

# Caring Supporting Empowering

A history of Australian  
Multicultural Community Services  
1983-2023

Jacques Boulet  
Jennifer Borrell



## **AMCS Mission Statement**

To improve lives through care,  
support and empowerment.

---

### **Our Values**

#### **Clients-first**

We strive for Client Satisfaction: Delivering the best possible outcomes for our clients; building effective relationships which allow needs to be identified early and quickly satisfied.

#### **Quality**

We deliver Quality: Achieving the highest standards in everything we do; ensuring that all individuals take responsibility for achieving this and take pride in their work and the organisation.

#### **Respect and Diversity**

We stand for Respect and Diversity:  
Providing the highest levels of integrity and personal standards in an apolitical and impartial manner to clients and stakeholders.

#### **Continuous Improvement**

We practice Continuous Improvement: Striving to achieve higher standards of performance; positively seeking opportunities to bring about organisational and service delivery improvement and overcome resistance to change.

#### **Compliance**

We ensure Compliance: Ensuring all are aware that this is non-negotiable and deliver what is expected as per legislative requirements; actively involved with all levels of government and other community service providers in an open and honest manner.

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## About the Authors



**Dr Jacques Boulet**

Dr Jacques Boulet studied, worked and lived in five continents. Born in Flemish Belgium, graduated as a social worker in 1965 and community development volunteer in Congo (1966-69). Lectured in Germany throughout the seventies; obtained a PhD in Social Work and Sociology (80-85) at University of Michigan (US). Lectured 1985-1996 at Melbourne and RMIT Universities; co-founded Borderlands Cooperative in 1997 and involved in consulting and research work across social and community issues since. Co-founding the OASES Graduate School for Sustainability and Social Change (2006-16); casual university lecturer/researcher and Adjunct Professor at Deakin University; general editor New Community quarterly journal.



**Dr Jennifer Borrell**

Dr Jennifer Borrell has been a social researcher, policy advisor, advocate, activist and writer in the community sector for 30 years. She was one of the founding directors of Borderlands Cooperative in 1997, and remains passionate about co-creating a healthier and fairer future for all. Jennifer especially enjoys the richness and variety of the cultures that make up our community, and has enthusiastically embraced working with people from migrant and refugee backgrounds across a range of projects. The 40-year history of AMCS has been a particular joy for her.

## Acknowledgements

Australian Multicultural Community Services (AMCS) wishes to most sincerely acknowledge the contribution of everyone who was and continues to be, part of our 40 year community service journey. This includes the founding members who, 40 years ago, had the foresight to establish a professional support agency for the Polish community in Victoria, which included the largest number of refugees/displaced persons of any migrant community that has arrived in Australia to date. Thank you to the members of our Committees of Management and more recently of our Board of Directors, to every employee who has worked with us and to every volunteer who – in any way - has supported AMCS. You have all made AMCS what it is today and have contributed to improving the lives of thousands of people. We also wish to thank all sources of funding, federal and state government departments, local governments, as well as many other service organisations including health-related organisations, ethno-specific community service agencies, partner organisations, charitable trusts, donors and our friends and supporters.

We give particular thanks to the following people who had the vision and brought this book to life:

**Elizabeth Drozd OAM:** for her leadership ideas, stories, and hours spent looking through our archive of photos and documents.

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## About AMCS

From 1983 till 2011, the Australian Multicultural Community Services (AMCS) was known as the Australian Polish Community Services (APCS), its primary focus being to support the Polish community and to a smaller extent, other Eastern European communities. As our name change in 2011 intended to express, we have broadened the scope of our services and are now inclusive of all communities, including Anglo-Celtic Australians.

Although changing over the years, from migrant settlement to home care services, our mission was always focused on improving people's lives through care, support, and empowerment. Our vision continues to be 'a just, fair and equitable multicultural society.' After 40 years, AMCS has grown into a multifaceted support organisation, assisting over 2000 clients in any given week by a team of 260 staff and 120 volunteers. Our primary services include a range of supports for ethnic seniors and carers. We continue to provide adult community and further education, emergency relief, digital inclusion and positive ageing initiatives, including an annual anti-ageism art competition. We are governed by a voluntary Board of Directors, whose members ensure contemporary organisational governance and exemplary community leadership.

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# Preface

Written by

**Emeritus Professor Desmond Cahill OAM**

APCS & AMCS Board Director



The Australian Multicultural Community Services (AMCS) had its origins forty years ago in 1983. It is *Polonia's* gift to multicultural Australia. It grew out of the commitment of the Polish post-WWII refugee community to their Australian homeland and to the welfare of their own community members in Melbourne and regional Victoria in the formation of the Australian Polish Community Services (APCS) led by Zbigniew (Ben) Dabkowski. It came late but it came at a time when a multicultural philosophy was taking hold in Australia. It also came at a time when the *Solidarity* wave of Poles was arriving in Australia with some needing assistance.

The Polish presence in Australia began inauspiciously in 1803 with the arrival of convict John Potaski, who had come from a very troubled Poland, having taken part in the 1794 Kosciuszko Rebellion. He was transported from London for stealing a hair shawl for his Irish partner, Catherine O'Sullivan. Eventually, they ended up in Hobart and their daughter would be the first European to be born there. John became a farmer but his life ended badly in 1824 because of a horrific crime committed by his son. His daughter would eventually move to Geelong, and one of her descendants, Denis Napthine, became a Premier of Victoria (2013-2014). The Polish presence in Australia has gone on to providing many academics, artists, sports persons and politicians as well as tradespeople and bureaucrats. It is summed up in the naming of Australia's highest mountain 'Mt. *Kosciuszko*' by explorer Sir Edmund Strzelecki.

The Polish Australian legacy continues to live on; whilst the number of Polish-born persons continues to decline (45,884 at the 2021 census), the number of those claiming Polish ancestry continues to climb with 209,284, just under 1% of the total Australian population in 2021.

As the Board's longest serving member, I have been asked to write this preface. My first direct contact with the Polish community was in 1992, when APCS in tandem with the Commonwealth Immigration Department organised a conference on the Polish Australian community. The department was concerned that the needs of the community were not being fully met. In 2000, Elizabeth Drozd, as Executive Coordinator, approached me to become a Board member and I accepted. There had been some turbulence on the Board, a relatively normal occurrence and not just in ethno-specific organisations.

Previously, Elizabeth had been my student in the Bachelor of Arts (Multicultural Studies) in 1988 and during the 1990s I would supervise her RMIT University's Master's thesis on the settlement of the *Solidarity Poles*. I was the first non-Pole on the APCS Board which had the impact of broadening and deepening the vision of the Board and would become important in 2011, when APCS took its most important decision broadening its mission to encompass all multicultural communities. Under Elizabeth's direction, this has been wonderfully accomplished and the AMCS organisation has grown both in size and in reputation, particularly in delivering home care to the immigrant and refugee aged.

The Polish legacy also continues because the majority of Board members have been and remain Polish Australians. In addition, *Polonia* has given another gift to AMCS: *Millennium House* being gifted by PAKLA (*Polish Association of Kingsville and Ladies Auxiliary Inc.*), who had built it in 1967; the building is currently being totally renovated by AMCS at a cost of over \$7 million. It will be re-opened mid-2024, becoming a multicultural hub and event venue for all multicultural communities as well as the administrative centre for some of AMCS programs. The word "*Millennium*" commemorates the 1,000 years of Christianity in Poland. Its most famous visitor (in February 1973) was Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, who five years later was elected as Pope (now St.) John Paul II until his death in 2005.

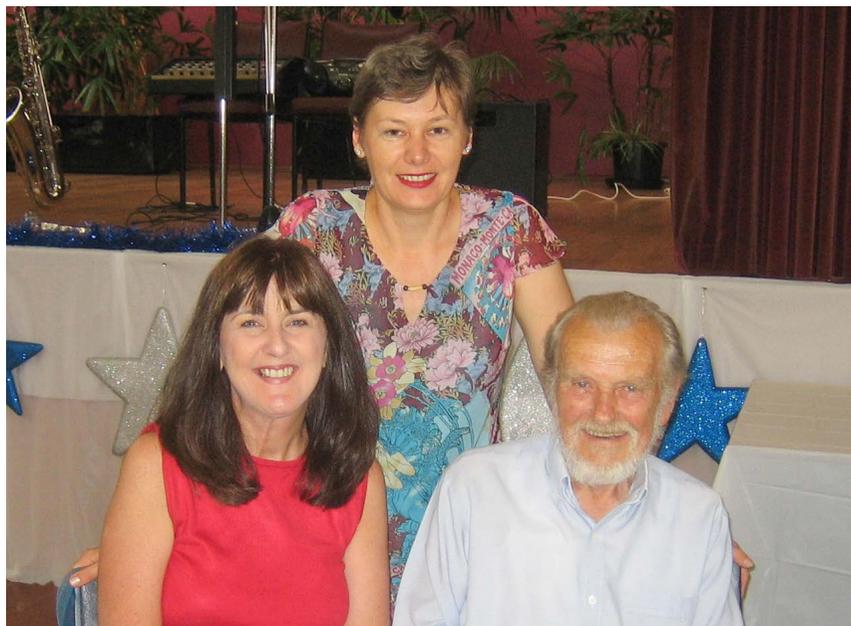
This book, therefore, documents a very worthwhile and valuable history, illustrating how APCS/AMCS has served many thousands of clients over the forty years of its existence. It adds considerably to our knowledge of the history of the multicultural and Polish presence in Australia and its authors are to be congratulated in putting it together and honouring the many Board members, APCS/ AMCS staff, volunteers, and clients who have been part of its history who have been part of its history. From my close perspective, I continue to admire the dedication, commitment and exuberance of all staff members. Their tasks, especially in serving aged clients in their homes, are not easy. This history is a testament to their faithfulness to the mission of the Australian Multicultural Community Services.

# Introduction

Written by

**Elizabeth Drozd OAM**

AMCS Chief Executive Officer



Genia Sawczyn,  
Elizabeth Drozd  
and Bill Nowak

I am very pleased to write a personal introductory note to the history of AMCS, an organisation I have been part of for 32 years. I hope that this summary of the activities, historical highlights, key people involved, as well as AMCS' overall impact will do justice to our commitment to and betterment of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, families, and individuals.

Following completion of a Bachelor of Arts in Multicultural Studies, as a new graduate in 1991, I first joined the Australian Polish Community Services (now known as Australian Multicultural Community Services). It was a difficult year in 1991 for APCS, but it fortunately turned into a catalyst for change for the organisation and its ongoing successes since.

I had a lot to learn as a community service professional and embraced this with my usual enthusiasm, energy, and commitment. My tertiary education and lived experience as a *Special Humanitarian Entrant* to Australia in 1982 gave me great foundations, enabling me to undertake the role successfully. I was also fortunate to be guided and supported by Joe Zaia, the then Regional Manager of the Department of Immigration; by Joe Ribarow, at the time APCS Treasurer and Director of the Migrant Resource Centre in St. Albans; and by Bill Nowak, APCS Committee Member and one of its founders.

Our collective efforts resulted in regaining funding from the Department of Immigration, leading to securing our inaugural Home and Community Care recurrent funding. All of this occurred in 1992, turning it into a good year, together with the

conference about the Polish community in Victoria I organised with Joe Zaia's strategic guidance. The conference resulted in more than double the funding for further projects, key community service priorities were identified, and APCS's overall organisational mission and leadership was reinvigorated.

As a professional, my approach to community and (initially) client case work has always been to do the best and as much as I could, using all my capabilities and knowledge. During the first three years, it was often challenging to balance individual client assistance with community development; although both were important, the latter being imperative for the future of APCS/AMCS.

After three years and with encouragement from a colleague working in local government, I decided to broaden my professional experience and was successful in securing an Access and Equity Officer role at Brimbank Council, where I worked for five years. After a short break as an employee, I joined the Committee of Management of APCS and in 1999 was asked to return to APCS as the Agency Coordinator. Undertaking that role with my usual full dedication, I was able to be even more effective due to increased in-depth experience and widened professional and community networks.

Whilst my APCS/AMCS professional journey has always been full of challenges, I reflect on it with a great sense of satisfaction. In particular, the practical positive difference I have been able to achieve with clients, community leaders, colleagues, and the fantastic opportunities that I have had and have created.

Of particular note is my special rapport with Polish and culturally and linguistically diverse seniors, always based on a strong sense of trust and respect.

My most difficult community project has been Millennium House, currently being redeveloped. It will serve as a great community asset for the next 30-40 years. Despite the challenges, I have never wavered in my conviction that the change of ownership of Millennium House was handled correctly and for the right reasons, a conviction based on the trust that was bestowed on me by the key leaders who built and managed it for 50 years.

Overall, my approach has always been about doing what I professionally believed was right, not what would have been easier or what others expected of me or would have liked me to do. I feel very fortunate to have had the privilege to work with, and for, the benefit of culturally and linguistically diverse communities and for an organisation like AMCS. One of the mottos that has guided my work and mentoring of others can be summarised in Loretta Lynn's words, that to be successful, *"You either have to be first, best or different"*.

# 1983-1991: From enthusiastic beginnings to a temporary crisis

## Context

A first major wave of Polish migrants arrived in Australia between 1947 and 1953, mainly as refugees or '*Displaced Persons*' in the aftermath of World War II, some of them arriving from African countries as they had been deported or displaced from their homeland earlier, often multiple times. Australia had embarked on an '*assisted migration*' program after WWII, aiming to increase the country's population for defence and economic development reasons (Bongiorno 2022). The government created several migrant reception centres in regional areas, Bonegilla in North-East Victoria being the first one, where many Polish migrants initially resided. Having completed two years of compulsory service as required by the Government, many of them moved to – what were then – the outer suburbs of Melbourne. Many aspects of Australian life were unfamiliar to them, but through a lot of informal volunteering they assisted each other in settling in their new country. Their voluntary activism included fundraising to build churches, community centres – including *Millennium House* – and offering Polish language courses for children (APCS 2007:11,34).



↑  
General Hersey ship on  
which Krycia Popczyk  
came with her family



- 1/ Displaced person  
Helena Schloetzer  
with daughter Mary
- 2/ Polish refugee women  
working in Bonegilla  
(1949) (photo provided by  
Kaminska Janina, right)
- 3/ Krystyna Gruba  
with Family
- 4/ Xmas 1954 –  
Czyzewski Family
- 5,6/ Pictures from 2005  
Bonegilla Camp reunion

1

2

3



4



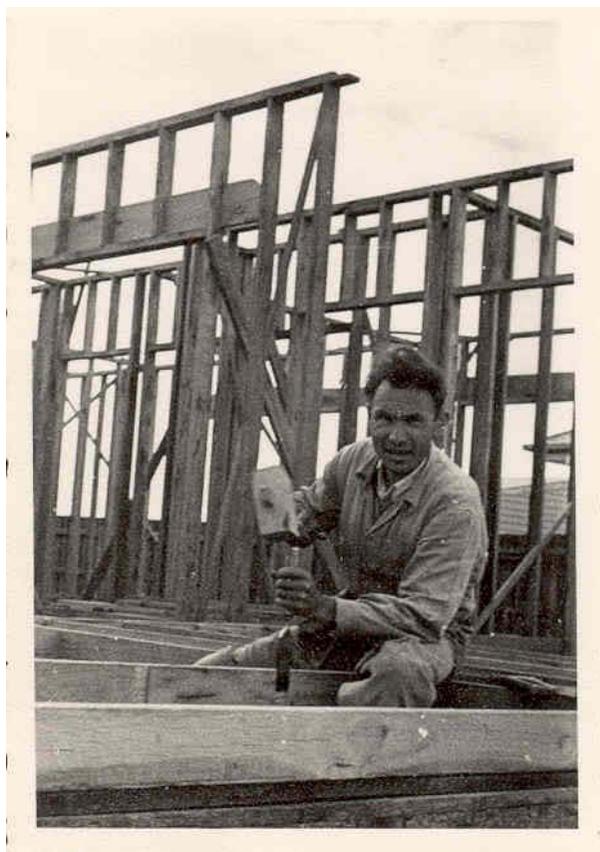
5



6



1



2



3

1/ Eugenia and Edward  
Choinski at Williamstown  
Beach (1950)

2/ Mr Czyzewski building  
Millenium House

3-5/ Historical pictures of  
Millennium House  
being built by the Polish  
Association of Kingsville  
and Ladies Auxiliary Inc.  
(PAKLA) in 1967



4



5



Attending a meeting of the Polish Siberians Association in Melbourne (people who were forcibly deported by Stalin as slave labourers from Poland to Siberia and following the end of WWII, came as Displaced Persons [refugees] to Australia.) 2010

From the mid-1950s to the early-1980s, migration from communist Poland to Australia had virtually stopped due to the political situation there (Bennett 2006:11); as a 1980s APCS Committee member expressed it: *'There wasn't as much communication when the iron curtain was down. People didn't travel but could write letters and make a phone call.'*

During the early-1980s, the growing need for support and social connection became increasingly obvious amongst ageing 'first wave' migrants. As well, due to the *'Solidarność'* (Solidarity) political upheaval in Poland during that time, a second major wave of Polish migrants started to arrive, many of them professionals, students or partners and family members of Polish people already living in Australia.

A more positive attitude to migration had taken hold in the Australian political context under the Whitlam and Fraser governments, the 1978 *Galbally Report* on 'post-arrival' Migrant Services and Programs a milestone. The 1980s and early-1990s saw *multiculturalism* being enshrined in government policies under the Hawke-Keating Labor Governments, recognising the contributions made by the country's diverse ethnicities and cultures. Multiculturalist inspired policies stood in sharp contrast to those associated with the earlier *'White Australia Policy'* and other assimilationist policies imposed by still overwhelmingly British legislative frameworks and culture. Legitimate issues of inclusion and the needs of diverse ethnic groups were – finally and still only gradually – recognised, accompanied by a celebration of the cultural wealth they added to Australian society (Bongiorno 2022).



↑ Aniela Rados, PAKLA treasurer for 50 years

← Krystyna Popczyk's Family, 1962

# Organisational developments



Zbigniew (Ben)  
Dabkowski

Australian Polish Community Services (APCS) was formerly established on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 1983; its founding members were a group of experienced and visionary men and women led by Zbigniew Dabkowski. They represented a range of community interests and many had prior experience in the Polish Welfare Bureau, which was affiliated with the Polish Federation in Victoria.

Zbigniew (Ben) was born in Poland in 1920 and migrated to Australia in the 1950's. He was always involved in the development of voluntary services for the Polish community including support for newly arrived migrants, organising dance groups, senior groups, sporting groups and activities such as the establishment of the POLANA camp. During the early 1980s he was one of the initiators to establish Polish Welfare and was President of the Committee. Zbigniew passed away in 1986, leaving behind a legacy of successful voluntary based services which were supported by government departments such as Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission.



Bill Nowak

Bill Nowak was also integral to the establishment of APCS. At 14 years of age, he was forcibly deported by the Russian Army to Siberia in September 1939, while on a school camp in the north eastern part of Poland. During his five years as a slave labourer, he worked in quarries, as a shoe maker and undertook other tasks to survive. Towards the end of WWII, together with a fellow deportee, he walked on foot several thousand kilometres to reach Teheran. He then joined thousands of Displaced Polish Army and fought as a gunner in the famous battle of Monte Cassino.

After the war, he was assisted by Allied Forces to be transported to England. After a few years in England, he migrated to Australia and became involved in trade unionism. Bill remained active with APCS/AMCS until 2008 and in everything he did, he practiced his strong commitment to social justice and helping a fellow being, just the way he was helped as a child.

