

State Planning Office
Department of Justice
GPO Box 825
Hobart TAS 7001

By email: haveyoursay@stateplanning.tas.gov.au

Submission: Draft Southern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy (STRLUS)

To whom it may concern,

COTA Tasmania welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the Draft Southern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy (STRLUS). Land use planning decisions shape whether people can age well in their communities - including whether older Tasmanians can access appropriate housing, essential services, safe walking environments, reliable transport options, and climate-resilient neighbourhoods.

Overall, COTA Tasmania supports the intent and direction of the Strategy, including its recognition of demographic change, its focus on concentrating growth in locations with services, and its commitment to stronger climate and hazard resilience.

We encourage the State Planning Office to strengthen the Strategy by making age-friendly outcomes explicit and measurable, particularly in relation to accessible housing supply, walkability, transport access, social infrastructure planning, and heat/hazard mitigation for vulnerable populations.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these comments further, and to contribute to implementation work (including indicators, structure plan guidance, and engagement processes).

Yours sincerely,



Brigid Wilkinson
Chief Executive Officer
23 January 2026

Submission to the Draft Southern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy

1. Overview

COTA Tasmania supports the Draft STRLUS as an important framework to guide sustainable growth and liveable communities in Southern Tasmania.

The Strategy will be stronger if it explicitly commits to age-friendly planning that recognises older people as a priority cohort. It should set clear expectations for accessible housing, walkable neighbourhoods, transport options beyond private cars, and climate resilience.

To that end, COTA Tasmania recommends the Strategy be strengthened by:

- Embedding an “Age-Friendly Southern Tasmania” principle across the Strategy, with clear expectations for accessible housing, walkability, transport, social infrastructure, and resilience.
- Requiring universal design/accessible housing supply pathways, especially in activity centres and infill areas - not only “housing diversity” in general terms.
- Making walkability and the public realm measurable, including safe crossings, continuous footpaths, seating/rest points, shade, lighting, accessible toilets, and gradients.
- Strengthening transport planning commitments, with specific attention to older people who are no longer driving or who drive less.
- Treating health, care, and community support services as core land-use functions within activity centres (primary care, allied health, community services, and accessible community spaces).
- Explicitly prioritising older people in heat and hazard resilience actions and ensuring adaptation measures reduce risk for vulnerable cohorts.
- Including implementation and monitoring indicators that track whether the Strategy is improving access and reducing disadvantage, rather than relying on aspirational language alone.

2. About COTA Tasmania

COTA Tasmania (Council on the Ageing Tasmania) is Tasmania’s peak body representing older Tasmanians. For more than 60 years, we have been a trusted voice for older people, promoting positive attitudes to ageing, advancing social inclusion, and championing the rights, interests, and value of people as they age.

We provide independent, evidence-based policy and advocacy informed by the lived experience of older people and engagement with stakeholders across government, community services, and industry.

Our focus is on improving outcomes for older Tasmanians and supporting ageing as a time of opportunity, contribution, and security.

We collaborate with other peak bodies, national COTA colleagues, and sector partners to challenge ageism and support practical reforms that enable people to age with dignity, independence, and connection in the communities they choose.

3. Why the STRLUS is important for older Tasmanians

Tasmania has Australia's oldest population profile, which makes older Tasmanians a particularly significant cohort in policy design and service planning.

At the 2021 Census, Tasmania's median age was 42 years, around four years older than the national median, reflecting a comparatively larger share of older residents.

Nationally, Tasmania has had the highest proportion of people aged 65 and over among the states (around one in five), and the population is projected to continue ageing, with the strongest growth in the 75+ age group and a rising share of Tasmanians over 65 in coming decades.

4. Detailed comments

4.1 Demographic change, housing diversity, and ageing well

COTA Tasmania supports the Strategy's recognition that the region's population will age and household sizes will reduce over time. This demographic reality should be treated as a design driver for land use planning and housing policy.

What COTA Tasmania supports

- A strategic emphasis on housing diversity and aligning growth with access to services, and
- The intention to reduce the social and economic costs associated with dispersed, low-density growth.

What needs strengthening

The Strategy would benefit from being more explicit about the types of housing outcomes required to support ageing well. "Housing diversity" can occur without delivering homes that are accessible, adaptable, and located appropriately.

Recommendations

- Include an explicit requirement that infill, activity-centre and greenfield growth contribute to accessible/adaptable housing supply (e.g., step-free access, wider doorways/halls, accessible bathrooms, and visibility features).
- Strengthen expectations for smaller, well-located homes suitable for downsizing within communities (not only larger dwellings in car-dependent areas).
- Encourage planning mechanisms that reduce displacement pressure and improve affordability for older people on fixed incomes, including proximity to services to reduce transport costs.

