



Budget Priorities Statement

2025–2026

DECEMBER 2024



Age is a number, not a use-by date.

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Included with this submission as separate attachments:

Appendix A: Population Projections for Tasmania by LGA area, Tasmania Department of Treasury and Finance 2024.

Appendix B: Digital Inclusion: Tasmania and National Averages, 2023 Collection.

We look forward to a time where age is not seen as a barrier, but instead as a positive contributor to the unique fabric of lutruwita, Tasmania.

About COTA Tasmania

COTA Tasmania (Council on the Ageing [Tas] Inc) is a not-for-profit organisation, operating as a peak body for a wide range of organisations and individuals who are committed to encouraging our community to think positively about ageing. This involves promoting and encouraging social inclusion and championing the rights and interests of Tasmanians as they age. We have been the leading voice of older Tasmanians for more than 60 years.

Our Mission: We challenge ageism and promote the rights, interests and value of all Tasmanians as they age.

Our Vision: Tasmania is a place where all people are treated with respect, kindness and dignity, and where ageing is a time of opportunity, contribution and celebration.

COTA Tasmania acknowledges with deep respect the resilience and knowledge of the palawa people, the traditional custodians of lutruwita, Tasmania. We value the wisdom of Aboriginal elders past and present and the role they play in continuing to care for Country.

We value the diverse voices of older Tasmanians, and we learn from their experiences.

Executive summary

In this submission, COTA Tasmania emphasises the critical need for targeted investments and policy reforms that address the challenges faced by older Tasmanians, including housing security, healthcare accessibility, digital inclusion, and opportunities for active and meaningful participation in community life.

Our submission very much reflects the voices of older Tasmanians we work and meet with whilst we undertake programs and projects across the State, as well as our collaboration with stakeholders and in considering evidence-based research.

Tasmania's ageing population presents both opportunities and challenges that require proactive and strategic planning. We can expect to live longer, healthier lives and we all have a role to play in making decisions that will support us to age well. It is important to recognise that many inequalities experienced by Tasmanians do not disappear as they age; in fact, some may worsen over time.

By 2050, nearly one-third of Tasmania's population is expected to be aged 65 and over and currently 40.8% of Tasmanians are over the age of 50.

This demographic shift necessitates infrastructure that not only meets the immediate needs of older people but also anticipates future demands to ensure sustainable, age-friendly communities. In Tasmania, several of our Local Government Areas (LGAs) are now in 'hyper ageing', where 21% or more of the population is 65 or older. Appendix A¹ shows the population projections for Tasmania by LGA area and clearly shows the need for the State to plan and prepare for supporting our older citizens, with 26.9% being over 65 years by 2038, increasing to 29% by 2053.

Investing now will alleviate future economic and social pressures. Housing must evolve to include affordable, accessible options that enable older Tasmanians to age in place or transition to supported living environments without sacrificing independence or community ties. ABS data shows that six LGAs have over 40% of people in housing stress in the 50 years+ age bracket, with 1053 people over the age of 80 years statewide living in

¹ Appendix A: Tasmania Department of Treasury and Finance 2024 Population Projections for Tasmania by LGA area.

housing stress (65% of this group are women).² Housing stress is an increasing concern for older renters, alongside safety and accessibility needs. Creative solutions like investigating intergenerational house share models (that have successfully operated in other Australian states and in other parts of the world) should be part of future housing policies.

Adequate public transport systems, designed with accessibility in mind, will become increasingly vital for maintaining mobility, reducing isolation, and facilitating access to healthcare, social services, and community activities.

Access to quality health care is fundamental and for older Tasmanians: it helps them live independently and stay engaged with their communities. However, Tasmania's health system already struggles to keep pace with demand, and as the population continues to age, this strain will only increase. Planning must prioritise local healthcare options, streamlined service delivery, and technological innovations like Telehealth to ensure timely, equitable access, particularly in rural and regional areas.

Failure to plan ahead risks exacerbating social inequities and straining public resources. Tasmania can set a national benchmark for how to adapt infrastructure to an ageing demographic, ensuring that older adults are able to contribute meaningfully to society while enjoying quality of life and dignity in their later years.

This submission draws on the findings of COTA Tasmania's [Healthy, Engaged And Resilient \(H.E.A.R\) consultation](#), which has influenced the direction for the new Older Tasmanians Action Plan 2025-2029 as well as our previous 2023-2024 and 2022-2023 Budget Priority Submissions and the issues raised within. We encourage the Government to review the recommendations from these in conjunction with our submission.

