

COTA Tasmania
2017-18 State Budget Community
Consultation Submission



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.

The vision of COTA Tas is for an inclusive society which values, supports and respects older people.

For further information or advice regarding the content of this document please contact:

Sue Leitch
Chief Executive Officer
COTA Tasmania

'Westella'
181 Elizabeth Street
HOBART TAS 7000
Phone: (03) 6231 3265
Mobile: 0448 281 897
Email: suel@cotatas.org.au

Contents

- 1.** Liveability: Community for a Lifetime
- 2.** Evaluating the Impact of the Active Ageing Plan
- 3.** Digital Inclusion
- 4.** Creating the Right Workplace Environment
- 5.** Age Friendly Businesses
- 6.** Housing
- 7.** Cost of Living: Concessions
- 8.** Health Literacy: Savings for the Health Budget
- 9.** Elder Abuse Prevention
- 10.** Seniors Week
- 11.** Community Sector Issues: Indexation

Introduction

COTA Tasmania has recently completed stage one of an extensive community consultation that involved over 600 Tasmanians and informed the development of a new Active Ageing Plan for Tasmania. This work has been funded by the Tasmanian Government, and COTA continues to collaborate with the Department of Premier and Cabinet in further development of the plan. This consultation has informed this State Budget Community Consultation Submission.

In responding to the consultation, older Tasmanians nominated the following factors as critical to living a good life as we age:

- Being in good health
- Having enough money to meet their needs
- Having good relationships with family and friends
- Living independently in their home

The most cited **challenges** to growing older in Tasmania were:

- Having enough money to meet their needs
- Being in good health
- Lack of public transport
- Continuing in the paid workforce
- Feeling that their age doesn't restrict their ability to do what is important

It is instructive to note that the key issues raised in the recent Active Ageing consultation are similar to those raised in 1999 when the first Tasmanian ageing strategy was prepared. These issues are:

- Affordable and appropriate housing
- Access to information to support informed decision making
- Transport
- Infrastructure that supports healthy ageing
- Workplace issues
- Social isolation

This tells us that there is no quick fix solution to resolve a number of the challenges experienced by Tasmanians as they age. Rather, it suggests that long-term strategy and sustained collaborative effort from a range of stakeholders is required to address system level, complex and evolving issues. Considered monitoring and evaluation, and effective feedback loops will be equally critical to long term success. It is clear that addressing these issues will benefit all Tasmanians, young or old.

Summary of Recommendations

(Please note that all amounts shown in this submission are GST exclusive)

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Create a Healthy Communities Infrastructure Fund to support active recreation and lifestyles \$10 million over 3 years supported by Federal and Local Government investment

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The collection, analysis and reporting of data undertaken by the Tasmanian Government disaggregates the over 60 year cohort.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1:

Provide funding for development and statewide roll out of peer education that promotes the benefits of using digital technology and addresses barriers to digital inclusion.

\$50,000 over two years

RECOMMENDATION 3.2:

The Tasmanian Government supports research that investigates where older Tasmanians experience barriers in using digital technology and maps and publishes information on existing digital inclusion programs.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3:

Support a Digital Inclusion Taskforce to identify opportunities for Tasmania to capitalise on existing digital literacy programs, resources and infrastructure, in addition to establishing new programs and events, such as a Digital Inclusion week, that enable the sustained expansion and awareness of digital literacy initiatives throughout Tasmania that educate older Tasmanians about modern technology.

RECOMMENDATION 4.1:

Amend the Tasmanian Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 to ensure that workers over the age of 65 years have equal protection under the Act.

RECOMMENDATION 4.2:

Introduce programs for the State Service and private sector that promote ongoing learning for older workers, mentoring opportunities, flexible workplaces, and succession planning in the workplace.

RECOMMENDATION 4.3:

Introduce a mature age friendly award to the Employer of Choice Awards in conjunction with COTA Tasmania.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Initiate an age-friendly business training program that supports businesses to understand and tailor products and services to meet the needs of the ageing demographic.

RECOMMENDATION 6.1:

That the State Government commit to funding the implementation of key recommendations outlined in the Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025, particularly in relation to the implementation of the Wintringham model in Tasmania.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2:

Dedicate a proportion of funding within the Private Landlords and Housing Connect Partnership (Affordable Housing Plan Government Action 6) to support older Tasmanian renters.

