

MCCSA Community Voices

SUMMER 2025



Celebrating
50
Years

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MCCSA Multicultural Communities
Council of South Australia

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FROM THE CEO

HELENA KYRIAZOPOULOS OAM



50 YEARS OF BUILDING SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES:

REFLECTING ON A HALF-CENTURY OF SERVICE

At MCCSA we firmly believe that our identity and strength are shaped by the communities we serve. For 50 years, it is this very community that has enabled us to lead with excellence in multiculturalism, to advocate for meaningful change, and to champion support for our state's rich cultural diversity.

Every day, the MCCSA Multicultural Hub comes to life with various communities using our facilities as a second home to bring people together for community events, workshops, information sessions, yoga classes, choir practice, and so much more.

In a time when challenges in the multicultural space continue to grow and gain presence, the MCCSA remains steadfast in its commitment to championing diversity as South Australia's greatest strength as we have done consistently since 1975.

Continuing our celebrations commemorating 50 years of Building Successful Communities, we were generously hosted by the Lord Mayor of Adelaide, the Hon. Dr Jane Lomax-Smith PhD MBBS FRCPA DSc AM at a

Lord Mayoral Reception in the prestigious Adelaide Town Hall on the 14th of August.

The event was well attended by dedicated members of the MCCSA Community, volunteers, dignitaries and friends alike whom we thank for their constant engagement and support.

On the 20th of August we were delighted to host the Inaugural MCCSA Multicultural Oration titled 'What's the Story?: Migration, memories and the importance of controlling the narrative' with Dr. Helen Vatsikopoulos – Walkley Award-Winning Journalist and Academic.

This event marked another significant milestone in our history and sets the stage for more such impactful events into the future.

The Oration explored the vital role that stories play in shaping identity, belonging and collective memory, while also highlighting the risks when narratives are distorted or silenced.

Dr Vatsikopoulos reflected on her family's migration journey and connected it to the broader experiences of South Australia's

multicultural communities. The lesson was unmistakable as Dr Vatsikopoulos framed it: "These are not just 'ethnic stories'; these are Australian stories."

The event, which drew over 100 attendees, underscored the significance of the inaugural oration and affirmed the role of MCCSA as a vital forum for dialogue, inviting a diversity of viewpoints and perspectives to contribute to Australia's multicultural mosaic.

Concluding our 50th anniversary celebrations, we held our Annual General Meeting on the 25th of November at the Dom Polski Centre which served as a moment to reflect, create inspiration and dream of what could be possible for the next 50 years.

As we look forward to the end of a monumental year, we invite you to enjoy reading this edition of Community Voices featuring authentic stories, successes and challenges of our communities and contemporary reflections on multiculturalism in modern Australia.

Helena

LORD MAYORAL RECEPTION - ADELAIDE TOWN HALL

MCCSA celebrations commemorating 50 years of Building Successful Communities continued with the generosity of the Lord Mayor of Adelaide, the Hon. Dr Jane Lomax-Smith PhD MBBS FRCPA DSc AM and Councillors of the City of Adelaide at a Lord Mayoral Reception in the prestigious Adelaide Town Hall on the 14th of August. The event served as an opportunity for community members to connect and reflect on our journey in service to the South Australian community – the civic reception was well attended by dedicated members of the MCCSA Community, volunteers, dignitaries and friends alike whom we thank for their constant engagement and support.



INAUGURAL MCCSA MULTICULTURAL ORATION

On the 20th of August 2025, MCCSA held its inaugural oration, with the keynote delivered by Dr Helen Vatsikopoulos on the thesis of “What’s the Story? Migration, memories and the importance of controlling the narrative.”

MCCSA Patron The Hon. Hieu Van Le AC, launching the oration, framed it as a new civic tradition, a place where “bold ideas, uncomfortable questions and necessary truths” can be aired to deepen our understanding of identity, belonging and unity.

Mr Le reminded the audience that the event was both “a celebration of MCCSA’s fifty years of unwavering service” and “a testament to MCCSA’s contribution as a beacon of thought and dialogue.”

The post-truth era

Dr Vatsikopoulos began by situating her remarks in what she called a “post-truth” era, where misinformation and distortion corrode public trust.

She observed: “Doctored images and AI generated vision and deep fakes circulate so you can no longer believe what you see. People gather around echo chambers that reflect their bias and amplify

the information through social media and influencers who are not journalists trained to be ethical and honourable but benefit from the clicks they receive. Why is all this happening? It’s all about the story.” Stories, she explained, are powerful precisely because they frame the world in which we live. “Stories are powerful and impactful and that’s why everyone wants to control the narrative. Stories not only transmit knowledge, they help us to understand what is happening in the world and how it impacts us. They help us to relate to the experience of ‘the Other’ and their suffering, building an emotional understanding,” she said.

From Prespa to Adelaide: A family story and national meaning

Dr Vatsikopoulos invited the audience to picture “a peasant village on Lake Prespa in northwestern Greece, a picturesque landscape of ancient forests and stone houses”, before recounting the decision her parents made in the 1960s to leave poverty behind and sail to Adelaide on the Patris. Yet her family’s story was marked as much by silence as by celebration.

