



# MiCare

## MiCare Annual Report 2020







▲ Prins Willem Alexander Lodge Elders and staff members at a special 'Thank YOU for Caring' day to all Elders and staff earlier this year.



▲ MiCare's Monash Community Strengthening Worker, Sarah (above, left), with a certificate and cheque for first prize presented by Grill'd Glen Waverley store for our latest Local Matters jar campaign with the burger franchise.

## Our Vision

To support the journey of a migrant throughout their life.

## Our Mission

To enable migrants to have comfortable, enjoyable, dignified and meaningful lives.

## Purpose of our work

At MiCare we value relationships that we have with each other, the clients we service and their family. We believe the closer the relationship, the more we want to help someone. Sharing their life's journey is a privilege, we should respect that privilege and always honour the person. We become part of their story. For some, all they have left is their story and we should validate, honour and respect it.

- Petra Neeleman  
Executive Director

## Our Values





# Words from our Chairman and Executive Director

## We welcome you to our 2020 MiCare Annual Report!

It is difficult to write a report relating to Aged Care especially after the Royal Commission has revealed that all is not well in the sector. But we have faced even greater challenges.

MiCare, despite its reputation and commitment to providing high quality care, had to account for its actions on a particular issue. After incurring sanctions, Avondrust's teams and facilities were rebuilt but not without difficulties. Then, the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic hit our shores resulting in a large number of Elders dying in various facilities. Loved ones could not be visited which was traumatic for both the families and staff. In response, MiCare reassessed its staffing and care models in depth. In this context, the Executive and the Board questioned whether we had the capacity to look after the people in our care. What we know is that a comprehensive workforce strategy does work.

At the end of the day, it is staff who have daily contact with our Elders. Accordingly, MiCare rolled out an intensive training program delivered by the Executive Director herself which probed the issues of care and empathy. Further, MiCare recruited additional clinical experts and enlarged the Executive Team. Most of these initiatives were in place before the coronavirus became an issue earlier this year. What we know is that comprehensive workforce strategy does work. At the time of writing this foreword, MiCare has had no cases of coronavirus: its clinical experts and the additional training of our personal carers clearly had a significant impact.

There is no doubt that the aged care sector is underfunded by the government and this requires change. For the sector to staff up, additional funding must be provided. In our case MiCare ran a deficit with labour costs exploding.

Our workforce has stepped up to the plate. It has responded to the crisis under very difficult circumstances. Furthermore, MiCare has assisted others and has shared its knowledge and policies with other providers including those serving indigenous Elders. These are great stories to be told about the COVID-19 virus and the manner in which MiCare has responded.

There will be significant change driven by the coronavirus and the findings of the Royal Commission. This will also be extremely challenging. In the meantime, however, MiCare will celebrate and acknowledge its Executive and staff who are dedicated to looking after the Elders in our care and keeping them safe.



Ignatius Oostermeyer  
Chairman

We are living through very strange times since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. It is an understatement to say that it has had a huge impact on how we deliver our services. In the community, remote support has enabled a number of staff working from home to maintain contact with group participants and individuals alike. In Home Care, the Advisors have predominantly carried out their work online although Elder support was suspended for a period of 2 months unless there were exceptional circumstances.

In Settlement Services, we have delivered services by phone whilst working closely with government departments to ensure that the needs of some of our most vulnerable people were met. In our Residential Aged Care homes, we stepped up our infections control management but had to restrict visiting hours. We sought advice very early

on and listened to the experts as to the best way forward. This is, however, new territory and whilst we have had to test for COVID-19 on occasions, to date all tests have come back negative. This is a testament to all key players, including regulators, management and staff, Elders families and all others involved in MiCare.

Social isolation has been a key issue and our many committed volunteers have helped enormously by maintaining contact with isolated people by phone. This has been a very important service.

We are listening to our Elders, residents and clients and hearing that support and relationships are central to their experience. We are constantly building relationships and are finding that even remote relationships are central to people's wellbeing.

In the next 12 months we expect to see more changes in the way services and programs are funded and delivered. We are fortunate to have solid leadership, strong teamwork and extraordinary support from the Board and senior teams throughout MiCare.

Thank you to all of you for contributing and being a part of the MiCare team, for your commitment, hard work and for caring.