RECOMMENDATION 6.3:

Explore opportunities and reduce barriers to private sector investment (including Tasplan) into age appropriate housing throughout Tasmania.

RECOMMENDATION 7.1:

The State Government continues to support senior concessions.

RECOMMENDATION 7.2:

The State Government considers the impact on existing concession holders of changes to asset testing for pension eligibility that come into force in January 2017.

RECOMMENDATION 8.1:

State Government supports continuation of the Eat for Life peer education program to improve knowledge of age appropriate diet.

RECOMMENDATION 8.2:

That State Government funds the development and delivery of Falls Prevention Peer Education programs to extend the benefits derived from the existing Stay on Your Feet program administered by the Department of Health and Human Services.

\$60,000 over the next two years (\$30,000 in each year)

RECOMMENDATION 9.1:

Commit to ongoing resourcing of the Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy, improve data collection across agencies and services (police, hospitals, legal services and courts), and support a national register of powers of attorney.

\$360,000 over three years

RECOMMENDATION 9.2:

Extend funding for Advocacy Tasmania to operate the Elder Abuse Helpline and Elder Abuse Advocacy Support.

\$145,000 per annum

RECOMMENDATION 9.3:

Refresh Elder Abuse Prevention Campaign to raise awareness of elder abuse within the community.

\$30,000

RECOMMENDATION 9.4:

Endorse and ensure promotion of Guiding Principles that Protect and Respect Older People & build on the Rethink Ageing project.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Seniors Week continues for a further three years and new opportunities to broaden the concept to be more inclusive of the 60-74 year old cohort are explored and implemented.

\$140,000 in each of the next three years (total \$420,000 over three years)

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Negotiations between Government and community sector organisations continue for the creation of a new formula for grant indexation which is applied to all Government grants immediately to support the continued growth and development of Government funded communities programs.

1. Liveability: Community for a Lifetime

Liveable communities are great places to grow up and grow older. Life's necessities (housing, services, information, transport) are accessible and affordable and there are strong intergenerational connections. Liveable communities enable individuals to build and maintain personal independence and to contribute to community life in meaningful ways.

"Liveability is the sum of the factors that add up to a community's quality of life"¹.

Active ageing is supported by and occurs within liveable communities. There is a key role for the Tasmanian government to play as an enabler to creating liveable communities that support health and wellbeing.

COTA Tasmania endorses investment in programs that benefit the whole Tasmanian community and encourages the Tasmanian Government to invest in infrastructure to support healthy ageing at all ages (eg. walkways and cycling paths linking communities, warm water pools, exercise parks).

A commitment to healthy ageing and long term outcomes is a challenge but critical if the goals within the Healthy Tasmania Strategy and those emerging through the Active Ageing consultation are to be achieved, and the impact of chronic illness in Tasmania is to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Create a Healthy Communities Infrastructure Fund to support active recreation and lifestyles \$10million over 3 years supported by Federal and Local Government investment.



- Accessible and Affordable Housing

2



- **Promote Access and Mobility**
- Safe and walkable community
- Flexible transport option
- Safe driving conditions



- **Communiy Support and Services**
- Health Care, retail & community services
- Healthy food
- Social integration

1. Partners for Liveable Communities; extract from <http://www.livable.org/about-us/what-is-livability> November 2016
 2. *WHAT IS A LIVEABLE COMMUNITY?* (Stanford Centre on Longevity)

2. Evaluating the Impact of the Active Ageing Plan

Monitoring and evaluation are key elements of an effective strategy. To ensure that we create a liveable community for all ages in Tasmania we need to ensure that data is collected to support robust evaluation.

Data collections for the 60 or 65 plus age groups are frequently shown together as one group despite this age range extending over 35 or 40 years and beyond. Combining data for people in their 60's, 70's, 80's and 90's can conceal patterns that exist within sub-sets of these age groups.