“I grew up not really knowing or understanding the trauma of my parents’ lives during WW2 and the Greek Civil War,” she reflected. “They preferred silences. For them it was crucial to forget the past so their daughter could flourish in the future.”

Citing Greek Australian historian Joy Damousi, she described it as a “wall of silence... where parents do not tell and children do not ask.”

This silence shaped her journalism. “My parents were bewildered and alarmed when I became a journalist reporting on wars and political persecution and stolen generations,” she said. “These were also their stories, not that they told me but they did tell someone else.”

The lesson was unmistakable: “These are not just ‘ethnic stories’; these are Australian stories.”

Read the full article via The Greek Herald: <https://greekherald.com.au/community/multicultural-communities-council-sa-hosts-inaugural-oration-delivered-by-dr-helen-vatsikopoulos/?fbclid=I%2E2%80%A6>

Visit our website for more highlights of our 50th Anniversary Celebrations: www.mccsa.org.au/50-years

MCCSA AGM 2024/2025

The MCCSA Annual General Meeting was held on the 25th of November 2025 at the Dom Polski Centre.

This AGM served as a moment to reflect on 50 Years of Building Successful Communities and acknowledge all those in the MCCSA Community who have helped to shape our organisation into what it is today.

Life Memberships were awarded to:

- » Mrs Anna Zacharko
- » Mrs Ekaterina Briffa
- » Mrs Eva Wong
- » Mrs Ilde Wetherill*
- » Mrs Isolde Ira Požėlaitė-Davis AM*
- » Mrs Laima Bogens OAM*
- » Mr Silvio Iadarola
- » Mrs Sophia Matiasz
- » Dr Warwick D. Raymont

We congratulate all award recipients and sincerely thank every volunteer, staff member and our Board Members who work tirelessly to serve our diverse communities. The MCCSA Honour Board was also unveiled serving as a timeless memento of Life Members and Past Presidents/Chairpersons of the MCCSA.

Visit our website for more highlights of our 50th Anniversary Celebrations:

www.mccsa.org.au/50-years





CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO WORLDS.

BY MECHELL AUGUST

I was born in Sydney, Australia, to migrant parents from Lebanon. They came here with hopes of a better future for themselves, and for their children.

I grew up surrounded by beautiful Lebanese traditions, our food, our music, our Maronite Catholic faith and our language. Inside our home, it felt like Little Lebanon. But outside our door, it was Australia... a totally different world.

As a young girl, home came with rules and expectations about how a young lady should act and who I should be. At school, the rules were looser, more relaxed. I saw how other children lived when I was allowed on playdates... and it was so different to me. What rules should I follow? Who was right? I loved my parents, and I knew they wanted the best for me. But I longed for the freedom I saw others have. I had to attend Arabic school while my friends went to dance and netball. I helped mum cook and clean on the weekends while my friends watched tv and played outside, don't get me wrong... I had a great childhood but different to the friends I made at school.

I always fought with my parents because of the two worlds, I wanted to dance all night in the clubs,

I wanted sleep overs at my friends' houses and I desperately wanted freedom. Was I wrong to want these things?

When I visit Lebanon, I'm warmly embraced... but I'm still "the Australian." My Arabic carries the strong accent of a foreigner. Back in Australia, my English is fluent, but my heritage marks me as different.

So, does this mean I don't belong in Australia, and I don't belong in Lebanon? Where do I belong then? Is my home the country I was born and raised in... or the country my heritage comes from? Too many questions, and no clear answer.

"To Australians, I'm not truly Australian. To the Lebanese, I'm not truly Lebanese."

Maybe my home isn't a place at all. Maybe it's the people I love, and the values I carry. Or maybe... I'm still searching. I often ask myself: What is my identity? Who am I? To what community do I belong too?

Now, I'm raising the next generation of Catholic Australian Lebanese, my children. And I feel the tension between two worlds more than ever.



How do I honour the deep-rooted customs of my parents and in-laws, while raising my children in a country I love but that often doesn't understand those traditions?

I want them to be proud of their heritage. I want them to feel like they belong here,

and enjoy the freedom I once longed for. I treasure the Lebanese sense of tradition, and the Australian spirit that everything will be alright. I strive to give them both.

I struggle with cultural identity and I hope my children don't inherit this struggle to. But how do I do that... when I don't even know where I belong?"

FROM SINGAPORE TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA

THE REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF GENEVIEVE THESEIRA-HAESE

Genevieve Theseira-Haese's life story spans continents and cultures, united by a consistent thread of leadership, service, and community impact.

Born and raised in Singapore, Genevieve's leadership qualities emerged early. She was elected Student Leader and Council Member in both junior and high school, and at 17 became Head of Women's Athletics, representing her college at the national level. At 18, she left Singapore to study at the prestigious Parsons School of Design in New York, later completing her degree at Central Saint Martin's University of the Arts in London, followed by a postgraduate qualification in Advertising.