Its 1983 Constitution describes the organisation as a *'non-profit, charitable, community-administered welfare agency which aims to serve the needs of a disadvantaged target group in our 40,000 strong Victorian Polish community, particularly the aged, non-metropolitan Poles and recently arrived refugee settlers.'*

Amongst other purposes, APCS saw an urgent need for a welfare organisation based in Melbourne's suburbs to cater to the needs of the elderly Polish in areas such as Footscray, Ardeer and Glenroy and for services in support of newly arrived migrants in St Kilda. APCS also recognised the need for social clubs for older Poles and for institutional day-care for the frail aged. Recent arrivals faced language difficulties, isolation, problems of employment and they needed recognition of their overseas qualifications ('APCS: A brief history 1983-1993' by S Morrissey, *Tenth AGM 1983-1993*).

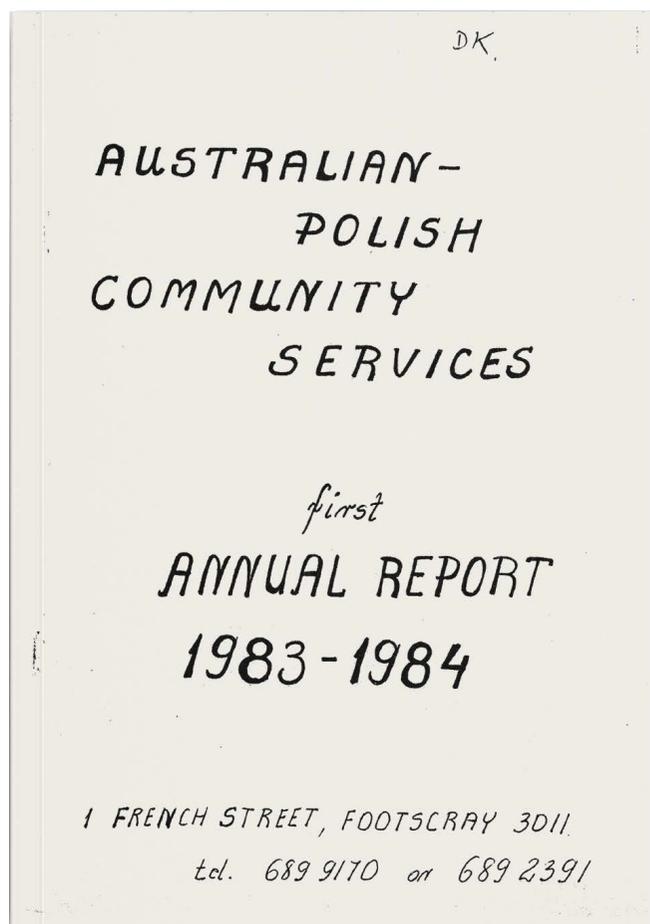
Without funding or premises, activities initially took place in members' homes, until the Carlton-based *Italian Assistance Association* (Co.As.It.) offered invaluable support during those early years – as they did for several other migrant welfare organisations. Geoff Chandler, APCS treasurer for several years in the 1980s and son-in-law of Zbigniew Dabkowski, recalls:

**// I wouldn't have been at the first meeting, but I do remember one or two meetings that would have been at their house in Blackburn. I just thought it was really interesting that people would give up their free time in the evening. There was always an open agenda; everything was very transparent and trusting and very enthusiastic. Ben engendered that across the group...**

Later in 1983, meetings were held at the Migrant Resource Centre in Melbourne, subsequently becoming an initial base for funded workers. Wanda Dabkowski, Zbigniew's daughter, remembers:

**// My father first set up the Polish Welfare (Bureau) in the City in La Trobe Street. I can remember I was in High School. He saw a need for help for the older Polish people and for new arrivals in the Western suburbs. He originally learned how to set up organisations through Co.As.It. He met people through that organisation and learned to write submissions and apply to the government for grants. Poles weren't familiar with how to apply for grants from the government to help the community (at that time). He learnt through Co.As.It. how to do that and to set up a Committee with the Polish Welfare (Bureau [at PCCV]) from the start, and that was his template for Polish community services. He set up a committee for APCS, with some teachers from Australian and Polish backgrounds, so it was diverse and different views were brought in – people who were interested in helping other people.**

In 1984, APCS received federal *Grant-In-Aid* funding to employ a welfare worker and a part-time information and office worker. The Federal Government Department of Immigration (with intermittent departmental name changes) provided this funding almost continuously until the 2004-2005 financial year (Bennett 2006:11).



First Annual Report

Simultaneously, State Government funding from the *Employment Initiative Program* (EIP – 1983–1984) and the *Community Education Program* (CEP – 1984–1986) became available, enabling APCS to employ staff in positions for community development and for education aid for children of migrants. The Community Development worker set up Senior Citizens Clubs in Ardeer, Footscray, Glenroy, St Kilda and Springvale to reduce older Polish people’s social isolation (APCS 1993:16; Bennett 2006:11). Jadwiga Piotrowski, President of the *Polish Senior Citizens Club* in Yarraville, comments:

**“** I came to Australia 57 years ago, in 1966. I noticed there were seniors clubs when I was still working. After a while, when I retired, I joined one. I have been involved with seniors for over 30 years now – at first at Caulfield Senior Club, St Kilda, and then the Polish Senior Citizens Club Yarraville. For retired seniors, APCS opened a few seniors clubs supplying them with information and money to start. Polish Senior Citizens Club Yarraville was opened in May 1984 by Zbigniew Dabkowski, representing APCS.

At the same time, the *Grant-In-Aid* worker provided casework, information, advocacy referrals and research to address the needs of the entire Polish community. During the financial year 1983-1984, APCS employed six staff (four EFT), including a Social Welfare worker and an EIP program coordinator, assisted by volunteers visiting hospitals and migrant hostels.

The organisation moved to the *Migrant Resource Centre* in French Street, Footscray in 1984, operating from that location for the next eight years (Bennett 2006:11). In 1985, APCS became an incorporated association and federal funding was received to provide emergency relief and meet a variety of requests from Polish people in need, with St Albans being added to the list of suburbs where elderly people were supported. The Polish senior citizens clubs were flourishing, with a high level of patronage for their activities and excursions. Close cooperation with other migrant/ethnic groups continued, including Italian, Greek, South American, Vietnamese, Chinese, Ukrainian and Maltese groups (APCS 1993:17).

However 1986 turned into a year of great sadness, with the sudden passing of APCS's founder, Zbigniew Dabkowski.

**Remembering Zbigniew Dabkowski** (usually going by the name 'Ben') was the founder of APCS, and a leader and tireless worker for APCS for three years until he passed away in 1986. He made an outstanding contribution to the organisation through his high intelligence and administrative capacity. He had great warmth and charm and the ability to get on with a wide variety of people at government, community and personal levels. Above all, he was moved by a strong concern for people in difficulties and recognised the need for practical help through a community-based structure, for research and for people to be encouraged to help themselves. He attracted many people to APCS and gained a high reputation with other ethnic agencies. In 1986, he received a decoration for community work from the Polish Government in exile in London (*APCS: A brief history 1983-1993* by Sylvia Morrissey, *Tenth AGM 1983-1993*).

Nineteen eighty-six was also the year of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine; APCS collected aid for those affected by the nuclear cloud in Poland, organising a concert and lobbying federal politicians.

Beginning a sustained tradition of scholarship and research, APCS produced and launched an important report in 1987, titled *'The Coming Winter'* by Grazyna Mackiewicz; it provided the organisation with direction to respond to the needs of ageing Polish people and their communities. Meanwhile, demand from newly arrived Polish people increased; they were generally younger and more educated, so it was a relief to have the *Grant in Aid* funding renewed. Co.As.It. continued its support for APCS, training volunteers in activities such as home visits, fitness classes, health and accommodation and supporting new arrivals.

Unfortunately, funding for the *Community Education Program* was discontinued, ending four years of productive work by Teacher Aides in Primary Schools and Welfare Aides assisting ageing members of the Polish community.

Cultural activities organised by APCS in 1987-88 included a concert in memory of Zbigniew Dabkowski, the publication of *'Fragmenty poetyckie'* (Poetic Fragments), the play 'Shoemakers' and a music program at Mietta's restaurant, raising funds for the *Polish Benevolent Association* ('APCS: A brief history 1983-1993' by S Morrissey, *Tenth AGM 1983-1993*).

By 1989-1990, the Senior Citizens Clubs APCS had helped establish were self-managing and self-sufficient, enabling the Committee of Management and workers to rethink the organisation's focus and activities, shifting attention to support services in St Albans and to community development in St Albans, Sunshine and Keilor, amongst other areas of involvement.

In spite of the necessary and successful work and the growing needs in the Polish community, APCS faced a financial crisis in 1990-1991, dramatically reducing the number of staff (19 or 11 EFT) employed in 1985. The only remaining funding was for short-term *Emergency Relief* for Polish people across Victoria, not even covering administrative or management costs; no funding remained to support older people, the organisation's primary objective since its inception (Bennett 2006:70). The financial precariousness of APCS thus became apparent: most income during its early years had been from short-term funding, except for federal Grant-in-Aid funding supporting new migrant arrivals.



## // Wanda Dabkowski's story

Wanda Dabkowski became a Community Development worker at APCS in the mid-1980s...

For over a year, she coordinated volunteers and activities to support older Polish people, particularly those who were socially isolated. Activities included bus trips, home visits and exercise sessions by a physiotherapist. After her father passed away in 1986, Bill Nowak became APCS President. As she recounts: *'He was like my father; he was altruistic and wanted to do things for the community. It was my father that had discovered him and introduced him to the Committee and got to know him. He was very knowledgeable and had good contacts in different tiers of government. You had to know the jargon when you were putting in submissions. You'd have to validate why you needed to apply for it or for any sort of grants.'*

Later, Wanda was voted in as President, a position she held until 1991; as she remembers: *'At the AGM in 1991 my speech (as President) was being given while I was giving birth – 19th of September 1991. My mother was at the meeting.'*

**1983**

APCS is established

State Government funding received for an Employment Initiative Program (EIP)

**1984**

APCS moves to the MRC, 1 French Street, Footscray

Federal Grant-In-Aid funding received to employ a welfare worker and a part-time information and office worker

State Government funding received for the Community Education Program (CEP)

**1986**

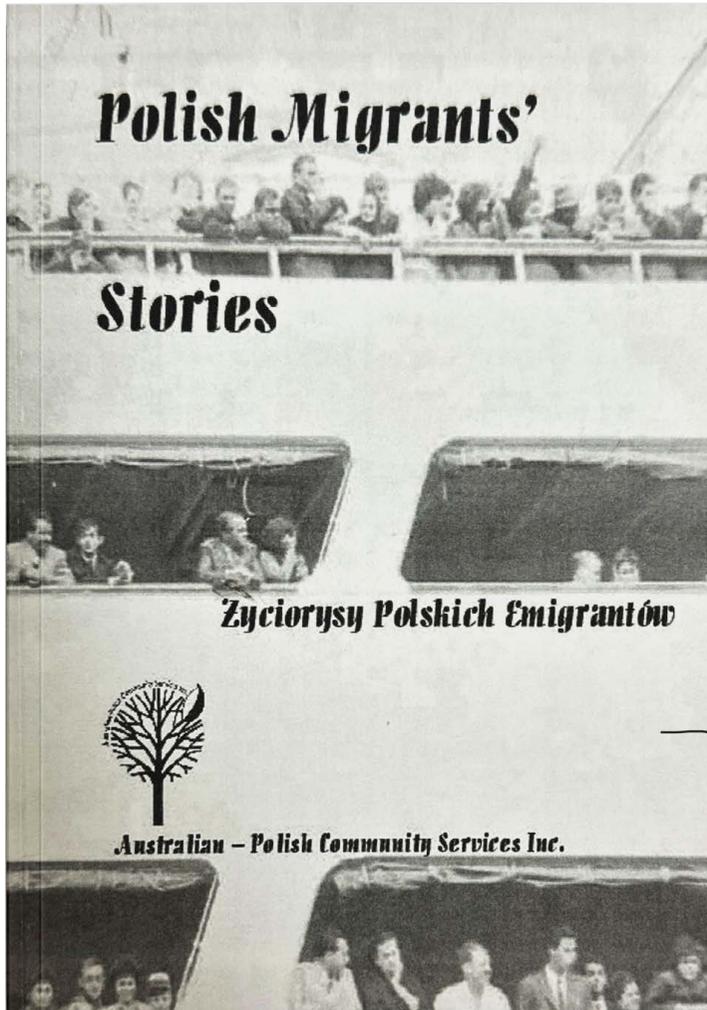
Founder, Zbigniew Dabkowski dies; Bill Nowak becomes Chair

**1987**

APCS produces and launches its first substantial research report: The Coming Winter

**1990**

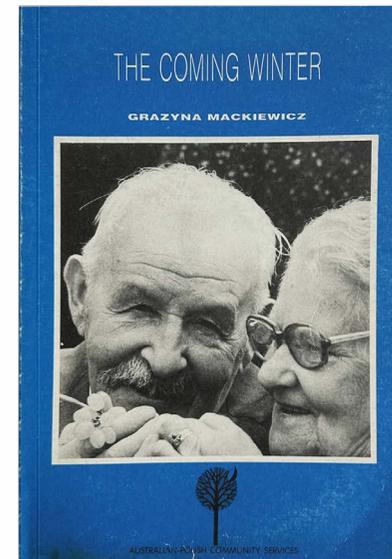
Financial crisis and downsizing



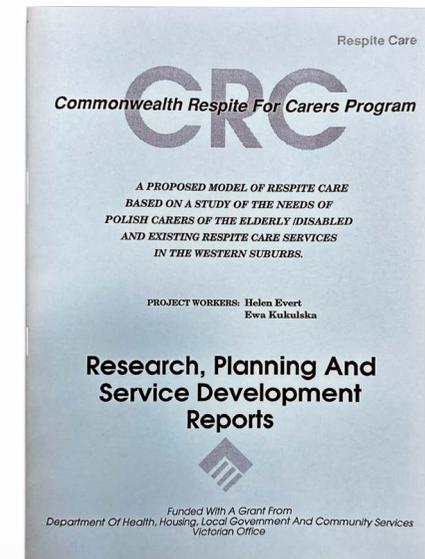
Published in 2006, this book captures the experiences of Polish migrants who immigrated to Australia between 1947 and 1954. Through their narratives, we glimpse their challenges, dreams, and steadfast dedication to their heritage. Authored by Monika Wiench and Elizabeth Drozd, this collection offers a touching tribute to the migrant journey, showcasing the resilience and determination of those who dared to seek a better life. Compiled from archival records and interviews, the book provides insight into the enduring significance of memory

**An example of the range of publications that were produced from 1987 onwards**

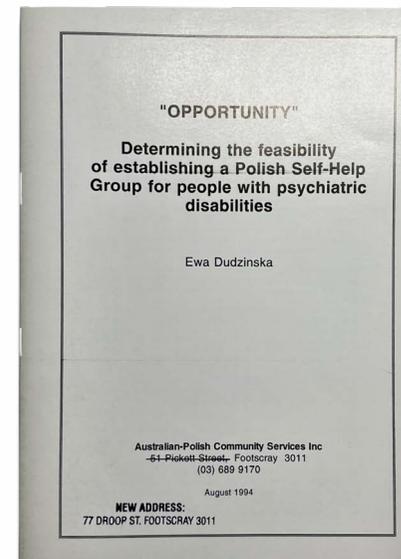
- 1/ Beginning a sustained tradition of scholarship and research, APCS produced and launched an important report in 1987, titled 'The Coming Winter' by Grazyna Mackiewicz; it provided the organisation with direction to respond to the needs of ageing Polish people and their communities
- 2/ Authored by Helen Evert and Ewa Kukulska, this report examines the needs of carers and available respite care services. It emphasises key findings concerning primary service providers and Polish carers of the elderly and disabled in the western suburbs
- 3/ Written by Ewa Dudzinska, this publication explores the feasibility of creating a Polish self-help group for individuals with psychiatric disabilities in the Australian Polish community. It addresses the impact of migration on mental health and proposes establishing a group to rebuild personal networks and friendships, especially for those with limited English skills
- 4/ This report offers insights into the Polish community in Melbourne, prepared by Joe Ribarow, Coordinator for the Migrant Resource Center, North-West Region. Prepared for the APCS Conference, it presents key facts and figures regarding the community's demographics and contributions
- 5/ This report by Elizabeth Drozd and Joseph Ribarow explores the characteristics of second-generation Polish Australians in Melbourne's western suburbs. It originated from the 'Polish Community – Where To From Here? Creating a New Future' conference, organised by APCS. The conference highlighted the challenges within the Polish community in Australia, influenced by two major waves of migration from Poland
- 6/ *Dziś ty pomożesz innym, jutro inni pomogą tobie (Today you will help someone, tomorrow others will help you)* – a publication by APCS Coordinators of Volunteers



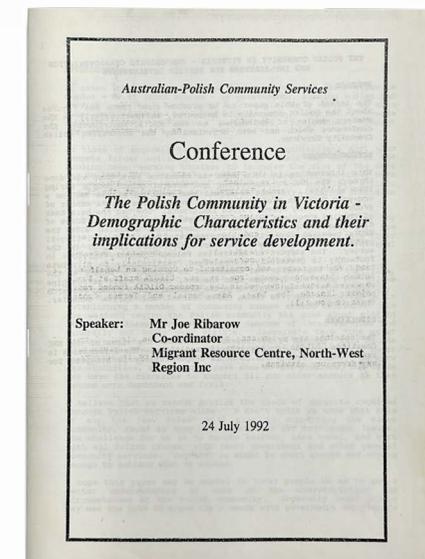
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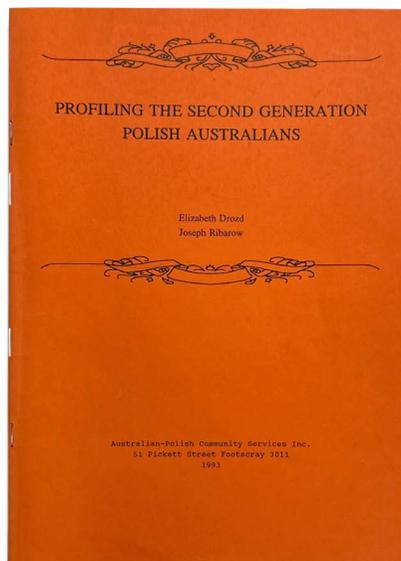
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5



Mrs Krystyna Gruba, long term volunteer with the Polish Association of Kingsville and Ladies Auxiliary and Footscray Polish Seniors Citizens Club with Ben Dabkowski, during the initial meeting of the Club



6

# 1992-2000: Expansion and growing diversification

## Context

In the mid-1990s, the *Aged Care Act* (1997) was introduced – the first attempt to reform the Aged Care sector in Australia. It was also a response to the emerging realisation that Australia was joining the experience of most developed countries: they were becoming ‘ageing’ societies. As well, on political-economic and social policy levels, the post-WWII willingness to widen and strengthen the welfare net came to a gradual standstill; globally referred to as the ‘neo-liberal’ transformation, a growing reluctance to expand the public provision of social services spread within and across most nations and within the institutional arrangements of governmental and non-governmental departments and organisations (Bongiorno 2022).

Elements of the rather massive structural and ideological changes during this period included the privatisation and '*contractualisation*' of social service delivery; the shift to a '*market*' model in the state-response to personal and social needs; the amalgamations between non-governmental service providers and the '*mainstreaming*' of previously culture- and ethnic-specific services; shifting attitudes to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; and in Victoria, a series of institutional changes affecting education, welfare and other policy areas as well as the redrawing of the municipal boundaries.