For example, the Health Indicators Tasmania 2013 document reports the health profile of the Tasmanian population 60 years and over; notwithstanding the fact that the document states the following:

The size of the seniors' group, which in Tasmania is calculated from 60 years of age, covers a period of potentially 30+ years – the largest size of all age related cohorts. It effectively covers a generation – the same period as the childhood, adolescence and young adulthood periods combined. As such the seniors' cohort is heterogeneous in age; interests; abilities; (physical, mental, cognitive, emotional, and functional); health and wellbeing; and health service needs – for disease prevention, illness management and to end of life requirements.³

Few would suggest combining data for people in their 20's, 30's, 40's and 50's, and will readily accept that there will be significant variations across these age groups. Equally, people in their 60's, 70's, 80's and 90's are a diverse group.

COTA Tasmania strongly recommends that data in relation to older Tasmanians is collected and reported in a disaggregated manner. COTA Tasmania's Facing the Future report breaks down demographic data into the young old (60-74 years), mid old (75-84 years) and older old (85+ years) groups. Adopting this approach for future data collection will improve decision making and monitoring of performance around the Active Ageing Plan and other government initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The collection, analysis and reporting of data undertaken by the Tasmanian Government disaggregates the over 60 year cohort.

3 DHHS, Health Indicators Tasmania 2013, P 164,

4 COTA Tasmania, Facing the Future: A Baseline Profile on Older Tasmanians, 2013

3. Digital Inclusion

I face the difficulty of isolation. Although I am very proud of my independence and personal skills, I can see that my situation could be scary in an emergency, and I need to try harder with the computer. But I would not be able to afford the internet so it would not solve the problem.

Consultation participant

In a world that is increasingly online, older Tasmanians are being left behind. Tasmanians over 65 years not only scored lowest in the Australian digital inclusion index for all age groups in the State, but had the lowest score in this age group nationally. This is due to poor digital ability, such as online skills and confidence, rather than reduced accessibility or affordability.⁵

Many older Tasmanians that took part in the Active Ageing community consultations feel frustrated by an inability to access information and services now only available online. A large number of Tasmanians aged over 75 years do not use modern technology as they have poor understanding of it and feel unsafe when online.

Digital literacy is clearly an issue and challenge for many older Tasmanians, but enabling this cohort to access online services confidently has benefits for themselves and the community at large. There are opportunities online for older people to utilise more efficient and cheaper methods to manage their health and wellbeing, access education and services, and connect with friends and family. There is also potential to reduce service and health care costs by enabling older Tasmanians to access online resources. Discussion through the consultation suggested that availability of courses educating older people about modern technology would be very popular, but a particularly important aspect to engagement in these programs is their affordability.

There is a huge amount of diversity amongst people aged over 65 years, and it was clear through consultations that multiple approaches that include online and physical resources need to be used to ensure all older people have opportunities to improve their digital literacy. A number of programs that COTA Tas see as being useful to increase online participation are Telstra's 'Tech Savvy Seniors'⁶, which is currently being successfully run on the mainland, Infoxchange's 'Go Digi'⁷ and the 'Lively' program⁸, currently running in Melbourne. These digital literacy programs provide resources for members of the community to improve their digital skills, as well as face-to-face training sessions. By expanding the Tech Savvy Seniors program to Tasmania, broadening the Go Digi footprint within the State and introducing the Lively intergenerational model, literacy skills of Tasmanians would be significantly improved.

Many people who participated in the Active Ageing consultation were enthusiastic about younger generations teaching them how to use technology in an environment where sharing of skills between both generations could occur. A successful program is currently being conducted between Kingston High School students and the Kingston LINC, in which students teach older people about technology and in turn develop workplace skills, communication skills and confidence. An appropriate phone service that could help when technical issues occur at home was another idea that was greeted with positivity.

⁵ Measuring Australia's Digital Divide, Roy Morgan Research, 2016

⁶ <https://www.telstra.com.au/tech-savvy-seniors>

⁷ <https://www.godigi.org.au/>

⁸ <http://www.lively.org.au/for-older/tech-help/>

I feel that older people are being sidelined by the increasing dependency on electronic media, because they didn't grow up with it, a lot of them have never done it and never will do it, and if you don't choose to do it, you're put through a lot of extra bother and trouble and cost.