“We want to feel included as we age – to be connected, contributing and be heard.”³

We must ensure that within any policy development and resourcing, digital literacy and accessibility is supported alongside increased health promotion and health literacy initiatives so that all Tasmanians receive information and resources in accessible formats. We fully support the advocacy work of TasCOSS in the space of digital inclusion and endorse the recommendations made in their 2024-2025 Budget Priorities Statement in relation to the need for inclusive and accessible access to technology alongside affordability measures.

Tasmania has the second lowest digital inclusion score in the nation at 70, with only two LGA areas above the national score of 73.2. Tasmanians aged 65-74 have scores 12.1 points below the national average, while those over 75 have scores 24.6 points below. For people over the age of 75, disparities in Digital Ability (41.6 points below the national average) and Access (18.0 points below the national average) are considerable⁴. This data points to a need for targeted supports for older Tasmanians on a wider scale than is currently provided through existing programs. This will be even vitally important as more Government services move to a fully online model, excluding many from confidently navigating them independently.

While we applaud the Government for acknowledging ageism and for recognising the importance of a life course approach to ageing within its Older Tasmanians Action Plan 2025-2029, it is disappointing that the Plan has been delayed to such an extent, and without significant resourcing commitments for innovation and new opportunities.

PRIORITY AREA 1: Strengthening advocacy and inclusion for older Tasmanians

1. The need for investment in age-friendly communities

Age-friendly communities play a pivotal role in creating environments that support the wellbeing, independence, and active participation of older people. Incorporating an age-friendly framework into planning

² Census of Population and Housing, Customised Data Report, Count of persons – Tasmanian Local Government Areas (LGAs) (2022) (UR) – Selected Persons Family & Dwelling Variables, 2021.

³ COTA Tasmania H.E.A.R Report, 2022.

⁴ Australian Digital Inclusion Index, 2023.

and policy ensures Tasmania can adapt to its demographic needs while maintaining the quality of life for all residents.

Key features of age-friendly communities include accessible, age-friendly housing, efficient transportation systems, public spaces that encourage physical activity and social interaction, and services that are easy to navigate and tailored to the needs of older adults. These elements, when integrated into local planning, help older Tasmanians remain connected, independent and engaged, reducing social isolation and promoting overall health, while also benefiting other age cohorts and diversity needs within the population.



Source: WHO 8 Domains of Age Friendly Communities

An age-friendly approach also enhances intergenerational cohesion. Designing communities that cater to people of all ages creates shared spaces and opportunities for interaction, enriching community bonds and challenging stereotypes about ageing. For example, parks with accessible walkways, seating, and intergenerational play areas serve as hubs of activity and connection for families, children, and older adults alike. Co-sharing housing models that support multi-generational living provide both security, social connection and opportunities to challenge ageist assumptions.

The concept of age-friendly communities extends beyond physical infrastructure. It includes fostering a culture that values older people and their contributions. This involves consulting older residents in decision-making processes, promoting lifelong learning and employment opportunities, and supporting volunteerism and civic engagement. By actively involving older Tasmanians in shaping their communities, we ensure their perspectives and priorities are respected, leading to more effective and inclusive society.

Incorporating age-friendly principles into Tasmania's infrastructure and urban planning strategies will empower the State to meet the needs of its ageing population while fostering vibrant, resilient, and connected communities for generations to come. We encourage the Tasmanian Government to work closely with the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) in this space, as it also holds responsibilities for community inclusion and many aspects of public infrastructure locally.

Recommendations

We urge the Tasmanian Government to:

- sign up to the [WHO Age-friendly Cities and Communities Network](https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/about-us/frequently-asked-questions/), to demonstrate a 'commitment to listen to the needs of their ageing population, assess and monitor their age-friendliness and work collaboratively with older people and across sectors to create age-friendly physical and social environments'⁵; and

⁵ World Health Organisation – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Age-friendly World. See: <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/about-us/frequently-asked-questions/>

- work closely with LGAs to develop a plan for supporting policy initiatives within the eight domains of the Age-friendly Communities framework.

We also encourage all Government agencies commit to utilising the [WHO framework](#) within planning and resourcing considerations.