Petra Neeleman  
Executive Director





# MiCare's Cultural Diversity Report:

## Highlighting the cultural diversity of our organisation's outlook

In determining the cultural diversity of MiCare, a few indicators relating to Elders, clients, staff and volunteers were considered. The quantitative data includes country of birth, language(s) spoken and religious affiliation. The data was taken from the organisation's Care System, Leecare Solutions and other organisational data sources.

### Residential Aged Care

**26 countries<sup>1</sup>** including Indonesia, United Kingdom, Latin America, and Greece, were represented by 256 resident Elders from Overbeek Lodge (VIC), Margriet Manor (VIC) and Prins Willem Alexander (QLD).



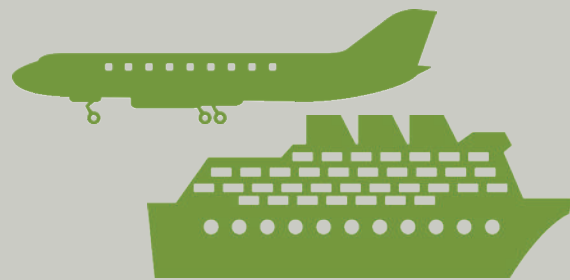
Elders in this cohort speak **14 different languages<sup>1</sup>** including Dutch, Spanish, German, Greek and Italian.



**19 different religions<sup>1</sup>** are practiced among Elders. The major denominations are Roman Catholic, the Uniting Church, Anglican, Church of England, Christian and Reformed Dutch. 39 did not disclose an affiliation, the rest did not respond.



### Home Care Packages

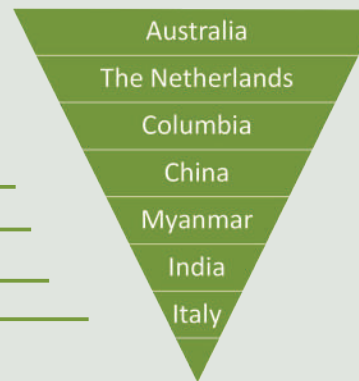


More than 1,000 clients including Veterans' Home Care are from **35 different countries of birth**. The majority are from Australia, followed by The Netherlands, Greece, Italy, Britain, China, Germany and Poland.



Amongst the clients **50 languages are spoken**. The languages mostly spoken are English, Greek, Dutch, Italian, Cantonese, Mandarin, German and Polish.

### Volunteers



We currently have 525 registered volunteers. There are 366 active volunteers from **58 different countries of birth, speaking 50 different languages**.

### Community Services



The Settlement Services Program assists approximately 1,000 clients. **The majority are from Burma, Ethiopia, Iraq, Tibet, Somalia, Afghanistan and Congo.**



Senior Clubs clients are from **29 different countries of origin and speaking 25 different languages** including Tagalog, Lebanese, Italian, Bosnian, Hindi and Arabic.

### Our Staff

It is estimated that 750 staff are from **34 countries of origin, and speak at least 27 different languages**.



<sup>1</sup> Data from MiCare's Cultural Diversity Report April - June 2019 by MiCare's Cultural Services Advisor, Mercedes Sepulveda. Please note this infographic only illustrates some of the key data from the report. Some residents who receive MiCare Independent Living Unit (ILU) services are included in the report but not specifically referred to as ILU residents. <sup>2</sup> Avondrust Lodge (VIC) could not be presented at the time of the report.





▲ Staff members, Joy (left), Hazel (middle) and Avondrust Lodge Elder, Fernand (right) on the day staff helped Elders move into their new home.

## Person-centred approach in mind with the redevelopment of Avondrust Lodge

**MiCare's Avondrust Lodge in Carrum Downs, Melbourne, has undergone an exciting redevelopment and expansion which opened last April.**

Stage 1 provided 72 light-filled spacious rooms with ensuites. Avondrust Lodge Mark 2 was built with smaller 12-bedroom households configuration designed to reflect normal living. There are currently six households, each containing a kitchen, scullery, dining and lounge area, together with a

balcony or outdoor courtyard to allow plenty of natural light and space. The unique design promotes The Eden Alternative care, giving Elders more choice, control and flexibility in the way they want to live. Each house is named after an Australian native tree or shrub and the colours of interior décor align with this theme. Each level also has 'back of house' service and clinical areas.

