Staying in touch

Social Outreach Program
PAGE 7

Life during COVID-19 in the APY Lands
PAGE 10

Postcards
PAGE 6
COTA SA is an older people’s movement, working to advance the rights, interests and futures of more than 630,000 South Australians as we age. Along with providing a platform to ensure that older people are part of decision-making by government and industry, we also offer a range of independent supports and services.

COTA SA powers the following:

**Policy and Advocacy work** - We work closely with older people to inform and influence policy and public opinion through our policy advice, communications and advocacy.

**Aged Care Support Service** - We support older people, their families and networks to navigate and access aged care services and explore the options available, including My Aged Care.

**Advance Care Directives** - We provide support for older people needing information about Advance Care Directives.

**COTA Visitors** - We match volunteer visitors with older people who could do with a friend. We are always on the look-out for both volunteer visitors and for people wishing to be visited.

**The Plug-in** - We provide a platform for older people to have an influential voice to innovate and improve products, services and policies for the growing older market.

**Strength for Life** - Strength training programs run by accredited fitness providers, specifically designed for older people.

**ZestFest** - Our festival for modern ageing held over two weeks in October every year.

**The Rainbow Hub** - A one-stop-shop for policy, programs, services, events and activities for older members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community.

**Information Access** - We offer volunteer assistance to help find information or complete forms or documents.

**Membership** - COTA SA offers individual, household and club membership to older people who want to support and assist our work.

**Legal service** - Free advice for COTA SA members on wills and general matters.

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**NEW OFFICE LOCATION**

Please note we are no longer located at 16 Hutt Street, Adelaide. We will be moving into new offices around October 2020. Stay tuned for dates and our new location!

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**Dr Maria Alejandra Pinero de Plaza, PhD**

Post Doctoral Research Fellow from Flinders University shares her research on loneliness and isolation.

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**2020, EXTRAordinary**

We are just past the halfway mark of 2020 and already the year has been an extraordinary one, with circumstances that have challenged and frightened us as individuals and collectively.

**Social Outreach Program**

Staying connected through COVID-19. Enter... the Social Outreach program!

**COVID-19 Life in the APY Lands**

We spoke to Elders and staff in the APY Lands to find out what life has been like during these unprecedented times.
We are just past the halfway mark of 2020 and already the year has been an extraordinary one, with circumstances that have challenged and frightened us as individuals and collectively.

The terrible bushfires in the Adelaide Hills and on Kangaroo Island dominated the end of 2019 and the start of 2020, with other Australian communities experiencing their own fronts of devastation.

And then, of course, the outbreak and spread of COVID-19 across the world upended our lives all over again. But, this time everyone in Australia is affected, as is the rest of the world. The impact and ongoing threat of the virus has been, and continues to, dominate our lives.

Both the bushfires and responses to COVID-19 have had disproportionate effects on the well-being of older South Australians.

More than a quarter of South Australians aged over 50 live outside Adelaide including in the areas which were the most heavily hit by the bushfires. Older people played a big part in a wide range of crucial roles in affected communities - as emergency services staff and volunteers, support crews for people and wildlife, in the clean-up and as fundraisers, donors and tourists when they have been able. Importantly many told us that they would like us to be more active in advocating for effective climate policy. Ask us how you can be part of our climate change survey and provide feedback to our draft Statement of Interest.

Older people, and particularly those over 70 years, were one of the groups identified very early as at particular risk from COVID-19. For many of us it all but shut down our roles and contributions as volunteers. It placed extended limitations on our interaction with family, friends, neighbours and neighbourhoods. For older people living in residential aged care, the incursions on lives were even more extreme. While we have all cooperated and observed the restrictions introduced for our own and our community’s good, it is important to recognise that extended isolation carries particular risks as we age.

While the most severe early restrictions are beginning to ease in South Australia, without a vaccine, the threat of COVID-19 is not over and we will need to maintain vigilance about social distancing, hygiene and avoiding contact with others if we are sick.

With our state, territory and national colleagues, COTA SA has represented the needs of older people as our community navigates its way through a global pandemic. We are conscious that large numbers of older South Australians do not communicate online and so we have picked up the phone and, despite the extra cost of postage, we have mailed information whenever we can.

We have now vacated 16 Hutt Street after a 10-year tenancy. We will soon advise the location of a new and more affordable city headquarters for COTA SA. The last few months have served to remind us that COTA SA has never been about our building. We are a community united by our vision for the possibilities of modern ageing and the need to tackle ageism and other disadvantage that get in its way.

Surely the lesson of 2020 is very much one of staying in touch - with neighbours, with friends, with family and, of course, with us. When the time is right, we look forward to welcoming you to our new office.
Heartwarming personal reflections from older South Australians on the highs and lows of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Postcards from behind the COVID curtain – a project by COTA SA and funded by Office for Ageing Well – responds to the extraordinary situation COVID-19 has brought to our lives. It provides an opportunity for older people to capture how the pandemic has affected them.

Those interested in participating are sent a pack of two specially designed postcards. One postcard is postage paid and has a return address to COTA SA. On this postcard, older people are invited to write a story, poem or do a sketch to tell us about their experience of life during the COVID-19 pandemic or what you have liked best about restrictions lifting. These postcards will be collated and shared through an online exhibition, displayed as part of ZestFest in 2021 and then kept as a record of this unique time in history.