2. The call for a Minister for the Ageing – a vital role for our age-friendly island

Appointing a dedicated Minister for the Ageing would not be a symbolic or tokenistic move; we submit that it is a practical necessity driven by the realities of our ageing population. A ministerial portfolio would be responsible for championing policies and initiatives that address the unique challenges faced by Tasmanians as they age (including healthcare, housing, employment, and social inclusion) as well as ensuring access to essential services are inclusive and easy to navigate. This would make sure the unique needs of older people are front and centre of decision-making about the infrastructure, services and initiatives that will benefit them and assist in creating age-friendly communities.

Added to this, a Minister for the Ageing would also serve as a focal point for collaboration and coordination among government agencies, community organisations, and stakeholders involved in ageing-related issues. This collaborative, cross-sectors approach is essential to developing comprehensive and effective strategies that address the multi-faceted aspects of ageing, from health and social care to employment and importantly, age-friendly infrastructure. At a time of large reform in the Commonwealth-funded area of aged care service provision, this conduit role is vital.

One of the primary concerns with the absence of a dedicated Minister is the potential for critical issues affecting older adults to be overlooked, deprioritised or ignored. The complexities of ageing require focused attention and expertise, which a dedicated Minister and the State Public Services within the portfolio could provide. It would also shine a light on ageism within our communities and encourage broader discussion about our experiences of the ageing journey.

In contrast to Tasmania's current political landscape, other Australian states and territories have recognised the need for a Minister for the Ageing within their government structures. We deserve the same proactive approach here as the state with the fastest growing ageing demographic in Australia.

Recommendations

- The Tasmanian Government explores and creates a Ministerial portfolio dedicated to the needs of older Tasmanians, as a matter of priority.
- The portfolio takes a lead in responding to the Aged Care Reforms commencing 1 July 2025, supporting education and advice initiatives to ensure the community are both aware of the changes as well as how to plan ahead and navigate them.

3. Listening to older people's views: the role of an advisory committee

The voices of older people are essential in shaping policies, programs, and services that affect their lives. We again ask the Government to establish an advisory committee dedicated to representing the views of older Tasmanians, ensuring their insights, experiences, and needs are central to decision-making processes. Such a group will empower older people to contribute on a regular basis, rather than every five years when a government strategy or action plan is reviewed.

Older people are experts in their own lives and are unique in possessing a diversity of needs. Their life experiences provide valuable insights that data and reports alone cannot capture. Older people often face ageism and barriers to services due to stereotypes and bias. An advisory committee would represent a genuine commitment to listening and responding to older Tasmanians firsthand.

Recommendations

- The Tasmanian Government commits to establishing an Ageing in Tasmania Advisory Committee, to obtain valuable lived experience perspectives and maintain connection to the specific issues experienced by older Tasmanians.
- The Ageing in Tasmania Advisory Committee is involved in the review of the Action Plan against the 2025-2029 Strategy for Older Tasmanians and future policies.
- The committee meets twice a year with the existing Premier's Youth Advisory Council to encourage intergenerational connection and sharing of experiences.

4. Sustainable funding to ensure representation and reach

Peak bodies in Tasmania play a critical role in representing and advocating for the interests of specific sectors, demographics, and causes. These organisations are essential for ensuring that the unique needs and perspectives of their communities are recognised and addressed in policymaking and the media, and within community development. In the Tasmanian context, where regional challenges and an ageing population present distinct considerations, the scope of peak bodies is both broad and impactful and requires greater allocation of funding that is currently received. The impact and reach of COTA Tasmania's work not only benefits older people, but also contributes to the broader social, economic, and environmental well-being of Tasmania.

The dispersed nature of Tasmania's population means COTA Tasmania must advocate for equitable access to services and infrastructure, particularly in rural and remote areas. Our effectiveness therefore hinges on adequate funding, strong partnerships, and Government interest and engagement. Increasingly, we are facing pressure on tight budgets while maintaining operational costs of rent, infrastructure, staffing and effective engagement and participation.

COTA Tasmania currently receives a small allocation of \$157,000 per annum to operate as the leading organisation representing older Tasmanians, who now accounts for 40.8% of the population. All other funding comes from secondary project sources, which do not have surety of ongoing funding.

COTA Tasmania has delivered events, activities and programs of work in the areas of elder abuse, social connection, ageism awareness and the delivery of Seniors Week for many years, sometimes decades, yet this work which forms our core strategic purpose as a peak is still considered within our deeds as short-term funded projects. This does not accurately reflect the importance of this work.