Her career began in an international advertising agency in London, but she returned to Singapore when her father was diagnosed with cancer. She became Managing Director of a Temasek Holdings-backed advertising agency before founding REPUBLIC, a pan-Asian consultancy. She also entered the wellbeing sector, creating BREATHINGSPACE, establishing wellness retreats and centres in Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, the UK, New Zealand, and later Australia.

In 2000, Genevieve met fellow entrepreneur Martin Haese. The two married on the memorable date 01.01.2010 at St. Xavier's Cathedral, Melbourne, and later that year moved to South Australia.

When Martin was elected Lord Mayor of Adelaide in 2014, Genevieve became the first Eurasian Lady Mayoress – a heritage rooted in the Straits Settlements of Malacca, Penang, and Singapore. Over their four-year term, she attended more than 550 events annually, established fundraising and awareness initiatives, and championed the recognition of women's contributions in South Australia.

One of her lasting legacies is the renewed telling of Queen Adelaide's story – believed to be the first living woman to have a capital city named after her. Genevieve supported artist Scott Eames in creating a bronze statue of Queen Adelaide, now located in the Adelaide Botanic Garden's International Rose Garden, with

an earlier version presented to Town Hall at the end of the Lord Mayor's term.

Today, Genevieve continues her community engagement as founder of the HerStory Movement, biannual host of MCCSA's Women's Awards, multicultural engagement advisor to the UNAASA, and supporter of the Migration Museum Foundation and South Australian artists. Alongside Martin, now South Australia's Special Envoy to Singapore and Southeast Asia, she also manages their investment company, Infinity Ventures.

For Genevieve, South Australia is home – and, as she says, “all migrants have two hearts – one for where they came from, and one for the home they help to build.”



INTRODUCING NEW MCCSA STAFF MEMBER SANTIAGO MONTANEZ

My name is Santiago, and my journey has always been guided by a simple principle... to help others, give back to the community, and promote social justice with empathy and compassion.

I was born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia — a vibrant city full of colour, music, and warmth, where people are known for their resilience and generosity. While Colombia faces its challenges, I was fortunate to grow up in a loving home surrounded by family and opportunities that my parents worked tirelessly to create. Studying Law gave me a strong foundation in justice and human rights, but it was life itself that taught me my most important lessons about empathy, adaptability, and connection.

Moving to Australia was one of the biggest decisions of my life, not because I was unhappy, but because I wanted to grow and contribute in new ways. Leaving my family behind was hard, yet it taught me resilience and reminded me that true belonging can be built anywhere people come together with kindness and purpose.

Today, I'm proud to be part of the Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia (MCCSA), an organisation that truly lives its values of inclusion, empathy, and collaboration. Every day, I see people supporting one another and working towards healthier, more connected communities — and that's incredibly inspiring.

At MCCSA, I am part of the team delivering the “Taking Care of Me” project alongside Ukash Ahmed — a men's health and wellbeing initiative funded by Preventive Health SA in partnership with The Hospital Research Foundation (THRF) Group. The project focuses on improving health literacy and preventive health awareness among men from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Through community consultations, peer-education programs, and the co-design of the Train-the-Trainer program (HELMET), we are ensuring that the voices of multicultural men help shape a more inclusive and equitable health system across South Australia.

This work has reinforced something I've always believed — that qualifications matter, but lived experience is what truly connects us. My background in Law, First Nations youth



*Introducing new MCCSA Staff Member: **Santiago Montanez***

and child protection, and community health, combined with my own migrant story, deeply influences how I engage with and support others.

Outside of work, I'm grateful to share a beautiful life in Australia with my partner and family, blending Colombian passion with Australian warmth. These experiences constantly remind me of the power of community, connection, and belonging.

Through it all, my purpose remains the same: to help others, empower communities, and make a positive difference — one step at a time.

MY EXPERIENCE AS A CONNECTOR

ULISES ESPUL

I started working recently for the CAB Project (Connect-Access-Belong), and I couldn't be more satisfied about this experience.

The main purpose of the CAB Project is to support people from different cultures and languages (CALD), living with disabilities or experiencing mental health conditions. One of the advantages of this Project, is that can also include support for family members of the person with disability.

Our inclusive CAB Project is designed to provide accessible, person-centered assistance to anyone with CALD background in need of support—whether or not they are a participant of the NDIS. This unique initiative operates completely independently of NDIS funding, meaning individuals can access practical, social, and wellbeing support without requiring an NDIS Plan or affecting any funding already allocated within one.



For those who are NDIS participants, the program runs alongside their existing supports, offering additional opportunities for connection, skill-building, and personal growth without drawing from their NDIS budget.

After leaving my country (Argentina), I was keen in learning from other cultures. My first experience with people from different cultural background was up in the air, while working as flight attendant for Qatar Airways in the Middle East. A few years after, I had the opportunity to move to Dubai, where I worked with people in need of medical assistance.

Being in contact with families from different walks of life, culture and needs, made understand the importance of having systems in place to provide assistance.

When I came to Australia I got my Diploma in Mental health, while working supporting people with disability.

Later on, I worked supporting war veterans, some of them also from CALD background.

