

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

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

Submission: Draft Northern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy

To whom it may concern,

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

Overall, COTA Tasmania supports the intent and direction of the Regional Strategic Directions, particularly the focus on well-located growth, improved access to services, stronger climate and hazard resilience, and a more coordinated approach to infrastructure and economic development.

We encourage the State Planning Office and regional partners to strengthen the Strategy by making age-friendly outcomes explicit and measurable. This is especially important given the Strategy's own recognition that Northern Tasmania must respond to a changing population (including older residents) and support opportunities for people to age in place.

COTA Tasmania would welcome the opportunity to discuss these comments further, and to contribute to implementation work (including indicators, guidance for structure plans and activity centres, and engagement processes).

Yours sincerely,



Brigid Wilkinson

Chief Executive Officer

30 January 2026

Submission to the Draft Northern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy

1. Overview

COTA Tasmania supports the Draft NTRLUS Regional Strategic Directions as an important framework to guide sustainable growth and liveable communities across Northern Tasmania to 2050.

The Strategy will be stronger if it explicitly commits to age-friendly planning that recognises older people as a priority cohort and makes expected outcomes measurable.

This includes accessible and adaptable housing supply, walkability and public realm quality, transport options beyond private cars, access to health and community support services, and heat and hazard resilience for vulnerable populations.

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

- Embedding an “Age-Friendly Northern Tasmania” principle across the Strategy, with clear expectations for accessible housing, walkability, transport access, social infrastructure, and climate resilience.
- Requiring pathways to increase universal design / accessible housing supply in activity centres, infill/renewal areas and growth locations — not only “housing diversity” in general terms.
- Making walkability and the public realm measurable, including safe crossings, continuous footpaths, seating/rest points, shade, lighting, wayfinding, accessible toilets, and attention to gradients.
- Strengthening transport planning commitments, with specific attention to older people who are no longer driving or who drive less, including community transport and demand-responsive options in smaller towns.
- Treating health, care, and community support services as core land-use functions within activity centres and regional service centres (primary care, allied health, community supports, and accessible community spaces).
- Explicitly prioritising older people in heat and hazard resilience actions, including urban cooling, safe evacuation planning, and access to ‘cooling refuges’ and essential services during extreme events.
- Including implementation and monitoring indicators that track access and equity outcomes over time.

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 NTRLUS matters 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.

Northern Tasmania has a comparatively older population profile, with the State of Play report finding that the region has a median age of 43 years.

The Strategy recognises that housing and service systems must respond to smaller households and older residents. Across the region, many older people want to remain in their communities, but this is dependent on housing choice, safe and accessible neighbourhoods, access to health and social supports, and transport options that do not assume ongoing private car use.

The Strategy also identifies that health care and social assistance are a major source of employment. These trends reinforce the importance of land use planning that supports ageing in place, a strong 'care economy', and equitable access to services in both Greater Launceston and smaller towns and coastal communities.

4. Detailed comments

4.1 Vibrant, liveable and safe communities (RSD1)

COTA Tasmania strongly supports RSD 1's emphasis on delivering housing that meets the needs of a changing population — including older residents — and on strengthening walkability, housing diversity and access to essential services, particularly through Greater Launceston and other key centres.

What COTA Tasmania supports:

- A strategic emphasis on focusing growth in serviced locations and improving access to services, jobs and green space.
- The recognition that communities should support older residents to age in place, with diverse housing options and care facilities.

- A hazard-informed approach to settlement patterns, including avoiding intensification where risks cannot be managed to a tolerable level.

What needs strengthening:

- Clearer expectations that ‘housing diversity’ includes accessible and adaptable homes suitable for ageing in place.
- More explicit, measurable public realm and walkability outcomes (footpaths, crossings, seating, shade, lighting, toilets, gradients).
- Stronger direction on sequencing, ensuring services and social infrastructure keep pace with new housing.

Recommendations:

- Include explicit language that housing supply programs (infill, renewal, and greenfield growth) must contribute to accessible/adaptable housing outcomes (e.g., step-free access, wider doorways/halls, accessible bathrooms, and visitability features).
- Require activity centre and structure planning guidance to include age-friendly public use standards (continuous paths, safe crossings, seating/rest points, shade/weather protection, lighting/wayfinding, and accessible toilets).
- Direct that major growth locations demonstrate proximity and realistic access (including for people with mobility limitations) to daily needs, health services and community spaces.

