

# Time for grey to go hi-vis

## New COTA chief targets ageism

**Sue Bailey**

The new head of the Council on the Ageing Tasmania has vowed to tackle ageism, saying everyone should be treated the same irrespective of their age.

Brigid Wilkinson said many older Tasmanians felt "invisible" and ageism awareness needed to start with children and updating legislation to remove birth dates in some Acts.

"People tell us all the time that they feel invisible, how since they've got grey hair, they're treated differently, how people assume everyone that's old has cognitive problems, which is just not true," she said.

"It's small percentages of people that do have issues that make them incredibly frail and vulnerable.

"But there's plenty of people in every workplace and community that are in their 60s, 70s, 80s that are contributing, and we've really got to shift our view of ageing and we've also got to plan for it better.

"We tend to make assumptions and say 'grumpy old man or forgetful old lady' and what we're doing is we're labelling all older people like that when that's not the case.

"We all have a role to play in creating an age-friendly Tasmania, alongside changes to systems, policy and infrastructure."

Ms Wilkinson, who has been involved with COTA for 10 years, said getting older was always portrayed as burden and not as a positive.

She said most older Tasmanians wanted to live independently in their own homes.

"Unfortunately, the systems and the structures around them



**COTA chief executive  
Brigid  
Wilkinson**

don't necessarily allow for that and we have huge issues, obviously, in the way that people access formal care, and even just transport getting around. All of those sorts of things can be barriers to that," Ms Wilkinson said.

COTA board chair Ingrid Harrison said Ms Wilkinson brought a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to advocating for positive ageing.

"Brigid's appointment comes at a pivotal time for the not-for-profit sector and peak bodies in Tasmania," she said.

"As they navigate the complexities of securing funding under the new government, strong and effective leadership is essential. The funding pool is becoming more stretched as priorities in all areas heighten."

Ms Harrison said people over the age of 50 represented more than 40 per cent of Tasmania's population.

"They face important challenges including access to appropriate health services, housing, aged care navigation and the rising cost of living," she said.

"These issues, coupled with the necessity to have the over 50 cohort heard in policy-making processes, highlight the critical role COTA Tasmania plays and its need to have strong and effective people at the top."

Ms Wilkinson replaces Craig Chadwick as CEO.

[susan.bailey@news.com.au](mailto:susan.bailey@news.com.au)