The second postcard, is to send to a friend, family member or neighbour to stay in touch or to initiate or reignite a relationship. For more information about Postcards visit the homepage of the COTA SA website: www.cotasa.org.au

To participate in the project, contact COTA SA by: P: (08) 8232 0422 or Country callers 1800 182 324 Email: postcards@cotasa.org.au Mail: GPO Box 1583, Adelaide SA 5001

Include your name, phone number, address and how many postcard packs you would like (if you are ordering for friends or an organisation). The Postcard project runs until August 31.

Our lives changed in March 2020 when Governments restricted our way of living to keep us safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Australians overwhelmingly complied and COTA SA was no different. Staff and volunteers postponed community activities and stayed home.

We know that many older people already experience some level of social isolation, and this pandemic may have, for some, added to those feelings of loneliness.

COTA SA felt it was vital to remain connected with older people across the state during the lock down. So, the Social Outreach Program was born! Our priority was to reach out to those who live alone or do not use email.

Volunteers heard incredible stories of stoicism, resilience and kindness with many older people concerned more about others than themselves. Some were helping others with groceries, stamps, meals and other essentials while others were learning to use Zoom for online parties and meetings.

We heard stories about people picking up discarded hobbies or household jobs, or enjoying time in their gardens and others were taking the opportunity to simply relax and do nothing.

Volunteers also heard stories about difficulties some were experiencing. Feelings of anxiousness about missing medical appointments, fitness classes, children and grandchildren. To fears of leaving the house, and sadness at the heartbreak of losing a loved one and hosting a socially distanced and restricted funeral.

Our volunteers have not reached everyone yet and we will continue to make calls for at least the next month. With restrictions now easing, we urge South Australians to continue to support each other through family, friendship and good deeds, doing so safely.

If we didn’t get to call you and you would like to know more about COTA SA services and other social supports, you can visit our website or contact us on (08) 8232 0422, Country callers 1800 182 324 or email: cotasa@cotasa.org.au.

For more information about COVID-19 contact the Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line on 1800 171 866.
I applied to become a Community Visitor with the COTA Visitors program initially for face-to-face visiting. I undertook training at Victor Harbor which occurred against looming COVID–19 restrictions. Shortly after, the Community Visitor role was put on hold. I was then invited to become involved in the new COTA SA Social Outreach Project as a virtual visitor.

Its purpose was to phone 5,000 COTA SA members who didn’t have email to check in. The telephone calls were to chat, have email to check in. The COTA SA members who didn’t have email said yes, either providing a phone number and sources of trusted information.

COTA SA’s Country Listening Posts identified “Loneliness and Isolation” and “Low Digital Inclusion” as major issues confronting South Australia’s population aged 65+ and there was a concern that these issues would be amplified during the Coronavirus period.

COTA SA provided volunteers with regular lists of 6 -12 members to ring, a call script, recording form and the opportunity to ask questions. Members were located all over the state, offering a cross section of experience and observation.

Most members I’ve spoken with aren’t experiencing negative effects during the Coronavirus period.

Some spoke briefly, confirmed they were well, revealed coping strategies and rung off.

I always ask whether a follow up telephone call is required and most members have declined, citing they’re alright. A few have said yes, either providing time for me to seek specific information they’ve requested or anticipating a further chat.

The experience has been enjoyable from my perspective as I’ve heard about South Australia’s boat building industry, horticultural sector and rail networks. I’ve heard about current events, employment histories, favourite recipes, fishing advice, gardening tips, model railways and popular authors.

It’s also incredibly humbling to hear members stories of being treated shabbily at shopping centres, feeling abandoned by younger family members, issues which could arise when partners return home from hospital, suffering inadequate funeral arrangements, turning off heaters in winter due to high electricity costs and vulnerability when watching civil unrest on television. I attempt to be both empathetic and objective.

It’s also rewarding when members say they appreciate COTA SA for “making contact”.

I have been amazed by the number of older members who have remained so positive and resilient during this time.

I initially started with phone calls to members on the Yorke Peninsula where I live but am now systematically working my way around the state with phone calls to members on the Eyre Peninsula, Ceduna, Whyalla, Andamooka, Peterborough, Port Wakefield, Mallala, Two Wells, Murray Bridge and Strathalbyn.

I never cease to be in awe of many of our members, well into their 80’s and 90’s who are continuing to lead very productive lives in their local communities. I have loved listening to member’s life journeys, to the resilience of members in the face of adversity, to just making the best of a difficult situation.

Gardening has been a top activity as has virtual book club meetings using Zoom, walking, listening to music, knitting, reading, crafts, jigsaw puzzles and reminiscing while sorting through photos.

There were only a few either with mobile phone numbers, connected to social media platforms or connected to the internet. Many have said they have actually enjoyed the isolation and for many its not much different to their normal lives.

I have particularly enjoyed hearing about what happens in Andamooka during a pandemic, what life is like in Port Wakefield - a place that I just normally drive through on the way to Adelaide or back home to the Yorke Peninsula.