A committed group of staff

formed the "Transition Team" which coordinated the logistics associated with such a dynamic project. It is no easy feat to move such a large amount of people with all their goods and chattels, but add in a global pandemic and it really gets interesting! We moved into the new Avondrust Lodge in stages over a few weeks, one level at a time, with the final group of Elders arriving on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020. There was a sense of sadness in

farewelling the old home but also a sense of excitement as we moved into our new home. We very much appreciate the energy, time and commitment made by many staff who went above and beyond the call of duty in so many ways. Great effort everyone!

Elders and staff settled into their new digs very quickly, learning where the light switches are and how their smart TVs work. Feedback about their new home was very positive and included one comment from Elder, John - "I love how my new home is bringing other Elders together

in a closer community - sharing the lounge room to watch our favourite movies and having a more intimate meal together". Another resident Elder, Maria, has said, "My favourite thing to do is sit on my new balcony watching the different colours of the sky go by. It makes me very happy and I appreciate my new home endlessly".

Maria P. stated "The new friends I have made in both Elders and staff have made it easier for me in my new home. The staff are such beautiful people; I feel very lucky".

We very much look forward to Stage 2 next year. Like any change, it takes time to establish a new rhythm and we have certainly got into the swing of things at Avondrust Lodge!



*"I love how my new home is bringing other Elders together in a closer community sharing the lounge room to watch our favourite movies and having a more intimate meal together."*

*John, Avondrust Lodge resident Elder*

### MiCare Residential Aged Care Services

MiCare Residential Aged Care homes are located across Victoria and Queensland. MiCare is committed to The Eden Alternative™ in which we create vibrant communities where children, pets and plants are part of daily life for Elders across our homes.



330

Elders cared for



4

aged care homes



482

devoted staff



# An Overview: Financials 2019-2020

## MiCare's Chief Financial Officer, Graeme Wickenden, provides an overview of our financials for 2019-2020...

Like everything in 2019/20, MiCare's financial performance has been significantly impacted by COVID-19. Responding to government directives – as well as our own initiatives to protect the health and safety of our Elders, families and employees – has come at considerable cost. While we acknowledge and are grateful for the financial support from the government, it has fallen significantly short of covering all the additional costs incurred or to compensate for the loss of income COVID-19 has exacted.

Hence, MiCare's deficit increased by \$3.4m from the prior year, and 2019/20 represented the most challenging financial year

MiCare has experienced for many years.

While Residential Services bore the main financial impacts from COVID-19, all services across MiCare have been impacted. Our plans to increase occupancy across Retirement Living have been thwarted, with many prospective apartment purchasers deferring any decision to move into retirement living while there is so much uncertainty with the property market. Home Care also has been impacted by COVID-19, with clients showing some reluctance to accept services and some services, such as gardening, not permitted across metropolitan Melbourne during the Stage 4 restrictions.

Hence, while MiCare's revenue increased by \$4.5m from the

previous year, increases in staffing costs and care related costs more than offset this. It's noted that \$2.8m included in the increase in Finance Costs (\$3.0m in 2019/20 compared to \$260k in 2018/19) and the corresponding increase in Other Operating Revenue (\$3.5m in 2019/20 compared to \$1.1m in 2018/19) is attributed to the introduction of the Accounting Standard AASB16 – Leases and AASB 9 – Financial Instruments. Under these standards, the Refundable Accommodation Deposit (RAD) that an Elder may elect to pay on entry into aged care is treated as an interest free loan with a deemed rental income and interest expense both recognised in the Income Statement, but netting each other off so there's a nil impact.

A positive for 2019/20 has been

completion of Stage 1 of the Avondrust Lodge redevelopment project. During the year MiCare drew on the loan facility from the NAB to finance the project and at 30th June 2020 \$3.2m had been drawn down from the \$18m facility. This has also seen a reduction in MiCare's current assets, as MiCare initially financed the project. A corresponding increase in non-current assets represents the completion of Stage 1 being added to Land & Buildings.

Overall MiCare's balance sheet remains strong and continues to experience positive cash flows. Although the current asset ratio appears low, this is due to Accounting Standards requiring ingoings from residential aged care and retirement living to be treated as a current liability. In practice, aged care providers typically replace a departing ingoing with one of a similar amount. In addition, investments are required to be classified as a non-current

asset, but MiCare's investments can be quickly converted to cash. Adjusting for these two technical requirements, MiCare has a current asset ratio of 1.2 – meaning the current assets are able to cover current liabilities 1.2 times and provides a positive liquidity position.