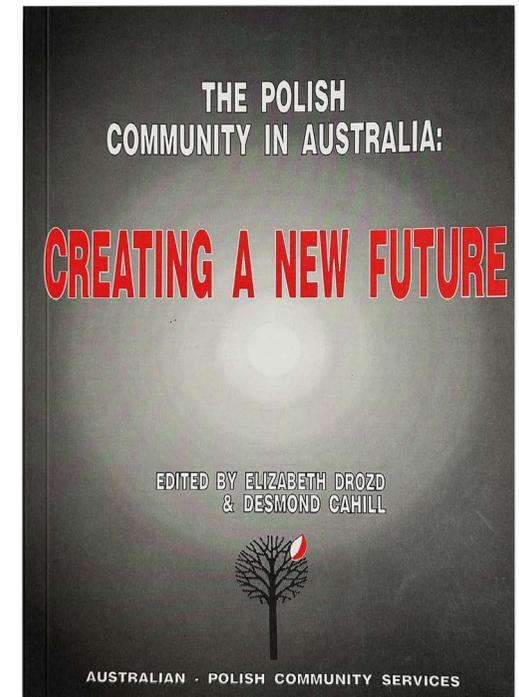
A great number of legislative iterations in the relevant legislations have occurred since and they continue to define service delivery to the ageing population; as well, other contextual changes impacting on the lives and circumstances of the ageing population include shifts in the superannuation and aged pension systems, the growing costs of housing and utilities, increasing life expectancy and the many consequential medical and lifestyle conditions thereof.



AMCS Committee Members:  
Genia Wrzesinski,  
Waclaw Kaska,  
Elizabeth Drozd,  
Joseph Ribarow,  
Bill Nowak, and  
Helen Evert

## Organisational developments

APCS found itself in a financial crisis in 1991 and the Committee of Management faced the decision to continue or dissolve the organisation. Fortunately, Joe Ribarow, an experienced community organisation manager, assisted in the reinvigoration of committee, staff and volunteers by providing strategic support and direction. From then on, ongoing state and federal funding was obtained (Bennett 2006:70), the year 1992 becoming one of hopeful and strategic change, with a new committee implementing new directions and strategies (APCS 1993). Averting the immediate crisis, APCS received a *Pilot Equity and Access Program* (PEAPS) grant, replacing the not-renewed *Grant in Aid* (GIA) funding and Elizabeth Drozd was appointed as co-ordinator.



Summary of the 1992  
APCS conference presentations

**// Elizabeth remembers the period well:**

I applied for the PEAPS worker position and was successful in getting it, officially commencing on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1991. APCS was then in the recovery stage from almost being closed. 1990 was the year when Department of Immigration funding for the GIA Worker stopped ....

Bill Nowak negotiated with the then Minister of Immigration, who gave APCS \$50,000 as part of the PEAPS program, from April 1991 onwards. After the previous short-term PEAPS worker left, Joe Ribarow (manager of St Albans MRC) asked me to take on the role in July, the funding being until April the following year. In that time we were successful in getting another grant from the Department, which was the MAPS scheme.... I was the only worker and we had admin support for four hours per week...

We had a typewriter, no computer. To send a fax, I had to go to the Footscray MRC in Whitehall Street. I used to go to MRC staff meetings. I negotiated this with the manager so I could attend them ... just to be connected to another organisation. Part of the management of my role was that I had to be based at the MRC in St Albans for two days a week – Monday and Wednesday.

Pivotal for the organisation's strategic refocus and for achieving a higher profile was the first conference it organised in 1992 – *The Polish community: Where to from here? Creating a new future*. The conference was strongly supported by the Federal Government and identified the changing community needs in the Keilor-Sunshine area.

**// Joseph Zaia recalls this time:**

I was employed by the Department of Immigration and based at the Sunshine office; APCS was in our catchment area and funded by us. I knew the organisations my staff had responsibility for and was responsible for managing their receipt of funding from the Department.... There was ongoing discussion of who the Department should and should not fund; established agencies received a lot of funding and there was a lot of discussion about whether they should keep it or whether we should rather fund other emerging (migrant) groups... We didn't want to take away the money without weaning organisations off it. So PEAPS was set up, offering funding to improve access to other (services) and MAPS was set up too which we used to wean APCS off our GIA funding (which had become part of APCS's financial crisis).

But the recovery of APCS had started thanks to Joseph Zaia's support; he continues the story of the recovery:

**“ I told Elizabeth: ‘Your trouble is your visibility is not high enough... you should have a conference to heighten the visibility of APCS, bringing the Department’s attention to (required) policies, and see what happens after that...’**  
**The conference strategy was to get important people to speak, with clear agenda topics for the conference; get the (Immigration) Minister or his secretary to open the conference... get the experts who are knowledgeable in each area and who could put up strategies for change... high profile people attracted participants from other departments... It had to aim high... to improve the chance of getting future funding. The conference was a key event which took APCS out of the mire and into the new world... We did a lot of work and it proved APCS could turn into a major service provider.**

APCS programs coming into existence after the conference included: (1) English language classes for newly-arrived Poles; (2) new elderly groups in St Albans, Werribee, Altona, Keilor Downs and Albion; and (3) a part-time service to assist in the accommodation of newly-arrived migrants, the latter two programs funded through the federal *Migrant Access Program Scheme* (MAPS). Subsequently, new funding was received to offer English classes for Polish people in the Western suburbs as well as State Government funds to establish a Friendly Visiting Program for socially isolated Polish people wanting to stay in their own homes rather than in aged care institutions (APCS 1993; Bennett 2006:12).

Staying in Footscray, APCS moved to its own rented premises at 51 Pickett Street in 1992/1993; its programs and revenue expanded with more reliable and ongoing federal funding for the *Aged Care Accommodation Project*, the *Community Visitors Scheme* (CVS – for people living in nursing homes) and for Community Aged Care Packages (CACP) to support frail and older Polish people in the Western suburbs, supporting them to stay in their own homes. State Government funding, in turn, allowed the organisation to develop *Adult Day Activities and Support Services* (ADASS, starting in April 1993) for frail elderly, carers and younger Polish people with disabilities (APCS 1993; Bennett 2006:12). This full suite of programs supporting older Polish people in their own homes and in nursing accommodation – through visits, practical support and social connections – has continued in some form to this day, becoming a mainstay of APCS (later AMCS) funding and service provision.

The recovery continued into the financial year 1993-1994, financial turnover doubling from the previous year and employing 16 full or part-time staff; such expansion of programs made the need for a stronger focus on coordination and management obvious (APCS *Annual Report 1993-1994*).

In 1994, APCS established strategic ties with the Federal Department of Health, participating in its *Polish Community Aged Care Strategy Plan 1994-2000* (Bennett 2006:12) and – together with the Polish Community Council – the organisation entered an agreement with the Victorian Government’s Department of Business and Employment for a *Community*



- 1/ Jarmila Dabkowski, Wanda Dabkowski, The Hon. Nick Bolkus, Geoff Chandler, and Wally Folcik during official opening of Dabkowski House, APCS office in Pickett St, Footscray
- 2/ Halina Zandler, Head of SBS Polish Radio Program, The Hon. Nick Bolkus MP Minister for Immigration, George Szlawski APCS President, The Hon. Ralph Willis MP Member for Gellibrand, during an official opening of APCS new office
- 3/ Stanislaw Kiedrzynski, receiving a Certificate of Appreciation for his many years of volunteering at APCS, from The Hon. Telmo Languiller, Member for Western Metropolitan Region in the Victorian Government, during the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the APCS Community Visitors Scheme Volunteering Program, 2008

*Based Employment Program* (CBEP) to help Polish-background people enter employment or training. Contacts with other Polish clubs and organisations were also strengthened and a closer relationship was formed with the Victorian and Federal governments. Significantly, the Polish community was one of only five ethnic communities focused on developing 5-year aged care action plans, showing that APCS had become a 'go to' organisation for governments for the design and provision of optimal support for Polish people in Victoria and Australia (APCS Annual Report 1994-1995).

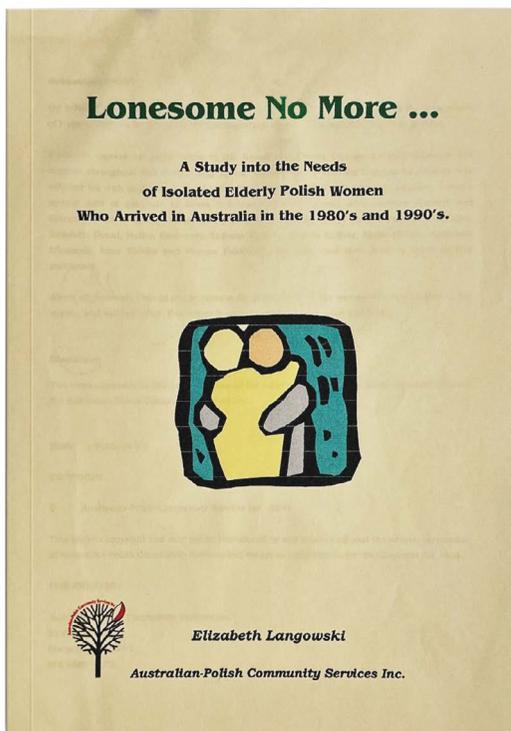
Other innovative projects were investigated or established by APCS around this time; in one of those, much energy was spent to create a self-help group for Polish people with psychiatric disabilities. Also in 1994-95, a Polish '*cluster*' was initiated at Deer Park Nursing Home, where specialist support could be provided to a group of elderly or frail Polish people living there, the first such 'ethnic cluster' in Melbourne (APCS Annual Report 1994-1995).

Further expanding its programs, APCS was registered in 1995 as an education provider by ACFE (*Adult Community & Further Education*), employing an *English as a Second Language* (ESL) teacher, English classes already having been provided since 1992-1993 (Bennett 2006:12).

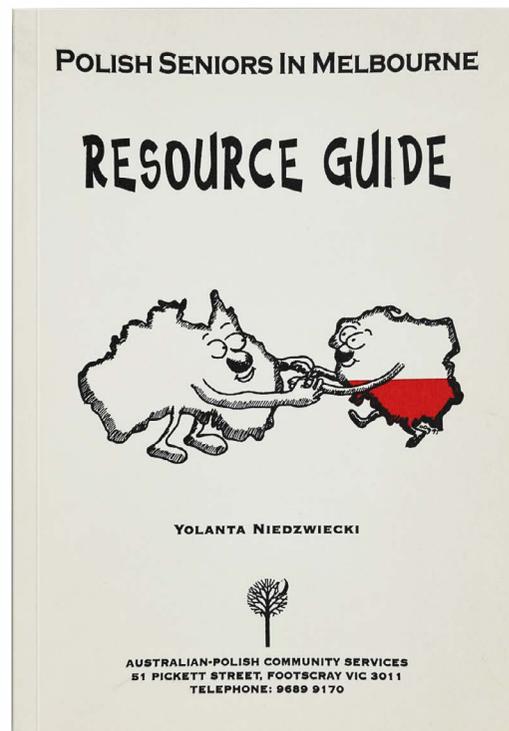
In the following financial year (1995-1996), the number of paid staff increased to 22, as programs and relationships with other organisations further expanded. Networking with those agencies grew through various joint projects including an *Internet Pilot Project* to improve services to older people in the Western Metropolitan Region, posting information on a Home Page and using emails for referrals. Inter-organisational collaboration also provided *Grief and Loss* sessions, a *Bilingual Pilot Course* for Polish-speaking HACC workers in the West and Polish cluster hostel residential care. To top it off, a Polish program on Radio Melton was prepared and presented by an APCS committee member and one of its employees.

APCS continued to introduce new programs in the following years, for example, a *Living with Cancer Program* and a *Polish A-Z Brokerage* service, providing Polish-speaking direct-care staff to mainstream care providers (1997-98). This service was particularly helpful for Polish seniors who had difficulty speaking English or had lost that ability due to deteriorating health, often the onset of dementia.

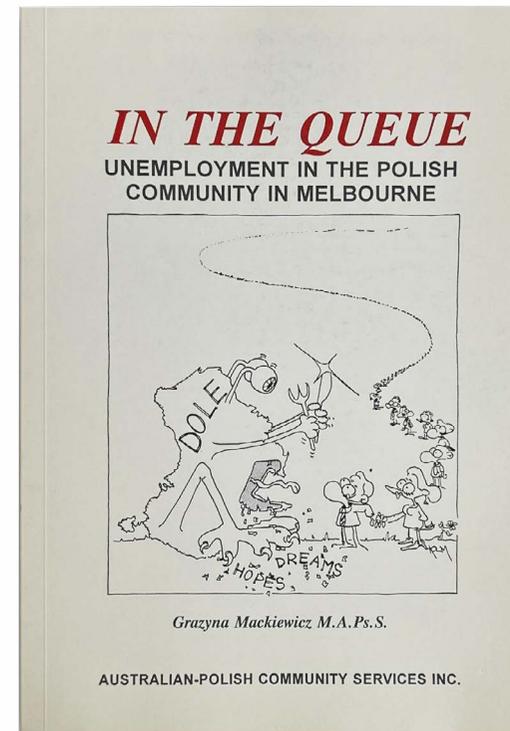
Elizabeth Drozd returned to APCS in November 1999, assuming the role of Executive Coordinator, following her previous employment as a Coordinator/GIA worker 1991-1994 and membership of the Committee of Management 1994-1999, three of these years as its Secretary.



Lonesome No More... A study into the needs of isolated elderly Polish women who arrived in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s' by Elizabeth Langowski in 2000



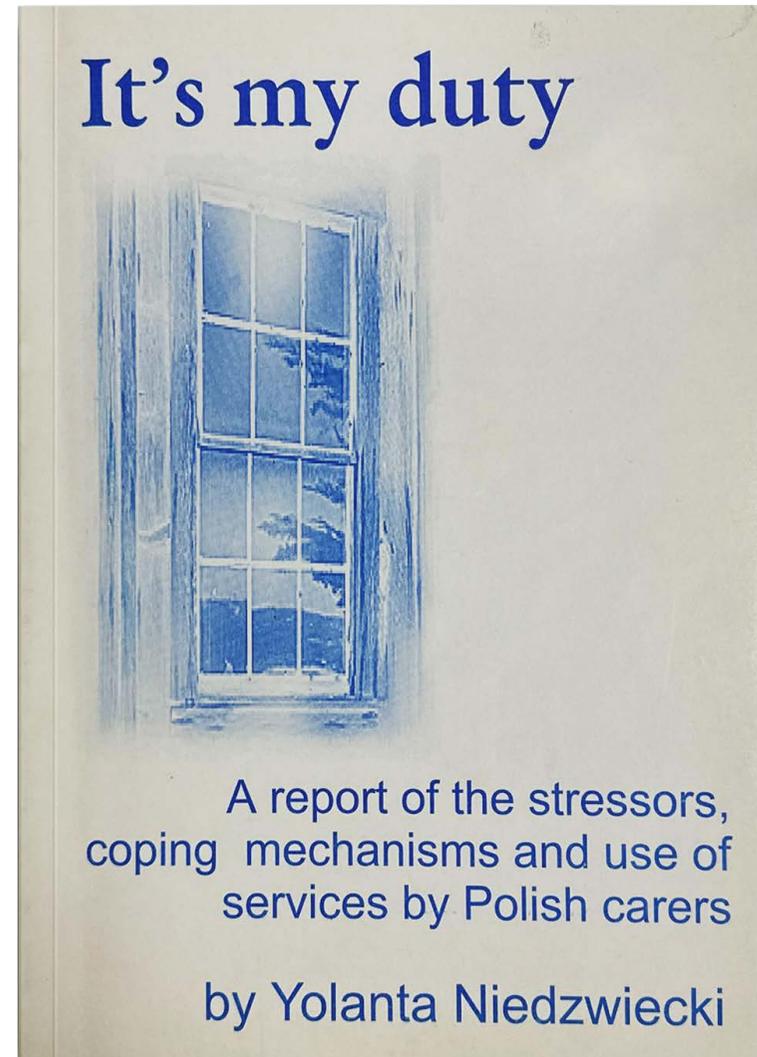
In 1996, the Resource Guide supporting Polish seniors in Melbourne was published. Its goal was to inform local service providers about the unique needs of Polish seniors. This guide included contacts and resources, helping agencies improve services for Polish individuals already in their care and reach out to others in their areas by Yolanta Niedzwiecki in 1996



In a relatively short time period between 1996 to 2000, a substantial body of research was produced and published including In the Queue: Unemployment in the Polish community in Melbourne in 1997 by Grazyna Mackiewicz

From 1996 to 2000, APCS provided sector leadership by conducting research and publishing reports about the situation of Polish people living in Victoria and Australia, specifically documenting and learning about their experiences, raising awareness and informing service delivery and program design. In 1996, a *Resource Guide and Manual* for agencies supporting Polish seniors in Melbourne were published with the aim of sensitising local service providers about the particular needs of Polish seniors, including a list of contacts and resources. Such agencies could then improve their services for Polish people already in their care and expand their client base to include others living in their respective areas (Niedzwiecki 1996:3). Along with the implementation of the nursing home 'cluster' model, this project highlighted APCS's orientation to not only provide direct support where it was needed, but to support other agencies in providing appropriate, tailored support for Polish people.

In a relatively short time period (1996–2000), a substantial body of research was produced and published; these works included: a Community Development discussion paper '*Forgotten Fragments: The significance of the Polish war experience*' (1996); '*In the Queue: Unemployment in the Polish community in Melbourne*' (1997); '*Lonesome no more... A study into the needs of isolated elderly Polish*



In 2000, 'It's my duty' was published. The report outlined the stressors, coping mechanism and use of services by Polish carers

women who arrived in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s' (2000); and finally, *'It's my duty: A report of the stressors, coping mechanisms and use of services by Polish carers'* (2000).

The numbers of paid staff (1997-98) grew to 26 and, in addition, 31 volunteers were involved; with more secure funding and a growing profile, APCS found itself in a stronger position than it had been eight years earlier to provide future support for Polish people in the community. Finally, 2000 saw a significant increase in funding for the *Community Aged Care Package Program* (now known as the *Home Care Package Program*), doubling the size of its APCS program.

Reflecting on how far APCS had evolved by the end of its second decade, it is useful to ponder how long-time APCS/AMCS Board member Professor Desmond Cahill summarised the situation at the start of that decade. Offering the 'summing-up' words at the conclusion of the 1992 APCS conference, he said he had been:

**/// ...wondering why the Polish community had not got itself well-organised for its welfare needs. There was, firstly, a residual refugee mentality, that was concentrated on the country they had fled from. Their own people had shared their common experience of fleeing the country. Secondly, there was a lack of adequate communication patterns in their own community as well... Thirdly, there was ambivalence by many Polish people towards multiculturalism... despite the fact that key Polish academics in Australia (but not in Victoria) were keen proponents... Also, the attitude to welfare is not overly positive amongst Poles, so it took more than thirty years from the late-1940s to 1983 before an independent Polish welfare organisation was established. The image is of a conservative community... there were four things needed for the future. (1) Departmental commitment at both State and Federal levels, the 1989 National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia being the best expression of this; (2) the need for cohesive leadership; (3) suggestion to form a Polish community workers' association; and (4) an urgent need to formulate a social welfare strategy.**

APCS certainly outperformed what could have been reasonably expected during the early years of the 1990s and as we will see, the organisation continued to grow and evolve into the first decades of the new Millennium!

