



Children of Mauritius Medical and Surgical Support Association

COMMSSA Western Australia Inc.



L'Espoir Courrier

A publication by the Committee of COMMSSA WA Inc.

August 2025 Newsletter

Perth, Western Australia



L'Espoir Courier

Welcome to our August 2025 newsletter!

We are thrilled to share with you the latest developments in our mission to make a positive impact in our community.

Dear Members of COMMSSA,

As we reflect on the past six months, COMMSSA Western Australia Inc. remains steadfast in its mission to provide financial assistance for the medical and surgical treatment of disadvantaged children from Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Recent Achievements

Since our foundation in 1991, COMMSSA has facilitated nearly 80 episodes of care in Perth. In collaboration with SACIM-Australia, we have also financed the treatment of approximately 30 children from underprivileged families in private hospitals in Mauritius since 2016.

The Journey of a Child

Our support goes beyond financial assistance. Recognising that many of the young children, and sometimes their parents, only speak Créole, we ensure comprehensive care that addresses both medical and cultural needs, providing a comforting environment during their treatment journey.

Community Engagement

Our strength lies in our community. While many of our members are from the Mauritian diaspora in Western Australia, we welcome anyone who shares our vision to join us. Your involvement, whether through membership, donations, or volunteering, directly impacts the lives of the children we support.

Looking Ahead

As we move forward, we remain dedicated to our mission and look to broaden our reach. Our work is far from over, and with your continued support, we aim to assist even more children in need, providing them with the medical care they deserve.

Thank you for being an integral part of the COMMSSA family. Together, we are making a tangible difference in the lives of these children and their families.

Warm regards,

COMMSSA WA Committee Members



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President's Report

Welcome and thank you!

Dear Valued Member of COMMSSA,

I hope this message finds you well.

Welcome to our newsletter! We are thrilled to share with you the latest developments in our mission to make a positive impact in our community.

Firstly, we would like to express our gratitude to all of our donors and volunteers who have continued to support us during these challenging times. Your generosity and dedication have allowed us to keep our programs running smoothly and effectively.

As a Not-for-Profit charity, since 1991 COMMSSA, (officially COMMSSA Western Australia Inc.), has worked diligently towards improving the lives of disadvantaged children from Mauritius and Rodrigues by providing financial assistance for their medical and surgical treatment. Our work relies on the commitment and passion of a Management Committee, whose members help drive our mission forward.

After many years of unwavering dedication, some of our long-serving and valued Committee members will be retiring at our next AGM. While we are deeply grateful for their contributions, we recognise that change is inevitable. This transition presents an exciting opportunity for new individuals to step in and make a meaningful impact.

If you are interested and would like more information, please contact a member of our Committee, or send an email to info@commssa.org.au by 15 August, 2025. We are eager to welcome new members who are committed to helping us pursue our important mission.

Since its founding in 1991, COMMSSA has assisted and supported a large number of children in need, who have been treated in Australia, in Mauritius or elsewhere. However, there are many more disadvantaged children who still require our support, and there is much more work to be done.

We look forward to receiving your Expressions of Interest.



It gives me great pleasure to share the wonderful success of our recent fundraising dance. The night was a fantastic celebration of music, connection, and community spirit – and most importantly, it raised an impressive amount of money to support children in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Every dollar raised will help provide critical support, from medical procedures to essential care, for those who need it most.

Events like these remind us how powerful it is when we combine fun with fundraising.

Our members truly enjoy coming together – not only to dance and celebrate, but to do so with a purpose. I want to extend heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended, helped organise, or contributed to the evening. In particular, thank you to those who so generously donated raffle prizes, gifts, and cash. Your kindness and commitment make these events possible and successful.

Finally, we want to remind everyone that our charity relies on the kindness and support of our community. If you are able to donate your time or resources, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Together, we can make a real difference in the lives of those who need it most. Thank you for your continued support!

Enjoy this month's newsletter!

