

## **Dashboard scan for older Tasmanians**

*Focus: business, tax and economic measures likely to matter for older Tasmanians*

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### **1. Headline take**

This is a cost-of-living, fuel-shock and tax reform Budget, with some genuinely relevant aged care and health measures. For older Tasmanians, the biggest practical effects are likely to be:

1. fuel and transport costs, especially in regional and rural Tasmania;
2. health, aged care and medicines access;
3. tax changes affecting older workers, sole traders, retirees with assets, and landlords/investors;
4. inflation and indexation, rather than any large discretionary pension increase;
5. housing/rental pressure, where there are supply-side measures but not much immediate relief for older private renters.

Tasmania's older demographic makes these measures more significant here than in many other jurisdictions: the Tasmanian Government notes Tasmania is the oldest state, with around 21% of the population aged 65+ in 2023.

### **2. Biggest implications for COTA Tasmania**

#### **2.1 Addresses symptoms, but not enough with structural cost pressures**

The fuel excise cut is the clearest immediate cost-of-living measure for regional Tasmanians, but it is temporary. Inflation is still forecast to be high in the near term, and older people on fixed incomes will remain exposed to essentials: food, energy, health, medicines, transport and rent.

*Possible COTA line:*

“The Budget recognises cost-of-living pressure, but older Tasmanians need durable relief where costs are unavoidable — housing, health care, energy and transport.”

#### **2.2 Aged care and Medicare are the strongest positives**

The Support at Home changes are probably the most directly beneficial measure for older Tasmanians, especially making personal care free alongside clinical care. The risk is implementation: workforce shortages, thin markets, regional travel distances and assessment delays.

*Possible COTA line:*

Call for Tasmania-specific reporting on Support at Home places, wait times, rural/regional coverage, assessment delays and provider capacity.

### **2.3 Tax relief is skewed to older people still working**

The WATO, instant deduction and personal income tax cuts will help older Tasmanians who are still in the workforce or running small businesses. They do little for older people wholly reliant on the Age Pension or other fixed incomes.

*Possible COTA line:*

“Tax relief for older workers is welcome, but it should not be confused with cost-of-living relief for older people outside paid work.”

### **2.4 CGT / negative gearing changes need careful messaging**

The measures are framed as fairness and housing supply reforms. For COTA, this is not simply “good” or “bad”: older people may be affected as renters, first-homebuyer supporters for adult children/grandchildren, small landlords, trustees, or people selling long-held assets. Importantly, income support recipients including Age Pension recipients are exempt from the minimum tax on capital gains.

*Possible COTA line:*

Support the housing affordability objective, but seek clear public guidance for older people with modest assets, inherited property, family trusts or rental properties.

### **2.5 Housing remains the weak point for older renters**

The Budget points to past CRA increases and broader housing supply, but I did not identify a new substantial immediate rent-relief measure for older renters.

*Possible COTA line:*

“For older Tasmanians in private rental, supply-side reform is necessary but not sufficient. Rent stress is immediate.”

## **3. Media hook**

“Federal Budget relief welcome, but older Tasmanians still face the hardest costs: health, housing, energy and transport.”

## **4. Questions to put to Commonwealth/Tasmanian MPs:**

- How many additional Support at Home places will Tasmania receive in 2026–27, and where?
- What will the Budget mean for GP bulk billing and urgent care access in northern, north-west and rural Tasmania?
- What immediate relief is available for older private renters beyond previous CRA increases and indexation?
- How will older people without access to rooftop solar, batteries or efficient housing be protected from energy poverty?
- How will tax changes be explained to older Australians with modest assets, trusts, inherited property or investment properties?

## Dashboard summary

| Area                                     | Measure / change  | Impact on older Tasmanians | COTA read   |
|--|---|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Economic outlook</b>                  | Headline inflation forecast at 5% to June quarter 2026, with growth slowing from 2¼% in 2025–26 to 1¾% in 2026–27.  | <b>High</b>                | Cost-of-living pressure remains the dominant story. Indexation helps, but older people on fixed incomes, renters, and regional residents remain exposed.  |
| <b>Fuel costs</b>                        | Fuel excise and equivalent customs duty cut by 60.9% for three months from 1 April 2026, equal to 32 cents per litre for petrol and diesel; heavy vehicle road user charge cut to zero for the period.  | <b>High, but temporary</b> | Helpful in regional Tasmania where car dependence is high and public transport is limited. But the short duration means limited structural relief. Worth framing as welcome but inadequate for transport-disadvantaged older Tasmanians.            |
| <b>Social security / pensions</b>        | Budget includes \$11.8b in increased social security payments to people with disability, carers, pensioners, young people, families and unemployed people, partly driven by automatic indexation.   | <b>High</b>                | This is indexation-driven rather than a major pension adequacy reform. COTA could note indexation is essential but does not necessarily close the adequacy gap for renters, single older women, and people with high health/energy/transport costs. |
| <b>Assistance to the aged</b>            | “Assistance to the aged” rises from \$109.975b in 2025–26 to \$115.601b in 2026–27, then to \$130.325b by 2029–30.  | <b>High</b>                | Demographic pressure is recognised in spending growth. COTA angle: Tasmania needs fair regional service access, not just aggregate national funding.  |
| <b>Aged care — Support at Home</b>       | \$1b to make personal care services such as showering free in Support at Home, alongside clinical care; \$389.8m over four years for Support at Home refinements including assessments, hardship applications, end-of-life pathway and earlier release of places. | <b>Very high</b>           | Strong positive. This should be welcomed, but COTA should ask how many places flow to Tasmania, what wait times will be, and whether rural/regional workforce constraints will blunt the benefit.   |
| <b>Aged care — quality and viability</b> | \$565.1m over four years for aged care regulation, governance, quality, sector viability and workforce support.   | <b>High</b>                | Positive if it improves safety and service continuity. COTA should watch whether compliance and viability funding reaches thin regional markets and smaller providers.  |