Looking forward, MiCare set a financial agenda for 2020/21 to secure the financial sustainability of Residential Services. While COVID-19 is unquestionably challenging this objective, there have been major inroads in the opening months of 2020/21 to address the key issues of agency usage, maximisation of income entitlements and maintaining above sector benchmarks in our occupancy levels.

We were encouraged by the *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's* interim report (titled *Neglect*) handed down in October 2019 highlighting the funding

deficiencies across the sector, and look forward with optimism that the Commission's final report to be handed down in February 2021 will set out a framework for a financially sustainable aged care sector that adequately funds the care and support our senior citizens deserve. And most importantly, that the government quickly implements the commission's recommendations.

Graeme Wickenden  
Chief Financial  
Officer



Petro Neeleman  
Executive Director



# Income Statement

## MiCare Ltd Income Statement 30th June 2020

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
<b>INCOME</b>			
Government grants and subsidies	38,736,344	35,926,593	34,032,787
Resident fees	10,849,977	10,837,820	9,452,490
Bequests, donations & fundraising	133,494	153,511	245,788
Other operating revenue	3,529,598	1,126,400	611,949
Interest revenue	50,454	706,094	308,048
Other income	114,576	113,970	0
Fair value gain on financial assets	0	443,236	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>53,414,443</b>	<b>49,307,624</b>	<b>44,651,062</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Employee benefit expenses	37,228,825	33,244,911	29,461,076
Depreciation and amortisation	4,377,009	4,056,296	3,718,567
Food expenses	1,968,457	2,044,074	1,835,411
Recipient care expenses	5,894,711	5,009,240	4,507,676
Property expenses	2,829,434	2,687,962	2,423,885
Other expenses	3,539,296	4,066,288	2,977,220
Fair value movement on financial assets	22,897	0	1,356
Finance costs	3,005,213	259,683	456,916
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>58,865,842</b>	<b>51,368,454</b>	<b>45,382,107</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>(5,451,399)</b>	<b>(2,060,830)</b>	<b>(731,045)</b>

# Balance Sheet

## MiCare Ltd Balance Sheet 30th June 2020

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>Current assets</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	7,181,123	10,949,036	9,569,261
Trade and other receivables	606,961	1,226,991	562,105
Inventories	-	33,239	33,240
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>7,788,084</b>	<b>12,209,266</b>	<b>10,164,606</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>			
Property, plant and equipment	109,776,915	93,497,066	89,188,576
Bed Licenses	1,240,000	1,240,000	1,240,000
Other financial assets	9,447,747	13,731,801	14,540,908
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>120,464,662</b>	<b>108,468,867</b>	<b>104,969,484</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>128,252,746</b>	<b>120,678,133</b>	<b>115,134,090</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Trade and other payables	106,691,890	97,152,843	85,894,608
Interest bearing liabilities	425,706	250,000	3,416,450
Employee provisions	3,924,038	3,765,151	3,738,844
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>111,041,634</b>	<b>101,167,994</b>	<b>93,049,902</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>			
Interest bearing liabilities	6,758,021	4,029,167	4,229,167
Employee provisions	849,634	426,116	739,335
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>	<b>7,607,655</b>	<b>4,455,283</b>	<b>4,968,502</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>118,649,289</b>	<b>105,623,277</b>	<b>98,018,404</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>9,603,457</b>	<b>15,054,856</b>	<b>17,115,686</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Retained earnings	6,348,923	8,705,933	10,766,763
Other contributed equity	3,254,534	6,348,923	6,348,923
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>9,603,457</b>	<b>15,054,856</b>	<b>17,115,686</b>





### MiCare Home Care Services

MiCare Home Care Services are located across Victoria and Queensland. MiCare understands that people want to remain living at home and are committed to assisting people to maintain their independence and quality of life. We also match staff to people's language and cultural needs.



**1,685**  
Elders cared for at home



**4**  
office locations



**110**  
devoted in home staff

▲ (from left to right) Peggy with Keisha the pony on Ekka Day, messages on 'Thank YOU for caring' day, and Johanna on Ekka day.

▲ Victoria Home Care clients, John (left) and Aije (centre), with MiCare staff member, Simran (right).

## Elders' resilience and drive to enjoy life

**This year has been challenging for our staff, Elders and their loved ones. Nevertheless, Elders at Prins Willem Alexander (PWA) have shown resilience by enjoying what they can in the present.**

Like many aged care homes across the country we, too, have been in and out of the lockdown. Despite visitor restriction, our residents continue to thrive and engage in various activities and events organised by our talented Lifestyle team.