Sincerely,

Dr Mariam Bahemia
President
COMMSSA WA Inc.
Members of the Management Committee

Medical Directors' Report



SACIM in Mauritius (1968), SACIM-Australia in Melbourne (1973) and COMMSSA in Perth, Western Australia (1991) share a common objective: *to make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged children, primarily from Mauritius and Rodrigues.*

Over the years, SACIM has referred more than 750 children overseas for complex, often life-saving surgical procedures that could not be performed in Mauritius. Many of those children were treated in Australia. Between 1991 and 2020, COMMSSA financed, fully or partially close to 80 episodes of care in Australia for children from poor Mauritian families.

2015, saw a game-changing development in paediatric care in Mauritius. Based primarily in private hospitals and clinics, a team led by Doctor Kevin Teerovengadum (paediatric surgeon) and Doctor Ryad Joomye (intensivist, neonatal care paediatrician) started providing first class surgical and medical care for children who, previously, would have had to be sent overseas. Not only was that care being provided at much lower cost than in Australia, but with it came the additional benefit to the child that he or she could recover in a hospital bed surrounded by family, friends and people speaking a familiar language.

In November 2016, Dr Teerovengadum and Dr Joomye, from Wellkin Hospital in Moka, requested COMMSSA's financial assistance for 25 cases. It was impossible for us to come to the aid of that many children. Nevertheless, between January 2017 and December 2019, COMMSSA's financial assistance of just over \$100,000 - topped up by contributions from SACIM Australia in some cases - helped make a difference in the life of twelve of those children.

Since 2020, despite the drastic brake that COVID-19 put on COMMSSA's activities in Perth, the Association has disbursed close to AUD 65,000 in aid to SEVEN more children in need who were treated in Mauritius.

In FY 2020-2021:

\$16,000 for a 16-year-old boy requiring bowel Surgery and \$7,000 for a 13-year-girl needing a cardiac intervention.

In FY 2021-2022:

\$3,000 for Knee surgery on a 12-year-old boy.

In FY 2022-2023:

\$9,000 for hip surgery on a 22-year-old who had had previous hip surgery in Perth in his early teens, and \$7,000 for knee surgery for 21-year-old boy.

In FY 2023-2024:

\$10,000 for renal surgery required by a 4-year-old boy; \$9,000 for a 10-year-old boy with renal failure.

The sum of approximately \$165,000 that allowed COMMSSA to make a difference in the lives of NINETEEN children by having them operated on in Mauritius, would have hardly been enough to bring TEN of them to Perth for treatment.

In addition to the assistance provided to children being treated in Mauritius, COMSSA has continued to be of assistance to three patients from Rodrigues.

L. A., a 14-year-old boy has to travel to Reunion Island with his mother every six months, for ongoing management of a malignant condition. COMSSA pay their airfares and board and lodging.

M S. F., and her younger brother, J.F. are the only patients who have come to Perth in the past five years. They arrived in February 2023 - their seventh visit since 2010, for a long overdue review of their ocular, metabolic, endocrinological and orthopaedic conditions. COMSSA took care of all their expenses, including an additional eye prosthesis for M S. F. and orthotics for J F. F. On two occasions since 2023, their mother has had to purchase new spectacles for them in Rodrigues. She was refunded by COMSSA.

However, beyond the ad hoc assistance and support for surgical and medical care to disadvantaged children, we believe that COMSSA's most important achievement is to have identified and addressed the pressing need for the training of Stoma Care Nurses in Mauritius. We invite you to read about it on the website of the Association www.comsssa.org.au, News, Stoma Care Nurse Education in Mauritius.

Although, M S. F. and her brother J F. F., were the only patients to come to Perth for treatment between 2020 and 2025, it should be obvious to all that COMSSA has not faltered in the mission it embarked upon in 1991.

Yet, because they can no longer see, meet or even host a child who is the beneficiary of their unfailing and generous support to COMSSA over many years, some of our members have questioned whether COMSSA is still relevant. Why raise funds when so few children being sent to Perth?



Mauritius is often seen primarily as a beautiful island paradise. However, beneath the surface, and despite the great strides made in healthcare in the country, many children still face significant medical challenges that can affect their quality of life - a mobility handicap, visual impairment, Type 1 Diabetes and many other conditions that do not necessarily demand the sums required for costly surgical or medical interventions.