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|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Residential aged care supply</b>   | Measures to incentivise construction of up to 5,000 aged care beds a year, plus dementia care and accommodation supplement changes/provisions.                                 | <b>Medium–high</b>                 | Important, but the Tasmanian question is whether beds are built where needed, especially outside Hobart.  |
| <b>Medicare / hospitals</b>           | Additional \$3.5b to strengthen Medicare, including Urgent Care Clinics and My Health Record; public hospitals funding increased by \$25b over five years.                     | <b>High</b>                        | Positive, but COTA should test Tasmanian distribution: GP access, bulk billing, hospital wait times, transport to services, and regional urgent care coverage.              |
| <b>Bulk billing / urgent care</b>     | Budget continues Medicare Urgent Care Clinics and bulk billing investment; national GP bulk billing rate cited as rising to 81.4% in Nov 2025–Jan 2026.                        | <b>High if it reaches Tasmania</b> | The headline is good, but COTA should ask for Tasmanian bulk billing rates, regional access data, and whether older Tasmanians can physically reach services.               |
| <b>PBS / medicines</b>                | \$5.9b over five years for new and amended PBS and RPBS listings.  | <b>High</b>                        | Good for people with chronic and complex conditions. Advocacy angle: medicine affordability is only one part; access to prescribers, pharmacies and transport also matters. |
| <b>Income tax — existing cuts</b>     | Legislated tax cuts continue: from 1 July 2026 the 16% rate falls to 15%, and from 1 July 2027 to 14%.   | <b>Medium</b>                      | Benefits older Tasmanians still in paid work. Little or no direct benefit to Age Pensioners with no taxable employment income.  |
| <b>Working Australians Tax Offset</b> | New \$250 Working Australians Tax Offset from 2027–28 for income from work, including wages, salaries and sole trader business income.   | <b>Medium</b>                      | Useful for older workers, carers returning to work, and older sole traders. Does not help retirees outside paid work.   |
| <b>Instant tax deduction</b>          | From 2026–27, workers can claim an instant deduction of up to \$1,000 for work-related expenses instead of itemising; higher claims still allowed.                             | <b>Low–medium</b>                  | Simplifies tax for older workers and sole traders with modest work expenses. Not relevant for most full Age Pensioners.   |
| <b>Medicare levy thresholds</b>       | Medicare levy low-income thresholds increase by 2.9%. Single seniors/pensioners threshold rises from \$43,020 to \$44,268; family seniors/pensioners threshold also increases. | <b>Medium</b>                      | Directly relevant to lower-income older taxpayers with assessable income near the threshold.  |

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|----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>CGT and negative gearing</b>  | From 1 July 2027, 50% CGT discount replaced by cost-base indexation with a 30% minimum tax on net capital gains; negative gearing for residential property limited to new builds. Existing established properties acquired before Budget night are exempt until disposed of. | <b>Mixed</b>                      | Could affect older Tasmanians with investment properties, family trusts or planned asset sales. Age Pension recipients are exempt from the minimum tax, but not necessarily from all CGT consequences. Housing affordability effects are longer term. |
| <b>Housing / renting</b>         | No new major CRA increase identified in these papers; Budget points to previous CRA increases and indexation, and to supply-side rental/housing measures.  | <b>High concern</b>               | Older private renters remain a key vulnerability. COTA could say supply measures are welcome but do not provide immediate rent relief for older Tasmanians under pressure now.  |
| <b>Small business support</b>    | \$8.2m over three years to extend the Small Business Debt Helpline and NewAccess for Small Business Owners mental health coaching to 30 June 2027.   | <b>Medium</b>                     | Relevant to older self-employed Tasmanians, microbusiness owners and people delaying retirement because they cannot afford to stop working.   |
| <b>Business cash flow / PAYG</b> | From 1 July 2027, businesses may opt into monthly PAYG instalments and dynamic instalment calculations through accounting software, with safe harbour arrangements.  | <b>Low-medium</b>                 | Useful for older small business owners if simple and supported. Risk: digital/accounting software reliance may exclude less digitally confident operators.  |
| <b>Tariffs / consumer prices</b> | A second tranche of 497 nuisance tariffs abolished from 1 July 2026, including goods such as tyres and air conditioners.   | <b>Low-medium</b>                 | Marginal but potentially helpful where lower import/admin costs flow through to prices. Air conditioners and tyres have relevance for older people's comfort, safety and mobility.  |
| <b>Energy</b>                    | Budget discusses clean energy resilience and notes households with rooftop solar and batteries have lower bills on average, no new broad household energy bill relief was identified.  | <b>High concern</b>               | COTA should keep pressing energy poverty, especially for older renters and low-income homeowners who cannot access solar/battery benefits.  |