Amazingly, most residents started using more technology to keep in touch with loved ones. Many, including one of our residents, Beryl, had never heard of Zoom or FaceTime before. Now most are accustomed to using these technologies to keep in touch

with their families and friends. Some of the initiatives we talked about last year have been put on hold, however, this did not stop us safely celebrating Ekka this year but on a much smaller scale. For those who are not from Queensland, Ekka (which is short for "exhibition") is the annual agricultural show here in Queensland. It's not Ekka unless there are plenty of Dagwood Dogs and sundaes to be enjoyed.

Earlier in May we also held a special celebratory 'Thank YOU for Caring' day to acknowledge the enduring patience and support of our Elders as they dealt with the challenges imposed by the pandemic. It was also a way for us to honour our staff who are our superheroes. This year, Elders with the help of our Lifestyle team, Carola, Tania,

and Laetitia, made beautiful display boards with messages of thanks, love and praise for our staff.

In August, we welcomed our new Deputy Manager, Shane to our family. Shane comes with more than ten years of aged care experience. He is a great addition to our multicultural MiCare community as he speaks Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean and English. Shane is passionate about caring for our older generation and has already become friends with many of our Elders.

While it has been very challenging time for everyone, our amazing staff have collectively enabled our residents and their families to continue to enjoying life in new and exciting ways.

**The goal of MiCare's Home Care team is to be at the frontline of innovative service delivery so we can support people to live their best lives at home and in the community.**

Being underpinned by the Eden Principles, we seek our clients' opinions on how we can meet their needs. With this feedback, we've expanded and developed our services to support more people in new and meaningful ways.

One of our key priorities has been to match people from non-English speaking backgrounds with staff who speak their language. This means we can truly understand their stories and what is important to them. To achieve this, we have continued to recruit bilingual staff and create resources to support people from many diverse communities.

As a result, MiCare has maintained growth in its Home Care Packages and Home Support services.

In addition, it's been important to keep our social groups connected throughout the isolation periods of 2020, and we've accomplished this with some exciting technological advancements! Earlier this year, we secured additional funding to purchase iPads for our clients to attend virtual social groups. Feedback has been positive on the difference they make to mental wellbeing. The program has also revealed other major benefits. Firstly, with iPad technology clients can now participate in social groups even when they're unable to physically attend due to health or other limitations. Furthermore, the iPad training we have provided has

connected clients with their families and friends from their country of origin. For many of our clients, this has been the first time they've been able to have face-to-face conversations with their loved ones in a long time.

As we look ahead to 2020-21, the Australian Home Care environment will continue to evolve with an ever-increasing emphasis on choice. With a person-centred, forward-thinking approach to Home Care Services, MiCare will remain a preferred Home Care provider that genuinely improves quality of life for people within the community.





▲ (from left to right) Independent Living Unit (ILU) resident, Irene, with Fonzie's Diner's owner, Debbie, and ILU resident, Sue, with VIC Retirement Living Manager, Darren.

▲ Menno van Ruyven Memorial Scholarship Fund recipient, Ligia Novoa (pictured above).

## Community and caring during pandemic

**Adversity has stirred individuals in our local community in Kilsyth to take action and to give back to our independent & retirement living residents in a caring, practical and tangible way.**

Navigating this pandemic has been a challenge for all of us. We need to understand what we can and cannot do, to keep ourselves and others safe and try to remain positive. It is difficult and can be mentally exhausting not knowing when we may experience some degree of normality again. For some more than others, the experience of isolation and physical separation from loved ones has been lonely, even traumatic in the absence of a hug, a smile or a thoughtful word.

Adversity, though, often stirs

individuals to action and this is one such story about kindness and civic generosity. It concerns a local woman who took the time to consider how she might bring some joy by demonstrating care in a practical, tangible way.

Debbie contacted us and introduced herself as a local Montrose resident and business owner (Debbie owns and runs a local eatery - Fonzie's Diner). She said she'd like to give the residents in one of our retirement villages a "bit of a lift". Living almost opposite Beatrix Village, Debbie was concerned residents may be feeling down under the weight of continuing restrictions and decided there must be something she could do.