We strongly believe that, even from afar, COMSSA still has a role to play. Whether it continues to do so, will depend on the concern of our members - on or off the Management Committee - and their commitment and willingness to help us find new ways of addressing the plight and ongoing needs of disadvantaged children in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Dr Mariam Bahemia & Dr Serge Toussaint
Medical Directors
31 March 2025

A Walk Down Memory Lane: Honouring our Founders and Pioneers

Our journey began in 1991 with the establishment of COMMSSA – SACIM (WA) Inc., an initiative dedicated to supporting disadvantaged children in need of medical treatment. In 2019, the name of the Association changed to COMMSSA Western Australia Inc., has continued to pursue its mission with the same commitment and passion.

COMMSSA was founded by a group of dedicated individuals.

Our Founding Members:

Dr Serge Toussaint – President

Dr Harry Dumbell – Vice President / Medical Director

Mr Sylvio Desvaux (*dec.*) – Secretary

Mr Jean Dubuisson-Perrine (*dec.*) – Treasurer

Committee Members:

Mrs Josette Ménagé (*dec.*)

Mrs Monique Malié, and

Mr Jean-Pierre Duvergé

The Pioneers Before COMMSSA

Before the official establishment of COMMSSA-SACIM (WA), a small but devoted group of expatriate Mauritians assisted over fifteen disadvantaged children from Mauritius who came to Perth for medical treatment. Though not formally registered as a charitable organisation, their impact was profound.

The following people were the **key contributors**:

Mr & Mrs Gaby (*dec.*) and Renée Euphémie (*dec.*)

Mr & Mrs Dass Appanah

Mr Barat Babajee

Gaby Euphémie and Barat Babajee later served on COMMSSA's Management Committee, while Renée and Gaby continued to generously open their home to host several children receiving treatment.

Their dedication laid the foundation for what COMMSSA has become today.

We honour and thank these remarkable individuals for their selfless contributions.

Dr Serge Toussaint

STOMA Care Nurse Education in Mauritius



From COMSSA WA 2017-2019 to Curtin Mauritius 2024 and Charles Telfair Education 2024

Often, children born with a bowel or bladder abnormality cannot pass faeces or urine normally; a surgeon must create an artificial opening – a *Stoma* – which allows their excreta to go into a pouch. Without the supervision of a Stoma Care nurse, the stoma can leak, the children miss or even do not attend school.

In March 2017, Dr Serge Toussaint and Dr Mariam Bahemia, Medical Directors of COMSSA WA in Perth, became aware that several children, whose surgery had been financed by COMSSA, were in that predicament. They saw the adequate training of Stoma Care Nurses in Mauritius as a pressing need. **How could COMSSA make a difference?**

Ostomy WA advised them to contact Mrs Elizabeth English AM, a Consultant in Stoma and Wound Care in Adelaide and a world authority on Enterostomal Nursing Education.

From 15-21 November 2017, Mrs Elizabeth English, travelled to Mauritius on a fact-finding mission, with Serge, Mariam, and Monique Malié, the President of COMSSA and logistics guru of the operation. Mrs English ran a workshop in Stoma Care at Wellkin Hospital and ascertained that Mauritian nurses were ready and eager to undertake Stoma Care training.

In September 2018 and October 2019, COMSSA funded Mrs English and Ms Sharon Boxall, a Wound Care nurse from Western Australia, to travel to Mauritius where they held 5-Day Stoma and Wound Care Nursing Education Programs at the Nursing Council of Mauritius, as well as workshops in Rodrigues on 30 and 31 October 2019. The COMSSA team, who accompanied them, funded their own expenses, as they had done in 2017.



Although COMSSA WA had taken the first steps, the full and ongoing education of Enterostomal Therapy Nurses would require the involvement of a tertiary institution. We, at COMSSA, saw Curtin University, Western Australia, as best placed to do so.

In 2019, thanks to Mrs Jenny Dee, Australian High Commissioner in Mauritius, the COMSSA team met with Professor Lina Pelliccione, President of Curtin Mauritius, on the Charles Telfair campus. We left Mauritius hopeful that, one day, once it became involved in health education, Curtin Mauritius would rise to the challenge.