**1991**

Financial crisis

State Government funding received for an Employment Initiative Program (EIP)

**1992**

Conference:  
*The Polish community:  
Where to from here?  
Creating a new future*

Move to  
51 Pickett Street,  
Footscray

**1992/  
1993**

Ongoing federal and state funding received for a suite of programs

Participation in the Victorian Government's Polish Community Aged Care Strategy Plan 1994-2000

**1994**

Financial turnover doubles from previous year and significant increase in staff numbers

Agreement with DSHS on a five-year strategy for social services to support elderly people

**1996**

*Forgotten Fragments:  
The significance  
of the Polish war  
experience*

**1997**

*In the Queue:  
Unemployment in the  
Polish community in  
Melbourne*

**1999**

Elizabeth Drozd  
appointed 'Executive  
Coordinator

**2000**

Funding for the  
*Community Aged  
Care Package*  
Program significantly  
increased, leading  
to doubling of the  
program

*It's my duty:*  
A report of the  
stressors, coping  
mechanisms and  
use of services by  
Polish Carers'

*Lonesome no more...*  
A study into the needs of  
isolated elderly Polish women  
who arrived in Australia in the  
1980s and 1990s



↑

AMCS staff and volunteers at SBS Radio in Melbourne participating in a radiothon during fundraising to help natural disasters victims

↗

Throughout AMCS history, we continue to learn from seniors, we appreciate their wisdom, life experience, how to overcome adversity and trauma and how to continue to embrace life and appreciate it every day. .... Our Social Support Groups in Melbourne and Geelong are enjoyed by all attendees

→

One of our AMCS staff members, Agnieszka Mlynarek, helping seniors in our Planned Activities Group (PAG) program





Recipients of the annual Victorian Multicultural Commission Awards, Stanislaw Milosinski and Anna Gobaira, Secretary and President of the Polish Senior Citizens Club in Reservoir, which APCS helped to establish and has worked with since the Club's inception in 1991



English as a Second Language (ESL) Students enjoying their end of year with teacher Janusz Janik, at the APCS premises in Droop St. Footscray, 2003



Our Social Support Groups provide a wide range of activities for the community



# 2001-2009: Service expansion to more diverse ethnic groups and Widely Spread localities

## Context

The first decade of the new millennium introduced several new areas of concern nationally and globally; the attacks on the World Trade towers in New York unleashed a global frenzy of reaction to real and assumed 'terrorism' which then in turn created massive displacements across the Middle East and North Africa. The resistance in 'developed' countries to accept the displaced populations increased, a growing body of national legislations and policies (including in Australia) trying to negate or undermine the Human Rights regime established by the United Nations in the previous decades. As well, conservative governments and media combined to erode the further development and institutional and policy entrenchment of multiculturalism, emphasising a more traditional 'Anglophone' understanding of the Australian nation in what has become known as the 'culture war' (Bongiorno 2022).

Simultaneously, tightening budgets on federal and state levels in Australia as well as deliberate but risky financial permutations led to the 2007-08 global financial crisis which caused reverberations across all nations. Inequality – which had been growing apace during the previous decades – worsened and accelerated globally and in most nations including Australia.

With shifting governments on state and national levels, it became increasingly difficult to address the social consequences from the growing inequality, the impact of neoliberal inspired social policies leading to further privatisation, organisational amalgamations of NGOs and associated massive governance and operational changes in service delivery and the gradual disappearance of previously expected evaluation requirements.

Finally, growing awareness about the consequences of climate change and the inconsistencies of dealing with them – a mixture of political unwillingness and businesses' recalcitrance to adapt and reluctance to forego the pursuit of profits at all costs – left communities with fear and indecisiveness as to the steps to be taken to meaningfully adapt to and prepare for the changes.

## Organisational developments

The financial year 2000-2001 signalled the beginning of a time of great change and rapid expansion for APCS; the organisation moved to new premises in Footscray at 77 Droop Street and widened its geographical reach and expanded the number and types of services it provided. Service provision expanded to Geelong and a new outreach service based at the Migrant Resource Centre in Dandenong. The first *Planned Activity Group* (PAG, previously named ADASS) was made available to Polish residents in Geelong and a second weekly PAG in Sunshine.



A group picture taken during a planned activity session with the group in Geelong in 2005



1/ 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dandenong MRC

2/ PAG Xmas lunch, West Sunshine

3/ We have celebrated hundreds of client's birthdays. Planned Activity and Community Aged Care Packages client with APCS employee, the late Danuta Malec, 2010

Thirty-six additional care packages were provided in the Western and Northern regions, increasing APCS's total number of packages to 65 and the groundwork for a Polish *HACC (Home and Community Care) Outreach Program* had started. As well, two new projects were initiated – a *Women's Friendship Group* and a *Carer Support Group* – to address the isolation particular Polish women found themselves in.

Elizabeth Drozd remembers how welcome the new HACC funding was:

**//** For years we couldn't increase our *Home and Community Care (HACC)* programs, so we highlighted our long waiting list for support in one of our Annual Reports. The department wouldn't allocate additional funding for us for several years, but after that strategy 'we broke the drought'. The Polish elderly couple (printed on the cover of the 1999-2000 Annual Report) included the grandmother of one of my Polish friends and who used to work at APCS. So we used marketing of community empathy to show the need and to stand out.



Barbara Swiatkowski and Elizabeth Drozd, attending the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Christ, with whom APCS has had a partnership for over 10 years, 2009

**AUSTRALIAN POLISH COMMUNITY SERVICES Inc.**

Incorporation Number A0004210V

**17<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL REPORT  
1999/2000**



Two Polish elderly who may have to wait five years  
for a Polish home support service and two years for a day care program



**Australijsko Polskie Biuro Usług Społecznych**  
51 Pickett Street, Footscray, Vic 3011  
Ph: (03) 9689 9170 Fax: (03) 9687 7446

Website: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~polish>  
Email: [polish@vicnet.net.au](mailto:polish@vicnet.net.au)



Australian Polish Community Services Inc.  
51 Pickett Street, Footscray, Victoria 3011  
Ph: 9689 9170 Fax: 9687 7446  
Email: [polish@vicnet.net.au](mailto:polish@vicnet.net.au)  
A.B.N. 69 022 519 263  
Incorporation No. A0004210V



Website: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~polish>

**AGED – CARE FACILITIES**  
for People of Polish background

**Polish Hostel – Low Care Beds**

Contact Person - Daniela Kowalczyk  
All Polish Residents - 30 places  
3 Percival Street  
Bayswater 3153  
Tel: 9720 3575 or 9720 3978

**Burnside St Nursing Home**

(8 - bed Polish cluster)  
54 Burnside Street  
Deer Park 3023  
Tel: 9360 4488

**Waldreas Lodge**

Contact Person - Nada Buehler  
(10 - bed Polish cluster - Low Care Beds)  
211-213 Wantima Rd  
Ringwood 3134  
Tel: 9870 7088

**St Georges Nursing  
Home/Hostel**

Director of Nursing  
(Polish residents in a multicultural setting)  
13-19 Howard Street  
Altona Meadows 3028  
Tel: 9315 7811

**Salsbury House Nursing Home**

(5 places - to be built)  
Contact Person - Ms Vicki Liaskos  
Cardinia North 3978  
Mail Address: Salsbury Rd  
Upperbeaconsfield 3808  
Tel: 03 5944 3443

**St. Mary's Nursing Home**

(10 places, to be completed in April '00)  
413-415 Waterdale Road  
Heidelberg West 3081  
Tel: 0413 731 120 or 9455 0000

**Woorack Hostel**

(10 places)  
Contact Person - Philippa Campbell  
6-8 Killara St  
Sunshine 3020  
Tel: 9312 0111

**Third Age Consultants**

(10 places - hostel level)  
Contact Person - Mr Neil Wilson & Tony Lear  
Community Hub  
Sydenham  
Tel: 9458 4056

**Parkwood Special  
Accommodation Home**

Contact Person - Manager  
(All Polish Staff)  
123 Westgarth Street  
Northcote 3070  
Tel: 9481 4867

With Compliments

Information prepared by APCS staff  
01/12/00

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*Linking together, proudly serving*

As part of our lobbying to the Government for much-needed additional funding, we featured photos of senior clients on our Annual Reports and other publications, to humanise the need for support and the long waiting list

Covers of the 1999-2000 Annual Report

At the start of the decade and continuing its tradition of collaboration and networking, APCS developed strong links with several *Primary Care Partnerships*, professional bodies and regional networks; programs set up in partnership with other agencies included a *Community Jobs Program* with the Inner Western Region Migrant Resource Centre and a *Polish Older Persons' Outreach Program* (POPOP) with



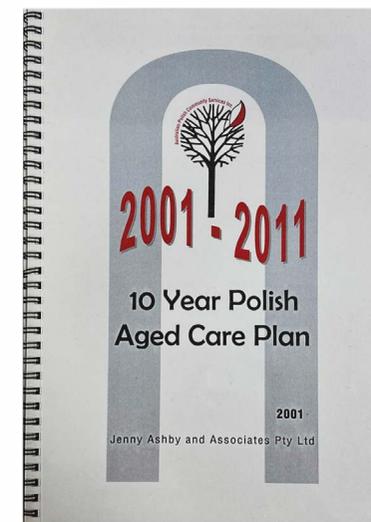
the Polish religious order of the Missionary Sisters of Christ the King in support of elderly people and carers from 2002 till 2011. Sister Regina Sznejder was instrumental in establishing this collaboration, further enhancing APCS' offering for the community. Visiting programs expanded as well, with more volunteers visiting elderly Polish people in their homes and in Residential Care facilities.

Sharing knowledge and resources continued as APCS created, piloted and implemented a 'Cultural Planning Tool' in 2000-2001, assisting agencies to meet the requirements for HACC funding. Further developing and using the tool during the following years guided the organisation's planning and provision of culturally responsive services. During the same year, more than 160 people were assisted when applying for compensation for slave labour, a scheme available to Polish people deported to Germany and forced into slave labour during WWII, many of whom were already supported by APCS. Finally, a booklet about volunteering, 'You help someone today, someone will help you tomorrow' was launched in 2001 to celebrate the United Nations Year of Volunteering, its title underpinning much of APCS's/AMCS's successes to this day.

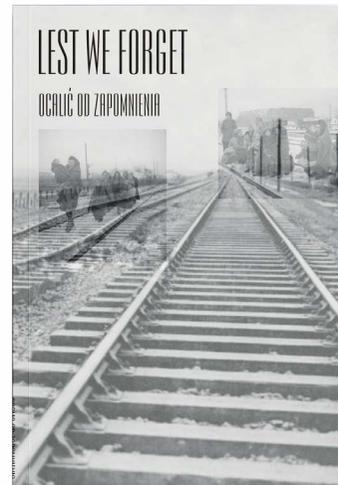
In the following financial year (2001-2002), APCS's income doubled, staff numbers approached 60 and to keep up with the expansion, internal management and systems were improved. The organisation expanded its relationships and partnerships with other bodies to better support Polish community members. An *Older Persons Lobbying Group* was established with COTA (*Council on The Ageing*) and APCS participated in the Ethnic Aged Mentoring Project organised by the *Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria* (ECCV); thirty information sessions were offered to mainstream providers to assist them in supporting Polish service users. In the same financial year, a *Polish Services Directory* and information kit: 'The Polish Way' was published and, importantly, the *10-year Polish Aged Care Plan 2001-2011* was launched.



Launch of the Polish Aged Care Plan 2001  
Jenny Ashby & Prof.  
Desmond Cahill



From 2002 to 2005, APCS continued to present itself as an organisation with knowledge and authority when speaking about the needs and aspirations of Polish-born people and of those from other cultural backgrounds. The organisation convened an important conference about the Polish community in 2003; *'Where to from now?'* was attended and addressed by Ministers from Federal and State Governments and by various experts from the multicultural sector. Partly based on this conference, research papers and community reflections were published in 2004, titled *'Polonia in Australia: Challenges and possibilities in the new millennium.'* Further informed advocacy was documented in other research reports: *'Lest we forget: Pre-migration life experiences of older Poles'* (2004); *'Aspirations of Polish young people'* (2005); *'Before it's too late: Domestic violence in the Polish community'* (2005); and a Polish business directory (2005). The organisation also represented the ethnic sector (through ECCV) on the Victorian Government Department of Human Services' HACC Departmental Advisory Committee.



Patrycja Toczek APCS  
Coordinator of Volunteers  
and Elzbieta Marek APCS  
long term volunteer,  
together with other  
representatives of the  
Polish community



Author: Monika Wiench  
Publication: Lest We  
Forget - Telling Stories of  
WWII Displaced Persons

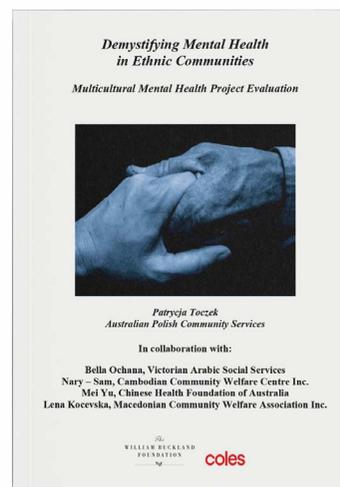


While staff numbers fluctuated, on the whole they were increasing, with 50 paid staff and 50 volunteers in the financial year 2002-2003, increasing to 78 paid staff and 60 volunteers in 2003-2004 and slightly going back to 60 paid staff and 70 volunteers in 2004-2005.

The years 2005 to 2008 saw more and different ethnic groups being supported by APCS, with 15 projects and initiatives assisting migrants from Ukraine, Latvia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia and providing assistance to other ethnic organisations. In 2006, the organisation was providing care packages to ageing Eastern European people in addition to the Polish people in the Northern and Western Metropolitan Regions of Melbourne and in the Geelong area. A partnership was formed with the *Russian Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria* in 2006-2007 for the *Workplace Participation Program* and the *Multicultural Mental Health Project* was implemented in 2007-2008 together with four other ethno-specific organisations.

↑  
Magda Wyrwicz, APCS Care Manager, attending the Polish Women Forum organised by APCS, 2006

→  
"Demystifying Multicultural Mental Health" by Patrycja Toczek, published in 2009, addresses challenges in mental health among ethno-specific communities. The book explores a collaborative project led by the Australian Polish Community Services to destigmatize mental health and improve access to services. Despite limitations, the project emphasizes the need for sustained support and resources, suggesting long-term funding and collaboration between mainstream and ethno-specific sectors





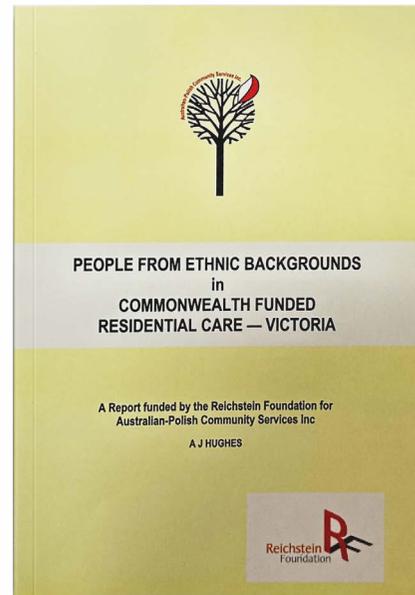
1/ Official launch by Sir James Gobbo, Governor of Victoria, of the Reichstein Report, authored by Alexis Hughes, APCS Aged Services Manager, about Polish older persons in nursing homes in Victoria. Dr Sylwia Greda Bogusz, APCS President, Alexis Hughes, Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO, QC, Elizabeth Drozd, Krista Momot from the Reichstein Foundation which funded this research, Prof Des Cahill, APCS Committee Member, Voula Messimeri Kianidis, CEO of Australian Greek Welfare Society (now known as Pronia) and Chairperson of FECCA, The Hon. Telmo Languiller MP for the Western Metropolitan Region, 2008



2/ The Hon. Telmo Languiller Member for the Western Metropolitan Region, Elizabeth Drozd, Prof. Desmond Cahill OAM, APCS Committee Member, at the launch of the Health Promotion Plan, 2007



3/ Over the 40 years, APCS/AMCS has offered hundreds of students work experience opportunities. This is Duxin Wulan and Sarah Choul, at our office in Maidstone in 2009



As APCS continued to provide core services across the years – such as *Planned Activity Groups*, *Volunteer Visiting* programs, support for elderly or disabled people in their own homes and the *Polish Older Persons Outreach Program* – new issues arising in the community were investigated and new programs and initiatives were trialled, often in partnership with other organisations. New initiatives in 2005-2006 included the piloting of computer classes, a *Well for Life Project* (a healthy ageing day care program), a volunteer transport program and a mental health awareness-raising campaign to reduce suicides and 2006-2007 saw a partnership being formed with Cambridge International College, supporting and facilitating placements for welfare students. Other projects in that financial year included a dementia awareness program, improving care in nursing homes and hostels, a Polish Women’s forum and the completion of a *Health Promotion Plan*.

Various partnerships were established in 2007-2008; for example, *Planned Activity Groups* (PAGs) were set up in Melton and Carrum in partnership with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the City of Melton. Other partnerships included the work-literacy *WELL* program with Northern TAFE, collaborations with *Foodbank* and *QUIT*, and a (state funded) *Supported Access*



Seniors during a Social Support Group gathering, at the Filipino Australian Friendship Association of Geelong (FAFAG), 2013

*Pilot Project* to build capacity in other agencies to support older people from different ethnic backgrounds in accessing a range of services. All this confirmed that APCS’s way of doing things included creating and maintaining fruitful collaborations to respond to community needs and aspirations.

Confirming and acknowledging the positive results of APCS’s attempts at partnering with other ethnic communities and organisations and the efforts the organisation deployed in establishing a sound research basis.



“From many lands, one family”

Mila Cichello, member of the Committee of Management of the *Filipino Australian Friendship Association of Geelong* (FAFAG), had this to say:

**//** My first introduction to APCS/AMCS was through the CEO, Elizabeth, at a conference on Partnerships in Culturally Appropriate Care in the early-2000s. I became aware of their work delivering services not just to the older Polish, but to other ethnic communities as well. Over time, the organisation became known for developing project partnerships, crossing council geographical areas and uniting like-minded migrant communities.

I remember Elizabeth, as CEO, proactively engaging with university researchers in ageing from 2005 onwards. APCS/AMCS introduced evidence-based planning to guide service delivery and was one of the first health providers presenting value-for-money and efficiency modelling. The organisation's strong links with the academic sector were evident when the Department had consultative forums on public health and ageing, because they were able to cite hard data as basis for their project proposals, presenting research of a high quality. They showed plans for implementation, evaluation measures for accountability, and their reports reflected the outcomes they delivered.

**From my own experience of the FAFAG association partnering with APCS/AMCS to form the PAG Program in Geelong, I can say that the organisation has become one of the leaders in multicultural community services in the last 25 years. One of the strengths that makes it stand out in the sector is their ability to forge positive relationships – not just with government departments, but with key stakeholders such as academia, research institutions, advocacy bodies, various ethnic communities and with other service providers when the language of the day is competition and market forces.**

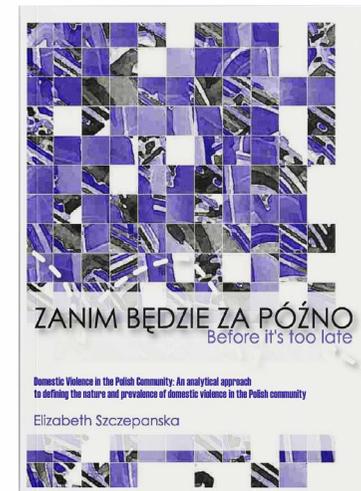
The organisation thus increased its public profile, Board members and staff regularly meeting government personnel and speaking at conferences and forums (2006-2007 *Annual Report*). Public presentations and information sharing included the creation of a video about its services and programs and exhibitions about APCS volunteers in 2005-2006 and about the Polish community in Ballarat, titled '*From migrant to citizen*,' in 2007-2008. The research and evidence-based report '*Depression in the Polish community*' was a substantial contribution and was launched in 2005-2006 by the Chairman of *Beyond Blue*, Jeff Kennett.