Consultation participant

Findings from community consultation demonstrate that there is a proportion of older Tasmanians who do not see that modern technology can be of use to them. It is vital that, in addition to teaching how to use modern technology, digital literacy programs educate people about how using technology can benefit them through access to more convenient and cheaper services, resources and social contacts. This may be possible through events, such as a Digital Inclusion week, that increase awareness about the benefits of online participation. Events such as this will also create an opportunity to bring together smaller digital inclusion programs already running throughout the community, and establish co-ordinated communication to enhance programs and participation. Peer education would also be an effective strategy to address motivation issues and barriers to participation such as internet connection, purchase of hardware and selection of appropriate plans.

Increased understanding and confidence in modern technology will not only have a significantly positive impact on older people, but will also benefit younger generations. Tasmania has the lowest digital inclusion index score in the nation for all age groups, and increasing awareness, availability and co-ordination of digital literacy programs will enable all Tasmanians to improve their online skills and confidence to access services and resources. In this way, the State can improve its digital inclusion index score and become better connected to the digital world.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1:

Provide funding for development and statewide roll out of peer education that promotes the benefits of using digital technology and addresses barriers to digital inclusion. \$50,000 over two years

RECOMMENDATION 3.2:

The Tasmanian Government supports research that investigates where older Tasmanians experience barriers in using digital technology and maps and publishes information on existing digital inclusion programs.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3:

Support a Digital Inclusion Taskforce to identify opportunities for Tasmania to capitalise on existing digital literacy programs, resources and infrastructure, in addition to establishing new programs and events, such as a Digital Inclusion week, that enable the sustained expansion and awareness of digital literacy initiatives throughout Tasmania that educate older Tasmanians about modern technology.

4. Creating the Right Workplace Environment

COTA has a strong interest in employment issues for older workers and broader issues of workforce planning and optimising employment opportunities for Tasmanians as they age.

As well as providing significant social outcomes, the economic case for increasing mature-age labour force participation has been proven at the national level. The Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research found that a five percentage point increase to participation rates of 50-69 year olds is projected to be worth 2.4% of GDP in 2050. If all inactive people aged 55 and over who want to work did so, the participation rate for that group would increase six percentage points – also worth 2.4% of GDP. And if Australia had the same mature age participation as New Zealand, GDP in 2012 would be 4% higher⁹.

Accordingly, removing impediments to mature age workforce participation in Tasmania could directly support the achievement of sustainability targets in our community.

Workers Compensation:

COTA Tasmania believes that the Tasmanian Government should act to remove an existing legislative barrier to mature age work contained in the Tasmanian Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 and ensure that workers over the age of 65 years have equal access to protection under the Act. Concern about worker's compensation after the age of 65 was raised during community consultation. COTA is aware the government is currently considering legislative amendments to the Act.

COTA's preferred position is that Tasmania's Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Scheme not make any reference to age.

Since the current scheme was legislated, the concept of a compulsory retirement age has been removed from nearly all awards. Many workers now take advantage of this and work beyond the age of 65 either because they still enjoy being a member of the work force or are seeking to increase their savings for a better retirement. This is particularly the case for workers who have limited superannuation investments such as low income earners or those who have had periods outside the workforce, such as women who have taken on caring responsibilities. As the pension eligibility age increases in coming years, more Tasmanians will aim to work beyond the age of 65 years.

It could be argued that older workers are cross-subsidising payments to younger workers in the current environment as employers pay workers compensation premiums for all employees but those over 65 years have limited access to benefits.

There are calls from many quarters for workers to continue working beyond the age at which they become eligible to apply for a Commonwealth Age Pension. However, the gap in workers' compensation protection to workers over 65 years is a huge barrier to mature age workforce participation.

RECOMMENDATION 4.1:

Amend the Tasmanian Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 to ensure that workers over the age of 65 years have equal protection under the Act.

⁹ Rafal Chomik and John Piggott in CEPAR briefing paper 2012/01; Mature-age labour force participation: Trends, barriers, incentives, and future potential.

Age Friendly Workplaces:

The Active Ageing consultation has highlighted the value placed on continued participation in the paid workforce for Tasmanians as they age. Tasmania's ageing demographic presents a number of labour force and business risks and underlines the importance of retaining workers both now and into the future. Optimising the employment opportunities for Tasmanians as they age will provide positive economic and social outcomes. Nevertheless there are a number of barriers to continuation in the paid workforce, not least of these being ageism.