I had a wonderful conversation with a 93 year old talking about how her life began schooling in Melbourne, working as a secretary in Hobart, marrying in Collins St in Melbourne and then settling in her early married life in Port Lincoln. She recounted snow skiing in her 70’s, how she and her husband had travelled around Australia twice, and they had just returned from a cruise in November last year. She told me how she still has a photo in her lounge room of her and her husband on a camel on Cable Beach in Broome. Which was funny because I have a similar picture in our living room having just returned from a cruise in November last year. She told me how she still has a photo in her lounge room of her and her husband on a camel on Cable Beach in Broome. Which was funny because I have a similar picture in our living room having lived in Broome for 6 years!
COVID LIFE IN THE APY LANDS

Most of us experienced feelings of isolation to some degree during the height of the COVID-19 restrictions, but the day-to-day realities were quite different in the APY Lands than in the cities.

It’s hard to comprehend the isolation of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. Located in the far north-west corner of South Australia, this 103,000 square kilometre area is home to about 3,000 people of Aboriginal descent. There are seven communities and several homelands dotted across the landscape. While these communities have essential services, facilities such as hospitals and major retail stores are literally hundreds of kilometres away.

As COVID-19 began to spread across Australia, the APY Lands was one of the first areas to be locked down, cutting the local population off from the outside world. The Aboriginal population was disproportionately affected by the swine flu outbreak of 2009, and the indigenous communities and the government were quick to act to ensure that didn’t happen again.

The lock down of the APY Lands was an important measure to protect the people and their culture. The elders are the guardians of Aboriginal culture – they are the storytellers, and have the knowledge of Aboriginal laws and customs. But they are also particularly vulnerable, with over 50% of Aboriginal adults having underlying health concerns that could contribute to complications from coronavirus. Multigenerational living is commonplace in the APY Lands, further increasing the risk of exposure for those aged over fifty.

Not only was movement into and out of the APY Lands restricted but so was movement between the communities within the area. This fundamentally changed their day-to-day lives. Aboriginal people love being on the move; it is not unusual to drive 300 kilometres to visit a relative or to buy supplies. For the people that live there, not being able to travel around had a profound impact on their mental health.

With restricted external services or supplies coming in, support for the communities had to come from within. Aboriginal Community Services (ACS) provide aged care services to the APY Lands communities. The majority of their APY Lands staff are Aboriginal and live and work on the APY Lands.

This was a significant reason why their services were able to continue. We spoke to some of their staff and clients to find out how life changed during this time.

The staff quickly had to get to grips with understanding coronavirus, how it spreads and the risks to the community. They were on a steep learning curve themselves, plus they were distributing protective equipment and teaching handwashing protocols and other preventative measures. While they were supporting their community during work hours, they were managing the impacts of the restrictions in their own lives when they finished work.

One care worker told us that explaining social distancing and travelling restrictions was difficult in the beginning. “They are a people that live, sleep, eat, move and breathe together”, she said. Many were missing the family they couldn’t visit in person and were worried about those that were outside of the APY Lands when the restrictions came into effect and were unable to return. Staying in contact via mobile phone was helpful but no replacement for physical connection. There are also impacts on cultural practices and rituals “their bush tucker is on the other side of the highway, where they are not permitted to go”, she continued.

The APY Lands people have acknowledged the need to adjust the way they live for the safety of their families, the community and their future. However, it is still very challenging and has fundamentally changed how they would normally live. While restrictions are easing, the people of the APY Lands remain vigilant to protect this unique and vulnerable culture.
COTA SA KNOWS AGED CARE

Thinking aged care? We can help...

COTA SA is an independent voice and source of up to date information on all things aged care.

We support older people, their families and networks to find out about the options available and what to do to navigate aged care and access the services you need.

We offer -

- Expert support and advice through Specialist Aged Care Navigator, Julie Lawrie [pictured]. To make a time to speak with Julie call 0484 143 772 or email: acs@cotasa.org.au.

- One-on-one information and advice about the aged care system and the options available through local aged care navigator champions in your community.

- Group presentations about aged care, how it works and where to start through our Maximising My Independence program.

- The opportunity to be or receive a friend through COTA Visitors for people living in aged care or waiting for or receiving aged care services at home [see page 16].

- Information and guidance to complete your Advance Care Directive.

- Specialist support through our Rainbow Hub for people identifying as LGBTI [see page 22].

- The chance for all older people to join The Plug-in and influence the future of ageing, including aged care.

COTA SA is committed to all older people who need aged care, and if we can’t help you, we will connect you to services and supports who can.

COTA SA is also involved in advocacy for improvement to the aged care system both locally and nationally in partnership with the other states and territories through COTA Australia.

COTA SA knows aged care!
COTA SA’s My Aged Care Support and Advance Care Directive (ACD) programs have received continued funding from Country SA PHN into 2021.

These two programs provide free independent support and information to older people and their families who may need assistance planning ahead or may feel overwhelmed getting to grips with My Aged Care.

Both programs offer individual and group face-to-face information sessions adhering to social distancing guidelines.

If you would like to take advantage of these free services, they are available in the following regions.

Advance Care Directive
- Yorke Peninsula and the Mid North

My Aged Care Support program
- Yorke Peninsula
- Fleurieu Peninsula
- Mid North
- Mannum area
- Lower Eyre Peninsula

For more information please call:

Helen Morley
Country Program Officer
Ph: Country callers 1800 182 324
Mobile: 0429 085 990
Email: acs@cotasa.org.au

COTA SA Project Officer, Su Bell, has been working with regional South Australians on the Copper Coast.