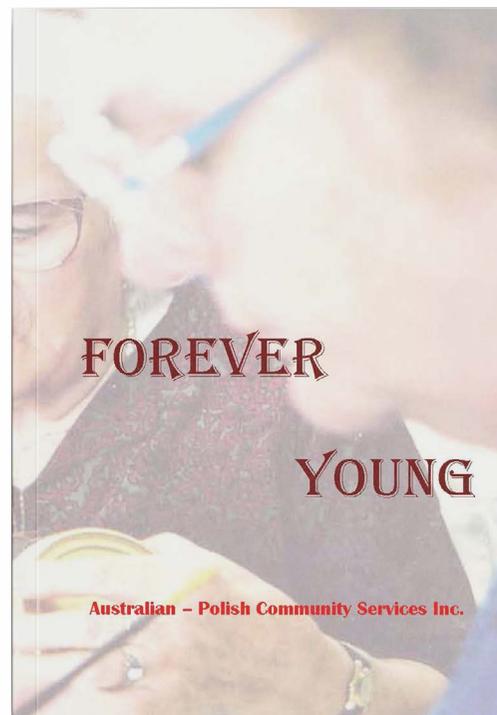
1/ Dr George Luke-Kozika  
Polish Honorary Consul  
in Victoria, Bill Nowak,  
Jeff Kennett AC

2/ Dalal Samar and Dr. Linda Sidor, both  
Victorian Multicultural Commissioners,  
along with Elizabeth Drozd and Jeff  
Kennett AC, at the launch of Depression  
in the Polish Community

Domestic Violence in the  
Polish Community Report



Importantly, aiming to assist other ethnic organisations, APCS produced *'Making it happen: A resource kit to assist in developing services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities'* in 2006, and the following year, *'Our secret lives'* (stories of living with disability) was completed and two major research projects were carried out – a survey of the needs and issues of Polish Senior Citizen clubs in Victoria and a Volunteer Scoping Project. In 2007-2008, another two publications were launched – the *'Health Promotion Plan, Forever Young'* (stories of Polish migration) and the *'Reichstein Project Report'* (focused on people from ethnic backgrounds living in Commonwealth-funded residential care in Victoria). They were considerable additions to the organisation's body of research, shared and presented in the public arena and especially for the benefit of Australian ethnic communities.



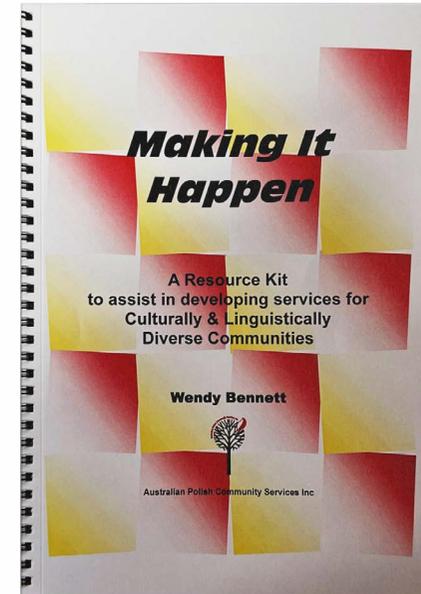
Forever Young Publication:  
Author Monika Wiench, 2007



Stories of Polish Background People with  
Disability: Author Monika Wiench, 2007



Making it Happen launched by George Lekakis AC (former Chairperson of the Victorian Multicultural Commission) and Elizabeth Drozd, Wendy Bennett, fourth person unknown, 2006



Acting President Professor Desmond Cahill, writing in the *Annual Report 2005-2006*, noted:

**// ... As an academic and researcher who works across many immigrant and ethnic communities, I can publicly attest that APCS is one of the best managed, if not the best managed, ethnic welfare and health agency in Victoria. It is perceived as active, innovative, strong and determined in achieving its mission, most especially in caring for the many Poles who are in the twilight of their lives and for other Poles who have encountered difficulty in their lives of resettlement here in Australia...**

This is certainly a great endorsement after about 25 years of service!

Attending to the substantial diversification and expansion of programs, service users and geographical areas in the previous few years, in 2008-2009 the APCS Board was expanded, the operational charter reviewed and a stronger focus placed on corporate governance and strategic planning. Other period highlights included a range of liaisons and networking activities, for example, with the Presidents of Polish organisations in Victoria, the Federal Ethnic Communities Council in Australia, and various key Ministers and bureaucrats at state and federal levels. APCS also celebrated the 15th anniversary of the *Community Aged Care Packages Program* and its volunteer programs. At this point, paid staff remained steady at 60 whilst volunteer numbers increased to one hundred.



Guests of Honour at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration: John Pater APCS Vice President, Wanda Dabkowski, the Hon. Bill Shorten Member for Maribyrnong, Cr Sam David JP Mayor of Brimbank Council, Sisto Malaspina, 2008



APCS organised networking session with Victorian-based Polish interpreters and translators, 2004

A new director, Russell Howard (President 2008-2016, 2020-present), joined the Board in 2008, bringing extensive experience from his previous executive and non-executive director roles across a wide range of organisations. Except for four years (2016-2020), his directorship has continued to this day, providing leadership in highly effective governance and strategy reforms. Russell shared his memories of how he became involved in APCS/AMCS and how he perceived and played his role in the organisation.

## // Russell Howard's story:

At the end of 2007, Leadership Victoria held a function, involving member organisations and volunteers. As I was leaving and standing at the lift, I met Elizabeth and said: *'Oh, you're looking for a director?'* and she said *'yes'*. I added I was interested in joining a Not for Profit Board. I advised her *'I'm not Polish'* and she said *'Well, you'd be perfect; we are looking for a non-Polish person who can add value to the organisation'*.

...At the AGM in October 2008, the President did not turn up and resigned and I became the President of APCS. I then started to get more deeply involved in the organisation. I could see at that stage, NFPs relying on public funding via Governments really didn't have a lot of corporate governance; there was a lack of strategic planning, risk management, proper financial delegations, policies, OH&S and Board Charter. I started to introduce appropriate organisational governance frameworks based

on my corporate experience. I set objectives for Elizabeth including that APCS had to make a surplus, so we could invest in staff training, computers, etc. I then had monthly meetings with Elizabeth – reviewing her objectives, actions from Board meetings, what was happening in the broader community and providing her direction and development. I've always been very keen on making sure staff grow and develop... That's how it all started. We set objectives, goals and governance requirements and stuck to them... When I became President, I made it perfectly clear that I would be President on the Board as long as the organisation was a-religious and a-political and *the focus was very clearly on our clients*. We developed a vision and values, which I wrote up as guiding behaviours. At the top was the client. This was the only reason we existed – to meet the needs of clients.

## 2000

Significant increase in federal funding for the Community Aged Care Package Program, doubling it in size

## 2000/ 2001

Move to 77 Droop Street, Footscray  
Expansion of services to Geelong and Dandenong  
Creation and implementation of a 'Cultural Planning Tool' to guide the organisation's culturally responsive support

## 2001

Significant increase in federal and state funding for the Home and Community Care Program

Launch of the '10 Year Polish Aged Care Plan 2001-2011'

## 2003

Conference – *Where to from now?*

## 2004

Amalgamation between *Australian Polish Community Services* and *Polish Association of Kingsville and Ladies Auxiliary*, which became known as *Australian Polish Community Services – Millennium House/ Kingsville Inc.*



Strategic and logistical assistance to the Australian Polish Historical Society with regards to the 25th anniversary of Solidarity exhibition at Victorian Parliament

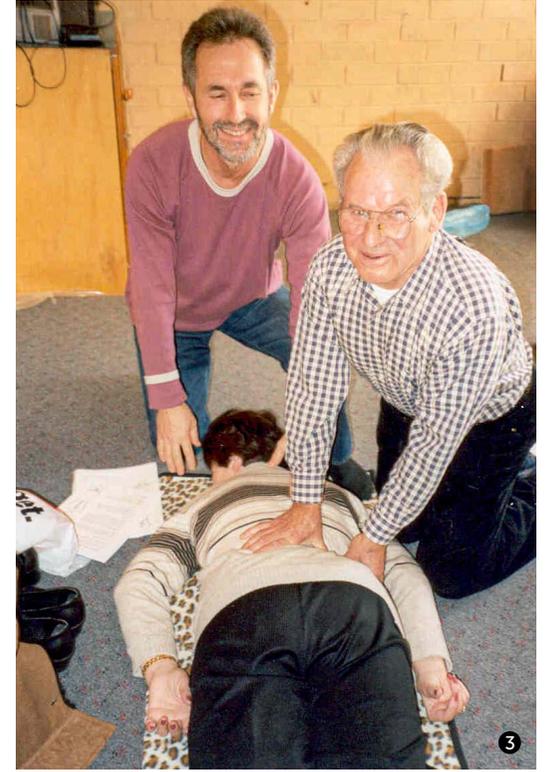
**2004/  
2005**

**2005/  
2009**

A number of important research-based publications informing the aged care and broader multicultural sectors

Expanded Board, charter and corporate governance, including review of strategic plan

**2008/  
2009**





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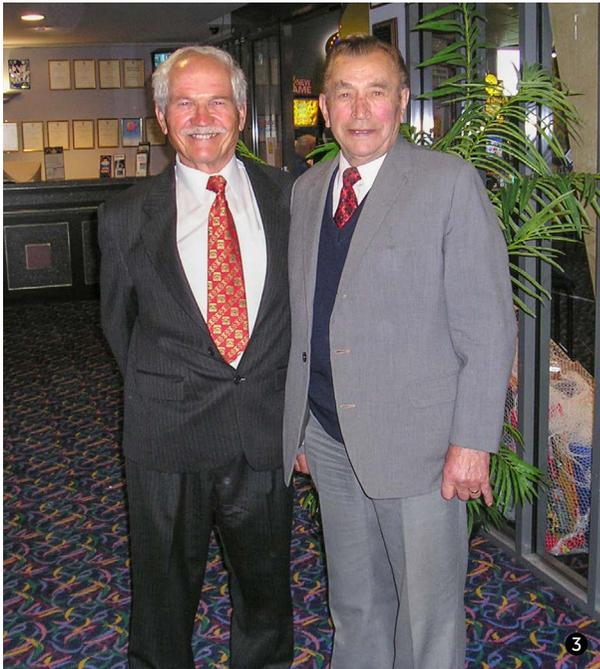


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- 1/ Maryla Sapieja, long term APCS volunteer, demonstrating exercises for seniors, 2005. APCS has been a champion of active ageing, community engagement and gentle exercises for seniors for the last 40 years
- 2/ Members of the Polish Seniors Club in St. Albans and APCS staff representatives. APCS has had a very close working relationship with this club for 30 years
- 3/ The late Maciej Ura demonstrating massage to Polish seniors
- 4/ Ms Jill Morgan previous CEO of MAV, together with Polish traditional dancers at the Pier Festival in Melbourne, organised by Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV), of which AMCS has been a member for many years
- 5/ Launch of the Faces of Goodwill exhibition organised by APCS to pay tribute to the hundreds of volunteers who have supported our organisation over many years. Cr Michael Clark Maribyrnong City Council, Agatha Pawlowski APCS Secretary of the Committee of Management
- 6/ Xmas lunch celebration by clients and staff of the APCS programs in Geelong, at the White Eagle House, Breakwater
- 7/ A concert to celebrate the arrival of the first Pole in Australia, at Melba Hall, University of Melbourne, 2003
- 8/ APCS Ukrainian-speaking care staff, Elizaveta Ischenko, Direct Care Staff, and Oksana Demar Care Advisor, with a client
- 9/ Mrs Teresa Skrypko, Committee Member of the Polish Senior Citizens Club in Ballarat and APCS volunteer, promoting the Polish culture and her heritage to the community in Ballarat
- 10/ APCS volunteers during an outing to Healesville, 2008
- 11/ APCS Coordinator of Volunteers Ewelina Kwiatkowska and a client, Mrs Krystyna Gruba. Preparing a grave of a loved one for the All Saints Day commemoration, 2007





1/ APCS representatives attended the 50th anniversary of the Polish Association of Kingsville and Ladies Auxiliary (PAKLA), at Millennium House, 2003. In photo: Jan Skiba (PAKLA President) and Alicja Michalski (PAKLA Deputy President)



2/ AMCS Volunteers and Staff visit Victorian Parliament House and are hosted over a morning tea by two Members of Parliament, The Hon. Gavin Jennings and Sang Minh Nguyen MP Western Region, 2003

4/ Con Pagonis – Manager of Department of Immigration, Elizabeth Drozd, John Williams – State Manager Department of Immigration, Prof. Desmond Cahill OAM, during a departmental visit to our office in Droop St. Footscray, 2006

3/ Roman Skrypko, President of the Polish Senior Citizens Club in Ballarat and Waclaw Kaska, President of the Polish Senior Citizens Club in Albion at the 5th anniversary of the Ballarat Club, which was also attended by APCS representatives

5/ APCS Volunteers getting ready for a trip on the iconic Black Bird boat tour along the Maribyrnong River, 2004

6/ Group photo of representatives of the National Heritage Grants recipients, of which APCS was one of, at the front of the National Library of Australia, 2006



Launch of Polish Migrants Stories, authored by Monika Wiench at Victorian Parliament, 2007



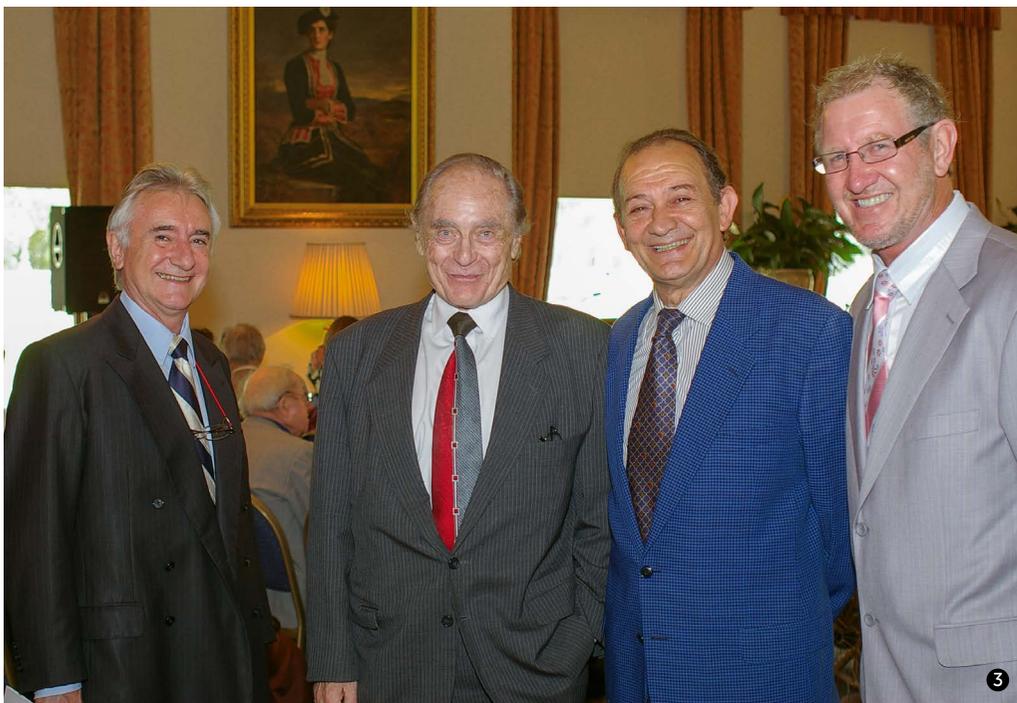
1/ Skrypko Family Musical Ensemble, performing at the APCS organised 60th anniversary afternoon reception held Government House Melbourne, to commemorate the arrival of the largest wave of Polish refugees, known as Displaced Persons, which occurred between 1947-53, 2006

2/ Miss Polonia visiting the APCS office to meet staff and clients, 2007

3/ Recipients of the annual Seniors of the Year Awards at Government House, in the presence of the Governor of Victoria HE David de Kretser, Victorian Premier, The Hon. John Brumby, The Hon. Lisa Neville, Minister for Senior Victorians. Edward Bialy, President of the Polish Senior Citizens Club in Rowville is one of the Finalists, following a nomination by one of APCS staff, 2007

4/ APCS nominated Polish community leaders and volunteers following being awarded the VMC Meritorious Awards, Government House, 2007





- 1/ Members of the Committee of Management of APCS, Russell Howard, John Pater, Pauline van Dort, Barbara Swiatkowski, Ron Horfiniak, at the 2008 APCS Annual General Meeting
- 2/ Elizabeth Drozd, as Victorian Multicultural Commissioner, joined thousands of multicultural leaders and community members in marching to support the work for harmony
- 3/ Eric Rybar (Cordon Bleu Agency), Richard Frank (husband of late Lilian Frank), Sisto Malaspina (co-owner of Pellegrini Espresso Bar) and John Pater, APCS Committee Member for many years, at the reception at Government House
- 4/ Prof Des Cahill OAM, APCS Committee Member, Elizabeth Drozd and Dr Andrzej Jaroszynski, Polish Ambassador in Australia, visiting the APCS office in 2008
- 5/ Polish Association of Kingsville and Ladies Auxiliary and the Australian Polish Community Services amalgamate as one organisation to be known as Australian Polish Community Services – Millennium House/ Kingsville Inc. Meeting of APCS representatives with PAKLA Committee of Management, 2005

# 2010-2023: Further expansion, governance consolidation with 'care' remaining the central focus

## Context

As stated in the APCS *Annual Report for 2009-2010*: 'Last year has continued to see economic and political uncertainty which has impacted on all NFPs and community-based organisations. There is increased demand for funding of programs and services, limited resources and skilled staff shortages. Australia has a diverse ageing population and the Federal and State Governments are looking to simplify and rationalise the delivery of community care' (p.6). The following year's *Annual Report* also noted: 'increasing corporate governance requirements by government' (AMCS AR 2010-2011; 2013-2014).

Polish people who had arrived during the 1980s' 'second immigration wave' were ageing and started to require specialised support in the present decade. At the same time, the number of Polish community members had stabilised if not reduced and the organisation had rapidly extended its support to other ethnic communities where similar and other needs were also identified. Indeed, the numbers of older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were – proportionally – increasing faster than the population as a whole.

This led **Australian Polish Community Services** (APCS) to 'update' its name in 2011, becoming the **Australian Multicultural Community Services** (AMCS) and by 2015 the organisation had evolved from an ethno-specific community organisation into a mainstream multicultural service provider and NGO (Dogan 2015:7). As anticipated, the Federal Government's 'Consumer Directed Care' model (CDC) for aged services across Australia was introduced early-2017, opening up the *Home Care Package* program to market forces (AMCS AR 2016-2017:2). Since the introduction of the *Consumer Directed Care* funding model, AMCS achieved the biggest organisational growth, in terms of clients and communities supported.

From July 1st 2019, new aged care quality and safety standards – said to be 'consumer-focused' – were also introduced (AMCS AR 2019-2020) and in early-2021, the *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety* released its report, leading to growth in federal and state funding to support older people, as well as increased governance requirements tied to this funding.

Less anticipated were the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and other measures starting in March 2020, with restrictions on direct contact radically affecting the ways in which services could be delivered. Alongside this, a noticeable Australia-wide decline in formal volunteering also affected AMCS, albeit to a lesser extent than many other volunteer-involving services.

Finally, many factors mentioned in the contextual statement introducing the APCS story during the 2000-2010 period continued to make their impact felt. As economist Richard Holden suggested in a speech for the National Press Club on the 17th of October 2023: *'In 1996, just 12% of Australians were aged over 65, but today that figure has grown to 16% and by 2060 it will be 20%. And of course, because the total population is rising, there will be a lot more elderly Australians. We have fewer than 600,000 Australians over 85 years of age today. In 2060, that's projected to be more than 1.5 million people.'*

Given the other factors Holden mentioned – a worsening economy, the consequences of the need for decarbonisation, the gradual decline in the quality of education and training – the nation will have its work cut out to provide adequate care for all its citizens.