A core focus of any peak body is the ability to respond to policy submission processes, consultations and researching evidenced based approaches to local issues. We currently do not receive adequate funding to cover a dedicated policy role, so we are limited in our ability to respond to important consultation pieces that impact on older Tasmanians. Our peak body allocation does not adequately cover the CEO nor Administration/Finance roles. A dedicated policy role would ensure that we can represent older Tasmanians and the community more extensively in formal submissions, engagement activities and in fulfilling our role of advising Government on issues important to older people across the State.

Recommendations

- COTA Tasmania's current funding pools (Peak Body, Seniors Week, Elder Abuse Prevention, and Active Ageing) are combined to create our Peak Body Funding Grant, indexed appropriately (replacing the current separate short-term grants), thereby providing us with consistent resourcing to better reflect our role and scope of work as a peak body. **Total funding = \$572,255 per year.**

- COTA Tasmania's peak funding is increased to cover a full-time Policy Officer role, Level 7 SCHADS Award, on an ongoing basis. **Total cost = \$133,295 per year.**

5. Commitment to minimum five-year funding contracts

Short-term or piecemeal funding hinders our ability to address systemic challenges, limiting the capacity to deliver consistent programs that allow for collaboration with other community sector partners to support older Tasmanians and their families. Partners are more likely to invest time and resources into joint initiatives when funding stability supports a shared vision for sustained impact.

With the recent review of more than 400 grant deeds to the community sector, now is the time to formalise the recognition that this sector is vital to the wellbeing of Tasmanians, ensuring support and capacity building is a core value within our society. Secure, multi-year funding will enable us to focus on building comprehensive, evidence-based solutions without the constant uncertainty of annual funding renewals. Assurances for long term funding commitments to the community sector have been made in the past, with no follow through.

Committed funding will allow a focus on staff development, infrastructure, and innovative approaches, providing the stability needed to attract and retain skilled professionals and maintain high-quality service delivery over time.

A five-year commitment ensures that projects can be tracked over time, providing evidence of success and identifying areas for improvement. Long-term funding commitments reassure older Tasmanians that their needs are a priority. It demonstrates government accountability and strengthens trust in publicly funded organisations.

Surety of sustainable, ongoing resourcing of community programs and organisations reflects the commitments made within the 2030 Strong Plan:

“Ensuring a well-resourced community services industry so they can meet the need of Tasmanians in local communities.”⁶

Recommendation

- The Tasmanian Government commits to five-year funding on all our current and future funding allocations, appropriately indexed, to be implemented at the commencement of the 2025/26 Financial Year to provide certainty for our organisation and programs.

6. Investment in mature age workforce initiatives

Mature age workers are a valuable and often underutilised resource within Tasmania's workforce. With the population ageing and workforce participation rates declining, supporting and retaining mature age workers is critical to maintaining economic productivity, addressing skills shortages, and fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer. Many industries, particularly healthcare, education, and skilled trades, are experiencing shortages that could be alleviated by tapping into the mature workforce. Targeted initiatives, such as upskilling programs or pathways for re-entering the workforce, can help mature workers fill these critical gaps. Continued workforce engagement positively impacts the health and well-being of mature-age workers by fostering social connections, purpose, and routine.

We know that age discrimination continues to occur, with the *Employing Older Workers 2023*⁷ report finding one in six organisations will not consider hiring people aged 65 and above while only a quarter are open to hiring those aged 65 and above 'to a large extent.'

⁶ 2030 Strong Plan: Supporting Stronger Communities.

⁷ 2023 Employing and Retaining Older Workers Survey, Australian HR Institute and the Australian Human Rights Commission.

We have vast workforce gaps that can be filled by experienced older Tasmanians who want to continue working and earning an income. They should be encouraged to do so without having to consider adverse financial impacts or fear of discrimination. We ask the Tasmanian Government to advocate for policy reforms that support industry to hire older workers (e.g. increase the Federal Government's Work Bonus limits to help address skills shortages and improve workforce participation rates) whilst also ensuring their own recruitment processes are inclusive and encourage age diversity.