Over the weeks that followed, a team compiled hampers after

rallying local businesses delivering to our local villages in Kilsyth and Montrose. It was a joy to see our residents' surprise and delight as the hampers were delivered, each with a beautiful bunch of tulips from TNB Tulips in Monbulk. With the generosity of these businesses residents were given a positive lift during this challenging time.

Our sincere heartfelt thanks to everyone involved for making this possible!

One of the messages of thanks from the many from our residents around the villages:

*"Hi! And thanks so much for the gift. Please convey our thanks - it was such a cheer up. We love it."*

## Menno van Ruyven Scholarship Fund

**Ligia works as an Enrolled Nurse for MiCare at Prins Willem Alexander Village (PWAV). She gives us a little insight into her background and what the scholarship means for her...**

My name is Ligia and I am working as an Enrolled Nurse at PWAV in Birkdale, Brisbane. Last year, I was honoured to be one of the recipients of the Menno van Ruyven Scholarship.

It is an honour for me to work at an organisation that prides itself on enabling migrants to have comfortable, enjoyable, dignified and meaningful lives. This resonates with me because I am a migrant myself. Nearly ten years ago my family and I came to Australia seeking a better future for our family. Australia has delivered. We have made ourselves at home in a beautiful country and found

Australia abundant with opportunities as well as cultural diversity.

I have always been immensely proud of being a nurse. Back in Colombia I worked as a Registered Nurse/Midwife and Nurse Educator for nearly 20 years. Upon settling in Australia I continued working in the health area. At PWAV I initially started working as an Assistant in Nursing (AIN) then for a couple years as a Medicator Assist. Recently, I got my registration as an Enrolled Nurse.

I have always wanted to study the Diploma in Auditing Quality because I know it is not enough to do our best while working; we must also demonstrate high quality work as a team.

Only recently have I been able to upgrade my skills, thanks to the scholarship. This diploma

will give me the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge that I need to ensure that I am one of many in our team who are always striving towards the highest standards of care for our Elders.

When I am working for the Elders at PWAV I can see myself in them: nearly all of them speak more than one language; they have other religions, beliefs, cultures and habits. They have lived the adventures that come with being a migrant. They are here to open up a new pathway for their descendants. After their life's work, these Elders have earned the right to receive excellent care. They deserve the best possible life in their final years.





▲ Access & Support client, Ted (above, left) with MiCare's Community Inclusion & Participation Officer, Eliana (above, right).



▲ MiCare's Access & Support team (from left to right, clockwise), Sladjana, Athina, Sheryl, Eliana, Angela, and Lara.

**Our Community Inclusion & Participation Officer, Eliana Aguiar, talks about how her role help connect people from diverse cultural backgrounds.**

As part of MiCare's Access & Support team, I connect people from diverse backgrounds with services tailored to their own languages and cultures. This empowers them to continue living independently, happily, and healthily within their communities for as long as possible. Two of my clients recently gave me some feedback about their experiences, which I feel really helps to demonstrate how our Access & Support program improves people's wellbeing.

After Dora\* became a widow earlier this year, she faced financial hardship in addition to her grief. On top of this, Dora was having trouble obtaining

the help she needed due to a communication barrier. We connected Dora with services in her language so she could arrange home-delivered meals and food vouchers, and negotiate assistance with her rental payments. Recently, Dora let us know that she feels better because of our help. Although these are only small gestures in the bigger picture, we're very glad to know they have made things easier for her.

One of our other clients, Ted, was feeling isolated this year due to the social distancing restrictions coupled with his hearing difficulty. For some time, he was only able to communicate by email, which made it hard to maintain relationships with others. In addition, many of Ted's friends and family live overseas. When we spoke, Ted told me that he

enjoys tending to the roses in his garden as they remind him of the ones back home in so I suggested he share pictures of these with his loved ones. We worked together to upload the photos to social media, and Ted later said he was thrilled that friends and family had started sending messages back. This little suggestion helped to reduce the impact of social isolation for Ted by opening new conversations and increasing meaningful connection.

It is warming to hear feedback like this, not only from Dora and Ted, but also from many other clients whom we have assisted over the years through the program. I love knowing that my encouragement makes such a positive difference in the lives of others.

*\*Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the individual.*

## Access & Support

**Sladjana has been working as our Assistance with Care & Housing Worker since 2019. She shares her story...**

Since 2019, I have been working in Micare's Assistance with Care & Housing program (ACH), where I help people to find a place to call home. The ACH program supports frail and older people living in the community who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or renting in insecure housing. By helping our clients to access affordable, long-term housing that best meets their needs, we enable them to preserve their health and well-being and continue being part of the community.