Su Bell [pictured right above] has worked with COTA SA for two years. First as a Volunteer Peer Champion for My Aged Care (MAC) and then as a Project Officer for Care Directives (ACD).

She assists the local community in understanding and accessing aged care services that are available to them and navigates people through completing Care Directives.

The Copper Coast has an ageing population and Su has been very successful at making a difference and having a positive impact on her community.

“It is so important to let people know what services are available in their area, and how they can access them.” It is a great job, to see the relief on their faces, for them to know that now I can stay in my own home, with assistance, or get transport to get my hair perm, or get my garden tidied up. This is very important to some, to keep their standards up, regardless of their age.” Su says.

Interview with Pat Williams

How did you connect with Su Bell?
Dr Gray [Moonta Medical] said I should talk to Su Bell. She was in the waiting room with her MAC sign. I made an appointment and she visited my husband and I in our home.

How has Su helped you?
Lots of ways. MAC to begin with. She made numerous phone calls to MAC to get more help for my husband, Gary. Then she helped set up an ACD for my husband and myself. She was supportive when Gary went into Moonta Aged Care.

How has this relationship affected you?
Su has always been there to alleviate my worries and walk me through any situation. Su is one of the nicest ladies I have ever met. Everyone will tell you that. She is very helpful.

How important is it to have a local, face-to-face connection?
Very important! Just a phone call, and she will visit to chat through the issue.

What have you struggled with being an older Australian living regionally?
We have everything here. Doctors, specialists come to Wallaroo Hospital. It’s usually all ok.

How have you dealt with isolation and loneliness through the COVID-19 pandemic?
Not good. Same thing each day, get up, clean the house, read a book — bored s**less. I can’t visit husband of 62 years, because he is in the local nursing home. I haven’t seen him for 5 weeks, but I can visit him next Monday.

How are you staying connected with others through these restrictions?
On the phone, have a coffee with friends and sit a metre away from each other.
COTA Visitors matches friendly volunteer visitors to older people who are lonely or in need of a new friend. Suitable matches are made based on both peoples backgrounds, interests, hobbies and geographical location and all volunteers are police checked.

People receiving a home care package or who are living in a residential aged care facility are eligible. Families, advocates and/or aged care representatives are encouraged to reach out and get a friend for someone in their care.

Visits are for an hour a week or fortnight, at the older person’s home, aged care residence or a mutually agreeable public meeting place.

Whether it be chatting, reminiscing, sharing a morning or afternoon tea, walking, doing a craft or other activity that you both enjoy – visits are fun and enjoyable for both.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, COTA Visitors maintained their friendships by regularly telephoning, texting or posting good old fashioned letters to their friends. Now with restrictions easing, we are looking forward to resuming face-to-face visits, albeit physically distanced.

Take part!

COTA SA is always seeking new people to be matched for this program. People interested in participating either as a volunteer visitor or someone seeking a new friend should contact COTA SA. Website: www.cotasa.org.au [see COTA Visitors in the left hand menu] Ph: (08) 8232 0422 or Country callers 1800 182 324.

As part of COTA SA’s Rainbow Hub, we also have a specific COTA Visitors program for the LGBTI community. Call Jackie Wurm, LGBTI Project Officer, on the numbers above for more information.

COTA SA is funded through the Government’s Community Visitors Scheme to deliver the COTA Visitors Program.

I first met Maria back in October last year when I volunteered as a COTA Visitor. After I finished my orientation session, I was matched with Maria as she lives nearby and we have a similar background.

I was a nervous when we arranged to meet at the local shopping centre. Maria chose to meet there as she preferred to get out of the house.

I soon felt comfortable as we had coffee and cake and got to know each other a little. We walked around the shops as Maria enjoys looking at new clothes and current fashions. After Maria bought a new skirt, I walked her to the taxi stand and we went our separate ways.

The next time I telephoned Maria to arrange my visit, Maria asked to meet at a different, shopping centre nearby, which also suited me.

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We chat on the phone as if we’ve been friends for years and even on the days when Maria’s not feeling too good we end up having a good laugh about something.

Elizabeth
COTA Visitor
As with any issue facing older Australians, COTA SA wants to ensure that the community is being heard. COTA SA’s social enterprise, The Plug-in, conducted a survey soon after the Coronavirus first struck to hear people's thoughts and feelings.

The Plug-in received a large number of responses from South Australians aged 50 or older, including many comments and ideas about responding to the crisis.

The findings showed respondents caring more about the impact of COVID-19 on society as they do about the impact on themselves and their family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The impact of social isolation on my wellbeing</th>
<th>34%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catching it / becoming ill myself</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity of health services &amp; hospitals</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on the economy</td>
<td>90%</td>
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</tbody>
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The findings showed respondents caring more about the impact of COVID-19 on society as they do about the impact on themselves and their family.

Many respondents commented on the positive aspects that may emerge from the COVID-19 crisis telling us:

“The many heroes, (shop assistants, emergency medical staff and more) need to be publicly appreciated....”

“It’s an opportunity for everyone to be more responsible and care for each other”

Stay tuned for our next survey asking about COVID-19 and what your thoughts are now, several months after the pandemic first hit and as some restrictions are being eased.
Research shows that strength is important for continuing to function well as we age. Strength training exercises are beneficial for bone health as well as improving mobility, balance and helping with everyday activities like climbing stairs or carrying groceries.