Mature age workers bring a wealth of experience, institutional knowledge, and soft skills that are invaluable for mentoring younger employees and ensuring continuity in businesses. Policies that facilitate their ongoing contribution, such as flexible work arrangements and phased retirement options, ensure their expertise is not lost but shared across generations. Including age diversity as a category in the Employer of Choice awards would also raise the profile and importance of planning ahead and supporting our older workforce.

“More workers would like to continue working in later years, but skills and experience are not appreciated.”⁸

To date, there has been no specific investment to support older job seekers in the same way as we have seen for younger cohorts. COTA Tasmania would like to see the Government invest time and resources in a Mature-Age Jobs' Strategy, working with job providers, jobs hubs, employers and the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to provide targeted campaigns and training support to industry and job seekers and build on the previous investment of the Work 45+ website.

Recommendations

- The Tasmanian Government funds a Project officer (Level 6 SCHADS Award) for ongoing mature-aged workforce research and policy to support workplaces to explore age diversity principles, promote age inclusive recruitment practices and supports older workers who would like to continue working rather than retire. This role would also assist in updating and maintaining the COTA Tasmania Work 45+ website, a resource for both older job seekers and employers, including the development of new case studies. COTA does not receive any specific current funding to maintain this important resource.
- The Tasmanian Government explores a Mature-Aged Jobs Strategy for Tasmania.
- Include an age diversity category within the Employer of Choice Awards, to recognise industry best practice in supporting older workers and Diversity Equity and Inclusion plans that cover planning for age related needs of workers.
- Continue funding for the [Area Connect](#) service to support older job seekers to attend training and employment opportunities. Currently Community Transport Services Tasmania (CTST) is funded to deliver this service until 30 June 2025 with no commitment beyond this date.

PRIORITY AREA 2: Community sustainability

The community sector in Tasmania plays a vital role in delivering essential services, fostering social inclusion, and addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. However, increasing demand, limited resources, and administrative burdens make it challenging for the sector to stretch their funding to cover the business-related aspects of the organisation vs staffing and direct support to community members.

The following are suggested activities that will create significant savings for community organisations that can then be directed into direct client/community projects.

⁸ COTA Tasmania H.E.A.R Report 2022.

1. Compliance and Regulation – support for the community sector

As part of the ongoing efforts to protect vulnerable individuals, Registration to Work with Vulnerable People (RWVP) checks and National Police Checks are essential for ensuring that individuals in positions of trust, including those working in the community and social services sectors, are thoroughly reviewed. However, the costs associated with obtaining these checks can be a significant barrier for many community organisations, particularly smaller or under-resourced groups. With the expected increased regulation resulting from the Child Youth Safe Organisations Framework and the RWVP Expansion Project, the community sector in Tasmania will face increasing financial and administrative costs, alongside being one of only three jurisdictions in Australia to charge volunteers for Registration to Work with Vulnerable People (RWVP) checks.⁹

The additional requirements in today's environment to ensure that our staff and volunteers have appropriate checks and that these are updated in accordance with expectations now places an additional workload on a sector that is already very stretched for resources.

We support moves by Volunteering Tasmania to ask the Tasmanian Government to cover the costs associated with obtaining these checks, to minimise barriers to volunteering alongside providing financial relief to the volunteer involving organisation.

Recommendations

- Remove the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People (RWVP) fee for volunteers. This support would help ensure that all organisations and service providers, regardless of their financial capacity, can maintain the highest standards of safety and integrity in their work with vulnerable populations.
- Clearly outline in all Government funding deeds the required compliance checks required and expected, to ensure consistency of understanding and messaging across the community sector, thereby affording clarity to organisations and those that wish to work or volunteer for them. This also extends to Government providing clear guidance about Anti-Discrimination legislation and the intersection with compliance and regulation requirements.

2. Efficiency measures for consideration

In considering areas where savings could be achieved within the community sector, we believe that supporting not-for-profits with business-related advice and services would help to maintain consistency within the sector (and thereby ensure good governance); it would also enable community sector organisations to use limited funding and resources in optimal ways – i.e. within the community, providing greater reach and impact in our programs and events.

This year alone, our organisation has had to commission costly legal and Human Resources (HR) advice, alongside Governance support to ensure we are working in line within current practices and legal requirements. This has impacted on our overall operational costs. Many not-for-profits across Tasmania find themselves in a similar situation.