# Organisational developments

In 2009-2010, APCS had embarked on a process of fundamental change, including a move to new premises in Maidstone in 2010. As recounted by CEO Elizabeth Drozd:

**// The key highlight for APCS during the 2009-2010 financial year has been the move to new, larger and better premises. APCS is now able to offer staff a spacious, modern and well-equipped office. The extra space even allows us to share our office with other organisations, e.g. outreach staff from a Migrant Resource Centre, and have larger meetings and functions for our community and volunteers. An additional highlight has been the official opening of the office in April 2010 by the Honourable Bill Shorten MP, in the presence of Mr Witold Krzesinski, Chargé d'affaires at the Polish Embassy in Canberra and many other distinguished guests and community representatives from the ethno-specific and multicultural sector... (APCS 2009-2010 Annual Report).**

As mentioned, the organisation changed its name to *Australian Multicultural Community Services* (AMCS) in February 2011, reflecting the deliberate expansion of its service focus from the Polish community to other ethnic communities (from its inception, APCS had collaborated with other ethnic communities and their organisations; Desmond Cahill explains: *'The multicultural focus will always have a raison d'être as long as we have immigration, which we will have into the foreseeable future... In the West, people from a multicultural background are attracted to our organisation. AMCS has a good image at a governmental level too.'*)



↑  
Guests at the opening of the office in Maidstone, including Wanda Dabkowski, 2010

→  
Official opening of the APCS Maidstone office in the presence of Natalie Hutchinson MP, Elizabeth Drozd, Mrs Anna Dzaman 100 years old APCS client, the Hon. Bill Shorten, Member for Maribyrnong, 2010



This expansion also applied to the extension of AMCS's geographical reach, the diversification of the types of services provided, the numbers of people supported and the associated revenue for the organisation. Elizabeth Drozd illustrates the spirit in which this expansion should be understood:

**// [At one point in time] we got \$20,000 from the Victorian Government to create a financial tool which was applicable nation-wide. We had two independent accountants working on it. We could use it but we also made it free of charge to other organisations... (This is an example of) coming up with the idea of what was needed..., assessing the need and then finding a solution, for which we then seek funding. If there are no (outside) funds, we may do it with the resources of the organisation. There are plenty of things we have done without funding. For example, the *anti-ageing art competition*, we don't get one dollar for that. We have done it for three years ... and it is our contribution to anti-ageist advocacy, ageism being the most subtle discrimination that exists in society.**

In 2009-2010, particular attention was paid to corporate governance, including a *Risk Management Strategy*; APCS/ AMCS also partnered with *Great Connections*, established to link with professional pro-bono volunteers assisting not-for-profit organisations. This partnership lasted several years, leading to mentorship for staff, a Human Resources review undertaken by a HR consultant and the formation of a *Future Services* subcommittee. New funding for a variety of projects

was obtained, including '*Leading the Way*' (aimed at community strengthening in the multicultural sector), CALD computer training, a *Community Partners Program* and emergency relief for struggling community members.



Fay Gilbert from Leadership Victoria and Elizabeth Drozd

AMCS's capacity as an education provider greatly expanded in 2010-2011, when its new *RTO (Registered Training Organisation)* status became fully operational, offering its first dual Certificate Course. While some core ongoing programs were reshaped and renamed, new projects proliferated, including *Health Promotion* and *Employment Support* and various cross-cultural initiatives.



AMCS becomes a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and this is one of the first group of students undertaking a Certificate III in Aged Care, 2011

Ever since, AMCS's services and funding base have continued to expand; a broader based business model to meet changes in government policy for 2011-2012 saw a *'Multicultural Community Services Exchange Project'* come into being (exploring how ethnic communities can collaborate more closely and support each other) as well as a partnership with *Uniting Care Community Options (UCCO)* for the first *Polish Respite Day Centre* in the Eastern Melbourne Metropolitan Region, anticipating an Eastern European respite day centre the following year. Partnerships with *Kalyra Care* (formerly *Ukrainian Elderly People's Home*) for the PAG program; with the *Footscray Community Legal Centre*, providing financial counselling at AMCS premises; new HACC partnerships; collaboration with the *University of the 3rd Age (U3A)* to improve access for CALD people; small projects including a *Local History Project* about the Polish community in Victoria and beginning research on dementia in 10 communities completed the additional initiatives for that year.



Celebrating a 10 year partnership with Uniting VIC TAS

A new mission statement (2011-2012) encapsulated the organisation's new direction and focus: *'To provide a range of home-based aged care support, advocacy, adult education and training, financial assistance, support services and associated projects for clients and communities from a multicultural background.'* In 2012-2013, respite services were extended to several Eastern European communities in partnership

with UCCO and relationships with the Ethiopian and Filipino communities were established, supported by HACC funding. AMCS also began providing accredited aged care courses, reflecting its expansion in the education and training space. Again, Mila Cichello from the *Filipino Australian Friendship Association* of Geelong, comments on the help received from AMCS:

As an innovative organisation, AMCS led with the vision of a multicultural provider of metropolitan-wide services that extended to regional parts of Victoria. When I became a carer for my elderly parents and a leader in the Filipino community, I initiated a PhD study exploring the health care needs of ageing Filipinos, particularly in rural and regional areas. I first approached AMCS to provide social support services to Filipino seniors in Geelong in 2011. When the Federal aged care funding came through, AMCS partnered with our Club FAFAG in establishing the *Multicultural Planned Activity Groups (PAG)* and we are proud to say that the PAG Program has been looking after Geelong seniors from *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse* communities every week since 2013.

I think what has sustained the organisation through the big changes in the aged care industry and in the health sector to this day is AMCS's ability to set long-term vision, build partnerships, skill up its multicultural workforce and deliver culturally-sensitive services.

IndianCare Services were expanded in Geelong and more support was provided for carers, including in Wantirna, Ferntree Gully and Pascoe Vale. New initiatives that year included health promotion about diabetes awareness, the development of a *Consumer Directed Care Financial Tool* and the expansion of accredited courses. Premium Care partnerships were strengthened and expanded as well, supporting ethnic seniors to stay living independently at home.



Jaya Manchikanti,  
President IndianCare, with  
Manjit Singh and  
Elizabeth Drozd

## // **Jaya Manchikanti and the IndianCare story**

Jaya Manchikanti is President of *IndianCare*, which supports the Indian community in Victoria. Jaya migrated to Australia as a young child in 1970, and she has worked across a range of not-for-profit organisations, local and state governments in Victoria for the last three decades.

AMCS has a close relationship with Indian Care, having assisted Jaya to set up the organisation in 2013 to respond to an evidently high need for support in the local Indian community. According to Jaya, the story goes back even further, as she came to know CEO Elizabeth Drozd twenty years ago when APCS played a leadership role in helping small organisations that provided HACC services to respond to a Departmental audit. In 2012, Elizabeth and Des Cahill, who was on the AMCS Board, approached Jaya saying that there didn't seem to be a welfare agency active for the Indian community. At that time, Elizabeth was wearing the hat of a Victorian Multicultural Commissioner as well as being the CEO of AMCS and Des was on the Board of AMCS as well as being an academic involved in multicultural research and education. They offered their experience and support to set up an organisation for the Indian community. As expressed by Jaya, *'when two people with all that experience and standing promise you moral backing, that gave me courage to set it up'*.

The support from AMCS lasted for about 5 years and in 2018, Indian Care received its first government funding.

Today, Indian Care is a thriving and well-respected not-for-profit organisation supporting the welfare and wellbeing of people of South Asian origin living in Victoria. Jaya further comments: *'AMCS's support lasted for about 5 years; we established Indian Care in 2013 and it lasted till 2018 till we received our first government funding and that was when we were slowly able to wean off from their support. The good thing with AMCS was that they never interfered with what and how we operated; it was always: you do it your way and when you need us you can call on us... I hope that they will continue to support and advocate for specific welfare and social agencies to evolve and keep working and advocating for the need for specificity in our approach to cultural and ethnic communities, as well as advocating for the multicultural sector overall.'*

The year 2014-2015 again saw ongoing geographical and cultural expansion of AMCS services, with new activity groups (PAGs) for Chinese people in Melbourne and the multicultural community in Geelong. Support for migrants in financial hardship was provided across Metropolitan Melbourne – in the West, North-West, North-East and inner regions. Training and employment pathways were also provided for CALD women in Melbourne’s West.

Alongside the development of new projects and programs, core services – such as care packages to assist elderly frail and disabled people living in their own home – continued; in May 2015, the organisation was put on high alert by the Federal Government’s announcement that, from March 2017, funding for home care packages would be allocated directly to consumers and that *Home Care* and *Commonwealth Home Support Program* packages were to be consolidated into a single system. Sector responses were said to include employing more casual workers, engaging in mergers/acquisitions and striving to be a low-cost rather than a quality provider (AR 2014-2015:2).

AMCS strategically met the challenges associated with these major changes to aged care services and its client base and services continued to expand in 2015-2016; for example, 40 additional Home Care Packages were approved and Level 3 and 4 packages were offered with improved support to existing clients as well as attracting new service recipients.



Rohan, Sophie, Elizabeth, Jadeep and Arnel, members of the AMCS and Apex Institute Jobs Victoria Employment Team

## // Sinisha Krstov's story

In 2013, Sinisha left his home country, Macedonia, to settle in Australia with his future wife. Her family came from his own home town, although his father-in-law had migrated here in 1982 and raised his family here. When Sinisha first arrived, he initially felt overwhelmed with how different this country looked. Then he started looking into organisations and groups he could connect with and learn *'how things work in this country'* and how he might establish himself professionally. He came to the country highly qualified, with a double Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and Social Policy and a Masters in International Relations and Diplomacy. As with many migrants, the pathway into suitable work was not straightforward. Ten years later, Sinisha is still with AMCS and is proud that in his role he has supported over 2,500 individuals to access, understand and navigate services. Actually, he says, that it will be 10 years on the 4th of February 2024, *'a reason to celebrate!'*

As Sinisha tells it: *'When I started the process of recognition of my qualifications in this country, I started looking into organisations that work closely with people from migrant backgrounds, people from diverse backgrounds. I was lucky enough that a friend of my family pointed me to AMCS. So I started not long after that, volunteering for this organisation, office volunteering and a diverse range of tasks and I was using the opportunity to assist people in the organisation and*

*learn about programs – how do social services work in Australia? (I had) the opportunity to learn and feel welcome in a safe environment where a lot of people will have migrant backgrounds and accents when they speak. You can hear that in the corridors, (people) talking about where they come from. These things made me feel comfortable and safe and I fell in love with this place and everything about it. So following that, I had an opportunity in 2014 to apply for a particular position in this organisation and I was successful – so I became an Access and Support Coordinator helping people accessing services across various areas. What made me good doing my job was this comprehensive understanding and lived experience of what a potential barrier someone has coming from a cultural and linguistically diverse background.'*



↑  
Sinisha Krstov and participants of an Aged Care, Education and Employment program

←  
Italian Ladies Friendship Group during the 'Be Connected' Project at the Coburg Library with digital mentoring sessions. Facilitator Bianca Glazebrook

Additional new projects included: a digital strategy for a seniors project in the City of Maribyrnong; an ACFE women's education and employment project in the Western Metropolitan Region; and *Project Learning/Pathways for CALD Women's Futures in South-Western Victoria*. Meanwhile, core AMCS programs continued apace, such as the volunteer visiting program, social support groups and community development initiatives linked with senior citizens clubs.

As anticipated, the Federal Government's *Consumer Directed Care* model (CDC) for aged services across Australia was introduced in early-2017; thanks to the organisation's preparatory work during previous years, AMCS's financial position improved and client numbers further increased, including 40% more HACC service users from migrant communities in Victoria. Additionally, new training programs provided by the organisation in 2016-2017 included an *ACFE Multicultural Leadership course and Digital Literacy for Older Disadvantaged Victorians*.

Two noteworthy events in 2017/18 should be mentioned: AMCS's 35th anniversary celebration and the donation of a substantial property in Seddon, the 'Millennium House' by the *Polish Association of Kingsville and Ladies Auxiliary (PAKLA)*, as already referred to in other parts of this publication. The intention was for AMCS to move some of its operations/ programs there, thus maintaining it for PAKLA and the Polish community, based on the long-term goodwill built between the organisations and the formal terms of the gift.



Basia Swiatkowski, two AMCS volunteers, and Bo Rutecki (AMCS Marketing Advisor)

Multicultural Leadership Course inaugural participants many of whom remain in contact with AMCS, 2017



1,2/ AMCS 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, held at Victorian Parliament, 2017

3/ 35<sup>th</sup> AMCS Annual General meeting and fare-welling Russell Howard after nine years on the AMCS Board

4/ The Hon. Nick Wakling, Member for Ferntree Gully, Elizabeth Drozd, The Hon. Melissa Horne Member for Williamstown and Ryk Bliszczyk, AMCS President, during the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, at Queens Hall, Victorian Parliament, Melbourne, 2018

In the same year, AMCS extended the mentoring role it performed for many other organisations over the years; the organisation was invited to become part of a consortium to support two remote organisations to implement reforms (known as the *My Aged Care focused model*). To assist other organisations, *'Making it happen: A resource kit to assist in developing services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities'* was produced and AMCS supported the highest number of CALD people it had ever supported, employing 151 paid staff and 176 volunteers. The organisation kept growing with reported revenue of \$10 million for the first time in 2018-2019, along with increased client, volunteer and staff numbers, managing the largest government grant to date, \$1.8 million for a *Better Ageing Project: 'Moving for Life Program'*.





- 1/ Launch of the Surrey Bike initiative, 2021
- 2/ The Hon. Bill Shorten, his daughter, Medha Gunavaghana, Councillor Michael Clark, Mayor of City of Maribyrnong
- 3/ Launch of Moving for Life project
- 4/ Moving for Life CALD participants, enjoying their time together including dancing

All of these initiatives are infused with a spirit Sinisha Krstov describes as follows:

**// I think it's the organisational guiding behaviours – such as Clients First, understanding of diversity, quality, continuous improvement and also at the same time the can-do attitude of the organisation and the people who work here. All this creates a trust-based relationship with the communities and the individuals that we support, to provide the best support and services. I believe that's an imperative ...**

Following changes in government policies in 2019, renewed demands on governance and operations came about and on the 1st of July new 'consumer-focused' aged care quality and safety standards were introduced. In response and in preparation, AMCS provided staff education to drive the necessary cultural change towards implementing the new requirements, a continuous improvement program involving a *Clinical Governance Framework*, a *Client Voice Committee* and an *Occupational Health and Safety Committee*.



AMCS wishes to particularly acknowledge the expertise of Deb D'Costa, in her role as a Quality and Care Coordination Manager. It is due to her guidance that AMCS has had such successful transition to clinical care management and also how the organisation managed to provide safe care during the pandemic.

Obviously, no-one had predicted the major – catastrophic – change that was the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns, beginning in March 2020; it restricted face-to-face

contact with service users and other workers and volunteers. Nevertheless, AMCS successfully transitioned to remote communication, using platforms such as Skype, Zoom and Microsoft Teams; in fact, increased numbers of people were assisted in the financial year 2019-2020. While planned activities were disrupted, services were adapted and redeployed, including meal deliveries, entertainment packs, cotton face masks, a Pen Pal project, two newsletters, conducting *Bingo* by phone/SKYPE, online 'Moving for Life' classes and doubling support and relief services.

Deb D'Costa AMCS  
Quality and Care  
Coordinator Manager



- 1/ AMCS staff preparing Entertainment Packs for ethnic seniors during the early days of the pandemic
- 2/ Helen van Heemst, AMCS Receptionist, in the office every day during the pandemic and lockdown period, taking calls from our clients
- 3/ AMCS client receiving her Seniors Entertainment Pack during the Melbourne lockdown

In the beginning of 2020 AMCS experienced a governance crisis, resulting in a split Board which lasted more than three months. It was a difficult time for the organisation, especially as this occurred in the early months of Covid-19, but staff and clients were completely shielded from this situation. In the end, three Board members were not given an opportunity to pursue their agenda and four other members stood by AMCS when it needed it the most. In addition, at the 2020 AGM, AMCS's previous President and Treasurer returned to AMCS to stabilise the organisation and commence the implementation of an independent governance review, which had commenced in 2019.

In March 2021, *The Final Report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety* was tabled in Parliament, describing a national system in deep trouble. One central recommendation resonated: *A new aged care program that is responsive to individual circumstances and provides an intuitive care structure, including social supports, respite care, assistive technology and home modification, care at home and residential care. In particular, the new program will provide greater access to care at home, including clearing the home care waiting list.* This foreshadowed an increase in Federal and State funding to support elderly frail people living in their own homes and help them sustain connections with their communities – service modalities that had been central to AMCS's work and vision from its inception as APCS in 1983.

Following the Royal Commission, corporate governance requirements were strengthened, leading AMCS to change its legal status at the 2021 AGM from an Incorporated Association to a ***Company Limited by Guarantee***. The Board developed a new strategic plan including an integrated *Home and Health Care Business Model* (merging Home Care Package Programs and the Commonwealth Home Support Program) and strengthened its focus on corporate governance, financial development, organisational growth and monitoring service quality. **The AMCS Strategic Plan** has four goals:

1. An integrated Home/Health Care Model,
2. Contemporary Governance,
3. Service Growth,
4. Millennium House Upgrade

The strategic efforts of AMCS's Board and management appeared to bear fruit in 2020-2021, when the largest number of seniors and job seekers in the organisation's history were supported; there was also a marked increase in paid staff – to 207 (from 150 in 2019) – whilst the number of volunteers decreased from 188 to 169. As mentioned before, for several years, decreasing formal volunteering has been an Australia-wide trend and an accelerated decline was brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, in part because many volunteers are older or retired and hence necessarily watchful of their health, many not returning to the service (Biddle & Gray 2021). This trend also

continued at AMCS in 2021-2022, the number of volunteers dropping to 120, while staff numbers increased again, this time to over 220. As well as the general trend of declining volunteer numbers, the growth in paid staff numbers may reflect higher expectations of professionalism in the aged care workforce as required by government and as part of the ongoing reforms.

Key to AMCS's enduring success in providing support – initially and ongoing, to Polish people and increasingly to people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds – is a strong focus on core services and programs as well as flexibility, innovation and creativity in responding to emerging needs and a commitment to partnership and collaboration with other groups and organisations. This has been overseen and delivered by a passionate and committed Board, management, staff and volunteers. Many active programs are still recognisable and reflective of their earlier equivalents even before the 1990s – Home Care packages, volunteer visiting programs, social support groups, centre-based respite, information, referral and support and programs providing adult training and education or assistance to find work. It may be useful to offer one example of what recipients of *Home Care packages* think about the service they received from APCS/AMCS:

## // APCS Community Aged Care Packages – a personal story by Genia Sawczyn

My mother is very precious to me and since the unexpected death of my father almost 10 years ago I have been touched by her amazing resilience and have discovered a wonderful sense of humour that still shines through on good days. For the first few years she managed just fine, adopting a very positive attitude and actively engaging in community life in Ardeer. As her dementia progressed so did my anxiety about her living on her own. She's not answered the phone, has she had a fall? She can't remember what she had for lunch, has she eaten today? Has she remembered to take her medication? Years of social work experience gave me all of the theory around *'ageing in place.'* I'd spent many hours with carers going through the same scenarios... but it's a bit different when it's your own mother. She often says *'I never want to live in a nursing home.'* All I can do is reassure her that I don't want this either and that it would be the last resort.

As mum's main carer, the load of working full time and managing two households started to take its toll. The community care journey has been slow and frustrating. Getting her to accept minimal services was a struggle... The option of CACP came at a time when things were really getting to a critical point for me... So the opportunity to have someone else sit in the *'driver's seat'* (case management) was most welcome. Mum has been on CACP

for over a year now and during this time she has become much frailer and disengaged as a result of dementia. But she is content and feels supported by family and the other people who have become central to her life.