Now in MCCSA, I'm lucky to collaborate as a Connector for the CAB Project, working along an amazing and supporting team.



REFLECTIONS ON THE MOSAIC FESTIVAL 2025

LENARD SCIANCALEPORE, CEO MOSAIC ADELAIDE INC.

This year felt different.

In the words of the Hon. Dr. Anne Aly MP, Federal Minister for Multicultural Affairs: "Multiculturalism isn't just about a celebration of festivals and food [...], it is about the character of modern Australia. It is about our modern identity."

This is us.

Every one of us carries thousands and thousands of years of tradition and heritage within us, it is a unique and essential element of the human experience - to carry on and preserve cultural identity.

We need opportunities to express that element of who we are through the language we speak, the food we cook, the songs we sing, the music we play, the dances we perform, and the stories we share - this is precisely what The MOSAIC Festival is all about.

This is us. - celebrating this element of who we are as South Australians.

Long before colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people traded with Macassans from the Indonesian archipelago. For hundreds of years, Macassan fishermen arrived in fleets of traditional wooden praus with goods to trade in exchange for access to annual sea urchin harvests. Australia has always been a multicultural country - from Afghan cameleers to examples of Greek and Sikh communities from the early 1800's - multicultural communities are the heartbeat of the character of modern Australian identity.

Over half of Australia's population has a culturally diverse background, with 25% speaking a language other than English at home - as the Multicultural Communities Council of SA (MCCSA) phrase it: "Multicultural is the new mainstream."

This is us.

Together, we all make up the rich fabric of South Australian community and society -

and this is something worth celebrating.

At a time in which we are receiving constant messages of division, it is important that we stand together unintimidated, supporting and celebrating one another and recognising the wisdom and professional expertise that migrant communities contribute to South Australia.

This year felt different.

The MOSAIC Festival reaches beyond the tokenistic.

This isn't about pretty dresses and performative parades.

This is about the character and identity of modern Australia. This is about celebrating communities who have been in South Australia for generations and working with them - codesign and participatory community development is the minimum. This is interculturalism in action.

So many tiny moments of connection and authenticity



made the evening truly special, unforgettable and extraordinary. The team and our community were left speechless as we celebrated a phenomenal evening together as one. Emotions ran high as people were overwhelmed from the pure joy in the room. Once again, we made magic in Adelaide and gave people hope as we brought together over 550 community members, more than 30 multicultural community organisations and friends to create countless beautiful moments and memories under one roof.

As an organisation we are deeply inspired to continue walking alongside South Australia's multicultural communities, to continue learning, growing and deepening our impact.

The team has already started planning for next year's MOSAIC Festival 2026 in September – stay tuned for more.



MULTICULTURAL MEN'S QUIZ NIGHT: INTERNATIONAL MEN'S DAY 2025

SUPPORTING MEN AND BOYS

Held on International Men's Day, 19th of November 2025 - The Multicultural Men's Quiz Night brought together men from all cultural backgrounds, faiths, and ages for a fun, relaxed, and meaningful evening.

Hosted by the MCCSA Men's Council, the event focused on health, wellbeing, solidarity, and the theme of International Men's Day 2025: "Supporting Men and Boys."

The night was filled with excitement, learning, laughter, and genuine connection creating a safe space where men could openly embrace

conversations around mental health and wellbeing over a delicious traditional Persian menu.

The quiz night featured mini-games, prizes and quiz questions including a mix of general knowledge, cultural traditions, language, men's health and wellbeing and statistics on issues affecting men of diverse backgrounds in Australian society. The event also served as an incubator to inspire and initiate more men's groups in culturally diverse communities.

MCCSA recognises that men's attitudes toward mental health are gradually changing. While many still hesitate to seek help,

more men are beginning to break traditional stereotypes by opening up about their struggles, seeking support, and prioritising wellbeing. Events like this enable men to connect, learn, and feel supported within a multicultural and inclusive environment.



A LETTER TO MCCSA FROM PELGRINA

CONNECT, ACCESS, BELONG (CAB) PROJECT PARTICIPANT PELGRINA

As a person with visual impairment from Namibia studying in Australia, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the MCCSA for your continuous efforts in assisting me to find opportunities for engagement. Your support in helping me secure a volunteering opportunity at the SA School and Services for vision impaired has helped me understand the importance of putting theory into practice as early as possible, inclusive education is also about providing learners with the diverse learning materials they need, every learner is different, even if they share the same disability, and every child is gifted and capable of becoming someone in life when given the right support.

Your commitment to making Australia feel like home for those of us from multicultural backgrounds, as well as sharing information about community events and activities, has made a real difference in my life. Since I arrived in Australia earlier this year, I did not know much about what was happening here. Through these events and activities, I have met people I would not have otherwise met people who are essential to the implementation of my reintegration action plan.



“I feel valued as an active member of the community.”

Through your support, I have been able to participate fully and contribute meaningfully to initiatives such as the review of the Disability Discrimination Act and the Multicultural Disability Inclusion Network.

Inclusion is more than convenience, it is empowerment, and your organisation has demonstrated that inclusion is not just a policy but a practice.

