling Hinchcliffe recognises the magic of this place, hosting his "Biggest Morning Tea" event within its welcoming walls.

With waiting lists for activities growing and an annual Christmas Party/Art

Exhibition that books out in a week, it's clear that Amici House has become more than just a community centre, it's the beating heart of the local neighbourhood.

In a world where many in the community feel marginalised and disconnected, Amici House is a welcoming and tangible presence of support, acceptance and solidarity.

It's a place where every visitor is greeted with a smile, every challenge is met with support, and every day brings new opportunities for growth and connection.

As we look to the future, one thing is certain: Amici House will continue to be the haven of hope, friendship, and community spirit for years to come.

SOCIAL GROUPS

Imagine a vibrant community space where age is just a number and connections bloom effortlessly. Our Social Activity Centres are revolutionising support for seniors and individuals with disabilities, offering much more than just a gathering place—they're lifelines of joy, independence, and connection.

Breaking Isolation, Building Community

Our innovative centres in Brisbane and the South Coast, are transforming lives. For individuals who might otherwise feel homebound, these centres provide a critical social anchor. Whether clients are navigating mobility challenges or managing cognitive differences, there's a welcoming space for everyone.

A Tapestry of Experiences

What makes these centres special? Diversity and inclusivity. Carefully crafted activities cater to individual capabilities, ensuring everyone can participate. From multicultural celebrations to engaging group pursuits, members find a genuine sense of belonging.

Respite for Caregivers

Perhaps most importantly, these centres offer full-time caregivers a much-needed break. While loved ones enjoy stimulating activities, caregivers can rest, attend appointments, or simply breathe.

The magic happens in moments of unexpected connection—like when children from a local day care visit, or a high school, bringing laughter, energy, and intergenerational warmth to the centres.

We are delighted that so many people use the centres, they aren't just services—they're lifelines of hope, dignity, and human connection.



An interview with Patricia

Patricia, can you tell us how you came to join the social group?

My Home Care Package coordinator suggested it. I'm a full-time carer for my husband, who has late-stage kidney disease and needs dialysis three times a week. I'd been so focused on his health that I neglected my own needs and lost touch with friends.

How did you manage to fit the group into your busy schedule?

My coordinator worked with the group organiser to find a time that suited me. Initially, I started attending the Friday group once a fortnight.

How was your experience with the Friday group?

I enjoyed the company, but I felt a bit out of place. The organiser suggested I try the Monday group instead, thinking it might be a better fit.

And how did that work out?

Oh, it was wonderful! I immediately clicked with the other ladies. I decided to attend every Monday after that first day. I've made some lovely friends there.

What activities do you enjoy at the group?

I love the morning chair exercise program. Once the music starts, I can't help but get up and dance!

How has attending the social group impacted your life?

It's been such a positive change. I've found an outlet to meet my social needs, and it's had a great effect on my mental health. It's my time to focus on myself, which is so important when you're a full-time carer.

SOCIAL OUTINGS

In an age where longevity is increasing, community connection has never been more crucial.

We recognise a fundamental truth: social connectivity isn't a luxury, it's a necessity. Carefully curated social outings continue to be a vital part of the social support services, enhancing community engagement in Brisbane North, Brisbane South, and the Gold Coast. The outings do more than entertain; they restore a sense of autonomy and personal choice.

Held on a fortnightly basis, these outings breathe new life into community participation and foster a profound sense of belonging among participants.

Regular attendance nurtures ongoing friendships, and clients are encouraged to broaden their social circles by organising outings and activities outside the program.

The excursions are designed to cater to a wide range of interests, drawing enthusiastic participation from all, particularly members of the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community.

For many in this group, recreational activities were often a lower priority during their younger years, as they focused on building their lives in a new country.

Now, in their later years, they are embracing these opportunities, revelling in experiences that boost their confidence and keep them engaged with their peers.

The impact of these social outings has been profound, reducing feelings of isolation and strengthening connections to the broader community.

Out and About

Many participants report feeling happier and more involved in outside activities and an increased awareness of local offerings that they can pursue independently. Over the past year, a variety of adventures have captivated attendees.

Each outing is complemented by the sharing of delicious food and the forging of lasting friendships, creating an enriching tapestry of experiences that nourishes the spirit and builds a more connected community.



With consistently full buses and waiting lists, it's clear these adventures are filling more than seats—they're filling hearts, creating memories, and proving that life's richness knows no age limit.



"These aren't just bus trips," says one coordinator. "They're journeys of rediscovery."



Language teaching

The Italian Language Centre (ILC) is a division of Co.As.It. Community Services Ltd. ILC's mission is to be the focal point in Queensland for the promotion, teaching and learning of Italian language and culture.

SUPPORTING ITALIAN CURRICULUM IN QUEENSLAND SCHOOLS

Support is made possible through funding provided by MAECI (Ministero Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale) through the Italian Embassy in Canberra and the Italian Consulate in Brisbane.

Funding applications cover two areas:

- Support for Italian curriculum in Queensland schools
- Providing professional development opportunities for teachers of Italian in Queensland schools

Budget requests were submitted and approved for the 2023 and 2024 school years based on data collected annually from state and non-state Primary and Secondary schools.