COVID-19 derailed our efforts. That is until Ms Anaïs Ducray, a member of COMSSA's Management Committee, on holiday in Mauritius in October 2023, contacted someone she knew at Curtin. A few days later, Mrs Monique Malié, Ms Anaïs Ducray and Dr Mariam Bahemia (online) together with Dr Odylle Charoux (Acting Head Health Sc faculty) and Mr Shafiq Gopee (Head of the Office of Learning and Teaching) met at Curtin Mauritius.

On 13-14 February 2024, Curtin Mauritius (with Dr Sharon MacLean of Curtin WA at the helm) ran a very successful Stoma Care CPD workshop for nurses, in conjunction with The Charles Telfair Education. Stoma Care Nurse Education in Mauritius is now on track and on its way!

The training of Stoma Care Nurses will transform the quality of life, not only for dozens of children - COMSSA's initial concern - but for hundreds of Mauritians living with a stoma.

We acknowledge the substantial contribution made by Austral Fisheries towards COMSSA's, Stoma Care Project. They provided Taxi Transport for our team for the whole duration of our trips to Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Heartfelt Congratulations and **Thank You** to Curtin Mauritius for taking up the challenge.

COMMSSA Changes Lives!

Although Yonny and Marie Shelly, whose news we share today are now adults, they demonstrate the impact COMMSSA has had over the years and can still have on the lives of disadvantaged children from Mauritius and Rodrigues. And how timely specialist surgical and medical intervention can help a child, with life-threatening or disabling conditions reach adulthood and achieve his or her dreams and full potential.



A Life Transformed: Yonny Lapunaise's Story

Yonny was one of ten children referred by SACIM-Mauritius for surgery in Perth between 1991 and 1997, all requiring, and successfully undergoing cardiac surgery at Princess Margaret Hospital. The costs for their hospital stay, surgical procedures, and all associated expenses were fully covered by COMMSSA-SACIM (WA).

Yonny arrived in Perth in February 1997, just before his third birthday accompanied by his mother, Christina. They were hosted by Mr and Mrs René and Mrs Hélène Mak, who have remained in regular contact with the family. As a result of the surgery, Yonny has been able to lead a healthy and fulfilling life, just like the other nine children whose treatment was financed by COMMSSA during those years.

Yonny works as a boilermaker at the shipyards in Port-Louis, enjoys Boxing and Thai-Boxing and is looking forward to getting married next year.

Thanks to Mrs Mak, Tonny called me on Whatsapp on 4 April. It was a pleasure to see him and hear his news.

With Yonny's permission, we are delighted to share a photograph kindly provided by Mrs Hélène Mak. It captures a joyous moment - Yonny celebrating his 30th birthday, popping the cork of a bottle of bubbly in front of his birthday cake - joie de vivre! A true testament to the new lease on life he was given through the generosity and dedication of COMMSSA and its supporters.

Dr Serge Toussaint



A Journey of Strength: Marie Shelly Félicité's Story

At just 10 years old, Marie Shelly Félicité was sent to Perth by SACIM for urgent medical treatment. Suffering from multiple ocular, metabolic, and endocrinological conditions, she and her mother spent several months in Perth, where they were hosted by Monique and Jack Malié - affectionately known as Mémé and Pépé - by several families whom they have hosted.

Despite the best efforts of specialists, Shelly's right eye could not be saved, and she was fitted with an artificial eye. Since 2011, she has returned to Perth for annual or two-yearly medical reviews. However, these challenges never held her back.

Shelly's resilience and determination led her to successfully complete her secondary education. After graduating from school she applied to study at a tertiary institution and was accepted into Polytech Mauritius at Baie Malgache, in Rodrigues, where she pursued studies in Sport, Recreation, and Fitness Management.

In October 2024, she achieved a Higher Certificate in Sport, Recreation, and Fitness Management. She is now setting her sights even higher, aiming to obtain an Advanced Certificate in Sport Management.

Well done, Shelly! You are an inspiration and a true role model. Your perseverance and achievements are a testament to your strength, and you have our admiration - congratulations!

Dr Serge Tousaint

Highlights of recent activities

Tropical Dance - 15th March 2025

What a night!

The Tropical Dance event was fantastic with vibrant music, a buzzing dance floor, and a colourful tropical flair! Guests enjoyed a fabulous evening that brought people together for a wonderful cause.