I look forward to what the next year will hold for me through MCCSA.

Thank you for leading by example and showing that when everyone is supported, everyone benefits.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2026 in advance.



RADIO ITALIANA 531 MARKS 50 YEARS OF BROADCASTING WITH HISTORIC CELEBRATION

In 2025, Radio Italiana 531 proudly joined the Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia (MCCSA) in celebrating 50 years of service to the community — a shared milestone that highlights the strength, diversity and enduring legacy of South Australia's multicultural landscape.

Radio Italiana 531 celebrated its own 50th anniversary in March 2025 with a weekend of festivities in Adelaide, honouring half a century of broadcasting to the Italian community. The milestone brought together past and present volunteers, community leaders, dignitaries and loyal listeners who have supported the station since its humble beginnings in 1975.

What started as an initiative by a group of students at 5UV, has evolved into one of Australia's most vibrant ethnic community radio stations, broadcasting seven days a week with a rich mix of Italian music, cultural programs, news and talk back.

For generations of Italian Australians, Radio Italiana 531 has been far more than a broadcaster, it has been a bridge to language, culture and belonging, helping to preserve identity while creating connection across generations.

The anniversary celebrations reflected this spirit with special on-air programs retracing the station's history, and live community events filled with Italian music, food and stories of migration. Among the guests was Italy's Ambassador to Australia, Paolo Crudele, who commended the station's cultural impact and ongoing contribution to multiculturalism in Australia.



“Radio Italiana 531 has told the story of migration and identity for five decades,” Ambassador Crudele said. “It remains a vital link between Italy and Australia, showing how community radio can preserve heritage while embracing change.”

In 2025, Radio Italiana 531 also extended its presence nationwide, attending almost every major Italian festival across Australia — from Cairns and Sydney to Melbourne, Griffith to Mornington Peninsula. Through these outside broadcasts, interviews and live activations, the station connected directly with Italian communities in the country, becoming the

Italian community radio with the strongest presence at cultural festivals across the country. This effort reflects its mission to make Radio Italiana 531 accessible to all Italians in Australia, promoting unity, pride and inclusion wherever the community gathers.

General Manager Marco Petta described the anniversary as both a tribute to the past and a commitment to the future. “This milestone belongs to every volunteer and supporter who has kept Radio Italiana 531 alive for five decades,” he said. “Our mission to connect, inform and celebrate our community is just as important today as it was in 1975.”

The celebrations reaffirmed Radio Italiana 531’s place as a cultural cornerstone for Italian Australians — honouring 50 years of broadcasting, heritage and the vibrant community spirit that continues to thrive.



SHARING THE VOICES OF ITALIAN-DIASPORA WOMEN

BY CARLA CARUSO

A group of women exploring the Italian-diaspora experience have launched their fifth anthology, *Stories from the Other Side*, in Adelaide.

Ascolta Women is a creative collective of women with Italian, Italian Australian and Italian-affiliated heritage, based mainly in Australia, with members also in London and Canada.

The name, Ascolta, means 'listen' in Italian - a fitting reflection of the group's mission to honour the stories and experiences of women whose voices have often been marginalised or unheard.

As part of the Adelaide Italian Festival, the group's Adelaide members hosted an event, *Vieni, Ascolti, Scrivi*, at Radio Italiana 531 on November 13.

Supported by Co.As.It. (SA) Italian Assistance Association, the event featured readings from the latest anthology, followed by an optional 10-minute writing exercise inspired by the theme, *La Dolce Vita* ('the sweet life'). Participants could share their own work - or simply listen and respond - in a relaxed, engaging session, conducted mainly in English.

Ascolta Women was sparked into life by Melbourne university lecturer Teresa Capetola just before Australia's first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020.

The collective emerged from a forum and creative writing workshop she organised, which led to regular online meetings where members share stories and experiences related to their Italian heritage and migration legacies.

In the foreword of the latest anthology, Teresa writes: "The book brings us full circle to Ascolta Women's inaugural publication, *Stories from the Inside*, produced during the COVID pandemic, featuring stories and images of how Italian diasporic women experienced lockdown in Australia."

"This current publication shows us as inside and simultaneously outside ourselves - a reckoning of time, a reckoning of belonging, a reckoning of mortality. We ask: what is on the other side of life, memories, histories, migration legacies, time, and ourselves?"

Among the group's Adelaide members are academic and author Dr Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli AM, who helped establish the Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council, and social worker and author Giuseppina Marino, a founding member of Ascolta Women.

Find Ascolta Women on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).



Adelaide members of Ascolta Women - Amy Panetta (left), Grace Mammone, Carla Caruso, and Giuseppina Marino - at Radio Italiana 531.

CARRYING THE LEGACY FORWARD: BUILDING BELONGING THROUGH CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

In Adelaide's growing multicultural landscape, Nina Iouguina has quietly built spaces where people feel seen, welcomed, and connected.

As founder and Chairperson of Prima Nota Inc., she began with a simple goal - to create a place where Russian-speaking migrants could find familiarity, belonging, and cultural pride while sharing traditions with the wider Australian community. That vision soon grew into a broader mission: to bring people of all backgrounds together through music, creativity, and shared cultural celebration.