We are consistently hearing that discrimination in the workforce against mature aged workers is strongly felt by many workers over the age of 45 years, but is hidden by loop holes and ambiguity. "...Ah yes, we know you have got the experience, but we want someone fresh."¹⁰

In Tasmania today, if you're over 50 years old, it's surprisingly hard to get work, no matter how experienced or qualified you are.

*Quote from the Saturday Mercury
(3rd December, 2016)*

Age discrimination in the workplace can be difficult to prove but notwithstanding this fact, the Age Discrimination Commissioner, the Hon Susan Ryan AO and Tasmania's Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Robin Banks, report that workplace discrimination is the most commonly reported complaint received by their offices.

In the current environment, Tasmania can ill afford to overlook the wealth of knowledge, experience and skills that mature age workers can bring to the workplace. There are significant opportunities to leverage existing programs to promote flexible working arrangements, ongoing training and two-way intergenerational training opportunities among other innovative approaches.

COTA Tasmania believes there is a key leadership role for the Tasmanian Government as the state's largest employer to demonstrate good practice in creating age-friendly workplaces and to enable age-friendly workplace practice in the private sector.

RECOMMENDATION 4.2:

Introduce programs for the State Service and private sector that promote ongoing learning for older workers, mentoring opportunities, flexible workplaces, and succession planning in the workplace.

RECOMMENDATION 4.3:

Introduce a mature age friendly award to the Employer of Choice Awards in conjunction with COTA Tasmania.

¹⁰ COTA Tasmania submission to the Willing to Work Inquiry, November 2015

5. Age Friendly Businesses

The Active Ageing community consultations conducted by COTA confirmed that ageist or disrespectful attitudes and poor design within businesses create a barrier to older Tasmanians using their services. As the largest growing consumer base in the State, businesses need to adapt how they conduct and design their business to better meet the needs of older people. In addition to enabling older people to engage in community life and improve participation, having accessible design and high standard service increases customer loyalty, business reputation and revenue.

“When I dyed my hair I wasn’t treated like an idiot. But as soon you stop they treat you like you’re fragile, talk to you really slowly ... the older you become the more invisible you become.”

Focus group participant

Many older people in consultation said that they preferred shopping at smaller, local stores to bigger chains, even though products were sometimes more expensive. This was due to helpful staff and a more enjoyable shopping experience. Additional services such as helping to load their car, offering home delivery and learning people’s names and details were highly valued and often instilled loyalty to that business.

Age friendly businesses have been implemented around the world to the benefit of businesses and consumers. New York’s age friendly business model provides education about low- or no-cost improvements businesses can make to marketing, ambiance, design and overall consumer experience with very positive outcomes from business owners¹¹. Age friendly business adaptations to Japanese convenience stores that include automatic doors, widening of aisles, lowering of shelves, enlarged price tags, areas for sitting and more neutral decor have resulted in increased store sales¹².

Adopting age friendly business strategies opens businesses to a much wider customer pool than older people. Adaptations to stores increase accessibility for disabled people, pregnant women, young families, people with limited sight, hearing or mobility and those from other cultures.

COTA Tasmania has identified an opportunity to engage the business community through development of an age-friendly business program. We already have some interest in the concept which could be expanded to the whole state once tested. Such an approach would benefit our local community and also tourism businesses for whom a large proportion of clients are in the older demographic.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Initiate an age-friendly business training program that supports businesses to understand and tailor products and services to meet the needs of the ageing demographic.

¹¹ The New York Academy of Medicine, Age Friendly NYC. Retrieved from <http://nyam.org/age-friendly-nyc/our-work/ongoing-initiatives/>

¹² In a Graying Japan, Lower Shelves and Wider Aisles, The New York Times, September 4 2006

6. Housing

“When you take away a man’s house, that he has worked for his whole life, you take everything.”

Consultation participant

The vast majority of older Tasmanians wish to age in place to remain in their homes and chosen social environment. A person’s ability to do this is impacted by a range of factors including whether they own or rent their home, if they have access to affordable personal and household support and repair services, their sense of security (especially if living alone) and the availability of appropriate housing that meets their needs as they age.