Having a sense of home is so important for every person to feel safe and secure, thrive, spend time with family and friends, and simply just "be".

During my time at MiCare, I have helped a number of people through the complex process of obtaining permanent housing. One of my clients, Maria\*, recently reached out to express her appreciation for the help she received through a difficult time in her life.

"Sladjana's care, positive approach, and professionalism was key to me finally being housed in a great flat. She assisted me greatly in navigating the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and provided crucial support through several processes along the way. I wanted to let you know that Sladjana's support and assistance was fundamental to me finding my permanent home, and I'll forever be grateful to her and MiCare."

Hearing such positive feedback

from people we have supported is always inspiring and heart-warming, and it reminds me of the importance of our work at MiCare. I am passionate about my work, and every day I recognise how vital my role is in providing people with the sense of belonging, stability, and safety that they need to live well.

*\*Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the individual.*

## Assistance with Care & Housing





▲ Colourful artworks by a few of the children from the Burmese playgroup.



▲ (from left to right) Adrian, Libby, Ana and Ruth at Sunshine Print Artspace (SPA).

## Youth & Communities Programs

**Over the past 7 years, MiCare has been uniting mothers and children from Melbourne's Burmese community through interactive playgroup sessions. MiCare's Community Engagement Officer, Rachel Phillips, manages the playgroup.**

These weekly catch-ups create a friendly, safe, and accommodating environment for early learning and socialisation activities, and as a result, they have become very popular with newly arrived Burmese families. One of our members, Pemala\* recently spoke to us about the benefits to both herself and her kids. "During these playgroups,

my children learn English in a way that is not possible at home, and I have the opportunity to meet other mothers, get help from the case workers, and learn important things about caring for my kids," she says.

The current social distancing restrictions have caused us to rethink the way we run our playgroups. The majority of mothers were keen to continue attending via the internet, but there were several difficulties to overcome. However, with the perseverance of the mothers and individual support from case workers, we were recently able to start running our playgroups

online. So far we've had virtual trips to Melbourne Zoo, created and shared artworks, discussed the news, and danced and sung to our favourite songs on YouTube. We have been inundated with glowing feedback!

On behalf of MiCare we would like to express thanks and gratitude to the Wyndham Community Education Centre for partnering with us on this terrific project and providing ongoing support. Together we are making a real difference!

\*Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the individual.

## Youth & Communities Programs

**Earlier this year, MiCare collaborated with the Sunshine Print Artspace (SPA) to deliver the Brimbank Yarns Project, which gave members of the Brimbank Community an opportunity to express themselves in a creative way.**

The project encouraged local people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds to attend a series of workshops at the SPA and create artwork that reflects what "belonging" means to them. The SPA is a volunteer-run studio in Melbourne which offers various printmaking facilities and provides open access to established and aspiring artists of all ages. There was a wonderful cultural diversity across the Brimbank Yarns Project, with participants from various parts of Africa and Asia. Volunteers worked closely with the artists to help develop their storylines and bring them to life

using screen printed images.

The finished artworks were then celebrated in an exhibition at a local art gallery in Sunshine earlier this year. Both the artists and organisers were thrilled with the outcome of the program, and talked about the positive impact it had for all involved. James Wight, MiCare's Youth and Communities Program Coordinator, commented that Brimbank Yarns set a new platform for people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds to "connect with local opportunities, learn and share skills and knowledge, and become active in community life". This was echoed by one of the participants, Ana Vahab: "I don't often get out and meet people. This project was an opportunity for me to do just that. I really appreciated the new skills and I plan to build on this knowledge."

*Details: The participating artists were Kissenza from Angola, Ruth Gedle-Gebreab from Eritrea, Ana Vahab from Iran, and Anne Mubale from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Their artworks were displayed in the Fundere Foundry Gallery. This project was supported by the City of Brimbank.*

### MiCare Settlement Services

Our Settlement Services team provides a range of youth, family and community settlement services to assist recently arrived refugees, family migrants and asylum seekers who live in Melbourne's Western, Inner Melbourne and Southern Metropolitan Regions.



1,269

people supported



7

service & office locations



30

devoted staff



# Get in touch with our MiCare family

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