Since its establishment in 2025, Prima Nota has launched more than five ongoing community initiatives, including choirs, cultural workshops, intergenerational craft gatherings, and strategic

games sessions. These programs have welcomed newcomers, families, young migrants finding their identity, and long-settled residents seeking cultural connection.

Volunteers describe Prima Nota as a place where "you arrive as a stranger and leave as part of a community."

The organisation's Maslenitsa 2025 Folk Pancake Festival brought together an estimated 3,000-4,000 people, filling a city space with food, music, history, and joyful cultural exchange. Plans for Maslenitsa 2026 build on this success, aiming to involve even more cultural groups and celebrate South Australia's shared traditions of hospitality and friendship.

Another initiative close to Nina's heart is the Strategic Games Club called VolkHauz, which has already welcomed more than 70 participants. What began as a space for

Russian-speaking youth to practise logic games and stay socially connected has evolved into an intercultural gathering where people of all ages build friendships, confidence, and understanding through creative play.

Nina's approach to leadership is grounded in empathy and lived experience. As a migrant mother of four raising her family in Adelaide and moving all the way from Canada, she knows the importance of community support, cultural identity, and the quiet strength required to build a new life from the ground up.

As MCCSA celebrates 50 years of supporting multicultural communities, Prima Nota's story reflects the power of grassroots leadership- showing how culture, kindness, and shared experience can help newcomers feel at home and enrich the cultural life of South Australia for everyone.



Nina Iouguina, Chairperson of Prima Nota Inc, and the Hon. Zoe Bettison MP, Minister for Multicultural Affairs at Multicultural Festival 2025



Youth volunteer, Jack Kozloff, at Maslenitsa 2025.



Youth volunteer, Anna Ablamskaya, at Folk Pancake Festival Maslenitsa 2025.



OUR WATER STORY: A COLLABORATIVE MULTICULTURAL TODDLER STORYBOOK

During Term 3, the Multicultural Playgroup at the Multicultural Communities Council of SA (MCCSA) explored the theme of Water through an inspiring, creative project supported by the SA Water Community Partnerships Program.

Over ten weeks, families and children from diverse cultural backgrounds came together each Tuesday morning to share stories, songs, art, and sensory experiences centred around water, a vital element that connects all cultures and daily lives.

The project, titled Our Water Story: A Collaborative Multicultural Toddler Storybook, invited families to explore the wonders of water through creative and sensory activities such as making jelly, flower drinking water, gloop play, sink and float, boat making, rainbow and bubble play, etc., encouraging children to learn through hands-on discovery and imagination. Their ideas and creations were then compiled into a beautifully illustrated storybook celebrating children's voices and perspectives.

More than 20 families participated in the project, representing communities from China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea, India,

and Sri Lanka. The sessions not only nurtured children's language and creativity but also encouraged families to connect and share their cultural experiences. Parents reflected: "Through this project, the valuable interaction between parents and kids is captured and preserved as a storybook, documenting a precious blend of creativity and family time. Tabris, Aubrey's Dad, from Hong Kong." "Firstly, we are so happy to be a part of MCCSA Playgroup. The Splash project was so interesting, and my daughter enjoyed all the water activity sessions, and she also loved the book launch event. Sandhya, Lishikha's mum, from India"



Volunteers also played a key role in bringing the project to life.

“Participating in the Splash! storybook project was a memorable and meaningful experience for me. I helped design the book cover, learning how to combine creativity with storytelling to create a visual that both attracts readers and reflects the story’s spirit. I also took part in organising the exhibition—from setting up the space to assisting visitors—which helped me understand the importance of teamwork and planning.

The event itself was truly meaningful. It brought people from different cultural backgrounds together and

encouraged communication through art and storytelling. I was touched to see both children and adults fully engaged and enjoying the activities we designed, while also learning more about the importance and value of water.

Through this experience, I not only improved my artistic and communication skills but also realised how design can connect people and inspire awareness. I’m very grateful to have been part of this project—it allowed me to grow and strengthen my desire to continue contributing to meaningful community activities in the future. – Denise Wong, playgroup volunteer, book cover designer”

At the conclusion of the term, MCCSA hosted a special exhibition and storybook launch, where families proudly viewed their children’s artwork and shared reflections on their learning journey.

Our Water Story highlights the power of play, creativity, and collaboration in supporting children’s learning and belonging. The project demonstrates MCCSA’s ongoing commitment to fostering inclusive, cross-cultural connections where every child’s story is valued and celebrated.

DISCOVER LANDCARE - HELPING NATURE, CONNECTING COMMUNITY

All across South Australia, people are coming together to look after our land, water, and wildlife. These local efforts are what Landcare is all about.

Landcare is about local people taking small steps that make a big difference. It could be planting trees, cleaning up creeks, looking after native plants and animals, or creating natural spaces for everyone to enjoy.

There are many Landcare groups around South Australia. Some meet to plant trees or pull-out weeds. Others care for community gardens, teach kids about the environment, or even help with digital volunteering - like sharing stories online, helping with social media, or mapping local projects. Every group is different, but they all share the same goal: to look after nature and build strong, connected communities.

