

1. Overview

COTA Tasmania appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed new look and style for the 2026 Concessions and Discounts Guide.

We support efforts to improve the layout and make the guide easier to navigate, including stronger alignment between print and online information. The draft presents information by category in a cleaner, more streamlined format and uses QR codes to direct readers to fuller online content. The draft also states that the printed guide is intended to operate as a quick reference, with the website carrying the most up-to-date information.

From an older person's perspective, however, it is important that digital improvements do not reduce accessibility for people who still rely heavily on printed information, phone contact, or in-person support.

2. Key comments

2.1 The printed guide should remain useful as a stand-alone resource

The current guide includes fuller explanations in print, including eligibility information and contact details for many concessions. The draft 2026 concept appears to shift more strongly toward QR-code access for full details online.

For many older Tasmanians, and many Tasmanians more broadly, this risks making the printed guide less practical rather than more accessible. The printed guide should continue to provide enough information for a reader to understand what the concession is, whether they may be eligible, and how to take the next step without needing to go online.

2.2 QR codes should complement, not replace, other access pathways

QR codes may be convenient for some users, but they should not become the main pathway to essential information about concessions and discounts. Many Tasmanians do not have reliable access to a smartphone, internet connection, or sufficient digital confidence to use QR-based information easily. For these users, reducing printed detail may create a real barrier to access rather than improving navigation.

From an older person's perspective, each QR code should be accompanied by a clearly printed phone number, web address, and a short plain-English summary in print. COTA Tasmania is concerned that a print guide which relies too heavily on digital follow-up risks excluding exactly those people who most depend on concessions information.

2.3 Readability and usability should be tested with older readers

The new layout is visually cleaner, but readability for older users depends on more than appearance. Font size, contrast, spacing, page layout, and the ease of finding relevant information quickly are all critical.

The guide should be tested with older Tasmanians, including people with low vision, limited digital literacy, and people who are not confident using smartphones, before finalisation.

2.4 Plain English and literacy accessibility should be explicitly considered

Accessibility is not only about font size and design. It is also about whether the information can be easily read and understood. Tasmania has significant adult literacy challenges, and this has direct implications for the way public information should be designed. Public reporting has highlighted that 50 per cent of Tasmanians aged 15 - 74 are reading at level 2 or below, meaning many people do not have the reading skills needed to successfully navigate even basic everyday life demands.

26Ten, Tasmania's statewide adult literacy and numeracy initiative, states that a communication is in plain English when its wording, structure and design are so clear that intended readers can find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information. 26Ten also offers plain English support and resources for organisations.

For that reason, COTA Tasmania recommends that the final draft be reviewed through a plain-English and literacy-access lens, including consultation with 26Ten or another suitable literacy specialist.

2.5 A strong print-based quick reference section should be retained

One of the strengths of the current guide is the quick reference section that helps users identify concessions by concession card type at a glance.

This is a very practical feature for older readers and carers. If the detailed content is reduced in print, it becomes even more important to retain a clear, well-designed quick reference tool within the booklet itself.

2.6 Biannual publication may create risks unless supported by a clear update mechanism

If the printed guide is issued only every two years, there is a greater risk that people who rely on hard copy information will be using outdated material for a long period. That risk is more serious where the print version contains less detail and directs readers online for essential information.

If a biannual model is adopted, there should be a simple and well-publicised non-digital update pathway, including a phone contact and a clear process for obtaining current information in hard copy.

2.7 Accuracy and quality control in the draft are important

As the guide becomes shorter and more reliant on digital follow-up, accuracy, clarity and consistency in the printed content become even more important. Any design or content issues in the print version may create confusion and reduce confidence in the guide as a trusted source of information.

3. COTA overall position

COTA Tasmania supports the aim of improving navigation and integrating digital tools, including QR codes.

However, digital access cannot be assumed. Many older Tasmanians, and many Tasmanians more broadly, do not have reliable access to devices, internet services, or the confidence required to navigate QR-code-based information.

The printed guide must therefore remain a genuinely useful stand-alone resource, not simply a gateway to the website. It should contain enough plain-English information for readers to understand key concessions and how to pursue them, without being forced online.

COTA Tasmania also recommends that the final guide be tested with older users and reviewed through a plain-English and literacy accessibility lens, including consultation with 26Ten or another literacy specialist. QR codes may improve access for some users, but they must not reduce access for those already at greatest risk of exclusion.