What has worked well: having staff who understand her culture and can communicate with her in Ukrainian and Polish; the routine and consistency; PAG attendance; attending *'The Club'* two times a week works really well for her; the social contact and stimulation has a positive effect on her level of alertness. Also knowing that she has two nutritious meals takes pressure off the family; flexibility of the service – for example, having services provided at my home when she was staying with me because of ill health; the genuine caring demonstrated by staff; case management has provided legitimacy to my concerns.

Without CACP my mother would now be in care and for her this would mean there would be *'no joy in old age.'* Congratulations to all the hard working staff at APCS for their approach to working with older people from a wide variety of backgrounds and the support that they provide to carers. May the program continue to go from strength to strength.



↑  
Rocco, Roberto Vassella, and Jadwiga Piotrowski during the Swamih project: various generations sharing wisdom during a session at a café in Seddon

←  
An image captured during our Senior Wisdom And the Mobile Information Hub (SWAMIH) program, showing an AMCS client with her grandchildren



↑  
Activities by the  
Evergreen Seniors Group

↓  
Westvale Men's Shed  
with local primary school  
children, building the AMCS  
multicultural tree

Against this constancy in services and purpose, the organisation has been willing, eager and able to adapt; a diversity of ethnic groups and age groups are now supported, with geographical expansion of services and multiple new partnerships and alliances. Many novel projects and a willingness to try out new approaches have been characteristic of APCS/AMCS; for example, the *'Mobile Information Van'* bringing information to seniors across the whole of Melbourne in 2018-2019; the 2019-2020 *'Share the Knowledge'* project, aimed at developing the capacities of multicultural communities and committees; the *'Multicultural Active Senior Festival'* in September 2020; the *'SWAMIH'* intergenerational project, with elders sharing their wisdom, experience and knowledge, including park bench conversations – called *Golden Talks* – which continued in an adapted form even during COVID-19 lockdowns; and community engagement projects in 2021-2022, including *'Smart Women Smart Money'* and *'Digital Piazza'*.

The solid research base – both directing and informing APCS/AMCS's work and raising public awareness – should be noted as well; over 30 research projects have been finalised, notably and generously contributing to all multicultural communities and organisations, including *'Making it happen: A resource kit to assist in developing services for culturally and linguistically diverse communities'* in 2006. This has exemplified the organisation's sincere intention to support and collaborate with other agencies and groups to meet the special support needs of diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic communities, while being strategic in managing its own viability and successful in meeting needs and aspirations of its own service users.



↑  
Viewing some of the finalists of the 2023 AMCS Art Against Ageism competition

←  
The Governor General viewing the 2023 Art Against Ageism exhibition and First Prize Winner



**Russell Howard**  
Chairperson of AMCS Board

Given his total of 14 years as Chair of the AMCS Board till the present, Russell Howard should have the last word:

**// AMCS evolving to meet governance requirements and community need**

Over the last few years, we have had to deal with many challenges: COVID-19; the Royal Commission Age Care recommendations; developing and implementing an integrated Home and Clinical Health Care business model; investing in new IT technology to better support our clients, staff and volunteers; addressing sector-wide workforce and skill shortages; changing our legal structure to be better placed to meet the Federal Government's age care reforms; developing Millennium House into a community resource centre; updating our Governance and Board Structures.

A lot of what we have been doing in the last few years changed the legal structure of the organisation.... We are registered under the Corporations Act, which brings its own set of regulatory requirements. The government wants to deal with organisations that are registered companies and have a broader presence than just local service providers. Governments want to deal with professional organisations rather than some of the smaller

community organisations. The sector is changing; a number of smaller organisations are falling by the wayside. Private operators are providing home care packages/ services. The whole nature of the industry is evolving...

Partnerships, collaborations, strategic alliances – you have to do it; for example, when the Federal Government announced millions of funding for IT development in the aged sector. These days you're better off getting with two or three other organisations and putting in a joint proposal... AMCS has been good at that, sharing knowledge and embracing different cultures. We have helped other organisations in getting their establishment, whether Polish or Indian or whatever. We all have our own cultures, but we are multicultural...



Name change from APCS to AMCS  
AMCS governance improvements

**2011**

Donation of  
Millennium House to  
AMCS by PAKLA

Board  
governance  
crisis

**2020**

Annual Art Against  
Ageism commences

**2021**

**2010**

Move to new premises in  
Maidstone

**2017**

Federal Government  
introduces new  
Consumer Directed  
Care Model

**2020/  
2021**

COVID-19 pandemic  
lockdowns

Change of AMCS's legal  
status from Incorporated  
Association to Company  
Limited by Guarantee

AMCS was awarded  
as a finalist by Cultural  
Diversity in Ageing  
for Excellence in  
Organisational  
Leadership and  
Excellence in Service  
Delivery in 2021

## AMCS Board of Directors 2022-2024

At the Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence, AMCS was honored as the winner of the Business Award. The awards were presented by the Victorian Multicultural Commission

Refurbishment of Millennium House commences

**2023**

**2022**

Elizabeth Drozd, CEO of AMCS, was honored as the national winner of the Executive Leader Award by LASA (Leading Age Services Australia), The Voice of aged care. This prestigious award recognizes executive leaders within the age services industry who demonstrate outstanding leadership and excellence through their dedication to the delivery of aged care and services



Rusell Howard  
Chairperson



Ron Horfiniak  
Company Secretary



Barbara Swiatkowski  
Director



Prof Desmond Cahill OAM  
Director



René Blaszk  
Director



Peter Biedak  
Director



Meena Vannitamby  
Director



Narelle Kent  
Clinical Director





1/ APCS organised Thank you Polonia concert 2010, at the Polish Sporting, Community and Recreation Centre in Albion, 2010. The Hon. Colleen Hartland MP, George Seitz MP, Indian background performing artist, Elizabeth Drozd, Jagdeep Singh Shergill Victorian Multicultural Commissioner, Federal MP, the Hon Dr Sharman Stone AM-Federal MP

2/ Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland for Victoria Dr George Luk-Kozika, The Hon. John Brumby Premier of Victoria, Krzysztof Malek Pianist, Elizabeth Drozd, at the Polish National Day Celebration organised by the Victorian Government

3/ AMCS volunteers visiting the National Gallery of Melbourne 2011, one of many outings organised by the AMCS Coordinators of Volunteers Team, 2011

4/ Cultural Diversity Day celebration lunch at the AMCS office in Maidstone, 2011

5/ 2010 Annual General Meeting and APCS Committee of Management, Prof. Des Cahill, Paul Walec, Guest speaker: Sandy Austin, Director, Health and Aged Care, Northern and Western Region, Department of Health, Barbara Swiatkowski, Russell Howard, Ben Loyd, Elizabeth Drozd (CEO), John Pater

6/ Clients outing to Mt Macedon, including mushroom picking and grilling sausages on bonfire, 2012







5

4/ Whenever we could and as much as we could, AMCS has supported the Western Eagles in their important community sport work, especially with regards to multicultural youth involvement including female soccer teams. In photo: Western Eagles representatives during a cheque donation from AMCS, with Elizabeth Drozd AMCS CEO, 2017



6

1/ 20th anniversary of the APCS/ AMCS Volunteer Programs, at Queens Hall, Victorian Parliament, Melbourne, 2012

2/ Gathering of Memory Lane Café, attended by HE Mrs Linda Dessau Governor of Victoria and Mr Tony Howard. In photo: Nadereh Edwards, Mr Howard, Mrs Dessau, Carer, Diana Stojkovska (CEO of Macedonian Community Welfare Association and Chau from the Chinese Memory Lane Café, 2017

3/ Chinese Social Support Group enjoy regular outings as their main activity, 2015

5/ Inaugural Grant ceremony, at AMCS, in 2018. \$50,000 in grants were given to community organisations from the AMCS Charitable Fund

6/ Launch of the Volunteer Information Kit for ethnic senior clubs, by the Hon. Minister for Multicultural Affairs The Hon. Robin Scott, Arzu Kayhan AMCS project worker, Betty Haralambours from the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) and other representatives, 2018





- 1/ Sing along at a Polana Camp in Healesville, 2019. A youtube clip of this event was viewed by more than 4000 people
- 2/ 2020 Annual General meeting of the Australian Filipino Community Services; an organisation with which AMCS works closely regarding a number of initiatives and programs
- 3/ Clients and volunteers, in front of the AMCS office getting ready for another successful blueberry picking trip to the Victorian Otways, 2019
- 4/ CALD mentoring project participants. AMCS has a proud record of sharing its expertise with other communities and CALD representatives, 2019
- 5/ CALD seniors enjoying a trip to the Dandenong Gardens





- 1/ Dr Medha Gunawardana representing AMCS at the National FECCA conference
- 2/ Gerard Mansour, Commissioner for Senior Victorians, Elizabeth Drozd, Tina Holgart -Clarke, CEO of COTA Victoria, the Hon. Luke Donnellan, Minister for Senior Victorians, launching the Ageing Well Report, 2020
- 3/ Gathering in front of Millennium House, to celebrate the donation of \$500,000 towards to the centre upgrade, attended by Liz Evans from the Westgate Tunnell Neighbourhood Fund, Dr Medha Gunawardana, Prof. Des Cahill, Katie Hall MP Member for Footscray, The Hon. Melissa Horne, Cr Cuc Lam Mayor of Maribyrnong Council and Elizabeth Drozd, 2021
- 4/ A Burmese dance group performing at the West Sunshine Neighbourhood House as part of a project called "The Whole Village into One Digital Stage", funded by the Department of Premier and Cabinet
- 5/ Elizabeth Drozd, on the way to receive the VMC Business Excellence Award for AMCS, from The Hon. Ross Spence Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Governor of Victoria, HE Linda Dessau AC CVO



Representatives from Council on the Ageing, AMCS, Katie Hall Member for Footscray, Office for the Commissioner of Senior Victorians and Municipal Association of Victoria, at the Art Against Ageism Exhibition official opening, 2022



Volunteering Geelong 2022 Awards ceremony



1/ Faten Alhelow and Medha Gunawardana receive the AUSactive Victorian Most Inclusive and/or Diverse Program Award, won by AMCS in 2022



2/ AMCS Quality Manager with representatives of an Indigenous aged care services, 2022



3/ Sharing of information between AMCS and an Indigenous care organisation in regional Queensland, 2022



4/ Polish Children's Choir in Melbourne, together with their conductor Magdalena Biadala-Sahingoez, performing at the Hon. Matthew Guy, Leader of the Opposition visit to Millennium House, to pledge \$1M election promise, to help renovate the centre, 2022





- 1/ The Hon Ross Spence, Minister for Multicultural Affairs (third from left) and Katie Hall (second from left) Member for Footscray, together with AMCS board members Prof. Des Cahill OAM and Ron Horfiniak Company Secretary, and Faten Alhelow, Manager of Social Support, Respite and Volunteer Program, during an announcement of \$500K Multicultural Infrastructure Grant to help with Millennium House upgrade, 2022
- 2/ The Hon Matthew Guy, Leader of the Victorian Opposition, together with other Members of Parliament, and AMCS Board Directors, in front of Millennium House, following the election pledge of \$1M, 2022
- 3/ After a long wait due to Covid-related delay, finally the AMCS multicultural tree (based on a similar tree at the headquarters of the United Nations in Washington, USA), is ready to be displayed and transported to the AMCS office in Maidstone, from the Westvale Men's Shed. Magdalena Biadala-Sahingoez, project manager, together with children from the Stevensville Primary School who worked on this project together with volunteers from the Westvale Community Centre Men's Shed
- 4/ Multicultural Tree Project team, volunteers and participants
- 5/ Several AMCS Management Team representatives, together with other multicultural community leaders, at the VMC 2022 Premier Gala celebration
- 6/ Elizabeth Drozd and Prof Des Cahill welcome HE Governor-General, David Hurley AC DSC (Rtrd) arrive to our office in Maidstone to celebrate the 40th anniversary of AMCS, 2023





- 1/ Guests at the meeting of the Governor-General of Australia and Mrs Linda Hurley
- 2/ Governor-General speaking to Abiola Akinbiyi, Board Director at the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and an active African community leader, at our 40th anniversary celebration
- 3/ Coptic Egyptian Women's Group at a strawberry farm. AMCS has a partnership with this Group over many years, 2014
- 4/ Mrs Janina Wojcik who made a donation to AMCS that helped to establish the AMCS Charitable Fund with the Australian Communities Foundation in 2015
- 5/ AMCS has been an accredited Learn Local organisation since 1993. Our signature program has been the establishment of the Multicultural Leadership Course. Veronica Kurufher from the Papua Community Association of Victoria and Shoheli Sunjida from the Bangladeshi community in the southern region of Melbourne
- 6/ Seniors dancing with representatives from a Vietnamese folkloric ensemble, during a Memory Lane Café gathering for several multicultural communities, 2018
- 7/ AMCS has been working closely with NintiOne, an Indigenous specialist consultancy. A meeting of the project team: Elizabeth Drozd, Andy Bubb, Ljubica Petrov and Deb D'Costa, during a project planning session at the AMCS office

# Conclusion

## Enduring focus on care for communities and community members

Since its inception as APCS, the organisation has posited *'care'* as its main purpose, initially providing support for ageing migrants and for new migrants arriving from Poland, assisting them in their integration in their new country, especially providing employment support and other services. Whilst such *'care'* initially was inspired by a strong sense of solidarity between and amongst Polish migrants and their descendants, the increasing professionalisation, institutionalisation and privatisation/commercialisation of welfare programs and their mainstreaming has posed a challenge to this spirit and its sustainability. The *relational quality* of *'care'* needs safeguarding and it is to be hoped that AMCS will continue its *Community Development and multiculturally* inspired programs complementing the operational aspects of the care it provides compliant with the formalities and expectations of the funding bodies.

As researchers and authors of this publication, based on our experience as evaluators and community and organisational development professionals with the Borderlands Cooperative, we offer the following reflections, with admiration and gratitude for the rich learning we have been allowed to gain from this experience.

**1. Importance of multiculturalism without the sub-text of 'mainstreaming' – i.e. the need to recognise the importance of '(cultural) difference' and to abiding need to continue and move towards a policy environment of 'inclusive diversity'.**

If *'inclusive diversity'* – which philosophically undergirds multicultural policy and practice – is to be maintained as it has by APCS/AMCS in the recent past and if it is to be more successfully supported and furthered especially against some major conservative cultural and economic forces, the organisation may need to even more deliberately engage in internal and external social change processes. It is hoped that attention for the cultural differences of the communities AMCS serves and with whom the organisation collaborates can be maintained; it is possible that AMCS needs an internal operating structure that not only 'respects' these differences but actively and visibly supports and enhances them through the innovative initiatives that historically have been a hallmark of the organisation. Externally, connections with ethnically and culturally diverse groups also will need sustained attention and support and remain connected with the organisation's internal processes.

**2. Importance of relationships and connections – with and between community members, community groups and organisations, and government. The importance of collaborations and alliances and fostering of community both in its own practice and in the 'sector'.**

The point about multiculturalism made in the previous comment is greatly enhanced and will be more easily sustained by APCS/AMCS's collaborative history since its inception. The mutual support displayed in the several instances in which the organisation collaborated with other migrant and ethnic groups from the start has paved the way to its formal name change and multicultural focus in 2011. Networking and collaboration in a policy environment and culture where agencies and organisations are invited to *'compete'* for funding are often fraught if not impossible. An environment in which political influences from local to federal government levels are potently at work and in which private economic interests and profit-making often lead to *'efficiencies'* detrimental to quality care and support, community involvement and interagency cooperation and mutual support and collaboration – let alone sector solidarity – may become difficult if not avoided. It is to be hoped that AMCS remains a beacon and example of (what we have come to call) mutually supportive *'interdependent and reciprocal autonomy.'*

### 3. Focus on research and evidence to guide activities, programs and advocacy

From its inception, APCS/AMCS has found time and space (and resources) to engage in highly relevant research in support of its ongoing and planned care and community development activities. Some of that research also served as evaluation of and reflection on its own practice and assisted in informing ongoing and future programs and activities as well as being presented in conferences. Against the general trend in the recent past to – either – forego meaningful, effective and participatory evaluative research – or – to outsource it to *'independent'* consultants too often limiting their work to the mere 'monitoring' of surface performance rather than base it on experienced outcomes for and impact on service recipients, the organisation's research projects, often in collaboration with other agencies and in conjunction with conferences, have been exemplary. It is to be hoped that this reflective and participatory 'in-house' attitude will be sustained and adequately supported in terms of time and staff commitment and professional proficiency.

### 4. Focus on responsible, strategic and forward-looking governance.

Given the change from association to company status, especially also to facilitate responding to government compliance and other obligations, the organisation's governance processes were consolidated; however, spaces for the creativity and the respect of cultural difference that was so much part of the organisation's strength may have been lost and/or need to be consciously and actively preserved and highlighted. It is hoped that the *'culture of compliance'* will not contribute to an unwanted form of *'mainstreaming'*, threatening the *'inclusive diversity'* AMCS wants to maintain as a hallmark of its vision and mission. Nor should it lead to forms of complacency as the organisation maintains its financial security but loses its multicultural vocation and commitment.