COTA is concerned about the vulnerability of older Tasmanians living in private rental and the availability of age appropriate housing, particularly in regional areas.

We note that the Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025 canvasses options to incentivise landlords to assist vulnerable groups and strongly suggest that the needs of older Tasmanians are incorporated in any planning in this area.

National and local research has identified limited availability of appropriate and affordable rental properties to meet existing and projected demand from older renters. At the time of the 2011 census, 21% of Tasmanians aged 65 or over were in households experiencing housing stress, while 63.7% of Tasmanians aged over 65 years were living under the poverty line of \$400 per week. A growing number of older Tasmanians on fixed incomes and in private rental housing are vulnerable to rent rises and there is a pressing need to develop strategies to support their housing security.

COTA Tasmania welcomes the commitment to construct accommodation for older disadvantaged Tasmanians similar to the widely respected Wintringham model. It is critical that the Government commits to funding this initiative and adopts a consultative and consumer focussed approach to design and implementation.

The Active Ageing community consultation highlighted the critical shortage of accessible, appropriate and affordable housing for Tasmanians ageing in rural and remote communities. People wish to continue to live in their community, but find it challenging to remain in their own homes. Many feel that they have to move to urban centres and leave family and social networks behind, increasing the likelihood of social isolation and associated health challenges.

RECOMMENDATION 6.1:

That the State Government commit to funding the implementation of key recommendations outlined in the Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025, particularly in relation to the implementation of the Wintringham model in Tasmania.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2:

Dedicate a proportion of funding within the Private Landlords and Housing Connect Partnership (Affordable Housing Plan Government Action 6) to support older Tasmanian renters.

RECOMMENDATION 6.3:

Explore opportunities and reduce barriers to private sector investment (including Tasplan) into age appropriate housing throughout Tasmania.

I see older people live in the country in their 90s, because they’re happy but there’s nothing coming back... In the country there’s no support, Federal [Government] wants us to sell our farm and go and live on the pension, but if you’re happy in your lifestyle and well enough you want to stay.

Consultation participant

13 AHURI report, Preventing first time homelessness amongst older Australians, June 2014

7. Cost of Living: Concessions

In its 2015/16 State Budget Submission, COTA commended the Tasmanian Government on the decision to continue to support seniors concessions despite the Federal Government's move to step back from this space. Seniors concessions allow older Tasmanians and others on low incomes to enjoy a reasonable standard of living in an environment where the cost of living is continually on the rise.

The increasing cost of living is a concern for older Tasmanians living with low, fixed incomes. Government concessions are greatly appreciated and relied upon to help with costs for healthcare, motor vehicle registration and licences, buses, taxis, rates, water and parking. By continuing to support senior concession, the Tasmanian Government can assist older Tasmanians to enjoy healthier, less stressful lives and remain socially included and active.

Changes to asset testing for pension eligibility in January 2017 will result in a number of Tasmanians losing their pension eligibility and therefore concessions that they previously relied on to help with financial costs. COTA urges the Government to consider the impact of asset test changes on existing concession holders who are living on relatively low fixed incomes.

RECOMMENDATION 7.1:

The State Government continues to support senior concessions.

RECOMMENDATION 7.2:

The State Government considers the impact on existing concession holders of changes to asset testing for pension eligibility that come into force in January 2017.

8. Health Literacy: Savings for the Health Budget

Comprehensive and co-ordinated person-centred care is central to good health outcomes for people of any age. Focusing on the needs and preferences of the individual and including them as active participants in their care planning and health management minimises health system costs.

There is potential to improve the wellbeing and health of older Tasmanians and reduce costs to the health system by targeting older Tasmanians with health literacy messages in areas such as nutrition and food security, falls prevention, and mental health and wellbeing.

Nutrition and food security is vital to ensuring that older Tasmanians remain healthy and strong. Diets in older age need to be different to diets in younger years due to physical changes that occur as people age. Educating older Tasmanians about how to enjoy food while meeting nutritional requirements through the Eat for Life peer education program is an effective way to keep this cohort healthy in both body and mind.