Recommendations

- **Corporate support service** – Provide a centralised service where professional advice can be provided in a timely manner for human resources, legal, insurance, finance, governance, employment law, volunteer management and grant writing.¹⁰ This service could be managed by DPAC or outsourced to a community provider, with procurement and cost of corporate services funded by Government.

⁹ Volunteering Tasmania 2025-2026 Budget Priorities Statement.

¹⁰ This service could be similar to the Tasmanian Hospitality Association (THA) member service or Employer of Choice Assist support via Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI).

- **Shared infrastructure:** Develop shared IT systems, office spaces, and back-office functions across the community sector to reduce overhead costs and improve operational efficiency.
- **Training programs:** Offer sector-wide professional development in areas such as leadership, grant writing, cyber insurance, cultural awareness, digital skills, and change management to strengthen organisational capacity, to be brokered and resourced by the Government.
- **Impact measurement:** Develop sector-wide metrics to assess outcomes, helping to prioritise effective programs and create a consistent approach to measuring community organisations and their funding.
- **A reduction in red tape:** Review and simplify regulatory and compliance requirements within grant reporting that create unnecessary administrative burdens for community organisations.
- **Streamlined policy and consultation open submissions:** Compile a regular fortnightly email¹¹ to community and business sector outlining any open policy submissions, consultations and forums available for contribution. This information could be linked to the home page of the Smarty Grants website. As many community service organisations are not adequately funded for policy roles, having details about advocacy submissions in one place would assist us to plan and draft submissions actively rather than reactively. Requiring a minimum two-month period for open consultations is also recommended. This will help to ensure that Government is adequately informed about issues and concerns for the community, and they receive expert, considered advice and guidance from the sector.

In tandem with guaranteed minimum five-year funding, this will support the community sector to work together, strengthening individual organisations output and amplifying their collective impact.

PRIORITY AREA 3: Social connection and wellbeing

1. Social connection grants – intergenerational programs and activities

Social isolation and loneliness have serious consequences for longevity, health and well-being. In older age, social isolation and loneliness can increase the risks of cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, cognitive decline, dementia, depression, anxiety and suicide.

The Ending Loneliness State of the Nation report 2023 showed loneliness to impact one in six Australians, with those who are lonely 5.2 times more likely to have poorer wellbeing as a result. Connecting with new people and groups as they age is often harder due to mobility and health issues that may impact confidence; lack of suitable transport options; limited family networks nearby; and difficulties knowing where to find out about local activities and groups.

Investing in social connection programs and supports (and ensuring clear and accessible information is available about these) is vital in minimising further social isolation amongst older Tasmanians.

Recommendations

- Implement an annual grants program to support community-led creative events and initiatives that provide sustainable ways to reduce social isolation for older Tasmanians. A focus for these grants to be on intergenerational connection and community capacity building. This grant scheme could be modelled on the [NSW Health Connecting Seniors grant program](#).
- Ensure that the application process for this program addresses transport considerations, to ensure accessibility for all participants.

¹¹ This could be modelled on the regular e-alerts about Tasmanian grant opportunities.

2. Seniors Week grants

The Tasmanian Government currently supports the following community event weeks by way of a grants program:

- Youth Week
- Carers Week Mental Health Week
- Children's Week
- Harmony Week
- International Women's Day

Seniors Week should be provided the same equity and interest as other statewide celebrations. A grants program similar to that afforded to other event weeks will showcase the Tasmanian Government's commitment to this important community week.

A small amount of funding to support more targeted marketing, and possible community transport. Convenient public transport to the Community Garden and Men's Shed is problematic, and community buses are not available.¹²

Offering grant opportunities to local groups will assist in their ability to host events during Seniors Week, as well as support the cost of activities in rural and regional areas. Grants could be used to support an activity or towards transport initiatives to enable community members to attend their event. It is hoped that this initiative will also increase participation and connections made during Seniors Week.¹³

Recommendation

- A commitment to a three-year trial of a Seniors Week Event Grants program - \$500 grants, \$30,000 per year (up to 60 organisations per year).

3. Seniors exercise parks in all LGAs across Tasmania

With the successful launch of the Seniors Exercise Park in Clarence in November 2024, the first of its kind in our State, we applaud the Tasmanian Government for providing funding for this initiative and supporting the health and wellbeing of older people in local communities. Designed in accordance with age-friendly principles, these parks offer the opportunity for older people to stay active, connect within their communities, and be visible in ways that could help dispel ageist views and attitudes.