Our Strength for Life (SFL) program helps to promote health and wellbeing in people over 50 through specially designed strength training programs run by accredited fitness providers. COTA SA partners with over 100 facilities across SA to deliver Strength for Life programs to the community.

In May 2019, the City of Salisbury established a Strength for Life program with a focus on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) participants. The classes included 32 participants of different cultural backgrounds including 9 Bhutanese, 5 Filipino, 3 Italian, 2 Croatian, 2 Dutch and 1 Spanish participant. The classes provided an opportunity to celebrate their own cultures as well as meeting people from other cultural backgrounds while improving their own wellbeing.

Most of the CALD participants speak and understand English. However, there was strong Bhutanese contingent, who sometimes have difficulties understanding English. Luckily, one of the Bhutanese participants is happy to interpret for the Bhutanese clients that need it.

Sadly, during the onset of COVID-19, classes were unable to continue at the Jack Young Centre. However, The City of Salisbury maintained a connection to their Strength for Life attendees through fortnightly phone calls, the creation of a Salisbury Seniors Community Facebook page, mail-outs and other engagement activities.

In response to the COVID-19 restrictions, COTA SA, Wellbeing SA and Strength for Life developed a series of videos to help keep participants moving at home. In conjunction with these videos, The City of Salisbury also provided participants with their individual programs and free equipment hire. Their fitness instructor took calls and emails from those that wanted advice or feedback, and she also produced illustrated instructions for participants.

These measures were very popular amongst the Strength for Life participants with many of them taking up the offer of free equipment and keeping up their exercise routines in their homes during the lock down.

“Thanks to the equipment, I’ve been able to stay active at home. I find I am sleeping better and get up refreshed. I’m seeing the benefits of starting exercising in a group, which has helped me to be motivated to exercise at home alone.” said Lucy Duka.

Mary Jimenea also said, “I’m happy when I’m exercising because I feel healthy and at peace. I like how it’s like meditating, and it’s also mental wellbeing.”

The City of Salisbury were delighted with the number of Bhutanese participants who took up the offer of free equipment. Hari, the Bhutanese volunteer, reported that “They are thankful to you for delivering exercise equipment to their homes, even during the time that movements were so restricted.”

Dhanmaya said that JYC’s gesture and its concern for their wellbeing had motivated her to do her SFL exercise at home regularly. She finds the programme beneficial for her. She is now able to move her limbs more easily and finds moving around not as painful.

Damber Kumari is following her exercise regimen regularly. She feels SFL has helped her wellbeing, particularly she is now able to move her hands more freely.

As COVID-19 restrictions begin to ease, The City of Salisbury is looking forward to being able to resume in person Strength for Life classes. In the meantime, they continue to actively encourage and support their Strength for Life clients as much as possible. The City of Salisbury wishes to thank COTA SA for their support, provision of resources and leadership during this time.

To give people an avenue to keep moving and stay fit during the COVID-19 restrictions, Strength for Life partnered up with Wellbeing SA and Redfox pictures to create eight online exercise videos to keep people active while staying at home.

As part of this, SFL ran the ‘Move in May’ competition which engaged members and gave them a fitness challenge. The competition attracted 17,000 views of the exercise videos. Participants were required to complete a warm up and cool down video as well as 1 to 4 workout videos for the week.

Dean Bennett (pictured) was one of the winners of our Move in May competition.

Dean said “We had seen the flyers promoting SFL and had talked about starting the program before COVID-19 hit”. “I am very excited that I can now get a free assessment and 10 free sessions and my wife and I will both join the program”.

If you would like more information about Strength for Life visit the COTA SA website or call and speak to one of the SFL team on (08) 8232 0422.
The COTA SA Rainbow Hub is a one-stop-shop for policy, programs, services, events and activities for older people who are part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community.

**PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

**Rainbow Hub Monthly Lunches**
Every 4th Thursday of the month at The Treasury from 12pm. Bookings essential via 8232 0422.

**Rainbow Hub E-newsletter**
Keep up to date with the latest news and events for LGBTI elders.

**Navigating Aged Care**
We provide tailored information in convenient locations throughout Adelaide, including a regular presence for LGBTI elders at Stirling Library, every 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month from 10am - 12pm.

**COTA Visitors**
The Rainbow Hub connects volunteer visitors with LGBTI elders in need of a friend, who are receiving or waiting for aged care services.

**LGBTI Aged Care Awareness Training**
COTA SA is the South Australian partner for the Silver Rainbow LGBTI Aged Care Awareness Training Project. Training is available for aged care providers and is delivered by qualified trainers with lived LGBTI experience.

**POLICY AND ADVOCACY**

**Rainbow Hub Advisory Group**
The Advisory Group works closely with COTA SA to guide the Rainbow Hub and to lead advocacy priorities and engagement. The Advisory Group also liaises with other key LGBTI stakeholders such as the South Australian Rainbow Advocacy Alliance (SARAA).

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### The Language of Biscotti

In late March, as the Adelaide Festival and Fringe season was drawing to an end, and the unknown reality of the COVID-19 measures were being discussed, I saw a little post on Facebook from a respected arts colleague, Paola, announcing her inaugural ‘Biscotti Bake In’. Somewhat intrigued, I replied, ‘yes, I am in’. I had no idea what to expect – and I don’t think Paola did either!