The dance floor was constantly full thanks to DJ "G-Ezy". He had us all on the dance floor all night. Many thanks to those who contributed to the wonderful raffle prizes and congratulations to those who won!

A big thank you to everyone who came along and made the night so enjoyable. What a great success this event was!

In previous years we welcomed around 400 enthusiastic patrons, and it was wonderful to see such strong community spirit. However, in more recent times, attendance numbers have been lower, and unfortunately, some supporters have missed out. As a result, we made the decision to host the event at a smaller venue, however in doing so some members missed out on attending. We are truly sorry this occurred, however we hope we can count on your presence and support to continue making our events vibrant and successful in the future.

Until the next event - à bientôt!

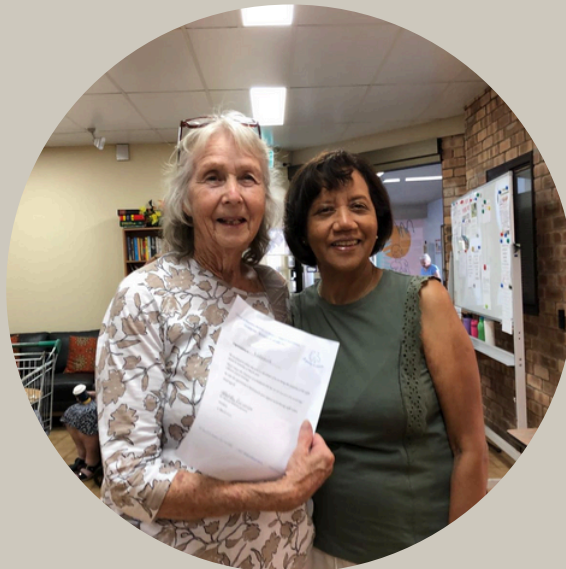
Monique Malie



More pictures from the Tropical Dance



A wonderful evening, filled with fun and laughter!



Major Prize winner
Congratulations!



Les Plaisirs du Goût - For your tastebuds

Gâteaux Piments Recipe:
From Jack Malie,
Masterchef of chilli cakes!



Ingredients:

1 cup yellow split peas (dhal)
3-4 green chillies, chopped (adjust to taste)
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tbsp chopped coriander
1 small onion, finely chopped
1/2 tsp cumin powder
Salt to taste
Oil for frying

Instructions:

Soak the yellow split peas in water for at least 4 hours or overnight. Drain completely.
Grind the split peas into a coarse paste (not too smooth) without adding water. Add the chopped chillies, garlic, coriander, onion, cumin, and salt to the paste. Mix well.
Shape the mixture into small balls or patties.
Heat oil in a deep pan and fry until golden brown and crispy.
Drain on paper towels and serve hot with a chilli sauce.

Just the best...

Share your Favourite Mauritian
Recipe!



Do you have a favourite Mauritian recipe that's been passed down through generations or a dish that always gets rave reviews? We would love to feature it in the next edition of our newsletter!

Please email your recipe (and a photo if you have one!) to info@commssa.org.au and share a taste of Mauritius with our community.

Let us celebrate the flavours that bring us together!

Tarte à la Banane / Banana Tart Recipe

From Monique Tourneur



Ingredients:

Banana filling:

500g very ripe bananas

100g sugar

Tsp of vanilla essence (optional)

Pastry:

200g flour

100g butter (cubed)

Pinch of salt

1 tbsp sugar

15 mls of cold water

Instructions:

Mash the banana with sugar and vanilla essence and cook over low heat stirring constantly as it will splatter.

When mixture is brown and thick remove from heat and set aside to cool.

Pastry tart for shells:

Add salt, sugar and butter to flour and using your fingertips quickly rub the butter into the flour to obtain a fine crumbed texture.

Make a well in the centre, add water and mix/knead to obtain a soft dough.

Shape into a ball and flatten slightly. Cover with cling wrap and refrigerate for about 30-60 minutes.

Preheat oven to 200c

Grease 10 small tart tins with removable base.

Flour the pastry mat and roll out pastry 3-5 mm thick.

If pastry is too hard to roll stand at room temperature for a few minutes until soft to touch.

Cut out circles large enough to fit tins.

Line tins with pastry, trim edges and add banana mixture.