"With the cost-of-living increasing under continued interest rate hikes, we want to ensure that no Tasmanian, young or old, misses out on an opportunity to be active and connected within their community."¹⁴

Recommendations

- Consideration of a costed plan to create an exercise park for older people in all LGAs across Tasmania.
- Commitment to work with [National Research Ageing Institute](#) on the design and evaluation of new parks developed across Tasmania.

PRIORITY AREA 4: Preventative health investment

We believe the 20-year Preventative Health strategy, launched last month, is vitally important to the next four-year budget cycle and warrants considerable resourcing, planning and funding for infrastructure to support

¹² Seniors Week Host feedback 2024. Question: What could help support you in hosting more impactful activities and events in the future?

¹³ COTA Tasmania will support the promotion of the grants program under our current Seniors Week funding grant.

¹⁴ State Government 2030 Strong Plan.

older Tasmanians. The lived experience of Tasmanians needs to be front and centre of this strategy, alongside a strong partnership to health and allied health professionals tasked with providing the support.

It is pleasing to see work commence on this strategy, which acknowledges that “Tasmanians deserve to live healthy, active lives in communities that support connections to people, place and culture; and improving the health of people in our State will lead to more people living fulfilling lives and will contribute to a thriving Tasmania.”¹⁵

It is concerning that, to our knowledge from our participation in conversations to date, there does not appear to be a ring-fenced allocation of funding towards this strategy’s action plan. Without this commitment, opportunities will be lost. With the cohort of people aged over 85-year-olds cohort expected to triple in size in the next 30 years, our State requires urgent scoping and mapping of the required health, aged and social care resources and workforce, as they will be both the largest area of need and of workforce demand.

We commend the Governments development of the Aged Care Collaborative and the Tasmanian Frailty Network, which aim to create stronger partnerships and processes between older people, residential care facilities and the Tasmanian Health Service, predominately acute hospital settings. These working groups are increasing collaboration, innovation and care whilst creating efficiencies and supporting older people to access the appropriate care in a timely way.

Of particular note, and important to the cohort we represent, the following topic areas continue to be raised when we consult, interact with and support older Tasmanians. Increased availability of occupational therapists within the community - to decrease wait lists and provide preventative equipment that increases safety and reduces hospital admissions.

- Consistent and timely GP access – in all regions.
- Falls prevention – both ongoing programs and printed supports.
- Live Well Live Long programs funded in all regions – this proactive program supports older Tasmanians to learn and interact with local services to plan ahead for their later years.
- Digital inclusion – supports to navigate health and other services are needed and should be embedded into programs across Tasmania.
- Mental wellbeing supports – targeting the specific needs of older people, including life transition and grief and loss.
- Life stages planning – support increased initiatives and printed resources that focus on life and estate planning highlighting the importance of the four key documents (Will, Advanced Care Directive, Enduring Guardian and Enduring Power of Attorney).
- Exercise and physical health - commitment to fund the Ticket to Wellbeing program beyond the ongoing trial of 2024-2026.

These require focused effort and planning, and appropriate resourcing. A commitment to explore and invest in social prescribing models alongside dedicated funding in the above would have significant impacts on the wellbeing and health of older Tasmanians and should be included within the 20-year Preventative Health Strategy development.

Final reflections

COTA Tasmania plays a vital role in advocating for and supporting older Tasmanians. Through strong partnerships with the Government, local councils, service providers, and community groups, we work to ensure the voices of older Tasmanians are heard and their needs addressed. Our programs, events, and daily

¹⁵ Media Release, Guy Barnett, Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing 23 October 2024.

interactions across the State provide firsthand insight into the challenges and struggles faced by this significant and growing demographic.

With 40.89% of Tasmanians now aged over 50, investing in this cohort not only supports the wellbeing of today's older Tasmanians but also strengthens the foundation for all Tasmanians as they age. By creating age-friendly communities where people feel valued, supported, and connected, we can ensure the right services are accessible at the right time, for everyone, in every part of the State.

We urge the Government to take a long-term approach to planning, policy reform, resourcing, and infrastructure to meet the needs of an ageing population over the next two to three decades. Alongside this, fostering a cultural shift in attitudes towards ageing is essential. Valuing the knowledge, contributions, and experiences of older Tasmanians will help build a state that respects and supports all generations, creating a future where ageing is embraced as an asset, not a challenge.