We kicked off on the first Saturday in April, all 30 participants, from all walks of life, met over the interactive online meeting platform, Zoom. Each in our own kitchens, donned in aprons, ready to tackle Zia Julie’s Scotch Finger Biscuits.

My authentic Italian baking experience had commenced – there were no bowls in sight, the bench was the mixing platform and the measures relied on feeling ‘how much flour the mix would take.’ Paola, and from time-to-time, her elderly Mamma, Anna, would regale us with tales about the biscuits. Events they had featured at, whether they were ‘speciale’ or regular coffee dunking sorts, family stories associated with them and the origins of the recipe. The details of certain ingredients that must or must not be included to be truly ‘tradizionale’, and the history of each biscotti, such as spices brought by the Ottomans, and the inclusion of certain nuts according to region or symbolism etc. I felt the warmth radiating from Paola’s passion for cooking directly into my kitchen via Zoom!

We follow this pattern every Saturday, making Mamma’s Lemon Biscuits, Nonna’s Parigini, Biscotti Alle Mandorle, Biscotti con Marmellata, Brutti ma Buoni (translates as Ugly but Good – and oh my, were they good…) Biscotti Joyce, Baci di dama, Savoiardi and a deviation for Mother’s Day in May when we baked Anna’s favourite, Torte della Mumma – see image on the right!

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We have all dealt with the challenges associated with being in ‘Lock down’ in many different ways, certainly we have all had to find new ways to adapt. So, while my son in Melbourne, like so many hipsters, has nurtured his sourdough starter like it was a new born baby, I have been nurturing my new Biscotti Bake In friends over Zoom in my cucina (kitchen) and in my cuore (heart) every Saturday. I have noticed, unfortunately, that my body is taking a little longer to translate the Italian language, as I’ve noticed the swelling that I am feeling in my cuore is actually manifesting in my culo (bottom).

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Jayne Boase
Festival Director, ZestFest

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The COTA SA Rainbow Hub Advisory Group has room for more!

The Advisory Group advocates for older LGBTI people, develops programs and events for members of the LGBTI community and helps people connect to the services they need. The group warmly welcomes new Advisory Group members.

To find out more please phone Project Officer, Jackie Wurm on (08) 8232 0422 (M/W/Th), or Chairperson, Cris Davis, on 0406 809 944 or email rainbowhub@cotasa.org.au
Culturally and linguistically diverse, the German-speaking Aged Services Association is a tightly knit community. We cherish speaking our language and celebrating our culture. When the pandemic hit our social support groups and home visits ceased and we wanted to adapt quickly to fill the social void.

We began phoning our clients, to ensure they were well and remained connected. As one team member put it “My clients assure me my phone calls give them a tremendous boost. Sometimes I feel I’m a counsellor - clients tell me their innermost secrets. I feel very privileged to receive their trust.”

Germans have a saying, “When the mountain does not come to the prophet, the prophet must come to the mountain”. True to this we personally delivered Easter chocolate, newsletters and activity packs to our clients. It was wonderful to see their smiles and enjoy a chat!

One of our clients was very disappointed about not being able to celebrate her 99th birthday. So, we took her flowers, chocolates and a photo of her mates with the promise of a party when restrictions ease!

Our monthly bi-lingual newsletters included strategies for mental and physical wellbeing, complete with toilet paper jokes and our photo service really took off. Clients let us know which image they wanted and we delivered the prints - keepsakes of moments of joy! We set-up a mobile library to deliver books, magazines, CDs and DVDs - most in German of course! Work tablets were used to introduce clients to smart devices and those having to isolate were kept in touch via video chat. We promoted our Facebook page as a practical way to stay informed. To beat the bad weather and cancelled exercise programs we took a pedal way to stay informed. To beat the bad weather and celebrate our culture. When the pandemic hit our social support groups and home visits ceased and we wanted to adapt quickly to fill the social void.

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Engaging our team was key, many missed the interaction with clients and colleagues. Donning our work shirts made us feel part of our team when we participated in the virtual Memory Walk.

We Germans have a saying, “When the mountain does not come to the prophet, the prophet must come to the mountain”.

Staff and volunteers exchanged emails about isolation activities like teddy-bear-hunts and backyard camping and we sent out cards and German quizzes to keep the grey matter busy.

Our latest project is 1000 Hearts - we sew bright felt hearts, and send our love to each client!

For more details about the German-speaking Aged Services Association, visit: www.gsasa.com.au or call 8340 3889.

Late in 2019, COTA SA undertook listening posts at shopping centres and libraries across regional SA. The results of the rich conversations with 400 older people about what works, what doesn’t and what matters, have been compiled in our Ageing in Country South Australia report.

There were evident similarities among older people living in rural and regional South Australia, the most being the strong connection and sense of community. We kept hearing people say “I wouldn’t live anywhere else”.

Their positive sentiment is in stark contrast to many of the concerns older people reported to COTA SA about living in their country community, including financial uncertainty, housing issues, limited mobility and transport and healthcare.

Country services are increasingly being developed based on city models, budgets and assumptions but that process fails to capitalise on local strengths and is often blind to local issues. There is a danger in assuming that people age in regional areas on the same terms and under the same circumstances as those in metropolitan areas.

