

## **AUV Social Welfare and Ukrainian Senior Citizens Annual Report 2022** **Theresa Jaworski Coordinator**

In 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic changed our lives, it disrupted the normal practice of work and governance, and the outbreak of COVID-19 affected the lives of all sections of society as people were asked to self-quarantine in their homes to prevent the spread of the virus. This affected the CHSP visitations/Friendly visiting program, and the Senior Citizens Club.

Thursday the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022, a date that will live in infamy, the brutal and deliberate attack on Ukraine by Russia, has changed our lives in the most devastating way. The Association of Ukrainians in Victoria (AUV) did not expect the massive change to our work and governance, our existence, our responsibilities to our Ukrainian Community, and to the flow of Ukrainian people fleeing the war in Ukraine, arriving in Victoria needing help and support.

The changes and added responsibilities to my role as social welfare co-ordinator was to assist people with visa information, how to best get to Australia on the Tourist Visa subclass 600, information about the visa 449 transitioning to visa 786 the three-year Temporary Humanitarian Visa, and recently with changes the end of 786 after 31<sup>st</sup> of July assisting with other visa options. Also assisting individuals, families with social, emotional difficulties, to refer them to the proper services and agencies to help and support them with the changes in their environment. One of the first telephone calls was from the director of the organisation Asylum Seekers Resource Centre, offering their help, support, and concerns for our Ukrainian people. Throughout the following months they provided food parcels for the newly arrived displaced people from the war, which has been a great help and relief for them.

Home Affairs made themselves available to us for information and support regarding the visa process for people fleeing the war, zoom meetings with the Minister of Immigration to learn about the fast-tracked visa 600 process, the humanitarian visas, and many very important issues.

The months that past we have had to face:

- Hundreds phone calls from people concerned about their family members in Ukraine, and how help and support them, how to apply for the fast-tracked tourist visa subclass 600. Many people needed guidance on how to use the online program to fill out the application forms, and the many issues that were required to. There have been many direct calls and emails from people in Ukraine, and who had fled to a safe nearby country.

- Working with the organisation AMES regarding resettlement of newly arrived people to provide protection, liberty, safety, health, or other human rights that were at risk in Ukraine.
- Foundation House an organisation that helps people rebuild their lives in Australia after surviving torture and trauma in their countries of origin.
- Ukrainians who are experiencing mental health struggles dealing with the trauma of war.
- Fear, anxiety, and depression are prevailing emotions, but so are grief and even survivor's guilt.
- People living in constant fear.

We have been blessed with the many organisations who work in these areas, who have provided information, who have helped set up so many programs and support systems, the AUV would not have been able to carry the valuable work we do without these organisations.

I would like to mention the participation of Ukrainian women in the “Kitchen and Garden program” for women of migrant and refugee backgrounds at Government House, sponsored by the Governor of Victoria, the Hon. Linda Dessau AC, and her husband Mr Anthony Howard AM QC, as part of their vision to open up Government House and its grounds to the Victorian community. This has been a breath of fresh air for them and time to forget the war for a short time and feel welcomed and supported.

At the same time whilst all the above is happening, the Association of Ukrainians in Victoria (AUV) is a Service Provider for CHSP programs of support for the elderly to help them maintain their independence at home under the My Aged Care program, and we must continue with these responsibilities.

The Ukrainian Senior Citizens Club is the other service provided by AUV and one of the instruments used to maintain CHSP clients' connection and independence. I coordinate the Senior Citizens Club which holds fortnightly lunches as well as educational, cultural, and social activities but through Covid19 these activities were severely limited, there were off and on gatherings for the Senior Citizens meetings and the CHSP visitations from the beginning of 2020.

Our direct service delivery funding is through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) for Sector Support and Development (SSD), we are required to do reports, SSD Activity Work Plan. I would like to thank Tatiana Zachariak for helping with the new reporting processes that have resulted in a more detailed analysis of what we do, why we do it.

The SSD funds are attributed to the following programs;

Senior Citizens Centre  
Volunteer Coordination- Friendly Visiting  
Volunteer Coordination -Other

In the SSD application for government funding, the following statement is made by AUV which represents their position on servicing their community.

**“The Association of Ukrainians in Victoria values and respects our aging population for their individual human worth and dignity, treated with courtesy, access to services without discrimination, they are informed about available services, they have the right to privacy and confidentiality. We are aware that our Ukrainian Clients are registered with MY Aged Care, they receive home care and personal care, which we support and encourage. But they also know they are cared for by our Ukrainian Community where they can get help and support in their own language, culturally and traditionally. We will never abandon our ageing community and will continue to help and support them in the way that is needed.”**

Ukrainian Senior Citizens Club in Melbourne provides a focal point for senior activities in our community and is easily accessible. It serves a place of social, physical, and educational activities designed to respond to an increasingly diverse demands and interests while fostering independence and community interaction among participants.