4.2 “Live local”, activity centres, and 20-minute neighbourhood outcomes

COTA Tasmania strongly supports the “live local” intent, as it is closely aligned with age-friendly planning principles.

What COTA Tasmania supports

- Strengthening activity centres as places where daily needs can be met locally.
- A focus on co-locating services and housing.

What needs strengthening

To be meaningful for older people, “live local” must include the detail of mobility, access, and comfort in the public realm.

Recommendations

- Require that structure plans for activity centres include age-friendly public realm design, such as:
 - continuous, accessible paths of travel;
 - safe and frequent pedestrian crossings;
 - seating/rest points at regular intervals;
 - shade and weather protection;
 - lighting and wayfinding;
 - accessible toilets in centres and high-use open spaces.
- Ensure the Strategy directs councils and agencies to plan for the “last 500 metres” problem — the gap between transport stops/parking and destinations that can make centres inaccessible in practice.

4.3 Transport and mobility beyond private cars

What COTA Tasmania supports

COTA Tasmania supports the Strategy’s acknowledgement of car dependency and the difficulty of servicing low-density expansion with public transport. This is critical for older people, particularly as driving confidence and capacity can reduce with age.

What needs strengthening

Transport is not only a “transport” issue - it is an inclusion and access issue. The Strategy should more directly connect land use decisions to older people’s ability to access health care, food, services, and social connection.

Recommendations

- Strengthen language requiring that significant housing growth occurs where:
 - public transport exists or can be delivered cost-effectively, and
 - walking access to daily needs is realistic for people with mobility limitations.
- Encourage prioritisation of:
 - safer walking networks,
 - accessible public transport stops/interchanges, and

- integrated planning for community transport and demand-responsive services where fixed-route services are not viable.

4.4 Social infrastructure, health care, and community support services

What COTA Tasmania supports

COTA Tasmania supports the Strategy's recognition of equitable access to services and social infrastructure.

For older people, this must include a clear planning commitment to health and community support services.

What needs strengthening

While the Strategy recognises the importance of equitable access to services and social infrastructure, it does not yet provide sufficiently explicit direction on how health care, community supports, and inclusive community facilities will be planned, located, and delivered alongside housing growth.

The Strategy would be stronger if it more clearly prioritised the co-location of primary care and community support services within activity centres and growth areas, set clear expectations for safe and accessible access (including walkable access and public transport access),.

It should also address sequencing to ensure that essential services and community facilities are available when new housing is occupied, rather than lagging behind population growth.

Recommendations

- Strengthen the Strategy's expectations that activity centres and growth areas provide capacity for:
 - primary health care and allied health,
 - community support services (including information and advocacy), and
 - accessible community facilities that enable participation and reduce isolation.
- Require that land use decisions consider service access for people who are:
 - no longer driving,
 - living with disability or chronic illness, or
 - living alone.

4.5 Climate change, heat, and hazard resilience

What COTA Tasmania supports

COTA Tasmania supports the Strategy's focus on climate resilience and hazard-informed planning.

What needs strengthening

Older people are disproportionately affected by heatwaves, smoke events, service interruptions, and evacuation barriers. The Strategy should explicitly reflect this, and ensure actions reduce risk for vulnerable cohorts.

Recommendations

- Include explicit references to protecting vulnerable cohorts (including older people) in climate adaptation and hazard resilience actions.
- Utilise trusted community organisations to support on-ground education and information sharing brokerage activities.
- Strengthen expectations for:
 - urban cooling (canopy/shade, cool materials where relevant, water access),
 - accessible cooling refuges and community spaces in activity centres,
 - resilience planning for power/water/road disruptions and health access during extreme events.
- Ensure hazard-aware land use decisions consider evacuation complexity, mobility limitations, and proximity to services.

5. Implementation and monitoring

COTA Tasmania encourages the Strategy to include a small set of measurable indicators to track whether it is delivering equitable outcomes over time.

Suggested indicators could include:

- proportion of new housing within walking distance of daily needs (and a realistic walking catchment for people with mobility limitations);
- proportion of new housing that meets accessible/adaptable design standards;
- access to health and community services within activity centres;
- public realm measures (continuous footpaths, crossings, seating, shade, toilets);
- heat mitigation benchmarks (canopy targets, shaded walking links, cooling refuges).

6. Conclusion

COTA Tasmania supports the draft STRLUS direction and encourages the State Planning Office to strengthen it by embedding explicit, measurable age-friendly planning outcomes. Doing so will help ensure the Strategy supports independence, access, participation, and safety for older Tasmanians - and will deliver broader benefits for families, people with disability, and the community as a whole.

COTA Tasmania welcomes ongoing engagement as the Strategy is finalised and implemented.