4.2 We care for Country and Place (RSD 2)

COTA Tasmania supports RSD 2’s focus on protecting natural and cultural values and embedding environmental sustainability as a core principle in growth planning. This is also central to ageing well: older people are disproportionately affected by heatwaves, smoke events, flooding, service disruptions and evacuation barriers.

Recommendations:

- Make explicit that climate adaptation and hazard resilience actions prioritise vulnerable cohorts (including older people), particularly in relation to heat, smoke, flood and coastal hazard risk.
- Strengthen expectations for urban cooling and comfort in centres and neighbourhoods (tree canopy, shade, cool materials where relevant, access to water, and shaded walking links).
- Encourage identification and planning for accessible ‘cooling refuges’ and community spaces in key centres, with clear connections to transport and walkable access.
- Ensure hazard-aware land use decisions consider evacuation complexity, mobility limitations, and the need for proximity to essential services and health care during emergencies.

4.3 Northern Tasmania is regionally and globally connected (RSD 3)

COTA Tasmania supports RSD 3’s intent to integrate land use and infrastructure planning, reduce car dependency through public and active transport networks, and improve digital connectivity across communities.

For older Tasmanians, connectivity is fundamentally an inclusion issue: access to health care, food, services and social connection depends on transport and the ‘last 500 metres’ of safe, accessible pathways.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen language requiring that significant housing growth occurs where public transport exists or can be delivered cost-effectively, and where walking access to daily needs is realistic for people with mobility limitations.
- Require inclusive design for public transport stops/interchanges (shelter, seating, lighting, safe crossings, and accessible paths to destinations).
- Explicitly recognise community transport and demand-responsive services as part of the regional connectivity mix, particularly for smaller towns and dispersed communities.
- Retain a strong focus on equitable digital access (coverage, affordability and digital inclusion supports) so older people can access services and social connection where in-person access is limited.

4.4 A diverse and adaptive economy (RSD 4)

COTA Tasmania supports RSD 4’s recognition that Northern Tasmania’s ageing population is increasing demand for care, support and service roles, and that the ‘care economy’ offers stable employment across the region. Land use strategy should treat health, aged care and community supports as essential economic and social infrastructure, not as secondary considerations.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen expectations that activity centres and growth areas provide capacity for primary health care, allied health, aged care and community support services, co-located with housing and transport where possible.
- Plan for workforce stability by aligning housing affordability, transport access and service precinct planning (including safe access for shift workers and carers).
- Ensure visitor and seasonal worker accommodation approaches do not displace older people on fixed incomes, particularly in coastal towns experiencing tourism pressure (through location, scale and sequencing considerations).

Implementation and monitoring

COTA Tasmania encourages the NTRLUS to include a small set of measurable indicators to track whether the Strategy is delivering equitable, age-friendly outcomes over time.

Suggested indicators could include:

- Proportion of new housing within a realistic walking catchment of daily needs and key services (including for people with mobility limitations).
- Proportion of new housing that meets accessible/adaptable design standards.
- Access to primary health care, allied health, and community support services within activity centres and regional service centres.
- Public realm measures: continuous footpaths, safe crossings, seating, shade, lighting/wayfinding, and accessible toilets in centres and high-use open spaces.
- Heat mitigation benchmarks: canopy targets, shaded walking links, and identified cooling refuges.

- Transport access measures: proximity to accessible public transport and availability of community/demand-responsive transport options where fixed-route services are not viable.

5. Implementation and monitoring

COTA Tasmania encourages the NTRLUS to include a small set of measurable indicators to track whether the Strategy is delivering equitable, age-friendly outcomes over time.

Suggested indicators could include:

- Proportion of new housing within a realistic walking catchment of daily needs and key services (including for people with mobility limitations).
- Proportion of new housing that meets accessible/adaptable design standards.
- Access to primary health care, and allied health and community support services within activity centres and regional service centres.
- Public realm measures: continuous footpaths, safe crossings, seating, shade, lighting/wayfinding, and accessible toilets in centres and high-use open spaces.

6. Conclusion

COTA Tasmania supports the Draft Regional Strategic Directions for Northern Tasmania and encourages further strengthening to ensure age-friendly outcomes are explicit, practical and measurable.

With modest additions - particularly around accessible housing pathways, walkability standards, transport inclusion, co-location of health and community supports, and heat/hazard resilience for vulnerable cohorts - the NTRLUS can better enable people to age well across Northern Tasmania's cities, towns and communities.

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