RECOMMENDATION 8.1:

State Government supports continuation of the Eat for Life peer education program to improve knowledge of age appropriate diet.

Falls Prevention:

Fall-related injuries are common among older people and are a major cause of pain, disability, loss of independence and premature death. Falls result in relatively high levels of preventable hospitalisation, often for extended periods, that come at a high cost. Interventions to limit the number of falls experienced by older people have the potential to significantly reduce costs within the health system.

One in every 10 days spent in hospital by a person aged 65 years and older in 2010-11 was directly attributable to an injurious fall. These episodes of care accounted for 1.4 million patient days over the year and the average total length of stay per fall injury case was estimated to be 14.7 days.¹⁴

In recognition of the financial and personal costs of falls in older Tasmanians, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) made a substantial investment in falls prevention through the development of the Stay on Your Feet resources. This package of resources is comprehensive and provides excellent advice for older people in the community. Other jurisdictions have produced similar resources that are also well supported by successful research.

Notwithstanding this fact, indications are that community awareness and knowledge of preventative measures is still relatively low and participation in interventions recommended by health professionals are often not sustained¹⁵.

To improve the ability of older adults to recognise the risk of falling and take precautions to prevent falls requires co-ordinated and sustained action. One possible strategy to increase implementation of prevention strategies is through peer education, which has been found to be successful in this space¹⁶.

Peer education is a term widely used to describe a range of initiatives where people from similar age group, background, culture and/or social status educate and inform each other about a wide variety of issues. The rationale behind peer education is that peers can be a trusted and credible source of information. They share similar experiences and social norms and are therefore better placed to provide relevant, meaningful, explicit and honest information.

The addition of peer education to the Stay on Your Feet program would assist in disseminating this information, and awareness of resource recommendations, to a wider target audience. COTA Tasmania has delivered peer education modules in related areas previously, and currently has a team of experienced volunteer Peer Educators who could engage in such a project. By utilising this resource, there is potential to capitalise on existing government investment in this space, extend the awareness of the impact of falls and reduce costs to the health budget by reducing falls among the older age group.

RECOMMENDATION 8:2

That State Government funds the development and delivery of Falls Prevention Peer Education programs to extend the benefits derived from the existing Stay on Your Feet program administered by the Department of Health and Human Services.

\$60,000 over the next two years (\$30,000 in each year)

14 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Clare Bradley, Injury Research & Statistics Series No.84, Trends in hospitalisations due to fall by older people, Australia 1999-00 to 2010-11, 2013

15 Hill, K, Australian Ageing Agenda, Call to action on falls prevention, Australian Ageing Agenda, 25 March 2014

16 Pohl,P; Sandlund, M; Ahlgren, C; Bergvall-Kareborn, B; Lundin-Olsson,L; Melander Wikman, A (2015) Fall Risk Awareness and Safety Precautions taken by Older Community Dwelling Women and Men, PLoS One, 10(3): e0119630, published online 2015 Mar 17

9. Elder Abuse Prevention

COTA supports a community and whole of government response to the issue of elder abuse and welcomes the opportunity to partner with State Government to deliver actions to ensure that all older Tasmanians are valued members of society and are treated with respect.

Ageing should not be viewed as a burden but seen as an opportunity to explore and value the benefits of experience, wisdom and skills accumulated over time.

Elder abuse remains a significant issue for Tasmania. Large population-based studies show incidences of abuse at between three and five percent of the population, which equates to 3,000-4,500 Tasmanians¹⁷. The consequences of abuse can be substantial and older people experiencing it can feel helplessness, alienation, guilt, shame, fear and anxiety. Abuse of older Tasmanians is a violation of human rights and a rejection of the fundamental respect that our older people deserve. Ending abuse is a community responsibility that demands all sectors of society to actively address its causes and reduce its harmful effects.

Older Tasmanians deserve the right to feel safe and respected in their own homes, in their relationships and within their communities. The *Protecting Older Tasmanians from Abuse: Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2015-18* provides a framework for responding to elder abuse in our community.