For example, a number of people we spoke to were in precarious financial circumstances and secure housing or employment were major motivations for choosing to live regionally. This works financially and often seems to deliver from an engagement point of view but transport and support options appear to fall short.

Similarly, older people in regional SA recognised the importance of taking responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and so the presence of reliable local health services were valued.

On the back of this landmark report, COTA SA has asked the state government to recognise the significance of rural ageing and to lead the way nationally, by developing a strategy that plays to the strengths of older country people.

COTA SA has already set up a presence in the Yorke Peninsula with local staff member, Su Bell (see page 15) and has established a hub of volunteers to help older people access aged care in the South East. COVID-19 willing, our local advisory group will host a series of seminars in Victor Harbor and Goolwa later this year.

Many COTA SA volunteers live outside Adelaide and contribute as community visitors, peer educators, aged care navigators and policy volunteers.

COTA SA represents and honours the diversity of older people and we look forward to new opportunities to test initiatives that engage directly with older people living in rural SA.

Read the full report on our website or call COTA SA on (08) 8232 0422 or Country callers 1800 182 324, and we will post one out to you.
Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses play a vital role in the wellbeing of communities with an estimated two million user contacts per annum and 20,000 volunteer hours contributed every week.

There are 163 Community Centres across SA working with people and local communities to bring positive social change through community development, health, wellbeing, social inclusion, education and life skills activities.

Meet Olive Pepper

Olive Pepper [96yrs] has been going to Camden Community Centre for over five years.

“I rang the Council and spoke to them because I had heard they had things there for elderly people and that’s how I got in touch with the Community Centre.

“The main thing for me is the friendships you get” Olive says
She has enjoyable days out, attending their social group, which includes a hot lunch, bingo, craft and guest speakers. Olive has continued to feel a sense of connection throughout COVID-19.

“They have been ringing me up to make sure I’m alright, that wouldn’t have happened before. I would have been very lonely with what we have had to go through but now with a few phone calls I’ve kept in touch with them.”

Meet Bev-Standen

For Bev Standen [pictured] and Bev Neville attending Pooraka Farm Community Centre, has meant learning new skills, meeting new people and an opportunity to give back.

“After working full time, I started thinking about what I could give back to the community so I sent off a resume to Pooraka Farm,” says Bev Neville. “It gave me a lot of self-esteem and confidence, mainly on the work side of things.”

Both have found the Centre a welcoming, non-judgemental space to share with others. They particularly enjoy Café Fridays, when they share an activity, have a chat, coffee and some food.

“The people and the company,” is what Bev Standen says keeps her coming back. “I’m shy would you believe, but I’ve come out of my shell a bit, with being here, I just love it.”

Meet Josie MacGrath

Josie MacGrath first attended their computing course, and connected with other ladies and then became a regular at the craft group.

“The company is what keeps Josie coming back.

“Sometimes you might just have a coffee and a talk and I think that’s what Centres are all about.”
Along with a new love of crafting, Josie has found going to the Centre benefits her socially too.

“I never used to invite people to my place, I never had the confidence but I’ve had some of the ladies from craft group over for morning tea or afternoon tea, so I think socially it’s helped me be more open with people.”

Meet Joe

Joe has found attending The Junction Community Centre in Ottoway a helpful place to connect with others and to adjust to life in Australia after migrating from Malta.

The Centre offers many different community activities and courses including, computing, painting, choir, literacy and sewing.

“I've been coming to the Community Centre, one for the computer which has helped me keep up with the changes of life.” says Joe.

Joe’s experience has been so positive that he shares often with others he meets about the benefits of going to a Community Centre.

“You should go to the Community Centre, do something you like because you make friends and that’s what life is all about,” he says.

“The other thing I like about the Community Centre is when you are a new Australian it is the only way you can chat together. We say hello to each other, sometimes with different languages.”

“That’s what I’ve been through, I came to Australia and these people helped me settle quicker and this is my home now,” says Joe.

To find out more about Community Centres or to find your nearest location, please see the details below:

Community Centres SA
Website: https://www.communitycentressa.asn.au/searchdirectory
Phone: (08) 8371 4622
Email: info@communitycentressa.asn.au
WHAT THE RESEARCHERS SAY...

Social isolation is the actual situation of having minimum contact with other people. Loneliness refers to the feeling of missing connections, affection, and proximity in our relationships. Both experiences are considered harmful as they increase ill health and mortality.

There are numerous ways in which seniors can prevent or diminish the effects of social isolation and loneliness but implementing them requires a focus on participation opportunities for them. As a researcher concerned with promoting health and wellbeing as people age, I understand that we all need different types of support to sustain our wellbeing and keep contributing to our families, friends, and communities.

Concerns about the needs of connection, involvement, and support for older adults have come into focus recently because of the impacts of COVID-19. Yet, such issues have been silently pressing many Australians before the current pandemic arrived, particularly seniors with chronic problems, lack of independence and care. Now, after the first pandemic wave, loneliness and social isolation in seniors has been exacerbated. To face this situation, researchers are joining forces, with the support of the Centre of Research Excellence in Frailty and Healthy Ageing and the Caring Futures Institute of Flinders University.

Our developing strategies are based on scientific evidence and convene with the World Health Organization (WHO) policy framework of ‘Active Ageing’. This ‘Active’ definition is not only about being physically active, it extends to seniors’ participation in health, cultural, social, economic, and many other affairs. My endeavours in this regard involve seniors as peers in research. We, together with other health experts, look at the physical, social, and mental wellbeing needs of aging Australians via different methods.

