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## Postcards project helps mark moment in history

Hundreds of older South Australians have documented their experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, as part of COTA SA's *Postcards from Behind the COVID Curtain* project.

Almost 300 postcards with letters, stories, poems and drawings were returned to the state's peak body for over 50s.

Now a year on from when the pandemic was declared, COTA SA has celebrated the project with the release of a 15-minute short film, sharing the unique stories of five older South Australians who used a postcard to record their experience.

The film recognises the challenges older people faced – such as loneliness and social isolation – while celebrating the resilience, humour, imagination and contribution made by older people.

The film is available on COTA SA's YouTube channel (<http://bit.ly/postcardsfilm>). The individual stories will be broadcast separately by community television station Channel 44 during the month of May.

Postcard responses will also be digitized and archived by the State Library to ensure they are available for future generations to learn about the pandemic directly from the pens of the older people who lived through it.

COTA SA will soon release via its website and Facebook page a digital flipbook containing all of the postcard responses received.

"The pandemic was a momentous time in our history, especially for many thousands of older South Australians who were urged to stay home or restrict their activities," said Jane Mussared, COTA SA Chief Executive.

"Postcards from Behind the COVID Curtain was an opportunity to capture and document how older people managed the pandemic. It allows us to reflect on a period which we are unlikely to experience again in our lifetime.

"From the postcards, we found that some older people found the pandemic very lonely and lacking purpose, while others took positives from the experience by learning something new, challenging themselves, or finishing projects.

“Many older people valued the connection the postcards provided, with the project demonstrating how loneliness and social isolation among older people are very real risks that were exacerbated during the pandemic.”

61-year-old Angela Lange, who features in the project's film, is among the more than 300 older South Australians who returned a postcard for the project.

The Lyndoch resident said the pandemic was a very fearful time for much of the community, with the township the centre of a COVID-19 hotspot, however she stayed positive.

“There was a lot of fear because of the uncertainty,” she said. “Our normal routines such as book club and going to church had to stop for safety reasons.”

“We kept ourselves active with new projects such as knitting and woodworking when going out was discouraged and during the lockdown.

“Being creative sustained us, giving us a focus to enjoy each day and learn new skills.

“We had to create new connections with our family and friends too, when we couldn't see them in person, instead speaking on the phone, by Messenger or on Zoom.”

COTA SA launched the *Postcards from Behind the COVID Curtain* project in May 2020.

It involved sending those interested in participating a pack of two specially designed postcards.

One postcard was postage paid, had COTA SA's return address and was designed for participants to write or draw about their experience of living during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the other postcard was for personal use, such as sending to a friend, family member or neighbour to stay in touch.

**COTA SA is an older people's movement and the peak body representing the rights, interests and futures of more than 633,000 older South Australians aged over 50.**

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