Anyone can get involved! You don't need special skills - just a bit of time and a love for the outdoors. Volunteering with Landcare is a great way to meet people, learn new things, and make friends. Everyone is welcome - families, students, new arrivals, retirees - the list goes on!



If you'd like to get involved and find a group near you, the Landcare Association of South Australia can help. Whether you can give one hour or one day, every bit helps to make South Australia healthier.

To learn more, visit www.landcaresa.asn.au.

Landcare Association of South Australia Inc.

Photo: Torath Arts Group
in "SAHRA: Arabic Music
and Dance Soirée"



ADELAIDE FRINGE CHAMPIONS CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Adelaide Fringe is inviting all creatives to participate in the upcoming 2026 arts festival.

Adelaide Fringe champions cultural diversity and is committed to reflect South Australia's diverse community in its program and becoming the most inclusive festival in the world.

One year ago, Adelaide Fringe proudly announced the formation of its inaugural External Multicultural and Inclusion Committee. This pivotal committee has been spearheading the development of a Multicultural Inclusion

Action Plan, a significant step forward in the festival's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This ongoing plan is focused on increasing access and opportunities for multicultural communities and ensuring their rich diversity is reflected in every aspect of the festival.

All multicultural creatives, especially emerging artists, are encouraged to register. The Fringe offers a platform for creative expression and a chance for you to share their voice. In 2025, over 25% of registered shows featured performers or creatives from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Adelaide Fringe also welcomes venue owners from all cultural backgrounds to get involved. If you're a venue manager of a community hall, a cultural centre, a restaurant serving traditional cuisine, or a shop specialising in cultural goods—you can open it up for Fringe artists looking for a place to perform.

This is a great opportunity to not only support the arts but also to showcase your community and become a part of Australia's biggest arts festival. Artist and venue registrations are still open. Visit the adelaidefringe.com.au or speak to their team to find out more and get involved.

THREE GENERATIONS, ONE MESSAGE: EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES

In South Australia, Italian women are one of the largest groups of women from migrant backgrounds in the eligible age range for breast screening, and we know that for many, cultural factors can play an important role in shaping screening habits across generations.

To encourage more Italian women to take part, BreastScreen SA has launched a new campaign that aims to connect with Italian women - mothers, daughters and Nonna's - to highlight the importance of regular breast cancer screening.

In October 2025, BreastScreen SA introduced the Italian Ambassadors Recruitment Campaign, featuring three generations of Italian women from one family. Their powerful and heartfelt story shares the importance of early detection, survival, and the value of supporting the next generation of women to make screening a health priority.

Partnering with the Italian Assistance Program, Co.As. It. (SA), the campaign centres around a video with a heartfelt story that captures the warmth of Italian culture while opening up conversations about breast cancer, early detection and the importance of screening.

Many first-generation Italian migrant women have not taken part in breast screening due to language barriers, social

isolation, limited understanding of the process, and fears or myths about cancer. Working with Co.As.It. (SA) has strengthened this community-based campaign and helped share the message through Italian support agencies, local businesses, allied health services and Italian media.

A wide range of promotional materials - including posters, postcards and social media content - feature digital links and QR codes to view the video, access Italian-language information, and book a screening appointment online. Over the coming months, the campaign will appear across social media and Italian community radio, encouraging women to share the message with family, friends and workplaces.



**A breast screen is free,
takes just 15 minutes
and can detect breast
cancer before you
notice any symptoms.**

**Lo screening
mammografico è gratuito,
richiede solo 15 minuti
e può rilevare il cancro
al seno prima che si
manifestino sintomi.**

Prenota online ora su
www.breastscreen.sa.gov.au
o chiama il 13 20 50.

Information in Italian
Scansiona il codice QR per
informazioni in italiano o visita a
www.breastscreen.sa.gov.au



Watch the video
Scan the QR code or visit
www.breastscreen.sa.gov.au to
read more about Elena's story
and watch the video.



Book now!
Scan the QR code or visit
www.breastscreen.sa.gov.au to book or call 13 20 50.
Free interpreter services are
available for appointments.



**Breast
Screen
SA**





**Breast
Screen
SA**

Around 55 per cent of South Australian women currently take part in breast screening, but participation among culturally and linguistically diverse communities remains lower. For women of Italian background, the rate is about 46 per cent, meaning many are missing out on this simple, life-saving test.

When health information is shared in a person's first language, and in a way that reflects their values and community, it can make all the difference. Rather than simply translating information, this campaign tells a story - one that women can truly connect with.

That story is Elena's. Through her experience, and those of her mother and daughter, we see the importance of early detection, family support and sharing knowledge across generations. Their story reminds us that breast cancer can affect anyone - but early screening can save lives.

Please use the QR code links to watch Elena's story, read information in Italian and also book your screening appointment. For more information about the campaign, contact BreastScreen SA CALD Project Officer, Marita Aldridge at marita.aldridge@sa.gov.au or phone: 8274 7169.