Dr. Alejandra Piéro de Plaza, PhD
Flinders University

We explore ways to support older adults’ participation according to their wishes and capacities while providing them with adequate care. Our strategies look at interventions at individual, community, and healthcare levels. This multilevel approach is demonstrated in the projects I am co-developing:

1. Investigating the use of digital technologies in the inpatient setting for nurturing care, trust, and connections.

2. Evaluating the effects of involving seniors in research processes to inform and optimise the dissemination of preventive messages about frailty and healthy ageing.

3. Exploring methods and technologies to continuously optimise the quality of the aged care system from a person-centred perspective, considering our fundamentals of care knowledge.

4. Investigating and developing ways to prevent exclusion and marginalisation of frail and housebound or bedridden people.

We welcome the contribution of people, community, experts, government, and industry in enriching these endeavours. I believe that we need to work in synergy with the common goals of promoting the autonomy of our aging population, facilitating their sociability, and preventing the multilevel issues hindering their wellbeing, participation, and continue integration opportunities. We must create a new stage for tackling the isolation and loneliness that our seniors are experiencing, because, as Betty Friedan has wisely described, “aging is not ‘lost youth’ but a new stage of opportunity and strength.”

The social connections provided by family, friends and the broader community are thought to exert a more potent influence on quality-of-life than wealth and health. Social connection and its allied sensibilities such as social participation and social engagement refer to the act of undertaking a meaningful activity with others without compulsion. The antithesis of social engagement is loneliness. Loneliness is a highly personal response to the actual, compared to desired, level of social interaction. One person’s loneliness can be another’s solitude and can be distinguished from living alone (e.g. single person household), being alone (time spent alone) and social isolation (how well integrated an individual is with individuals and groups in the social environment).

Given the increased risk for social isolation, loneliness is a recognised risk factor for reduced physical and mental health and cognitive functioning in older adults. Larger social networks and engagement in social activity in late life are associated with better thinking skills (what psychologists refer to as cognitive function). In fact, social isolation is a key modifiable risk factor for late-life dementia, estimated to be responsible for 2% of dementia cases worldwide. Dementia prevention approaches are now integrating social interactions, including the development of meaningful relationships and connections to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation. In those with dementia, increasing severity is associated with decreasing social networks, especially with friends (i.e. relationships outside the family). Maintaining friendships is critically important, therefore, in enhancing cognition and quality of life in late life.

Loneliness may be endemic in Australia, but older adults are not necessarily at greater risk. In a recent study involving Perth residents aged 65 and over, researchers from Curtin University found that 62% reported never feeling lonely, whilst only 32% percent reported they were sometimes lonely, 6% often lonely and 2% always lonely. By contrast The Australian

Professor Kurt Lushington &
Associate Professor Hannah Keage
Uni SA

Psychology Society in conjunction with Swinburne University report that younger adults and especially those who were single, separated, or divorced are actually at a greater risk for loneliness than older adults. Loneliness may be endemic in Australia, but older adults are not necessarily at greater risk. Older adults may even have some of the answers to overcoming loneliness. This includes older adults’ greater propensity for reaching out to others and, a greater willingness to seek out social support for themselves. As well, older adults are more likely to provide social support to others, they tend to focus on the things that matter, and are not afraid to be themselves and thus are less inhibited by what others might think.

The story of loneliness in Australia has taken another turn with the extraordinary events of our time and COVID-19. It is acknowledged that some groups are at greater risk including those in aged care, those with serious medical conditions and those who are living with perpetrators of abuse.

Older Australians have been innovative when it comes to overcoming isolation. Much of this has involved the use of social media, but also through political agitation for change and at a personal level by focusing on building support networks for themselves and others.

It is certain that continued innovation and methods for increasing social engagement are needed to reduce loneliness, and it is further certain that the voices of the aged will continue to play an important role in that journey.
The funds raised by COTA Insurance support COTA’s work in these important areas, along with programs that can improve the health and wellbeing, social connectivity and participation of older people.

“We have a long history”
COTA Insurance was established in 1992, becoming the first insurance specialist to focus on the needs of older Australians. Today, we are the most experienced insurance agency in this area, insuring home, contents, motor, travel, caravans, boats – even pets.

“We are not-for-profit – and your insurance supports our great cause”
COTA Insurance earns insurance commissions on the policies we provide. It is what we do with those funds that makes us unique. We are one of very few Australian insurance agencies that operates on a not-for-profit basis. All surplus funds that we generate after deducting our costs are returned to COTA to support their great work for older Australians.

“Experience our great service, the way you like it”
We understand that convenience and ease makes online a great option for some of our customers. For others, we know you value talking directly with our wonderful staff, who can guide you through your insurance needs. Our team are insurance specialists who really enjoy talking to people about their insurance needs.

“We are backed by leading business partners”
COTA Insurance policies are backed by leading insurers, who have worked with us to offer insurance products tailored to the needs of our market.

“Connect with your Elders.
They are the teachers and keepers of culture.
If you know someone who is being disrespected or mistreated, or are worried about your own situation, call the SA Elder Abuse Prevention Phone Line 1800 372 310 for free, confidential information and advice.

Or see www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/stopelderabuse

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