Roll remaining pastry, cut strips ½ cm wide and length to fit tart tin and lay on filling in a weaved pattern.

Brush with egg yolk and bake about 20 minutes until golden brown.

Enjoy!

Upcoming events



Vino & Van Gogh - Paint & Sip Event

Gather your friends, sip on some vino, and nibble on some cheese and create your very own masterpiece inspired by the great Van Gogh!

No experience needed - just bring your creativity and enjoy a relaxing, fun afternoon with friends.

When: Sunday 21 September, 2025

Time: 1.00pm - 3.30pm

Where: Bayswater Community Centre
27 King William Street, Bayswater 6053

Cost: \$25.00 per person

RSVP: To Committee Members by 30 August 2025

Payment is due by 30 August 2025

Spots are limited!

All materials, a platter of nibbles and a complimentary beverage upon arrival will be provided.

BYO Drinks (Snacks - if you would like to eat something more substantial).

We can't wait to sip, paint, and enjoy an afternoon with you!



All proceeds from the event will go to support COMMSSA WA Inc.



Get Ready for our 2026 Quiz Night

It's time to start brushing up on your trivia... because our legendary Quiz Night is back in 2026!

Gather your dream team, dust off your thinking caps, and get ready for an evening full of fun, laughter, friendly competition, and plenty of surprises.

Lots of fun and prizes to be won!

Date and event details coming soon!

Stay tuned – you won't want to miss this night of brain-teasing brilliance!

All proceeds from the event will go to support COMMSSA WA Inc



Seeking Committee Members

We are seeking enthusiastic and committed people to join our Management Committee. If you, or someone you know, has the passion and skills to contribute - whether by offering great ideas, helping organise fundraising events, or supporting our initiatives - we would love to hear from you.

If you are interested and would like more information, please contact a member of our Committee or send an email to info@commssa.org.au. We are eager to welcome new members who are committed to helping us pursue our important mission.

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We look forward to receiving your Expressions of Interest.

COMMSSA Management Committee Members



Dr Mariam Bahemia
Medical Director
President



Dr Serge Toussaint
Medical Director
Co Founder



Dr Thierry Venaille
Vice President



Gilbert Tourneur
Treasurer



Yashtee Boodhun
Secretary



Monique Malié
Co Founder



Mirella Augustin



Anaïs Ducray



Christine Antoine



COMPETITION

Design a Mascot for COMMSSA!

We love seeing children use their creativity and talents, so we are launching an exciting competition where you can learn, have fun, and even win a special prize!

We need a fun and friendly mascot to represent our mission of helping children in need. It can be an animal, superhero, or a brand-new character - let your imagination run wild!

How to Enter:

Draw your mascot and send us a scanned copy or a photo of your artwork to info@commssa.org.au by **Saturday 23 August 2025**.

Make sure you **include your name and age** on your masterpiece.

The winning design will win a prize and will be featured in future newsletters and events!



Supporters of COMMSSA WA over the years...



SKG Radiology, Perth has provided imaging services either at no cost or at a very substantial discount for many years.



Grateful thanks to Mr Warren Coli for providing storage facilities for a minimal fee.



Over the years COMMSSA has enjoyed the ongoing support of the Australian High Commissioners to the Republic of Mauritius.



On many occasions Kailis Bros have, supplied COMMSSA with seafood for various functions. Grateful thanks to Theo Kailis and his team in Leederville.



Austral Fisheries has made substantial donations to COMMSSA since 2012. They continue to support us by paying the annual membership fee to COMMSSA for all their employees. From 2017 to 2019, they also provided free transport in Mauritius for the COMMSSA team and Nurses involved in the Stoma Care and Wound Care Educational Programs.



We thank The Bayswater Pétanque Club for allowing COMMSSA use their clubhouse free of charge on various occasions.



We thank the Lions Club of Girrawheen for their regular donations.



Jenny and Paul Geelen have generously given their time and expertise to a young girl from Rodrigues since 2011; they have attended to her on many occasions and provided her with an aesthetically perfect eye prosthesis.



We are deeply grateful to St. John of God, Subiaco Hospital, where nearly half of the cases, brought to Perth by COMMSSA, have been treated at substantially discounted cost.