We recognise that all seniors still have ambitions, capabilities, creativity, and desire to remain independent in society.

The Ukrainian Senior Citizens Club in Melbourne is a non-for-profit organisation with a committee of management that governs and operates the Club with high regard and respect to all its members. It provides a friendly, welcoming place for social activities, meals, and educational opportunities for our target group. The Club promotes social connection which can improve the wellbeing by having a better lifestyle and a positive approach to ageing.

- Providing regular fortnightly meeting with a program, lunch is provided for all the members
- Providing and contributing to the physical, emotional, and social growth, development, and achievement of senior citizens
- Providing seniors with opportunities to participate in community service
- Providing information services to assist seniors in personal and health problems
- Providing the opportunity for involvement in the operation and decision-making of the Club and establishing annual goals and objectives with periodic reviews to ensure the accomplishment of the Club goals, and to meet the continuing needs of our participants.
- To utilise the knowledge, expertise, and experiences of the older persons for the good of the society

- To uphold the dignity and self-respect of the older persons
- aim to expand networks and partnerships.

**Some of the highlights for the past couple years:**

Due to the risk of Coronavirus in 2020 we had to make the decision to cancel meeting and lunches until we were advised by the authorities that we could resume our programs.

- During the first lockdown the Senior Citizens Club supported the mask making project for “Kalyna Care”.
- Members were constantly informed by mail and telephone calls about COVID-19 information regarding health needs and requirements, updated of any changes.
- Members received by mail Easter cards, Mother’s Day, and Father’s Day cards, Christmas Cards. In the first year of COVID lockdown 2020, we chose Mr. Ivan Berezowskyj and Mr. Josef Chajnus as Father of the Year. They both received and gift in the mail from the club and were chosen because they were both 99 going onto 100 years.
- We finished that year on happy note as we were able to have a Christmas gathering before the start of another lockdown.

In 2021 we successfully had a few lunches;

- 16.3.21 – commemorated Ukraine’s Greatest Poet, Taras Shevchenko with his songs and readings
- 30.3.21 – celebrated Mr Ivan Berezowskyj’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday
- 13.4.21 – the members did Easter activities, some members made Pysanky with wax and dyes, and other brightly coloured pictures of pysanky
- 11.5.21 – celebrated Easter and Mother’s Day with a traditional Easter lunch and Rev. Fr. Andriy Mykytyuk said a Moleben especially for all the mothers. We chose Halyna Hlychovera as mother of the year (she sadly passed away in Dec. 21)
- 25.5.21 – discussion of health and safety around the home
- 6.7.21 – Meet and greet the new appointed Bishop for Australia, Most Rev. Mykola Bychok, and farewelled retired Bishop, Most Rev. Bishop Peter Stasiuk
- 21.12.21 – after months of lockdown we celebrated Christmas and the end of the year
- We have successfully been able to continue our fortnightly lunches, most times Rev. Fr. Andriy Mykytyuk says a Moleben and prayers for peace in Ukraine, and we had the honour of greeting Rev. Fr. Bohdan Vosniak, newly arrived from Ukraine with his family.
- We have greeted many visitors from Ukraine at our lunches and offer them the opportunity to tell us their story about the war and how it has affected their lives.

- **Recommendations for the future of the Club:**
- Maintaining membership
- Encouraging younger membership
- Encouraging participation in activities, excursions, meetings
- To enrich and enhance the lives of the people
- Overcoming ageing and illness
- Providing information about the service of CHSP and MY Aged Care
- Providing interesting activities and speakers
- Mental illness/dementia education
- Providing more volunteers
- Promoting better outcomes to high need members
- Community engagement and understanding
- Providing information and awareness about the club
- Encouraging members to set their goal and working to achieve them
- Developing new networks and partnerships with the aim of expanding membership.

**Our Mission – “To provide the Senior Citizens with an opportunity to participate and enjoy all aspects of our Community.”**

I would like to thank the President of AUV, Mr Slawko Kohut, Tatiana Zachariak- colleague and mentor, Irene Stawiski, Marjana Miladinovic, Rev. Fr. Andriy Mykytuk, Rev. Fr. Bohdan Vozniak, the many volunteers who kindly give up their valuable time, and the Ukrainian Women’s Association, thank you to all for your ongoing help, support, and contribution. May God bless us with his love and strength, and especially we pray for Ukraine, for the end of the war, for peace and glory.

With respect and kindness  
Teklia Theresa Jaworski  
Theresa Jaworski Coordinator  
Ukrainian Welfare Bureau  
“Someone to Turn To”