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# Appendices

## Appendix One: Publications produced by AMCS

Date of Publication	Publication name	Authors
1987	The Coming Winter	Grazyna Mackiewicz
1992	The Polish Community in Victoria– Demographic Characteristics and their implications for service development	Joseph Ribarow
1993	A Proposed Model of Respite Care based on a study of the needs of Polish Carers of the elderly /disabled and existing Respite Care Services in the Western Suburbs	Helen Evert and Ewa Kukulska
1993	Profiling the Second Generation Polish Australians	Elizabeth Drozd and Joseph Ribarow
1994	"Opportunity" Determining the feasibility of establishing a Polish Self-Help Group for people with psychiatric disabilities	Ewa Dudzinska
1994	Informator o programach promocji dla osób starszych (Information Guide about Services for Older Persons)	AMCS Staff
1996	Forgotten Fragments	Grazyna Mackiewicz
1996	Polish Seniors in Melbourne Resource Guide	Yolanta Niedzwiecki
1996	Polish Seniors in Melbourne Resource Manual	Yolanta Niedzwiecki
1997	In the Queue	Grazyna Mackiewicz
1998	From House to Home	Elizabeth Drozd
1998	Why Be On Your Own – Lets be Together	Marta Bielski
2000	It's My Duty	Yolanta Niedzwiecki
2000	Lonesome No More	Elizabeth Langowski
2001	10 Year Polish Aged Care Plan 2001-2011	Jenny Ashby and Associates Pty Ltd
2001	Dziś ty pomożesz innym, jutro inni pomogą tobie (Today you will help someone tomorrow others will help you)	AMCS Coordinators of Volunteers
2001	They have come a long way	Elizabeth Drozd
2004	Lest We forget	Monika Wiench and Elizabeth Drozd
2004	Aspirations of Polish Young People	Elizabeth Drozd
2004	Polonia in Australia Challenges & Possibilities in the New Millennium	Elizabeth Drozd and Desmond Cahill
2005	Before it's Too Late	Elizabeth Szczepanska
2006	Forever Young	Monika Wiench and Elizabeth Drozd
2006	Making it Happen	Wendy Bennett
2006	Our Secret Lives	Monika Wiench
2006	Polish Migrants' Stories	Monika Wiench and Elizabeth Drozd
2007	Moving Forward: Mapping and Planning Volunteering in the Polish Community in Victoria	AMCS Staff
2008	People from Ethnic Backgrounds in Commonwealth Funded Residential Care – Victoria	Alexis Hughes
2009	Demystifying Mental Health in Ethnic communities	Patrycja Toczek
2011	AMCS Leadership Survey	Marcus Dripps, Thane Joske, Debby Maziarz & Steve Strang
2013	A Multicultural Perspective on Dementia: Case Studies and Community Perceptions in the North-western Region of Melbourne for the Victorian Home and Community Care (HACC) Program	Pramod Kumar Vinnakota
2014	Diabetes and cardiovascular disease CALD peer support and health information	AMCS Staff
2015	The unmet welfare and health needs of the Turkish Community in Victoria	Sultan Dogan

## Appendix Two: AMCS Committee Members & Board of Directors

Year	Board Members	Names
1983-1984	<b>President</b> 1st Vice President 2nd Vice President Treasurer Secretary Members	<b>Zbigniew (Ben) S. Dabkowski</b> Stanislaw William (Bill) Nowak Danuta Jagmin Jan Talaska Zofia Skarbek Magdalena Rozycka, Danuta Kolodynska, John Cielinski, Jerzy Kowalczuk, Tadeusz Sokolowski
1984-1985	<b>President</b> 1st Vice President 2nd Vice President Treasurer Secretary Members	<b>Zbigniew Dabkowski</b> Bill Nowak Henry Szkuta John Talaska Zofia Skarbek Maria Rozycka, Kamila Szlawska, Danuta Jagmin, Roman Jade, Sylvia Morrisey
1983-1993	<b>President</b> Vice President 2nd Vice President Secretary Treasurer Members	<b>George Szlowski</b> Jadzia Ridd Bill Nowak Irene Kozera-Molinaro Joseph Ribarow Helen Evert, Genia Wrzesinski, Rafal Dadok, Ewa Szweycer, Sylvia Morrisey
1993-1994	<b>President</b> Vice President 2nd Vice President Secretary Treasurer Members	<b>George Szlowski</b> Jadzia Ridd Stanislaw (Bill) Nowak Helen Evert Joseph Ribarow Wally Folcik, Wacław Kaska, Irene Kozera-Molinaro, Mirek Kuszner, Genia Wrzesinski
1994-1995	<b>President</b> Vice President 2nd Vice President Secretary Treasurer Members	<b>George Szlowski</b> Bill Nowak Iwona Lider Beata Amico Joseph Ribarow Wally Folcik, Wacław Kaska, Mirek Kuszner, Elizabeth Drozd, Ewa Fidelak
1995-1996	<b>President</b> Senior V President Vice President Secretary Treasurer Members	<b>George Szlowski</b> Helen Evert Tamara Ciecwiwa Helen Woods Mirosław Kuszner Irena Kozera-Molinaro, Jadzia Ridd, Genni Wrzesinski, Wacław Folcik, Wacław Kaska
1996-1997	<b>President</b> Senior V President Vice President Secretary Treasurer Members	<b>Helen Evert</b> Joe Ribarow, Mirosław Kuszner Genni Wrzesinski Irena Kozera-Molinaro, Elizabeth Drozd Mirosław Kuszner, Joe Ribarow Wanda Dabkowski, Jadzia Ridd, Wacław Kaska, Bill Nowak
1997-1998	<b>President</b> I Vice President II Vice President Secretary Treasurer Members	<b>Bill Nowak</b> Mirosław Kuszner Natalie Cymbalista Elizabeth Drozd Joe Ribarow Wanda Dabkowski, Marcin Bielski, Wacław Kaska, Julie Byra
1998-1999	<b>President</b> I Vice President II Vice President Secretary Treasurer Members	<b>Bill Nowak</b> Mirosław Kuszner Marcin Bielski Elizabeth Drozd Joe Ribarow Wanda Dabkowski, Janusz Napieraj, Wacław Kaska, Natalie Cymbalista
1999-2000	<b>President</b> I Vice President II Vice President Secretary Treasurer Members	<b>Bill Nowak</b> Marcin Bielski Mirosław Kuszner Natalie Cymbalista Joe Ribarow Wacław Kaska, Beata Haver-Czerwinska, Mirosław Czerwinski
2000-2001	<b>President</b> I Vice President II Vice President Secretary Treasurer Acting Treasurer Members	<b>Bill Nowak</b> Mirosław Kuszner Wally Kaska Natalie Cymbalista Joe Ribarow Beata Sokolowski Marcin Bielski, Beata Haver-Czerwinska, Mirosław Czerwinski, Ryszard Randla
2001-2002	<b>President</b> Treasurer	<b>Richard Randla</b> Joe Ribarow
2002-2003	<b>President</b> Vice President Secretary Members	<b>Bill Nowak</b> Desmond Cahill Ruth Lawrence Wacław Kaska, Yola Samplawska

<b>2003-2004</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President II Vice President Treasurer Secretary Members	<b>Ewa Hussain</b> Yola Samplawska Waclaw Kaska Desmond Cahill Ruth Lawrence Bill Nowak, Krystyna Gunia-Widera, Zofia Kaszubska
<b>2004-2005</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Members	<b>Ewa Hussain</b> Wally Kaska Desmond Cahill Sylvia Greda-Bogusz, Beata Leuner, Bill Nowak, Ewa Steckiewicz, Krystyna Gunia-Widera
<b>2005-2006</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Members	<b>Desmond Cahill</b> Waclaw Kaska Bill Nowak, Michelle McDonald, Beata Leuner, Mary Schloetzer, Sylvia Greda-Bogusz
<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Secretary Treasurer Members	<b>Sylvia Greda-Bogusz</b> Mary Schloetzer Agatha Pawlowski Desmond Cahill Bill Nowak, Waclaw Kaska, Michelle McDonald, Paul Walec
<b>2007-2008</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Secretary Members	<b>Sylvia Greda-Bogusz</b> Mary Schloetzer Des Cahill Agatha Pawlowska Paul Walec, Barbara Swiatkowski, Pauline Van Dort, Russell Howard, John Pater
<b>2008-2009</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Secretary Treasurer Members	<b>Russell Howard</b> John Pater Agatha Pawlowski Des Cahill Mary Schloetzer, Paul Walec, Barbara Swiatkowski, Pauline Van Dort, Ben Lloyd, Ron Horfiniak
<b>2009-2010</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Secretary Members	<b>Russell Howard</b> John Pater Ron Horfiniak Agatha Pawlowski Barbara Swiatkowski, Ben Lloyd, Des Cahill, Mary Schloetzer, Paul Walec, Ryk Bliszczyk
<b>2010/2011</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Secretary Directors	<b>Russell Howard</b> John Pater Ron Horfiniak Agatha Pawlowski Barbara Swiatkowski, Ben Lloyd, Des Cahill, Mary Schloetzer, Paul Walec, Ryk Bliszczyk

<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Secretary Directors	<b>Russell Howard</b> John Pater Ron Horfiniak Agatha Pawlowski Barbara Swiatkowski, Ben Lloyd, Des Cahill, Paul Walec, Mary Schloetzer, Ryk Bliszczyk
<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Secretary Directors	<b>Russell Howard</b> Ryk Bliszczyk Ron Horfiniak Agatha Pawlowski Assunta Marrone, Barbara Swiatkowski, Ben Lloyd, Des Cahill, Mary Schloetzer, Paul Walec
<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Secretary Directors	<b>Russell Howard</b> Ryszard Bliszczyk Ron Horfiniak Barbara Swiatkowski Prof. Des Cahill, Ben Lloyd, Assunta Marrone, Agatha Pawlowski, Mary Schloetzer, Paul Walec
<b>2014-2015</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Secretary Directors	<b>Russell Howard</b> Ryszard Bliszczyk Ron Horfiniak Agatha Pawlowski Prof. Des Cahill, Assunta Marrone, Mary Schloetzer, Paul Walec, Tam Nguyen, Rosemary Kelada
<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Secretary Directors	<b>Russell Howard</b> Ryk Bliszczyk Ron Horfiniak Agatha Pawlowski Paul Walec, Assunta Morrone, Tam Nguyen, Des Cahill, Ryszard Pietrzak, Rene Blaszak, Ewa Figiel, Rosemary Kelada
<b>2016-2017</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Members	<b>Ryk Bliszczyk</b> Tam Nguyen Des Cahill, Rosemary Kelada, Paul Walec, Mary Schloetzer, Rene Blaszak, Ewa Figel, Ryszard Pietrzak
<b>2017-2018</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Directors	<b>Ryk Bliszczyk</b> Tam Nguyen Debra Lyon Rene Blaszak, Prof. Des Cahill, Ewa Figel, Ryszard Pietrzak, Mary Schloetzer, Paul Walec, Barbara Swiatkowski

<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Secretary Directors	<b>Ryk Bliszczyk</b> Dr. Tam Nguyen Debra Lyon Paul Walec Prof. Des Cahill, Rene Blaszak ,Barbara Swiatkowski, Paul Ostrowski, Maurice Sikorski
<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Secretary Directors	<b>Ryk Bliszczyk</b> Dr.Tam Nguyen Debra Lyon, Paul Walec Rene Blaszak, Paul Ostrowski, Des Cahill, Barbara Swiatkowski, Maurice Sikorski
<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>President</b> Vice President Treasurer Directors	<b>Russell Howard</b> Rene Blaszak Ron Horfiniak Peter Biedak, Des Cahill, Barbara Swiatkowski
<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>Chairperson</b> Company Secretary Directors	<b>Russell Howard</b> Ron Horfiniak Peter Biedak, Rene Blaszak, Des Cahill, Barbara Swiatkowski, Meena Vannitamby
<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>Chairperson</b> Company Secretary Directors	<b>Russell Howard</b> Ron Horfiniak Peter Biedak, Rene Blaszak, Des Cahill, Barbara Swiatkowski, Meena Vannitamby

## Appendix Three: Acronyms

<b>ACFE</b>	Adult Community & Further Education
<b>ADASS</b>	Adult Day Activities and Support Services
<b>AMCS</b>	Australian Multicultural Community Services
<b>APCS</b>	Australian Polish Community Services
<b>CACP</b>	Community Aged Care Packages
<b>CALD</b>	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
<b>CBEP</b>	Community Based Employment Program
<b>CEP</b>	Community Education Program
<b>COTA</b>	Council on the Ageing
<b>CVS</b>	Community Visitors Scheme
<b>DHSH</b>	Department of Human Services and Health (Commonwealth)
<b>ECCV</b>	Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
<b>EIP</b>	Employment Initiative Program
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>FAFAG</b>	Filipino Australian Friendship Association of Geelong
<b>GIA</b>	Grant in Aid
<b>HACC</b>	Home and Community Care
<b>HCP</b>	Home Care Packages
<b>MAPS</b>	Migrant Access Program Scheme
<b>MRC</b>	Migrant Resource Centre
<b>PAG</b>	Planned Activity Group
<b>PAKLA</b>	Polish Association of Kingsville and Ladies Auxiliary
<b>PEAPS</b>	Pilot Ethnic Access Program Scheme
<b>POPOP</b>	Polish Older Persons' Outreach Program
<b>RTO</b>	Registered Training Organisation

## Appendix Four: AMCS Long – Serving Staff



Elizabeth Gauci  
Personal Care Worker  
Joined in 1997



Elizabeth Drozd  
CEO  
Joined in 1999



Jolanta Czajkowska  
Social Support Group Assistant  
Joined in 2001



Malgorzata Drzazga  
Personal Care Worker  
Joined in 2001



Janina Elliott  
Social Support Group Assistant  
Joined in 2002



Krystyna Duncan  
Personal Care Worker  
Joined in 2005



Teresa Kouros  
Personal Care Worker  
Joined in 2006



Aneta Antczak  
Senior HR Coordinator  
Joined in 2008



Violetta Sobczyk  
Personal Care Worker  
Joined in 2008



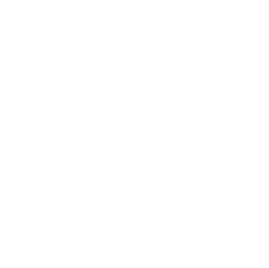
Elzbieta Swiergon  
Senior Accounts Officer  
Joined in 2010



Elina Nowak  
Personal Care Worker  
Joined in 2010



Alicja Uliasz  
Finance Manager  
Joined in 2010



Regina Jakubowski  
Personal Care Worker  
Joined in 2010

## Appendix Five: AMCS Long – Serving Volunteers



We take this opportunity to thank our long serving volunteers who have given up so much of their time to provide their compassionate services to our clients and those in need within our community. The positive difference you have all made to people's lives is truly heartwarming and AMCS thanks all our generous volunteers – long serving, past and present.

Zofia Sztendur – Joined in 1996

Bronislawa Bartkowicz – Joined in 2009

Mark Stanczyk – Joined in 2011

Anna Tomaszewska – Joined in 2012

Danuta Lipski – Joined in 2012

Gihan Tadrus – Joined in 2013

Joseph Sammut – Joined in 2014

Anna Stepien – Joined in 2014

Jackie Kabala – Joined in 2016

Gerardo Chierchia – Joined in 2017

## Appendix Six: Volunteer West and AMCS Amalgamate to Strengthen the Volunteering Impact



In 2023, we proudly announced our successful merger with Volunteer West, aimed at enhancing community health and wellbeing in Melbourne's Western region by strengthening support for volunteers and advancing volunteering initiatives. As a trusted leader in inclusive volunteering practices, Volunteer West brings its expertise as a dedicated volunteer resource centre to join forces with AMCS. Together, we aspire to uplift communities in the West through their collaborative efforts.

"The board unanimously decided that joining Australian Multicultural Community Services would be the best synergistic option for Volunteer West going forward, to continue on a shared path and to open up new opportunities to help the community. We are so proud of what Volunteer West has achieved over the past 16 years and are confident that AMCS – led by their able CEO Elizabeth – will expand on Volunteer West's impact and vision."

### – Roland Selvanayagam, Volunteer West Board President

The amalgamation has extended our shared vision of enhancing people's lives through volunteering and fostering community resilience via a sustainable and collaborative approach. Both organisations have collaborated to ensure a smooth transition for all stakeholders, including staff, volunteers, and program participants.

"AMCS is proud to welcome Volunteer West to our organisation. We look forward to continuing their considerable legacy of volunteer engagement and volunteering best practice. I would like to personally thank the staff, volunteers and Board of Volunteer West and acknowledge the impact that their services and programs have had on communities in the Western suburbs to date. The impact of volunteers on the community cannot be overstated. AMCS are committed to supporting people in these roles and have no doubt that with Volunteer West's expertise and best practice resources, we will continue to provide the highest quality support."

### – Elizabeth Drozd, CEO Australian Multicultural Community Services

"This is an exciting next step for AMCS. In our efforts to provide care and support for those in the community, we are delighted that Volunteer West have recognised our commitment as we look to expand on their substantial impact to date. I have no doubt that the knowledge and experience of the Volunteer West team will work to strengthen our volunteering practices and result in tangible positive outcomes for all involved."

### – Russell Howard, Chairperson Australian Multicultural Community Services

"Volunteer West has made incredible strides in the past three years audaciously reimagining volunteering to be inclusive, meaningful, and transformative. The same audacity drives the connection of Volunteer West with AMCS, and with AMCS' incredible leadership, communities and volunteers in the West will be well-supported to make a difference."

### – Thu-Trang, Former CEO Volunteer West

## Appendix Seven: The Millennium House Community Centre Redevelopment

In February 2023, we embarked on a significant redevelopment project. We embarked on a significant redevelopment project to transform Millennium House into a multicultural community hub located at 296 Nicholson St, Seddon, VIC, 3011. The initiative was in response to a pressing need for culturally inclusive spaces in Melbourne's West and will make a substantial impact on the community.

The upgrade provides safe and culturally appropriate meeting spaces for multicultural communities, revitalise the 1960s-built Millennium House into a modern community hub, and offer office spaces to support various groups, including seniors, migrants, refugees, women, youth, and children.

### New Vision for Millennium House

- The multicultural community centre features a range of community facilities and multipurpose rooms suitable for various events and activities.
- It provides office accommodation for community groups and organisations.
- A fully equipped kitchen caters to community events and supply food to the Emergency Food Services Network.
- The facilities are available for hire on a regular or casual basis at affordable community rates.
- The community centre includes a café, operated as a social enterprise, maximising training and social impacts alongside profits contributing to operation and running costs.
- A green rooftop garden offers an accessible outdoor space for community activities
- Through AMCS' employment referral program, the centre contributes to job creation in the local area.
- This project represents a major investment by AMCS to strengthen and support local and broader multicultural communities in Melbourne's Western region.



Before



After

### Legacy of Millennium House

Millennium House Community Centre has been a cornerstone for the Polish community in Western Melbourne since the early 1960s, serving not only Poles but also diverse cultural groups for decades. Its main hall has hosted countless significant life events, making it a cherished symbol of the area's migrant history and the resilience of its communities. The Polish Association of Kingsville and Ladies Auxiliary (PAKLA) generously gifted Millennium House to AMCS for redevelopment, with the intention of repurposing it for the broader community's benefit. AMCS has embraced this responsibility, committing to honour the legacy of Millennium House for the greater good of local and neighbouring communities.



### Progress and Generous Support

The redevelopment of Millennium House has seen significant progress. Despite challenges, our unwavering commitment to rejuvenating this space for future generations has remained steadfast. Our vision for Millennium House is to serve as a vibrant multicultural community hub, offering support and opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds, including seniors, newly arrived migrants, refugees, women, young people, and children.

We are deeply grateful to the Victorian Government for their invaluable support, which has been instrumental in bringing this project to fruition. Additionally, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to Vedran Drakulić OAM, CEO of the Gandel Foundation, and Nimbus Health for their generous contributions. Their unwavering support has played a pivotal role in empowering community organisations to enact positive change and foster inclusivity.

For further insight into the redevelopment of Millennium House, see images below:



We thank our generous supporters:

**Polish Association of Kingsville  
and Ladies Auxiliary Inc.  
(PAKLA)**



Millenium House  
Video



Millenium House  
Prospectus

## Appendix Eight: Art Against Ageism Competition

As a Home Care Package provider, we unfortunately see first-hand the impacts of senior age discrimination. In 2021 after a year of COVID-19 challenges and interruptions, there was a significant increase in social isolation and ageist attitudes. In our capacity as advocates for our clients and their wellbeing, we saw an opportunity to create a truly unique initiative.

To challenge the negative stereotypes of ageing, we developed the AMCS Art Against Ageism competition (AAA). Art has been a powerful tool throughout history to convey messages about society. We believe there is no better way to challenge negative stereotypes of ageing and promote inclusivity, than through an artistic competition and exhibition that celebrates the beauty and diverse capabilities of older people.

To encourage wide ranging participation and acknowledging art is expressed in many forms, we welcomed entries from any artistic medium such as painting, drawing, photography, graphic design, textiles, print, sculpture, knitting, crochet etc.

In it's inaugural year, in 2021, we enjoyed 52 artistic entries that used art as a medium to combat ageism and embrace the wisdom and experiences of older adults. In 2023, we grew the public's awareness and interest in the competition, and received over 250 entries with the age of artists ranging from as young as 9 years to 93 years old. from all over the world including Australia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Nigeria.

### 2021 Art Against Ageism Prize Winners



1st prize

Participant name: Gerardo Cierchia

Artwork title: Carlo



2nd prize

Participant name: Maria Janczak

Artwork title: Ageless Inspiration:  
Generational Ideas



3rd prize

Participant name: Jack Forbes

Artwork title: Knowledge shared – Knowledge learnt

2022 Art Against Ageism Prize Winners



1st prize  
Participant name: Dabgraphixs  
Artwork title: Forever Caring



2nd prize  
Participant name: Barbara Oehring  
Artwork title: A cultural afternoon at the historic Miller's Homestead in Boronia last autumn.



3rd prize  
Participant name: Fleur O'Brien  
Artwork title: Rainbow



3rd prize equal  
Participant name: Ancestors  
Artwork title: Jack Forbes- Walker

2023 Art Against Ageism Prize Winners



1st prize  
Participant name: Anne Marie Sinclair  
Artwork title: Black Velvet



2nd prize  
Participant name: Neil Gude  
Artwork title: Tango Romance



3rd prize  
Participant name: William Mcmartin  
Artwork title: Imagination has no age



Australian Multicultural  
Community Services

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**Millenium House**

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Seddon VIC 3011

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