ILC responded to:

- 73 requests for in-school support
- 18 bookings for immersion days at ILC
- 31 requests for teaching resources and/or curriculum planning support
- 28 teachers in L.I.F.T. sessions

Over 2023/2024 approved funding was channeled into employing:

- Two Language Program Liaison Officers and two Italian Resource Officers on fixed-term contracts to provide in-school and curriculum support to teachers of Italian
- One mother tongue teacher to provide the L.I.F.T. (Language Instruction For Teachers) program offering fluency sessions to upskill teachers.

Implementing eight Professional Development, language upskilling and proficiency opportunities for

200 teachers of Italian in schools across Queensland were held during in the past year.

2024	
Schools offering Italian as a subject	77
Students studying Italian	28,511
Total hours taught	50,918





National Conference for Teachers of Italian in Australia was hosted by: Italian Embassy, Italian Consulate Brisbane, Co.As.It.-ILC, IIC (Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Sydney) as part of the Settimana della Lingua Italiana.

Professional Development funded under Capitolo 2619 for teachers of Italian in State and non-State schools were organised in partnership with:

- Brisbane Catholic Education
- Townsville Catholic Education

Other Professional Development sessions supported by ILC:

- LTQ (Languages Teachers Queensland) Biennial
- Hybrid Languages Conference
- ILC Head Office, Lutwyche x 2
- St Augustine's College Cairns

GIROTONDO PLAYGROUP

Twice-weekly playgroup sessions for children aged 3-5 years are based on themed activity booklets. Over Terms 3-4 2023 and Term 1-2 2024. Sixty-two young children were enrolled in the program.

ADULT ITALIAN LANGUAGE CLASSES

Ten levels of Italian language courses are offered, from beginners through to advanced.

ADULT SHORT COURSES (TERM 3-4 2023-TERM 1-2 2024)

Italian Summer School: held over two weeks in January

Canzoni a Tema: - Theme: "Cin-cin - Festeggiamo sotto le stelle"

Movie Clip Club: "La finestra di fronte"



AFTER SCHOOL ITALIAN PROGRAM

Qualified native-speaker teachers ensure students are positively engaged in learning language through a range of activities for school-aged children attending after school classes at ILC.



STUDENT WORK EXPERIENCE

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

Three Year 10 students assisted the activity group centre's clients with playing games, exercising, serving their lunch - but above all, brightening the clients' days with kindness and affection whilst they practised their language skills first hand.

A booklet with correct vocabulary and exercises enabled students to practice using English and Italian when reflecting on their work experience and the skills learned.

Discussions about cultural importance of family, migration history and the role of women in the caring industry were very lively.

This initiative was supervised by an ILC teacher who monitored the students' progress.



Competitions

STUDITALIA PRIZE 2023

Co.As.It. Community Services Ltd. and the Italian Language Centre provide sponsorship for this annual event hosted by the Qld Department of Education (DoE) under the patronage of the Italian Consulate in Brisbane.

The prize rewards excellence in Italian achieved by year 12 students. ILC served on the selection panel to select the 2023 Winners.

The Hon. Grace Grace, Minister for Education, delivered the welcome address at the Award ceremony on Friday 22 September 2023 and the Consul of Italy Luna Angelini Marinucci congratulated the eight winners who each received an all-expenses paid month-long trip to Italy. Winners attended classes at the Convitto Nazionale Cividale del Friuli.



ITALIAN SPEAKING COMPETITION 2023

The 8th Italian Speaking Competition which attracted 214 competitors accepted videoclip entries and was open to students studying Italian in Yr2-Yr12.

Entries were categorised under 3 regions:

- Region 1 - South Brisbane/Gold Coast;
- Region 2 - North Brisbane/Sunshine Coast;
- Region 3 - Far North Queensland



ILC CALLIGRAM COMPETITION 2023

This annual event open to all school students of Italian from Prep to Yr8 was launched with the theme "Apparecchiamo – si mangia!" Medals and Certificates were awarded to the winners in each category. The competition attracted 200 entries.



ILC - Certified Examination Centre

CERTIFICATION OF COMPETENCE IN ITALIAN (CERT.IT. - CERTIFICAZIONE ITALIANO COME LINGUA STRANIERA)

In 2023, ILC became a certified examination centre offering the opportunity to obtain certification issued by the Università Roma Tre of competence in Italian as a foreign language.

Cert.It is officially recognised as a certification of competence by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAECI) and the Ministry of Education and Merit (MIUR).

We are very proud of the exemplary work and professional reputation earned through the hard work and dedication of our ILC staff and management.

Partnerships

We are proud to partner with a number of organisations both in Australia and in Italy.

ITALIAN AUTHORITIES

Italian Embassy in Canberra

Italian Consulate in Brisbane

Com.It.Es. Queensland and Northern Territory
(Comitato degli Italiani all'estero)
Association of Italians abroad

PROFESSIONAL BODIES

Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers
Associations (AFMLA)

Modern Language Teachers Association Queensland
(MLTAQ)

EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Queensland Department of Education

Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE)

Townsville Catholic Education Office (TCEO)

Griffith University – Department of Italian Studies





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

ITALIAN LANGUAGE CENTRE
473 Lutwyche Road LUTWYCHE QLD 4030
Tel: 3624 6172
www.italianlanguagecentre.org
enquiries@italianlanguagecentre.org