Connect • Access • Belong **CAB Project**

WE NEED PARTICIPANTS IN RURAL, REGIONAL AND METROPOLITAN SA.

Do you, or someone you know, live with disability or mental health challenges and want to feel more connected?

You only need to be from a CALD background. 1st gen 2nd gen 3rd gen doesn't matter. There are no age restrictions or requirements to be on the NDIS.

MCCSA's Connect Access Belong (CAB) project supports people from diverse backgrounds, their families and carers to join in community life.

What CAB can help with:

- » Finding local activities (sport, art, social groups)
- » Meeting new people in safe, welcoming spaces
- » Building confidence and independence
- » Linking with services and supports
- » Exploring volunteering, study or work options

CAB is free and flexible - we work alongside you, at your pace. Interpreters can be arranged.

To learn more or make a referral, contact MCCSA on (08) 8213 4610 and ask for the CAB team or send us an e-mail at cab@mccsa.org.au



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

MCCSA's diverse programs for a vibrant community



Transport Services

MCCSA's affordable and reliable transport solution for community organisations and individuals in South Australia. MCCSA has four buses in its fleet, including one wheelchair accessible bus, and can accommodate up to 12 people. MCCSA also offers volunteer drivers and is seeking expressions of interest for 'Going Places' guided tours.

For more information, please contact transportadmin@mccsa.org.au or call 8345 5266.



Community Facilities

MCCSA offers a variety of community spaces for meetings, forums, workshops, and functions. These facilities include a 50-seat hall that is *free of charge* for registered MCCSA community groups, with a donation appreciated for rubbish removal and electricity. The hall is also available for commercial hire.

To hire an MCCSA community space, call us on 8345 5266 or email mccsa@mccsa.org.au



Community Development

Community Development is focused on providing individual support to vulnerable and emerging culturally diverse communities and their members. The program offers a range of activities, including workshops, leadership and networking events, and capacity-building activities.

For further information, please email Somi Lindsay at somi.lindsay@mccsa.org.au



Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme

CVS has expanded and has been renamed to ACVVS. This program facilitates one-on-one friendships between older people and visitors speaking their language. They visit to build relationships and add warmth to the lives of senior citizens, reducing their loneliness and isolation.

If you would like to volunteer, please email Maggie Asaad via maggie.asaad@mccsa.org.au or call 8213 4604.



Men's Council

MCCSA's Multicultural Men's Council aims to improve mental health outcomes for men from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The group provides a safe and supportive space for men to connect, share experiences, and learn about mental health and wellbeing. Through a range of activities, including guest speakers and social outings, the MCCSA Men's Council encourages men to break down cultural barriers and if necessary, seek help when needed.

For further information, contact Ukash Ali Ahmed via ukash.ahmed@mccsa.org.au



Building Employer Confidence

Building Employer Confidence in Disability and Inclusion is a program that aims to create inclusive and diverse workplaces by providing training and support to employers, and supporting skilled CALD workers with disabilities to find suitable workplaces. This program offers a range of resources and services, including training workshops, internships, employer and diversity audits.

Want to know more? Contact Perrin Abbas on 8213 4603 or perrin.abbas@mccsa.org.au





Multicultural Playgroup

MCCSA's Multicultural Playgroup provides a safe and inclusive space for parents and children from diverse cultural backgrounds to connect and socialise. It aims to support children's development and help families overcome isolation through a range of social activities.

To get involved, contact Abby Liu via abby.liu@mccsa.org.au



Cultural Intelligence Training

Unlock the power of cultural intelligence with culturalQ! The service is designed for organisations that want to develop and implement diversity and inclusion strategies, and ensure that their services and products are provided inclusively, equitably, and effectively.

To book your session, email culturalq@mccsa.org.au



Consultancy

MCCSA prides itself on its connection with the multicultural communities of South Australia, understanding their needs and advocating for them. MCCSA and experienced staff are available to provide consultancy services on a range of topics that impact the CALD communities of South Australia. This provides a direct link for stakeholders and service providers to access and understand the needs of their communities more clearly.

Contact MCCSA via email mccsa@mccsa.org.au or call 8345 5266.



Cultural Connections in Disability

Cultural Connections in Disability is a project that develops and delivers culturally sensitive activities and resources for CALD people with disability. This aims to enhance their understanding of available support and services, build their capacity

to overcome social isolation, and explain their right to lead a good life. MCCSA produced a Disability Inclusion Video Series in collaboration with various communities and stakeholders across South Australia.

For more information, contact Katherine Greer at katherine.greer@mccsa.org.au



Interested in Volunteering?

MCCSA offers many exciting volunteer opportunities for those seeking a meaningful way to give back to their community. From Playgroup volunteers to tour guides and bus drivers, community visitors, and guest speakers, there's something for everyone. By volunteering with us, you'll be making a positive impact on the lives of CALD individuals and families, while also gaining valuable skills and experience.

Join our team today and make a difference!
Email your CV and cover letter to mccsa@mccsa.org.au

Building Successful Communities



Your Voice Matters.

Share your story by emailing communications@mccsa.org.au