COTA has, during the past three years, worked energetically and co-operatively with DHHS and agencies as part of the Statewide Elder Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee (SEAPAC) to raise awareness of elder abuse across agencies, service providers and the community. COTA has established a Referral Pathways working group to provide information and support to service providers receiving enquiries regarding suspected or actual elder abuse. In collaboration with DHHS, COTA has formulated Guiding Principles that Protect and Respect Older Tasmanians. Public consultation will

be sought in regard to the Guiding Principles in February 2017.

The Elder Abuse Helpline delivered by Advocacy Tasmania is a critical component of Tasmania's response to elder abuse. The Helpline has provided assistance in hundreds of cases since its inception and collects valuable information that will assist in reducing the incidence of elder abuse.

Despite the significant advances made in this space, there remains much work to be done if we are to collectively address this damaging and largely hidden social problem. Ongoing work on primary prevention, data collection and referral pathways are critical to addressing elder abuse

RECOMMENDATION 9.1:

Commit to ongoing resourcing of the Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy, improve data collection across agencies and services (police, hospitals, legal services and courts), and support a national register of powers of attorney.

\$360,000 over three years

RECOMMENDATION 9.2:

Extend funding for Advocacy Tasmania to operate the Elder Abuse Helpline and Elder Abuse Advocacy Support.

\$145,000 per annum

RECOMMENDATION 9.3:

Refresh an Elder Abuse Prevention Campaign to raise awareness of elder abuse within the community.

\$30,000

RECOMMENDATION 9.4:

Endorse and ensure promotion of Guiding Principles that Protect and Respect Older People and build on the Rethink Ageing project.

¹⁷ Department of Health and Human Services 2012, *Protecting Older Tasmanians from Abuse*, Tasmanian Government

10. Seniors Week

The primary aim of the long standing Seniors Week program is to promote healthy and positive ageing through:

- Building connections between older Tasmanians and their community
- Improving older Tasmanians health and wellbeing by introducing them to new activities that are sustainable over time
- Promoting positive ageing to the wider community

Seniors Week has grown significantly under COTA Tasmania's stewardship and in 2015 reached a record 574 events arranged by 200 organisers. This is increased from 179 events organised by 113 organisations in 2011 when COTA first conducted Seniors Week.

- Seniors Week events increased by 69% between 2011 and 2015
- Organisers of events increased by 43% between 2011 and 2015

It was evident through community consultations that older Tasmanians quality of life is closely connected to ongoing participation in community life, staying active and continuing to make a meaningful contribution.

Seniors Week acts as a focal point for older Tasmanians to engage with community activities, try something new from a very wide range of options and connect with others. Building these community connections reduces social isolation and builds health and wellbeing.

Importantly, Seniors Week is a public expression of support for older Tasmanians and a positive way to promote Active Ageing in the broader community.

The Active Ageing consultation highlighted the opportunity to broaden the impact of Seniors Week to be more inclusive of the young old (60-74 year old cohort) who may not engage with the concept of Seniors Week. COTA is keen to examine effective ways to broaden the impact of Seniors Week to be more inclusive of this younger cohort.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Seniors Week continues for a further three years and new opportunities to broaden the concept to be more inclusive of the 60-74 year old cohort are explored and implemented.

\$140,000 in each of the next three years (total \$420,000 over three years)

11. Community Sector Issues: Indexation

In its 2015/16 State Budget Submission, COTA Tas discussed the necessity of maintaining adequate indexation of funding to support viable community service delivery, and that its importance was acknowledged by the Liberal Government during the election.

There has been no increase in Tasmanian Government grant funding received by COTA for the past six years, despite increases in real and variable costs. COTA is currently waiting for the findings from a report investigating indexation of Government grants, but is not the only community organisation to experience rising costs on fixed funding. We strongly urge the Government to maintain discussions with the community sector regarding funding indexation.

Without grant funding covering increases in costs, the provision of research and services from the community sector can become stagnant and strained. To enable Government supported initiatives to continue to grow and make an impact in the community, funding grants must reflect increases in costs.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Negotiations between Government and community sector organisations continue for the creation of a new formula for grant indexation which is applied to all Government grants immediately to support the continued growth and development of Government funded communities programs.



COTA TAS Inc 'Westella'
181 Elizabeth Street, Hobart TAS 7000

Phone: (03) 6231 3265

Email: admin@cotatas.org.au

www.cotatas.org.au